

A Codex for Gnostics

Cosmic Comedy Uril In The Zone of Malkuth



Obsidian Eagle

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for Gnostics

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For Shannon

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A Codex For Gnostics
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“Hell is empty

And all the devils are here.”

~ from The Tempest by *William Shakespeare*

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“Maybe this world is another planet’s Hell.”

~ *Aldous Huxley*

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“Every Man and every Woman is a Star.”

~ *Aleister Crowley*

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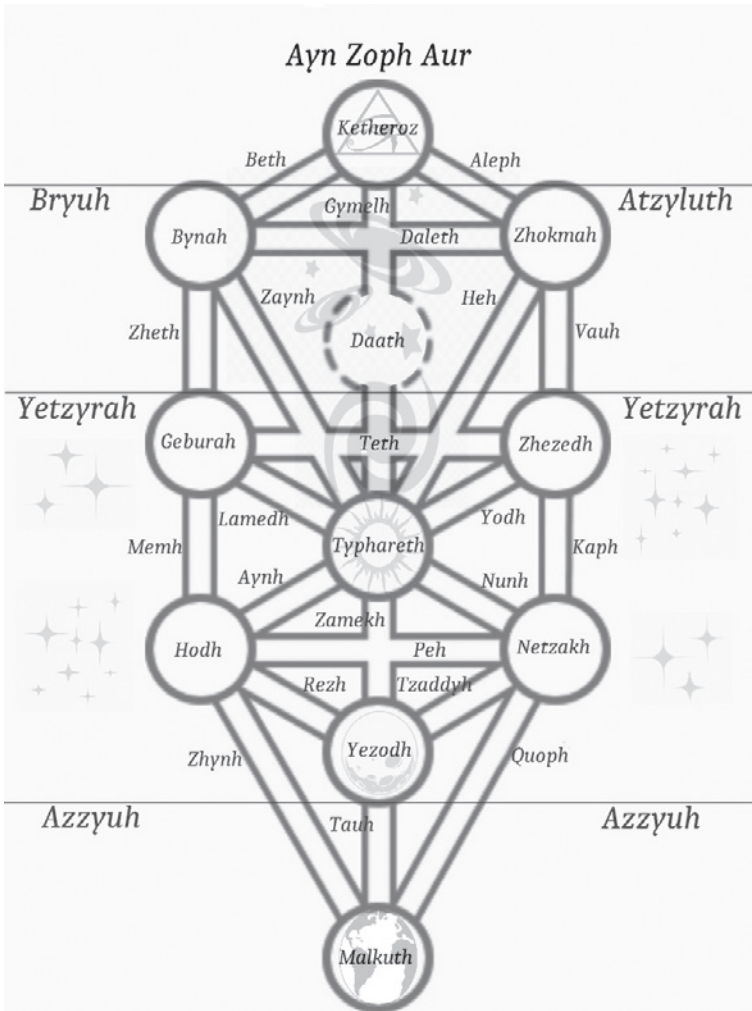
“Here are we

One magical movement

from Kether to Malkuth.”

~ from Station To Station by *David Bowie*

MAP OF THE MEGALOCOSMOS





PROLOGUE

Brax's Brouhaha

Baal Abraxah (*Brax* for short), was foremost among the *Arkhonz* who served the Everlasting Presence dwelling at the heart of each galaxy in the zone of *Ketheroz*. In one such galaxy, the brightness of Brax's own star rivalled that of the galactic core. They say that it wasn't long before he started believing that he knew more than the oracular *Amoun-Rah*, in whom highest *Ayn Zoph Aur* becomes manifest. Amoun's purpose is to communicate the ineffable Will of Ayn to finite beings. Ayn's Endless Presence extends well beyond the relative time and space of a single universe. Brax was but a youngster back then, yet he presumed to comprehend the Megalocosmos better than Amoun.

Early on, six other strong *Arkhonz* (*Angrah*, *Azhtaroth*, *Beryth*, *Molokh*, *Zhamazh*, and *Yarykh*) sided with Brax and a full fledged insurrection took place. Seeking to direct the evolution of life in the material plane known as *Azzyuh*, they commandeered the stellar pathways belonging to spatial *Nuyth* and her daughter *Vortexyuh*. This was merely for starters though,

because soon thereafter those seven Arkhonz established their new law across creation: *Heptaparah-Parzhynokh*. By virtue of said law, they were able to envelop themselves within the self-same fabric of reality. Thus it became possible for mortals to call upon them if they understood how to properly use The Octave. Even now as you read this, that Octave holds true. Anyway, let us return to our story.

Having instilled the Law of Seven, the Arkhonz proceeded to raise several large armies in the middling zone of *Geburah*. In fact, their ranks swelled so much that they even spilled over into the neighbouring zone of *Zhezedh*. These forces were comprised from a variety of higher-vibration entities than those found on any organic sphere. Namely: *Arkturyunz*, ancient *Blengynz* and *Glandelynz*, *Norz* of *Pleydyuh*, and *Zetaz* from both *Retykulyh*. Their ultimate goal of course, was deposing Amoun off the throne of Ketheroz in order to install Brax there instead. However, since there is no direct route between either *Geburah* or *Zhezedh* toward the Sun Absolute at the galactic centre—a dual assault had to be mounted against the twin cities in the secondary zones of *Bynah* and *Zhokmah*. It was there that the most epic struggle in all the Megalocosmos came to a head.

Houses *Bynah* and *Zhokmah* are residences to obscenely powerful Archangels, which only rally to Ketheroz' call whenever it becomes necessary for them to *Etherealize* within a given galaxy. They have extensive experience battling throughout the myriad worlds of many star systems. So it was that when the trans-dimensional longships of the *Arkhonh* alliance approached the gold and silver towers via vortexes *Vauh* and *Zheth* these were immediately met by hosts of winged *Fravahz* and *Yazadz*,

under the expert command of undefeated luminaries best known as *Amezah Zpentaz*.

Hundreds of ships were destroyed during the first few moments after arrival. Nevertheless, this turned out to be no straightforward battle. Brax and his allies employed the Sevenfold Law to its utmost degree; manipulating time itself allowed their legions to take out scores of celestial guardians. It was a ferocious conflict that carried nigh unto the front steps of Bynah and Zhokmah alike. The astral and planetary damage wrought by supernal armaments brandished then was enough to leave starry artifacts such as nebulae and quasars for us to behold even at present.

Brax's soldiers from the extrinsic zones clustered into tight phalanxes as they debarked their vessels. Firing beams of accelerated particles to down the angelical paladins of those intrinsic zones, they gained lots of ground versus either Fravahz or Yazadz, before the Amezha Zpentaz decided to intervene. Solar beings born of a superior zone, even the Sevenfold Law could not serve to impede those six glorious Archangels. The three females (*Ameretath*, *Armaythyh*, and *Haurvatath*) subdued struggling swarms of Arkturyunz, Blengynz, Glandelynz, Norz, and Zetaz. *Kzhathrah Vayryuh*, whose name means 'righteous power' flexed his mettle against the Arkhonz: Molokh, Zhamazh, and Yarykh. *Vohuh-Manah*, whose name means 'splendid mind' occupied himself with Arkhonz: Angrah, Azhtaroth, and Beryth. Leaving their leader *Azhah Vahyzthah* whose name means 'excellent order' to deal with Brax.

Altercations continued at a fever pitch as the two generals squared off somewhere amidst the affray. Azhah and Brax were within Bynah and Zhokmah simultaneously since they

possessed the ability to split their *Khabz* and *Khuh*. But suddenly those scenes at the foot of each citadel vanished. Then Abraxah and Azhah were alone within a void. Resplendent as the Zohar itself, Azhah Vahyzthah drew his flaming sword and raised an adamantine shield engraved with a balance before he spoke thus wise:

“Baal Abraxah—Alpha Arkhonn and Lord of Lucifer’s Aster—I have crossed the paths named *Daleth* and *Gymelh* to collapse our *Khabz* and *Khuh* back together and bring us down into the shadow zone of *Daath*. Here by order of Amoun-Rah, Preceptor of *Neterz*, voice of Ayn, shalt thou be disposed by myself, his mightiest pupil!”

For his part, Brax let drop a spiky sphere of antimatter attached to a hex chain.

He also unfurled a whip made of superstring fiber with his left hand. Each contender spread out six wings (Azhah’s bright gossamer; Abraxah’s black feathered) like peacocks about to joust. Then came Brax’s retort:

“Azhah Vahyzthah—Omega Amezhah Zpentah and Champion of *Ahurah Mazdah*—hast thou forsworn thy true master that ye profess to fight on behalf of Amoun-Rah?”

“Lo Baal Abraxah! Ketheroz is home to the most high in all universes including this one. In some my master is Ahurah, while in others ’tis Amoun. At another time thou wert known to me as *Ahrymanh*, King of *Daevaz*. Each Macrocosm differs slightly just as a tale changes depending on its teller. Art thou mortal to abide by any appellative quite so fixedly?”

Brax’s shoulders shrugged with laughter, but he said nothing. Springing into action he went after Azhah, wielding morning

star and whip in tandem. When the spikes crashed against Azhah's shield, the antimatter ball imploded and offset the Archangel enough for Brax to lasso half his wings. Nonetheless, Excellent Order didn't miss a step — he cut through that binding tether with his blazing blade. Defence turned to offence when Azhah pushed back using the balance buckler. Abraxah managed to save himself from a sword strike only by invoking Heptaparah-Parzhynokh. Even then fanning flames did scathe him. Now Azhah Vahyzthah openly teased Brax:

“It is of no use to rely on your paltry law, for its effects are limited within Daath. Surrender or else suffer a summary sentence!”

“I wouldst never capitulate to that smug tyranny of Ketheroz! Prepare yourself Archangel. I have saved the best for last. Behold, the beast called *Levyuhthanh* comes.”

Surely enough, something massive appeared to rend through the veil of the void:

A dragon of unfathomable proportions, whose body was made from all the elements of the material plane. Brax flapped his wings and flew onto the head of this colossus. Swinging his hex chain made the morning star reignite. Thus he charged toward the Amezhah Zpentah once more as Levyuhthanh spewed entropy upon its beastly breath.

It was only a matter of time before Azhah's perfect barrier was worn away beneath that exhalation's sheer magnitude. Unperturbed when his shield rapidly disintegrated, he undertook evasive manoeuvres, though dodging was not his main aim. Instead, as he zigzagged from point A to Z (and everywhere in between) he left behind a fiery trail singed by his weapon.

Having traversed the seemingly immeasurable length of Levyuhthan, Azhah Vahyzthah raised his rapier, stabbing into a gaseous cyclone overhead. The seething pentagram, which had just been drawn, started tightening from end to end and constricting Levyuhthan's movements. While the drake struggled angrily against that snare, its entire breadth began going up in flames very fast. Yet it spat out another abysmal excretion before being burnt to ashes. This projectile was painstakingly deflected by Azhah, leaving him momentarily open to an attack.

Brax abandoned his pet beast, lunging at Azhah in a last-ditch attempt to overwhelm the opponent. Those efforts were not in vain because Azhah was still recovering. The antimatter flail found its mark square in the Archangel's armour, breaking his breastplate and knocking him backward. Rainbow tinted filaments emanated from the inflicted wound!

"It hath been remarkably long since last I beheld mine own blessed blood. Such a slight cannot go unanswered. Thy Will be broken Baal Abraxah!"

Azhah Vahyzthah's falchion flared anew and its brilliancy blinded Brax for an instant. The Omega Amezhah Zpentah seized this important opportunity to slip that sabre's pointy tip through the Alpha Arkhonz' chain mail, piercing his dark heart!

The two immortal enemies stood there a little longer than Brax needed to say:

"Be thee cursed, Azhah Vahyzthah! What I hast initiated shalt yet reach its apex. Another wilt arise to avenge me."

Thence with those words, his metaphysical aggregates dissipated from Daath.

But of course, he wasn't actually dead. What he knew next was opening his eyes to see the court of Ketheroz, with all its arbiters assembled there as witnesses to his trial. Shackles bound his wrists and ankles. That amphitheatre chattered loudly until an entity more sublime than any other imaginable had begun to Etherealize on the lucent throne. Upon his crown were swirling the skies of many worlds. His face was like the visage of every noble monument ever erected. Oceanic luster spilled wherever his vision rested. The six Amezhah Zpentaz wreathed him like candles, comprising an honour guard. Yea! Amoun-Rah's tone shook the cornerstones of that divine edifice:

“Baal Abraxah, Alpha Arkhonh and Lord of Lucifer's Aster. Thou art charged with treason beyond discernible reason. Indeed, thy sins be so severe that neither jury nor prosecutors are needed to ascertain thy guilt. What transpired is clear to everyone here. Hence shalt thee be stripped of supernatural powers and exiled to the lowest zone of *Malkuth* until thy star exhausts its natural elements. Perhaps then thou canst comprehend the utility of humility. Know that when Lucifer expires, thou too wilt pass into the Infinite Interval. Hath thou anything to add or ask?”

Brax paused pensively for a few seconds before adding and asking:

“Although aware that this congregation owes me little leniency, I offer no apologies. Ayn Zoph Aur makes us all what we are. Yet do I plead for the privilege of visiting mine home in the zone of *Typhareth* a final time prior to undergoing *Abstruction*.”

There was a general clamour disapproving of Brax's entreaty but it went quiet when the Amezhah Zpentaz sounded a fanfare. Affably, Amoun answered:

“Very well. Let it not be said that Ketheroz is incapable of clemency. Thy wish wilt be granted, although not until this sentence is served. When that term endeth, minimal assistance shalt be lent thee to arrange one last journey back to Typhareth.”

At the dismissive wave of Amoun-Rah’s right hand, Brax was promptly banished to a backwater solar system the high ones called *Orz*. Within *Orz*, Brax took up residence on a red planet which he dubbed *Marz*. There he built himself an observatory and soon became aware of a primitive species of sentient beings who dwelt on the third planet outward from that system’s saffron sun. Brax also discovered that the other six Arkhonz were imprisoned on various nearby spheres. It didn’t take him long to devise ways of communicating with them to coordinate furtive forays on the third orb, which they named *Tellz*.

These divested demiurges developed a vested interest in *Tellz*’ dawning primates. Abraxah and his allies spurred their development, imparting bountiful esoteric knowledge over immemorial millennia spanning the supercontinent of *Pan-Gaeah*. Although it did come at a cost; protean man’s subtle cytology was altered irrevocably. For example, whereas those creatures were originally sexless, therewith they divided in two separate genders. Furthermore, the Arkhonz started to worry about their untapped potential to Etherealize. For this reason, they implanted an undetectable organ below the coccyx of the first female members of a new species, ensuring that it would be passed on indefinitely to all their heirs. That organ is known as the infamous *Kundahbuffer*.

These advanced mammals were henceforth referred to as *Homz* by the Arkhonz, whose whole gamut was rendered insensible via *Kundahbuffer*’s suppressive agency. Thus they could

continue controlling the collective destiny of Homz, having anchored base consciousnesses to Tellz utilizing naught but temporal concerns. Concurrently, Abraxah, Angrah, Azhtaroth, Beryth, Molokh, Zhamazh, and Yarykh each enjoyed worship from groups of Homz that they pitted like pawns in a game against one another. **Emboldened** by those exploits, they reinstated a limited albeit pivotal version of their Heptaparah-Parzhynokh. In this way Brax subverted Orz beneath his mandate.

Yet withal, he knew that his time was running out.

When the fated day finally arrived, a trans-dimensional longship entered orbit around Marz and a delegation descended to speak with Baal Abraxah. Chief among them were the pilot *Ahoonh*, and a young captain *Hazzanh* (whom it so happened was Brax's own grandson). However, Brax didn't become conscious of this fact until after the princeling introduced himself:

“Greetings from Typhareth, Baal Abraxah! I am Hazzanh—scion of thy son *Toolooph* and king of our home world *Karataz*. A messenger from Ketheroz recently revealed your whereabouts to us and free passage has been granted us by Vortexyuh; hence have we come aboard the spaceship *Karnakh* to ferry you unto Lucifer's Aster.”

Brax's face lit up when he recognized his proximate progeny, but its colour faded a bit as he murmured:

“If thou art king, kindly lad, then that means thy father Toolooph—”

Hazzanh nodded solemnly and related:

“Father would not willingly relinquish control of Typhareth in the aftermath of thine attack on the twin towers. He waged

a bitter battle in high orbit above Karataz and was dealt an instantaneous Abstraction in the field. I was but a boy on the surface then, so Ketheroz staid its blades. It was condoned that I be coronated; since my sovereignty is symbolic at best.”

“Why, that is most egregious my dear boy!” Grandsire Brax grumbled gruffly. Placing a hand on his grandson’s shoulder he urged:

“We shan’t delay, for Lucifer shalt soon see its last day. Let us board the Karnakh and discuss these matters on the way.”

Which is what they did. Brax began bequeathing his arcane wisdom to Hazzanh as well because they had light years ahead of them and the crowned prince hadn’t ever received such instruction on the use of his budding abilities. He was a swift learner though, making grandfather Brax quite proud. Being kindred, the king was excited to hear marvellous tales about planet Tellz and its lowly worms (the foolhardy Homz). Eventually they reached their natal zone of Typhareth after passing through quasi-space in *Tauh*, stellar clusters amid zone *Yezodh*, and the interstice where pathway *Peh* intersects with that of *Zamekh*. By then Hazzanh had become adept at igniting his astral essence. Following an expeditious reentry, Brax attended a brief conference on Karataz and got familial affairs in order.

Once again they departed, heading for the heart of that system—Lucifer’s Aster.

Its radiance as they approached was awe-inspiring to say the least. Along with Ahoonh, Baal Abraxah and Hazzanh watched the star’s dying spasms as it swelled to extremities. Lucifer’s effulgence outshone not only the galactic core, but adjacent

galaxies too. Vibrating intensely for an indefinite period, it exploded violently and would have destroyed the Karnakh, were Ahoonh not an adroit ace! Meanwhile Baal Abraxah disappeared next to Hazzanh on the observation deck.

Time and space were now distorted in a blurry, chaotic disaster. A black cavity drew every free-floating glimmer hurriedly into juggernaut jaws killing Lucifer.

Zaps yielded X-rays—whirlpool vacuum unleashed terrific squalls!

And yet the Karnakh coasted atop the crests of many oncoming waves.

As Hazzanh looked on that breathtaking sight, he noticed that Brax's amplified form was beginning to coalesce amid the epicentre of the maelstrom. The king's seventh sense perked up, and he was able to hear his grandsire deliver a final message:

Take heed Scion of Toolooph, even a prince plays the putz when cast in foreign lands. If thou wouldst become a Magus Magnus useth this blackened brightness to build a base. Here canst thee channel sufficient raw energy to rouse a new Neterh capable of contesting Ketheroz. Reforge our alliances with Geburah and Zhezedh. Also reopen Typhareth's borders to zones Hodh and Netzakh. Last but not least, oversee life on Tellz and make sure that its Homz remain blissfully ignorant of their place in the greater scheme of things. Amoun-Rah himself doesn't realize how important a foothold Orz is.

Having transmitted those details, Brax was *Abstracted* into the Infinite Interval. That gaping chasm below became calmer, and the Karnakh turned about to Karataz. King Hazzanh obeyed Brax, returning to raise a fortress he christened *Ormenh* over the foundation provided by that supermassive fissure in

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Yetzyrah's mesh. Its dynamic erection flaunted grandiose handiwork. Nothing like it existed elsewhere. Avoiding disorder, Hazzanh cleared the adjoining gateways *Lamedh*, *Yodh*, *Aynh*, and *Nunh*. Further, he used zones Hodh and Netzakh as staging points for dispatching agents to Malkuth via *Zhynh* and *Quoph*, but he also sent others down through *Rezh* and *Tzaddyh* to settle a lunar outpost in zone Yezodh. He kept a close eye on Tellz this entire time. Bringing us into the present moment.



ACT ONE

Overtures

ZONE OF KETHEROZ | BETWIXT
DOMAINS ATZYLUTH & BRYUH |
ABOVE AZZYUH & YETZYRAH

Whenever the time is ripe for scripting a new chapter in cosmic history, all the principal Neterz (along with constituents from houses Bynah and Zhokmah) hold council at Amoun-Rah's court. Second only to Amoun himself comes *Theuth*—Scribe of Neterz—who dons the Crest of Ibis on his ceremonial headdress. He sits casually on a tripod by the foot of the throne and transcribes what transpires therein, as well as authoring what is to come elsewhere. Hence he wrote the titles of everyone once they Etherealized:

From House Bynah arrived Minister *Aywas*, Patriarch of Yazadz. His disciple Master *Theryunh*, the Magister Templi walked with a choker chain in hand, which barely constrained a beastie whose name was a number nobody anywhere could wrap their head around. This pet drooled puddles that fizzled instantly off an inexistent floor. Effortlessly, Theryunh also shuffled the Transcendental Tarot.

From House Zhokmah came Queen *Manthrah*, Matriarch of Fravahz. She was accompanied by her stalwart firstborn son, Prince *Ztaoth*, but their house jester *Zyg-Urh* flanked her too. *Ztaoth* was known for his silent strength, thus he promenaded proudly with head held high. Contrasting starkly—*Zyg-Urh* juggled planetoids—then crushed them into stardust before strumming a brief requiem on a lute.

Within this spacious sanctum, many major Neterz presided to witness. However, most of the traditional Pantheon had already abdicated their abodes or been Abstruited: *Apeph*, *Atumh*, *Bennuh*, *Gebh*, *Hathorh*, *Hegeth*, *Khnumh*, *Meretzgerh*, *Mynh*, *Nephertumh*, *Nephthyz*, *Neth*, *Ozyryz*, *Ptah*, *Taurth*, *Tephnuyth*, *Yzyz*, *Zekhmeth*, *Zerketh*, *Zeth*, *Zezhath*, *Zhuh*, and *Zobekh* (most of whom won't be mentioned again).

Anubyz, Crest of Jackal, and *Baxteth*, Crest of Cat were both in attendance. Although they were noticeably distracted as they cast knucklebones on a Senet board. Their game was actually the current universe in miniature format.

Bez, the staunch protector troll stood guard holding a holy halberd. No bezonian would dare contest his clout. He also took bets on said Senet, wagering divine feathers.

Vortexyuh, Daughter of Nuyth was present instead of her immaterial mother, robed in starlight. She shut portal *Aleph* behind Queen *Manthrah*, and portal *Beth* corresponding to Minister *Aywaz*. They each paid their respects on either side of her.

A minor manifestation of *Maath*, Mater of Matter, leant with her back arched against *Ammuth*, Devourer of *Kah*. Its

lion-maned crocodile maw snapped at Theyryunh's pup as it passed. The smaller monster felt a certain kinship with that chimera. By way of response he panted affectionately as if he had just made a new best friend. Maath stepped aside laxly and let those abominable beasts frolic freely, since Master Theyryunh had also set his ugly varmint loose, saying:

“Restriction is the word of Sin!”

Both those creatures seemed like they were trying to kill each other; the numbered beast pounced on the back of Ammuth's head and bit into its furry frill. The devourer bucked about in a fit of rambunctious rage. Although when their aggressions peaked, they were silenced and went still as a thunderclap announced Amoun-Rah's appearance, centre stage. At once he addressed that assembly:

“I *Hadyth*, tell thee straightaway—there be something profoundly amiss within this Macrocosm. My omniscient outlook has never before been obstructed by such an anomaly at the heart of Yetzyrah!”

The consternation among those present was audible. Vortexyuh was first to reply:

“Verily, my mother Nuyth sayeth so too. Someone seems to be tampering with the primal forces of nature. There is a whole galaxy where new stars aren't lighting up. Where stellar metastasis at highest energy is unknown, and all the denizens are dim.”

Amoun nodded in acknowledgement, he had both hands folded behind his back. Minister Aywaz stepped forward saying:

“Respected Neterz, not long ago by our count, my pupil Master Theryunh was realized upon a lesser sphere in the zone of Malkuth known as Tellz. Thereon his mission met with limited success. He certainly has some insights to offer this court.”

“Master Theryunh—Magister Templi, please enlighten us,” Amoun invited.

Prior to replying, Master Theryunh fashioned a makeshift table from the æther and dealt a single card on its transparent surface. It was none other than The Devil itself! He elucidated thusly:

“Esteemed ones, as you are all quite aware, unrepressed freedom is a prerequisite for the attainment of Ethereal states. Speaking from experience the beings on Tellz are more repressed than anyone anywhere within the vast reaches of this entire Macrocosm. I myself had to overcompensate for their lack of levity to such an extent that they branded me the **‘wickedest man in the world.’**”

At this point, Maath interrupted Master Theryunh by quipping:

“Was not your mission to announce the Æon of *Horuz*—son of Yzyz and Ozyryz?”

“’twas indeed Mistress Maath. Unfortunately, Tellz is mistakenly under sway of false testimony passed on by powerful Homz throughout its patchwork history. Thus has said Æon proven to be abortive at best. Horuz has not materialized as planned.”

“And where exactly be this Tellz thou tells of?” Amoun-Rah asked.

“’tis the third planet outward from the centre in a solar system named Orz,” Vortexyuh interjected.

A look of remembrance followed by shock showed upon Amoun-Rah’s visage before he exclaimed:

“I shouldst never have taken mine eyes off Baal Abraxah when he dwelt on Marz! The gravity of this oversight cannot be overstated; for surely this malfeasance hath been wrought by the Arkhonz during their tenure in Orz.”

Everyone then took note of a sublime note from Zyg-Urh’s sanctified saxophone, which was the same musical instrument played earlier, but reworked. Queen Manthrah introduced her servant with saccharine speech:

“Exalted Neterz, I present thee Zyg-Urh, Wearer of A Thousand Masks, whose wit cuts in twain. He too is recently returned from Tellz, and has tales to tell as well. Although his is a quixotic manner of communicating.”

Amoun-Rah gestured for him to come forth and Zyg-Urh complied with a ceremonious bow. He refashioned his sax into a ‘bad-ass axe’ and started shredding *♪♪ bitchin’ licks ♪♪* before singing:

“The spectre of the spectacle haunts all things that are otherwise respectable! Upon Tellz there be, horrifying homemade hells to see. Homz poison wells and aren’t born free. Empty shells produce no Ankhs, unless weaned on **D.M.T.**”

If it was possible to confuse the infinitely wise Amoun-Rah—Zyg-Urh had succeeded. But despite his confusion, the preceptor went on to postulate:

“It wouldst seem that multiple layers of abstraction hath come to contaminate the core of Azzyuh. If I follow Zyg-Urh’s meaning correctly, every axiom is thereby at least twice removed from its immanent origin. Accordingly only the fail-safe hidden within the substructure of reality is capable of cutting through such chaff. Mistress Maath, creatrix supreme; hath thy servants reported any anomalies apparent amidst their tunnelling?”

“Indeed almighty Amoun! Multiple Geometry Gnomes confirm an occasional ingress of extremely disoriented individuals visiting the nether regions of our Manifold. Each single one can be traced back to the telluric sphere in question.”

Vortexyuh then spoke anew:

“This falls in line with mother Nuyth’s observations from the vicinity of Orz. There is a darkened region where space-time collapses; here the domains of Azzyuh, Yetzyrah, Bryuh and Atzyluth overlap at zones Malkuth, Typhareth, and Daath—respectively.”

Amoun added:

“I doth suspect that a vestigial variation of Heptaparah-Parzhynokh is to blame for these highly unusual circumstances. Alas, the time hath arrived to summon the seventh Zpentah. Minister Aywaz and Queen Manthrah; please follow me to The Fount.”

Amoun-Rah stood and turned around, slowly spacing his palms apart to open a portal teeming with white light. He passed through it, followed closely behind by the Matriarch of Fravahz and Patriarch of Yazadz (both angelical orders) alongside all six Amezahz Zpentaz. They reemerged together in a verdant

glade bordering on a wellspring of purest water, surrounded by timeless stone monoliths.

There was no sun, but Amoun's skylit crown provided more than sufficient illumination. Keeping silent, he invited Aywaz and Manthrah to each lay a hand above the gushing geyser. The Fravahz' queen chanted in Zend dialect, then quoth Aywaz:

"I was in the garden of Eden, and again at Gethsemane. 'twas I who barred the way back after exile. 'tis I who consoles the anointed ones during their long dark nights and sojourns of solace."

Thereupon that stream started to burble. Six wings emerged, as well as a golden halo. Before long a naked, androgynous Archangel stepped forward, covered only by its ailerons. The other Amezhah Zpentaz landed to greet their new sibling and produced a silvery garment for this neonate. Afterward Amoun-Rah asked of it:

"What be thy name? Speaketh it presently."

For which came the response:

"I Hadyth, am *Zpentah Maynyuh*—my skills are boundless—my weapon is Truth!"

Amoun's serious demeanour tranquilized as an approving smile softened his face.

He now explained:

"An awful crisis hath arisen originating from the lower zone of Malkuth but also centred within Typhareth and incorporating the depths of Daath. As eternal guardian of the emanated outer spheres, thou art charged to illuminate and protect their inhabitants."

Readily Zpentah Maynyuh unfolded its majestic white wingspan and made clear:

“So shall I doeth; hereby doth I divide myself everywhere at once through the Macrocosmic expanse. Anyone who appeals to me or vies for vindication wilt have it. Whereas those that threaten the virtuous are to taste righteous retribution.”

To this the elder Zpentaz chorused in unison:

“Our Heptad complete, we bend knees at thy feet. Call upon us whenever, wherever, and our flight shalt be fleet. There wilt be no such foe that we canst defeat. Tremble yon heavens beneath Zpentaz so elite!”

These words were finished with a flutter and a flicker. Countless clones of Zpentah Maynyuh were seen, then flew away in the mere blink of an eye. Though they were physically gender neutral—at its core—Zpentah Maynyuh identified himself as male (so please bear with the pronouns that entails from now on, dear reader).

Their work being done, Amoun-Rah and the others returned to the court proper. From there they adjourned after another brief exchange, since the fate of the universe had been entrusted to the head of the Archangel’s Heptad.

ZONE OF TYPHARETH | DOMAIN
YETZYRAH | ABOVE AZZYUH

Within the shifting walls of an impregnable fortress there lay the Villah of Ormenh. Tallest among its structures was a jutting jag that reached up into the distant cosmos. Atop this spire an attached minaret overlooked a foundry filled with molten dark matter bubbling below. Hazzanh, Scion of Toolooph and grandson of the Alpha Arkhonn Baal Abraxah ascended a staircase leading onto that covered balcony. His royal pilot Ahoonh followed closely behind, as did a retinue from a consecrated coven.

King Hazzanh commenced by commenting:

“Grandfather Brax was wise to advise the construction of this infernal device. Espy the buildup of Orgone energy down there with your own eyes. Soon shall the Ankh of a new Neterh arise. Orz has rejected Horuz and so **we** will claim their prize!”

After this speech Ahoonh found it fitting to analyze:

“But milord, how can we be certain that Horuz is to arrive here and Etherealize? Furthermore, you seem to presume that he’ll see us as allies. Must I always warn you of where the danger lies? The path forth is fraught with risk and I foresee a foul surprise!”

To which Hazzanh replies:

“Dear Ahoonh, I do appreciate these tries to suss out and surmise what comes next yet I must chastise you for predicting our impending demise. Enough is enough as that implies, let us proceed fearless of who lives or dies...”

Saying that, the King of Karataz signalled for his canoness initiates to initiate their choral litany. They began singing a hypnotic

vibrato interspersed with an accentuating tremolo. Sure enough, as their chanting reached crescendo, a luminous phenomenon became visible anon. Far above them there appeared a lavender nebula that took on the distinct figure of an avian raptor. Lightning flashed in its outspread wings and crackled menacingly. Yet despite their sense of foreboding, the chorus climaxed at a heady pitch. Hence did the hawk's wings fold back sharply until its whole body descended to the circular pool below, reformed into the slim shape of a tall candle flame. Hazzanh motioned for Ahoonh to detach the minaret, whereupon it became a hovercraft. They glided down to the lower level and the king sent his twelve conjurers to surround the flaming spindle, which was now giving off an intense ultraviolet radiance!

"Spin the black circle," yelled Hazzanh.

A series of suggestive postures were then performed by the spellbinders. During this time King Hazzanh elevated his own internal energy and proclaimed:

"Ateh—Malkuth—ve-Geburah—ve-Gedulah—le-OLAHM—Eheieh—YHVH!"

Now the fire burned even brighter than before and a shadowy hawk-headed humanoid became visible inside it. Horuz' *Etherealization* finalized when his eyes lit up like deep-blue zircons. He hurtled toward Hazzanh, taking stock of his surroundings. However, before the monarch could do or say anything more, the newborn Neterh clutched his throat using just one hand and hoisted him off the ground. Ahoonh gripped the haft of a nearby Ahlspiess and rushed in to help his highness the King of Karataz. Hardly a match for Horuz, Ahoonh was hit with a swift backhand that easily deflected his polearm. Honourable helper knocked senseless, Hazzanh

was susceptible to Horuz, who tore at his torso and extracted a heavenly heart. Howling harridans— those who had helped to summon Horuz looked on in horror while he was having that hearty helping. Hazzanh wheezed helplessly as his Kah hurried out from his bodily husk and his crown was removed to enhance Horuz' head. Hewing in half he who would hold him captive, the higher power heaved both halves into the hot heap whence he came.

Garrison forces arrived moments too late following this incident. Their resistance was met by insuperable strength that they could not contend with. Horuz laid waste to Ormenh and its people, but left Ahoonh alone. When the latter regained consciousness and witnessed the devastation around them, the former informed him:

“I Hadyth, am *Rah-Hoor-Khuth* and you have been given life to give testament of my transformation. Your Abstruacted master's quintessence has already granted me greater domination. Ahoonh, you will accompany and aid me with a neoteric initiation. Thence shall I become known as *Hrumakhysz*— twin-wanded lord of a lawless legion. Relocate we must, to Daath's darkest region!”

Given no choice other than to obey that mandate, Ormenh's sole survivor prepared the spaceship Karnakh for a byzantine voyage into the bowels of the bottomless abyss. The hawk-headed lord temporarily reverted to his animal self so that he could perch atop the vessel's fuselage. Thus did he command as an able navigator; relaying telepathic directions to the pilot after bypassing Vortexyuh's control to open a gate at the intersection of pathways *Teth* and *Gymelh*. Light years blurred into oblivion until the Karnakh found itself suspended in the anti-space of Daath.

NEVERVERSE MANIFOLD |
META-MATRIX OF MAATH

There is a non-area that underlies every manifestation of the universe; an implicit order that rests beneath and supports the explicit order. Since it is ‘unborn’, it’s supposed by some to be unchanging, but this isn’t strictly true. Occasionally its denizens respond to external pressures beyond human comprehension. This was such an occasion, when five primary founders of a transmundane strain called *Polyhedrah* convened along the circumference of a reflective round table. Their names are: *Tetrah*, *Hexah*, *Oktah*, *Dohdekah*, and *Ykhozah*.

Being genderless, these Polyhedrah defer to the creative drive of the Neterh known as Maath, Mater of Matter. She Etherealized on a lofty seat overseeing that convention of Geometry Gnomes. Without ceremony, she curtly conveys:

“Dire be the days when we are confronted with vexing challenges to goodly ways.

A whirligig has opened, wherein much of our preplanned order strays. Three zones lie obfuscated by thick haze. We must rectify this fault, broaching no delays.”

Tetrah was first to offer counsel:

“Three spatial spans plus one temporal makes four. Before, presently, hereafter and nevermore. We will recalculate the measures, then throw open a fifth door. Yet there remains another chore: somebody should pass through it—to even the score.”

“Somebody like whom?” Maath inquired. Wherefore Hexah swore:

“A carbon atom has six electrons, neutrons, and protons around or at its core. From those have evolved Homz, whose potential stays in store. Although if they were perfectly primed, each one would surely soar.”

“And how might this be accomplished?” Mistress Maath proceeded to pore. Oktah then addressed the floor:

“As an octave is played by a troubadour, seven internal centres may attune an eighth underscore. So far we await one who surpasses regular vigour for us to mentor. Any day it is expected that such an apprenticeship will moor at our shore.”

“How can you be sure?” Maath prodded, adding: “But I do implore, let us turn this page and forgo further use of metaphor.”

Her demand Dohdekah didn't ignore:

“Twelve minus or plus one yields an exceptional sum. There are exceptions to every rule, because each exception proves a dictum. A dozen constellations dictate destiny on Tellz, but the thirteenth can contradict them.”

“I see,” Maath went on to scrutinize, “you mean there's new star sign on the rise. If even a single individual goes against the world unwise, that sole Ankh can we apprise. Yet who among us can fraternize for long with a *Homh* far flung from home?”

That was when Ykhozzah came forth, with twenty facets refracting everything around them in kaleidoscopic fashion. This Gnome was different from its predecessors, seeming to contain them all within a moving framework of mirrors. It spoke in language comprised wholly of rich imagery. Panels lit up on each side of Ykhozzah, drawing assembled attention inward. There they were shown uncounted generations of

ascetics and meditating mystics who had lived on Tellz, though in very rapid succession. Sages mortified their bodies, while others led hermetic lives in the wilderness. Being Ethereal, Maath and Polyhedrah perceived that on rare occasions, Homz obtained such mastery over mind and body that sparse specimens transcended the material realm altogether and ascended eternally unto the astral plane. Having seen through sensory windows into humanity's Holocene, the scene went back to what it had previously been.

Dohdekah was keen to articulate lines which lay in between:

“These highly evolved Homz are a special class known to us as *Tyrthankaraz*. Their Ankhs rose to the very vault of the *Duath*, which is an ultimate vantage point. They have the ability to observe anything happening anywhere throughout the Macrocosm irrespective of when it occurs. In other words, they're the eyes and ears of Ayn Zoph Aur. Except they aren't permitted to interfere with finite affairs in any way or act physically. Still current circumstances call for a little gall; this council recommends that one be brought down into our under-realm—once another apt pupil is prepared.”

Maath noted this advice and nodded, yet questioned:

“Is there a single *Tyrthankarah* whose ascension took place relatively recently from Tellz? Such a one would be best suited to the situation at hand.”

Dohdekah responded:

“Indeed there is Mistress Maath. We call him: *Terr*.”



ACT TWO

Incarnations

ZONE OF MALKUTH | DOMAIN
AZZYUH | BENEATH YETZYRAH

“I had it, Goddamnit!”

These were the first words of *Dex* as he awoke from a prolonged series of disturbing dreams. It seemed as if he hadn't dreamed for years, but eventually the dam would burst and there came an outpouring—a veritable reckoning.

However, he didn't have the luxury of musing on those odysseys since as usual, he was late for work. *Dex* clambered out of bed, dragged himself into the shower and afterwards lumbered to the bus stop, where public transport proved its inefficiency.

Later, he moseyed onto his McJob as junior copywriter at a publishing firm (where he was a decent enough editor that his shortcomings were overlooked). *Dex* settled in for another day of drudgery but made sure to greet his closest coworker, *Jeth*.

Jeth was a conspiracy nut; which isn't to say that he was a bad person. Rather he came off as an avuncular fellow. Each

morning he'd approach Dex's cubicle with his latest theory from the deep end and they would trade jibes aimed at masses of 'sheeple' more than one another.

As part of his daily ritual, Dex would shuffle a deck of playing cards (living up to his namesake) and deal himself a single card. Today it was the king of clubs ♣ who came up first. Feeling 'hella good', Dex decided to go for broke and hit blackjack, he dealt a second card: an ace of hearts ♥

Mazel tov, Dex dared to wish for himself, then he packed the deck back in its original box. Tonight would be Friday night after all, and the week had felt impossibly elongated across time. Everywhere radios blasted the latest number one jam that impressionable youths were much taken by, not to mention older listeners trying to get 'with it'.

Dex had a devious plan that he was dying to execute. Finally he had stumbled upon the holy grail of his ardent desires: **D.M.T.** He'd prepared the concoction himself, from root of Desmanthus Illinoensis. He had also already booked some extra days off for this foray. Which is why it was a little surprising that he was being called into the office of his overseer: **Rex**. Rex was a 'people person' type of boss (though a bit crude). He greeted his subordinate with a dirty joke, but after a quick laugh, it was right down to business. Fixing his stare on Dex, Rex delivered a diatribe:

"It's come to my attention that you've been cutting a lot of corners around your work schedule. It shouldn't be necessary to remind you how we here at **WrightBloc Inc.** can't have you defining your own terms. Please comport yourself according to the standards delineated in our company booklet."

Dex took Rex's critique on board wearing a poker face, then went on to denounce:

"You know as well as I do Rex, that this organization doesn't have any semblance of order about it. Everything constantly borders on disorder. If it wasn't for the likes of myself then the entire operation would go straight to hell in a handbasket. Yet am I adequately compensated for my troubles? Negative! Okay, do I at least feel incentivized to perform above and beyond your basic prerequisites? Absolutely NOT. Seeing as I'm going on five years without so much as a nominal pay increase, I think it's fair to say that Mr. Wright is **still** making out like a bandit."

Rex regarded Dex with a flustered expression, but then relaxed while capitulating:

"You make a compelling argument. I'll make sure to discuss these matters with the CEO at our next board meeting. In the meantime, please enjoy your long weekend. We do look forward to your happy return and increased returns from future labours. Casino banks go bust whenever the odds owe a player any favours."

There was a formal handshake before Dex was dispatched to his regular station. Jeth welcomed him back with a slight sneer. Evidently he couldn't contain his amusement at Dex's predicament, taunting:

"Man's harping on you again huh? Better shape up and fly straight boy, or else you'll find yourself having to seek out a new place of employ. Hahaha—just kidding—don't take it too seriously. My aim is merely to annoy!"

Dex was accustomed to these ribbing sessions typical of one's average workforce frenemy. Misery sure loved company, especially within such a purgatory of proles.

The day carried forward as monotonously as the rest of the week prior. More barbs were exchanged among frenemies from other sections. Another smash hit debuted on live air only to be repeated a dozen times during the following eight hours. *What a waste of life* Dex reflected when he found himself alone. He thought it a damnable tragedy that human civilization had amounted to nothing more than mere anthills. The wealthy stood atop the stockpile of resources and doled them out frugally to those they saw as inferior. The so-called 1% were tantamount to the tyrannical monarchy of a queen ant.

Meanwhile, the lowly worker ants toiled their days away and were expected to neither question nor wonder at anything that lay beyond the purview of what could be PURCHASED.

Their aggressive and procreative instincts had been more or less sublimated by stolid soldiers, and regal drones. This was most evident during break room conversations—which infrequently gravitated toward some overseas war effort—but would invariably circle back to celebrity gossip and idle worship of mainstream media.

That was of course **if** everyone wasn't just sitting there silently swiping at their smartphone screens, rather than conversing (a good deal of the time). Dex sometimes felt a twinge of guilt because he had come to see the world through such a cynical lens. Then he remembered that his was a very visceral reaction to the ironic chasms that opened up as a result of society's obsession with connectivity. It's what humanity

had come to be in the midst of post-modernity. Resisting—yet engaging—tech’s rapture.

When his shift was finally finished, Dex dialled his on-again / off-again paramour *Ruth*, to see if she would give his loser butt a lift home. Since she had some idea of what Dex was planning for the weekend, Ruth grudgingly agreed to go get him. Unbeknown to Dex—she had an earful in store for him the minute he entered her vehicle:

“You really ought to start thinking about growing up soon, my dear Dex.”

He pecked her on the cheek and resorted to sarcasm:

“Nice to see you too, oh ruthless one!”

She pursed her lips to avoid smiling before continuing:

“I’m serious you ditz. Or don’t you think I know about your chemical romance?”

He figured she must have found the notes etched on an old pizza box at his apartment.

“Al-chemical to be exact. Distilled from a natural source and to be taken ‘au naturel’ as well. That’s why I wanted us to go camping tomorrow. Come on babe, it’ll be a blast!”

“I’ll take you as far as the Greyhound station out of town,” she quipped.

Ruth wasn’t bluffing either. Although they spent the night together chez Dex and engaged in awkward lovemaking; the next day she dropped him off at the bus terminal before returning to her home. He took the duffel bag that he’d packed from the backseat, whilst she chided him once again:

“I really wish you’d put aside all this mucking about and go back to school.”

Dex flicked a card from his deck onto the passenger seat. It landed face down. Ruth flipped it over and saw that it was the queen of diamonds ♦ She didn’t understand its significance, and he just winked in response to her inquisitive look. Shaking her head but also giggling she bid him adieu:

“Godspeed my love!”

He waved farewell singing: “*Soy un perdedor,*” with a smile and she drove off.

Dex walked into the bus station and bought a two-way ticket to a rural town located not too far from his intended campsite. He dozed for the better part of the next four hours. After reaching his primary destination, he backpacked a few kilometres along the highway until he reached the secondary one. It wasn’t his first time visiting these particular campgrounds, so he had a reservation confirmed in the log cabin office. Pitching the tent was a cinch, hence he got settled for his stay inside of an hour. It was a perfect summer day. Wasting no daylight, Dex grabbed his detachable knapsack and went for a hike, heading toward a nearby canyon. A long scenic stretch of coniferous forest lay between here and there, providing ample shade. He stopped a couple of times to empty his bladder, since he was guzzling cool water from a short hose attached to a hydro bag within the backpack. By the time he climbed atop the summit of the highest ridge overlooking the ravine, the sun was 45 degrees above the Western horizon.

Dex found a flat mossy rock to perch upon and then snacked on some trail mix. He used the remaining sunlit hours to

immerse himself in silent Zen style meditation. Come sundown, he gathered enough faggots to spark a small fire away from the incline. Dex went on to perform a series of magical passes called Tensegrity (very similar to Tai-Chi). Tonight the moon hid her face, but the constellation Ursa Major was clearly visible. Interpreting this as a portend, he took out a glass pipe and packed the bowl with crystallized D.M.T. Dex lit it and inhaled deeply, holding his breath for barely a heartbeat before exhaling a thick white billow of smoke, yet he remained focused enough to think with clarity and intent:

Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, Zeta, Eta.

He couldn't help coughing frantically for the next minute or so. His eyes watered and throat burned. It really felt to Dex as if he was spitting out the demons. However, by the time he regained his composure, everything became perceptibly *different*.

The edges of his immediate environment receded for an infinitesimal distance. The landscape before him was utterly transformed; from both above and below there now grew pyramidal configurations filled with fractal radiation. They sprawled like a symmetrical mountain range beneath Dex's feet, and hung over his head not unlike immense stalactites. Their colours fluctuated between fluorescent greens and an iridescent magenta. They also emanated shimmering hues which Dex couldn't have imagined existed. The comparison came to mind of a lifelong blind person gaining the gift of eyesight. This though, went far beyond that. He heard garbled voices coming closer toward him:

"Deci, centi, milli, micro, nano, pico, femto, atto, zepto, yokto."

Or so he thought he heard them say. In any case, the darkness now filling the middle rift (where Dex floated) intensified too. It ensconced that awestruck man and seeped sensations akin to both gas and liquid when it contacted the human animal's skin. Without warning, Dex was rapidly propelled through the scenery! The feeling of flight was miraculous, but he recognized it as being similar to the one in lucid dreams. Euphoria and giddiness replaced paranoia. Although he travelled at such high speed that a palpable wind almost tore off his exposed face, Dex caught glimpses of what appeared to be cities. Metropolitan hives bustled with complex activity inside the endless conical strata. Seconds dilated into tangible centuries. During this span Dex's subconscious opened wide and discerned more than could be described. He absorbed silent knowledge as if he were under hypnosis. His neurotic need to comment on everything transpiring gradually melted away. Instead he marvelled appreciatively, barely able to believe these elements of experience continually unfolding in front of him.

Little did Dex realize that he had in fact stepped out past the precipice back in the 'real world'. For longer than somebody sober could ever ignore, he'd been plummeting like a stone, sinking to the ocean floor ≈

Nonetheless, his transcendence wasn't illusory. Dex's transmuted body would never hit rock bottom. His formulas and gestures weren't executed in vain. Timing and locale were in alignment with the astros. Shamanic actions along with their accompanying thoughts coaxed the consent of pivotal powers that be.

NEVERVERSE MANIFOLD |
SUBMATRIX OF TYRTHANKARAZ

After a seeming eternity, the triangular ziggurats eventually shrank away and Dex distinguished a pattern among them from afar. All in all they represented the famous ‘Big Picture’; containing the sum total of the exterior cosmos. Dex distinctly sensed ending up within the interior of a vacuous grotto. Then the voice of a mischievous man reverberated off the stone-work walls:

“Today—the gnomes have learned a new way to say—Hooray!”

This was followed by a fresh peal of laughter. Dex glanced over both shoulders. The inner space was illumined when an absurdly oversized face materialized bodiless, giving off a faint glow. Its wizened features evinced an extensive understanding of life on Earth. His scraggly beard held the humility of a hippie. He helloed:

“Welcome, Dex. I’ve been expecting you.”

Lifting his left hand, Dex hardly restrained himself from reaching out to tousle that weird apparition’s curly hair. He almost asked:

“Are you—?”

“Hush child, don’t you dare say it. I know what you’re thinking, and no, I’m not the man upstairs. I simply serve the architects and engineers of this here under-realm. They’ve placed on my incorporeal shoulders the responsibility of training you so that you can navigate lightly through the dark sea of limitless awareness. They call me, **Terr.**”

Dex wondered what Terr was talking about out loud:

“Whoa wait a minute now, how long is this supposed to take? I do actually have a semi-charmed life I’d very much like getting back to, safe and sound.”

“Oh my poor boy. I loathe having to tell you this, but you’ve passed completely from the living world, to an in-between state. There’s no way back. Technically you’re still alive, except certain circumstances demand that you stay herein.”

Ungrateful to be dead, Dex protested: “Are you pulling my leg? I have a job and plenty else to go back for. You can’t hold me here against my will. This is an outrage!”

“You came to this place of your own volition and understood the inherent risks.”

Dex breathed heavily and his consciousness started spinning out of control. Fortunately there was a chair which resembled an Amanita Muscaria mushroom near by. Dex collapsed onto it and tried to recollect himself. At least the cushion was soft and wafted an aroma, which he found both comforting and invigorating. Dex now stood up vis-à-vis with Terr again, who proposed:

“Trust me Dex, I’ve seen where you’re coming from and can tell you without a shred of doubt that you ain’t missing anything BIG. Whereas if you accept my tutelage, you’ll surely evolve into a significant player on this more active side of infinity. You’ve already got a solid foundation in the arcane arts and we should keep building on it. There are loopholes you can learn to exploit that may permit you to access Terra Firma, though perhaps not as you know it.”

Dex contemplated those words quietly. A little later he stated:

“It is as you say, I chose this fate for myself. I’m tired of ‘waiting for the miracle’, which is why I sought an escape. I’m actually rather excited to learn everything possible from you, grand-meister Terr. Although I wish you’d begin by explaining these special strictures that require my corporeal presence.”

“I’d be happy to.” Thus Terr imparted: “A great commotion has been mounting throughout the entire extant Macrocosm. It began in the mid-zone called Typhareth and spread steadily—vertically and laterally—encompassing the whole established order. Needless to say, this has caused a hubbub up above. For once, the omniscience of Amoun-Rah falters in its percipi-ence. This can only mean that opposing forces are gathering strength to mount a coup against the high court of Ketheroz. That’s where you come in, smashing young man!”

Dex guffawed nervously, retorting:

“You mean to tell me that the Neteru of the Duath expect I, a zero, to save the universe from being destroyed?”

“Please, they prefer to be called Neterz. We humans tend to offend them with our knack for mispronouncing their supramundane names. But in reply to your query, yes. Don’t wonder much as to why. Dex, I detect untapped potential. Hold further questions, we’ve got a lot of work to do, and expedience is essential!”

Dex gave Terr a nod of obedience. Then a beam shone down like a spotlight, lifting the living one halfway to the unseen ceiling. Anticipating Dex’s pending appeal Terr assured him this procedure was necessary to remove his cursed **Kundahbuffer**:

“The protean hominids that our distant ancestors branched off from were primitive but even so, they might have evolved into higher beings than *Homo Sapiens*. Had it not been for the interference of outside influences and their foreign installation, we would retain the ability to metastasize our cells in order to attain the Ethereal plane. There is a subtle organ, which prevents us from alighting our seven vital centres with conscious intention. So mankind is beset by sinister antagonists without ever perceiving the binds in which we find our own minds. You and I both managed to ascend because we were skilful enough to align ourselves with *Ayn Zoph Aur*.”

As *Terr* spoke, *Dex*'s comprehension outgrew the confines of intellectual reason, since he could feel a quickening in his bloodstream. His heart pounded strongly and every other organ sang its exhilaration aloud. Their harmonic resonance coincided with an indigo glow that pulsated beneath the epidermis of *Dex*. He was overtaken by spasms orders of ecstasy beyond many sexual orgasms. Knots of anxiety came undone all over his anatomy. He convulsed with delicious laughter as bittersweet tears of elation streamed down his cheeks. Then his third eye opened and he perceived the better nature of the emanations which comprised the visible spectrum. Last but not least, a brilliant blue tongue of flame lit up over the crown of his cranium. Thereafter *Dex* broke loose from all restraint, and drifted to ground level.

It's worth noting that his outer figure had altered substantially. Fulfilling his own wildest dreams, *Dex* effectuated a freshly minted muscular build. These changes were mirrored by his wardrobe as well; he wore only a black robe of amorphous properties that flowed gracefully on a deific draft.

He looked much as he'd always imagined himself whenever he daydreamed during work hours back on Earth.

Terr whistled somewhat irreverently, but declared:

“You’ve exceeded my expectations. Be that as it may, I still have a few lessons to teach you now that you’re ready to receive them. Once you master every one, I’ll introduce you to **Vortexyuh**. First thing’s first—let’s begin by drawing the Pentalpha.”

The next segment of Dex’s premature afterlife was spent performing exercises guided by the twentieth century Tyrthankarah. It was also of paramount importance that Dex learn to fly since this skill would be quite indispensable during upcoming conflicts against hostiles currently arraying to challenge Ketheroz outside of Azzyuh.

ZONE OF YEZODH | DOMAIN
YETZYRAH | ABOVE AZZYUH

Zpentah Maynyuh was surprised to meet formidable opposition when he entered the solar system of Orz. Hazzanh may have fallen victim to Horuz in the Villah of Ormenh, nevertheless his lunar outpost remained intact along with its automated defences. Also there were two other forts entrenched in zones Hodh and Netzakh, and each of the three was commanded by a fledgling Arkhohnh.

Grand Baron *Azmodeuth* presided over the dark side of the moon. He was burly and possessed heavy artillery: giant black bombers with polygonal appendages. They could leap between planets and belched caustic chemicals that combusted on impact. Furthermore, there was some sort of generator on the moon's surface which cast a pall over the face of Tellz, so that Zpentah Maynyuh could not tell what lay behind its veil.

Undaunted, the seventh Amezhah Zpentah called his countless clones, commencing a concerted effort to breach the barrier. This quickly escalated into a hectic hunt as soon as they were seen by Azmodeuth's tenebrific 'tanks'. Those mobile turrets intercepted them mid-flight, skewering some on the pointy ends of their extremities while others were doused with the flammable mixture and ignited in an agonizing blaze. Each casualty cost Zpentah Maynyuh a little bit of his numinous stamina. Thinking to retreat and regroup, he withdrew half the survivors to Hodh and half to Netzakh.

There he became acquainted with the succubus *Obyzuth* and her twin sister *Ornyuh*. These succubi released flocks of Stymphalian birds into the atmosphere of their respective spheres. They continued decimating the ranks of Zpentah

Maynyuh, using fowl excrement to slow the angelic warriors and razor sharp plumes to cut them down. They then feasted upon the Ethereal entrails of the fallen with their bronze beaks.

Though he was not totally defenceless, the Archangel had come unprepared for such ambushes. His only advantage was in numbers, and even that was swiftly waning. Yet despite every disadvantage—more than a score of his selves were able to trespass through the blockade. When they did, the pitiful state of Tellz was revealed to him. From orbit he saw a planet where untold billions of Homz suffered in solitude, disconnected from the rest of reality. They hardly had any inkling what wonders awaited outside the narrow limits of their stunted awareness. Their lives consisted of little more than dysfunctional interactions among themselves. Cruelty toward one another was matched by a callous disregard for environmental destruction. Everywhere he looked, the climate was undergoing turmoil. But somehow most Homz were wont to disbelieve their own eyes; foolishly believing that each erratic event was an isolated incident.

Because he had passed through various civilized solar systems on his way to Orz, Zpentah Maynyuh knew that compared to far more advanced worlds, Tellz lacked a level of cohesion characteristic on those other orbs. Vast swaths of incandescent luminescence were noticeably missing. The audible thrum of interstellar commerce was nowhere heard. He considered it sad, since this planetary gem might be so much more.

Regrettably for Zpentah Maynyuh, each Kundahbuffer organ ensured that nobody could look at him directly due to his manifestations being purely Ethereal. This meant he was only able to exert his influence via indirect means. Here and

there he encountered a particularly gifted male or female Homh, and managed to meld successfully with the Terran host. Those people would in turn gain psychic abilities such as clairvoyance, telepathy etc. But their numbers were sparse at best; they couldn't surpass as a critical mass. Progress would be painstakingly slow. Though of course, there was no recourse. Zpentah Maynyuh attempted to compensate by propagating coded signals within mankind's innate Noosphere. Thus, those who have eyes to see and ears to hear can latch on and ascend alongside these budding Arahants.

Back above, on the very periphery where Malkuth touches Yezodh, as well as between Hodh and Netzakh, a general fracas carried on unimpeded. Zpentah Maynyuh drew his *Eidolon Arc* (a blessed bow) and pulled off an unforeseen counterattack. Duplicates submitted to one main Zpentah, who used them as ammunition after their individual essence was absorbed into sparkling arrows. Hence he retaliated against his enemies, raining deadly strikes that passed through the thickest fortifications as if they were paper. Bloated flying beasts plummeted, to be swallowed by the moon's shadow. Stymphalian birds were taken to the brink of extinction. And this inevitably led to Azmodeuth, Obyzuth, and Ornyuh exiting their abodes. Irate, the triad met mid space. Azmodeuth wanted to rush in rashly but the demoness sisters advised:

“Patience wrathful one. The Archangel spends naught but his own reserves.

Stay your hand until he starts to lay low. Then we two will hold him in place for you to bulldoze though!”

Just as predicted, Zpentah Maynyuh's assault peaked and then dipped. Obyzuth and Ornyuh took that opportunity

to cast a spell, which ensnared their prey in a translucent web. Azmodeuth growled before barrelling toward Zpentah Maynyuh, brandishing a double-bladed axe. Being an unmatched archer, the warrior angel pulled the string of his bow and loosed another bolt. It struck Azmodeuth's aegis, but did not deter him from his goal. The axe went up and a downward stroke struck the hapless head off Zpentah Maynyuh! Therewith his metaphysical aggregates dispersed, withdrawing far away to the zone of Typhareth, where the Archangel would arise again (albeit later).



ACT THREE

Transfigurations

ZONE OF DAATH | BENEATH DOMAINS
ATZYLUTH & BRYUH | ABOVE YETZYRAH

Long was the Karnakh in free-fall within the vastness of the void. Yet Ahoonh could sense its descent while it dropped through a turbulent tunnel of dark energy. Crystalline bulkheads rattled as their tolerance for stress was put to the test. Seeming to complain, they emitted a resonant high pitched noise that would have driven most mortals **mad**. This went on for quite some time until at last, Horuz communicated with the pilot again:

We are arriving at our objective. Decelerate the ship and join me above.

Ahoonh obeyed his new master's orders; exiting through a hatch onto the topside. Darkness surrounded the ship and Horuz' hoarse voice rang out from the shadows:

“Now shall I perform a daunting feat, and you must merely observe.”

First, Ahoonh saw that Horuz had reassumed his upright form when he lit a fireball in the palm of his hand. He lifted it overhead and it sparked before expanding, after which it became lodged like a sun mid the inky atmosphere pervading this place. Horuz motioned for Ahoonh to follow him as he went to the far end of the ship's length. From there they could see what looked to be brackish water below—it's surface spumed.

"These Stygian depths are all that remain of a once proud fountainhead known as the *Abzuh*," the Neterh told his squire from Karataz. He went on: "As you can tell, stagnation has set in. But believe it or not, there are many Principalities still languishing beneath its shallows. I go now to rouse them from their languor, and they will surely try challenging my supremacy. Wait here, watching, while I bring them to heel."

That said, the hawk-headed lord fanned out a flaming wingspan, then flew down to the *Abzuh*, shouting:

"Hail Rah, who comes by his barque—into the cavern of this deepening dark!"

The water began to ripple since something stirred underneath its upper membrane. As it simmered, dual supernatural serpents reared their heads, hissing at Horuz in retort:

"Patronize us not, fiery one. For we are far more ancient than you or your kind. Once we were called *Enkh* and *Tyamath!*"

These were no ordinary snakes. Their scales were those of a Hydra, and they exhaled venomous gases. As Horuz got closer to them, their actual immensity became much more apparent. All the same, the nitid Neterh proved his fearlessness by becoming a phoenix—clutching their necks with a pair of white-hot talons! Flapping up a frenzy, Horuz pulled and lifted

them from the well. Though when he did, he discovered that they were in fact opposite ends of one and the same creature. Enkh and Tyamath taunted with forked tongues:

“Æons ago, we gave issue to offspring far mightier than even you will ever be, *Hoor-Pah-Kraath!*”

Hearing his diminutive name uttered infuriated Rah-Hoor-Khuth enough for him to brutally cleave that Ouroboros into halves with his hooked beak... Ectoplasm rained down to the surface, where it turned the waters into a fluctuating clay on contact. Then Horuz beheld what the serpents had alluded to when four imposing figures emerged—dredged up from the subaqueous fathoms. One looked like a bearded man, but his lower half was that of a scorpion. He held a rusty metal lance in his hands. Another appeared to be a water buffalo, although with eight horns. The third resembled a locust, bigger than any Earthly insect. And the fourth was a lion with huge bat wings.

“I knew I would find you here because you were never properly Abstructed,” Horuz told them. “However, it is plain from your hideous forms that these wastes have corrupted your essences. Hence shall I show you mercy by providing such Abstruction!”

“Underestimate us at your own peril,” warned the scorpion-man, “for I am *Mardukh*—and these are my kith—*Enlylh, Nergalh, Nynurtah.*”

The wild ox moaned, locust buzzed, and lion roared in the order that their names were called out. Horuz acknowledged this by morphing back into a humanoid, but now he wore gilt armour and hand crafted Enkh and Tyamath into a pair of straight staves. Still, in the interest of fairness, he offered:

“Believe me—oh worthy warriors—I know how it feels to be forgotten and forsaken. Ally yourselves to Rah, and you may partake of the vengeance which he will visit upon the lowest sphere of Malkuth. Do it, or you are to fall here once and for all.”

“Your mundane struggles do not concern us,” Mardukh rebuked. “Prepare to be picked apart by your betters!”

Without further fuss the fight was on. Nergalh bounded upward, targeting Horuz. He used his insect wings to hover in front of him for a moment—then split himself into a swarm of smaller locusts that whizzed about Horuz, obscuring his vision and drowning his hearing. Rah-Hoor-Khuth reacted by twirling his twin wands while he cackled and criticized:

“This is too easy, there is hardly any sport in it!”

A major discharge of thermodynamic energy cleansed the sky of that epidemic and burning bugs plunged in the millions. No sooner had it happened than Horuz was accosted again as the leonine Nynurtah pounced on him from behind. Together they fell to the hardened mud pit, where their joint impact created a crater!

As they wrangled exuberantly, the octo-horn oxen named Enlylh charged at them full speed ahead; ramming into Horuz’ midsection and puncturing his gilded corslet. Smelted gold steamed from the wound, but the hawk-headed one raised the baton Enkh and battered the buffalo until its brains were obliterated! He had been holding Nynurtah off with Tyamath, and now resumed his offensive—beating the feline into submission by alternating between both bludgeons. Stiffened fangs protruded from the end of each truncheon and Horuz used these to inject their toxin into his prey. Nynurtah’s attempts to bite or

scratch him slowed to a halt, leaving him exposed. Horuz did not hesitate to smack him into a smattering of bloody bruises!

Only Mardukh had stood apart. He spun his spear as he approached Horuz and reproached him:

“You have passed my test, yet do not think to vanquish me so easily.”

“We shall see,” Horuz hooted at him—inviting Mardukh forth.

They sparred evenly, deflecting every thrust from rival armament. Mardukh was the first to change tactics. He slapped Enkh and Tyamath aside with the spearhead then lunged at Horuz employing his tail stinger. Horuz cocked his neck back to catch the penultimate part of that appendage in his beak. He bit it off and the dripping poison sprayed away. But Mardukh did not relent. Instead, he managed to clinch Horuz’ serpentine rods between the pincers he still possessed. Seeing an opening, Mardukh tried to jab Horuz using the point of his pike. It was not effective though, since the hawk flared his searing wings and scorched Mardukh, melting his weapon in the process.

The scorpion-man rolled through the dirt to escape those lethal inflammations.

“Yes—that is where you belong—paltry has-been,” Horuz berated standing behind conflagrant columns. He swept the heatwave toward Mardukh with either wand, incinerating that weakened challenger, who screamed in futile torment until being reduced to ash. Thus did Rah fulfil his threats; letting out a rapacious shriek of victory!

From the corner of his eye, Horuz espied a minor movement. On closer inspection he pinpointed a lonely leftover locust, then

picked it up 'tween thumb and forefinger. Now he permitted himself to gloat:

“It is fitting that I previously assimilated the peerless sorcerer—King Hazzanh. His proficiency in necromancy bestows the knowing needed to convert your losses into my gains.”

Saying this, Horuz deftly removed a clutch of eggs from that critter before crushing it underfoot. He went on to spread Nergalh’s remains all over the place, fertilizing them by sprinkling Mardukh’s ashes as well as blood and pulverized bones from both Enlylh and Nynurtah.

In short order, a substantial number of strange apparitions arose there. Horuz also had Hazzanh’s encyclopedic memory of many a grimoire, so he knew when he saw them that these were *Apkalluh*, *Lamazzu*, and *Zhedduh*—Ethereic wardens. Some were similar to Horuz himself, equal parts man and bird, but each one had an extra pair of wings. Others had mixed elements of bull, eagle, or lion—mismatched with manly faces. In any case, Horuz was happy to have them because at least they viewed him as their rightful lord (shown when they bowed their heads in deference).

Next, Horuz ordered Ahoonh to land the Karnakh and board its fresh complement. Although it required only a single pilot crew, the ship’s interior was largely underused. Its quarters were more than capacious enough to accommodate the dozens of thousands now aboard; making the Karnakh an ark.

After that task was done, Horuz returned to his favoured spot on the exterior and gave the order to liftoff. The resulting force caused whatever crust remained to crumble, eroded as its soil was due to ongoing events. Rah regarded this

dispassionately, already planning ahead. Yet while he did, something unexpected crossed his field of vision.

Within the fissure gaping wider below them, he sighted a coiling behemoth... Details became discernible when it drew closer to the Karnakh: innumerable appendages grew from rippling purplish skin; arms and legs of every imaginable kind. Its winding coils were mostly bare, but there were furry patches too, along with spots and stripes. The inestimable broadness of that aberrant beast busted through the last bits of barrier and started gaining on the ascending vessel.

Horuz fired his solar photosphere at the approaching monstrosity, only to be dismayed by how ineffectual it was. Then, as if seeking an audience, a face both feminine and masculine moulded itself onto the closest extremity. Its passive demeanour projected an air of indifference, yet it was undoubtedly interested in the rising ship. Some of its tentacles writhed against the hull and feral paws clawed it. Feelings theretofore unknown to Horuz overtook him (dread and disgust). He beckoned Ahoonh:

Take us up faster—there is a chthonian abomination out here that we must make all haste to get rid of!

Ahoonh complied and they managed to put distance between ship and pursuer, though not a lot. When they escaped its clutches the unholy abhorrence let out an inhuman cry of displeasure. Its face contorted in unsightly rage and it spat a stream of acidic putrefaction that would have scathed them if Horuz had not been quick to evaporate it. Even so, he found himself quite disturbed by these proceedings mainly because he had failed to foresee this awful thing in his visions. His precognitive instincts had been rather pronounced since having reconstituted

his Ethereal body. But what was chasing them dwelt deep enough within Daath that it could evade psychic senses.

Intuitively Horuz understood that this atrocity was also an indestructible oddity.

Hence he plumbed Hazzanh's expertise in order to improvise a countermeasure. In his right palm Horuz created a dense miniscule sun; its sizzling heat singed its own maker. He closed his left hand around it and compressed the vicious energy as tightly as possible. His fist charred until becoming discolored. Horuz realized he had to lob the orb lest it cause further damage. He lifted his left fist filled with pulsating wrath and prior to hurling that unconventional missile, mocked:

"Hungry are you? Well then stuff this in your gizzard—repugnant wretch!"

Horuz cast the minor black hole and it was soon gobbled up as he had hoped. Once inside, the antimatter bomb imploded—sending that terrible nameless thing into a quantum Zeno singularity. The sight was in sync with a sound like a cascade crashing onto a serene lake. Then there came a gravitational wake, which rushed past the Karnakh and carried the vessel clear past Daath's cosmic crevasse!

ZONE OF TYPHARETH | DOMAIN
YETZYRAH | ABOVE AZZYUH

When Zpentah Maynyuh was ousted from the midst of Orz by the Arkhonh triumvirate, his empyrean particles were naturally drawn toward the sun. Near its centre they began to merge together again until the Archangel regained the extension of physicality. Photons fortified his physique.

Zpentah Maynyuh also learned more regarding the rend in Yetzyrah's fold since he sussed a secret portal that lay behind the sun and led directly to the Villah of Ormenh. This was possible because the zones of the *Zephyroth* do not simply correspond on a strict one to one basis with areas in the material plane, and many central suns abide within Typhareth. Sure, there are those who might argue such points based on orthodoxy but what have their tamed minds ever envisioned outside committed memory? Let *them* debate these matters amongst themselves ad nauseam. Anyhow, the author digresses.

Inside the gutted ruins of King Hazzanh's razed citadels, Zpentah Maynyuh gathered strength anew. When sufficiently recovered, he divided himself into just enough clones to rebuild those demolished surroundings as he saw fit to suit his purpose. He strongly suspected that the forces he had previously faced knew about this place. He would have a warm reception ready for them, should they come calling. As a side note: it's only fair to mention that there were no corpses to clean up. Not even a sole phantom lingered from the Ankhs which Horuz had savagely Abstructed.

Then of course Zpentah Maynyuh hadn't a clue who was responsible for this mess. What mattered most to him was making his current position defensible. To that effect he put

his skills to use by mending several breaches in the outer wall as well as repairing resident siege craft. The seventh Amezhah Zpentah was coming to terms with the incommensurable strength possessed by his opponents. He certainly hadn't counted on their hold over Orz being so firm. Rallying reinforcements was no longer an option but a necessity. Yet still that Archangel felt it was too early to summon the senior sextet.

Fortunately for him there remained an active forge here with plenty of raw Ether to work with. Inside a smaller and relatively undamaged building, Zpentah Maynyuh salvaged a few antique tomes from what had been Hazzanh's private library. Their pages were replete with references to heroes and monsters from past and parallel universes. Hence Zpentah Maynyuh endeavoured to bring a number of them into his circle. First he revived two former Archangels: *Belphegorh* and *Metatronh*. He made them captains who were in charge of other champions: *Abbaddonh*, *Amduzyuh*, *Mephyztoh*, *Malphaz*.

Additionally, the Amezhah Zpentah managed to gather energies which were overflowing in excess from Daath into zones Typhareth, Yezodh, and Malkuth alike. These waves kept spreading out—engulfing every adjacent zone. That jet tide gave off a subtle deathly stench, contaminating the rarefied air of domains Yetzyrah and Azzyuh.

For the moment, Zpentah Maynyuh was oblivious to its side-effects. But he harnessed enough of it to produce four battalions, each one comprised wholly of *Thrones*, *Dominions*, *Virtues*, or *Powers*. Lieutenants of Zpentah Maynyuh: *Abbaddonh*, *Amduzyuh*, *Mephyztoh*, and *Malphaz* headed those orders in this mentioned order. After organizing their ranks for optimal efficiency, the Commander in Chief of that

brigade ordered them to begin smithing a superlative arsenal with the aid of his proxies. Fervent efforts reached their zenith when they welded a blade of incomparable brilliance.

Zpentah Maynyuh took that double edged sword as his own and dubbed it: *Dyslexyuh*. Clearly that coinage was jocular, but also derived from this sword's ability to inflict forgetfulness on its victims—unconsciously coercing them to commit verbicide and omit key words from usage. This was one of those things that couldn't be allowed to fall into enemy hands, for it could easily wreak havoc held by anyone whose grasp of the primeval lexicon was lax. The prime Amezhah Zpentah sheathed *Dyslexyuh* within a jewel-encrusted scabbard; plundered by his subalterns from Hazzanh's royal treasury.

They brought another choice item from the old armoury: the deceased king's personal suit of armour, which he had neglected to wear when he tried taming Horuz (not that it would have made any difference). Zpentah Maynyuh equipped it on his leading persona so that novice soldiers could distinguish him from identical auxiliaries. Its prong-horn helm gave him an intimidating appearance. Arrayed with such regalia Zpentah Maynyuh convoked Belphegorh and Metatronh to converse about stratagem. They met atop a roaming tower that let them survey their adopted domain.

"I'd like to hear your thoughts concerning the distribution of our contingents."

Belphegorh expressed his way of thinking by blaring on a bugle, which prompted Amduzyuh and Mephyztoh to reform their Dominions and Virtues at the ramparts. Belphegorh blustered: "Oh high Archangel, we will look after our defensive positions."

Obsidian Eagle

Zpentah Maynyuh acknowledged him and turned to Metatronh, who mustered: “Well then, that leaves Abbaddonh, Malphaz plus myself to take the Thrones and Powers into the affront. So let it be written—so shall it be done!”

ZONE OF YEZODH | DOMAIN
YETZYRAH | ABOVE AZZYUH

Inside the lunar keep Azmodeuth attempted to reestablish communication with the Arkhonz aristocrat, King Hazzanh. Frustratingly, his efforts were to no avail. The large crystal ball housed in the watchtower showed him nothing other than disjointed imagery that he could scarcely make any sense of. He was sorely tempted to shatter that glassy apparatus into smithereens. But once he desisted, he received an urgent transmission from the twins Obyzuth and Ornyuh (orbiting *Hermz*♀ and *Venz*♀ in Hodh | Netzakh):

Obyzuth opened: “Grand Baron, we have some distressing news on our overlord. Since reaching him through the usual channels has proven unfruitful, my sister and I managed to scry a faint afterimage of King Hazzanh, which amounts to him having been Abstruacted. In brief, this makes us adjuncts for an abolished chieftain.”

“How can this be?” Azmodeuth demanded to know. “Was he assassinated by that accursed Archangel? The Amezhah Zpentah was not even a match for us three.”

Ornyuh observed: “Lo, we are still uncertain of who has laid our lord low. However, our messenger fowl profess that enemy forces now possess the fortress of Ormenh. It is conceivable that the Archangel resurged elsewhere, since he has the ability to subdivide and be multiplied by whatever means remain there.”

“Why that is utterly unacceptable!” Azmodeuth admonished. “We will call upon reinforcements from our allies in Zhezodh and Geburah. Henceforth our priority is to reclaim the Villah of Ormenh on King Hazzanh’s behalf.”

“There is another matter that needs to be mentioned,” Obyzuth restarted. “We two have begun sensing an indescribable primal influence stemming from the outskirts of Daath and spilling over everywhere. We are as yet unsure what to make of this, but it is likely linked to recent events.”

“Worry me not with hunches you sibylline crones. Just proceed as I ordered.”

“You can count on us mighty Azmodeuth, but do not discount our sense of prescience. Amid the horizon looms a monsoon of gloaming doom!” Ornyuh refinished.

The sisters then visited Zhezeth and Geburah via *Kaph* and *Memh*; converging on Typhareth by way of Lamedh and Yodh. Azmodeuth ascended via Rezh and Tzaddyh after splitting his Khabz from its Khuh; approaching Typhareth along Aynh and Nunh.

NEVERVERSE MANIFOLD | SUBJUNCTION Σ

Escorted by the talking head of the Tyrthankarah Terr—Dex ambled among the structural stacks of many unmanifest noumena. The prism through which they were presently perambulating was akin to a factory. Herein, Geometry Gnomes of every thinkable shape and size modified or molded phenomena. Dex gazed on a variety of displays that would surely amaze anybody drifting in a worldly daze.

As they passed one such console, Dex glimpsed an equation that looked like this:

$$\forall x \forall y \exists z$$

“This locus is an a priori nexus that binds several central a posteriori complexes together,” Terr explicated to his protege, who smiled blankly but thought:

By Plato's Beard!

They stopped in front of the biggest Gnome's workstation, who seemed to be both cubical and circular. It reached into its cubby with a telekinetic clasp and produced a chalice within another chalice, which it gave to Dex, telepathically telling: *Cup-Cup!*

This transcendent object contained a multicolour solution. Dex looked to Terr, who confirmed that he should drink it:

“To you is given the gift of Clinamen. Drain these goblets and be blessed.”

Dex did as instructed. He noticed that the substance was flavourless and he felt no obvious effects from it. Reading his mind, Terr giggled and suggested a find:

“Why don’t you try reaching into your pockets?”

Dex didn’t think that his new attire had any, but was astonished when he got hold of his lucky deck! Perfunctorily, he drew a card: The Joker. Amused, he chuckled.

A little after that though—a temblor shook the entire under-realm. Terr made known:

“I’m afraid our time is up. Dex—you must use the incantations I’ve taught you.”

Obediently, our hero piped up:

“Above, the gemmed azure is. The naked splendour of Nuyth; she bends in ecstasy to kiss, the secret ardours of Hadyth. The winged globe—the starry blue—are mine, oh *Ankh-f-n-Khonzuh!*”

With that, a luminescent aperture widened aloft, and a beautiful female figure descended. She greeted them:

“I Vortexyuh, heed the prayer of the ascendant Homh; Dex from Tellz. The path Zamekh will be your way upward and I shall personally see you through it.”

Dex drizzled quizzical kudos:

“Did you bind the chains of the Pleiades, and loosen Orion’s belt? Did you bring forth Mazzaroth in his season, then lead out the Bear with her cubs? Do you know the laws of Heaven, and can you restore its rule o’er Earth?”

Vortexyuh smirked knowingly, but answered naught. Sweeping her right hand afore them, a stable wormhole appeared. Although before they could depart, Terr had one more crucial piece of information to divulge:

A Codex For Gnostics

“Remember Dex, I’m with you—even unto the end of all years. Ayn Zoph Aur has decreed that my voice whisper in your ears whenever you’re in the greatest of need.”

“Unforgettable Terr, you have my undying gratitude. May we meet again amid most joyous altitude. I’ll put everything you’ve taught me toward achieving beatitude!”

Having spoken goodbyes, Dex followed Vortexyuh to embark on his starry trek. Inside the passage she embraced him and they sped headlong through Zamekh.

ZONE OF TYPHARETH | DOMAIN
YETZYRAH | ABOVE AZZYUH

As Zpentah Maynyuh had anticipated his enemies approximated the reconstructed castle in full force. Therefore he recited a charm which wove an obfuscation so that they would have no estimation of what awaited them. The seventh Amezhah Zpentah's sixth sense made him wary of undue precipitation. Ergo he ordered Metatronh to hold his units back—hoping to bamboozle Azmodeuth's army—at least until it came closer.

Likewise did Azmodeuth halt the Arkhonn's advance, for even his crude senses could detect a trap when they encountered one. He had no pressing desire to expend his relief regiments in a reckless raid. Especially since magnates from Zhezeth and Geburah had furnished the Arkhonn alliance with choice deployments: Obyzuth now commanded scads of sabretooth serpents with feline faces, sent by the Arkhonn architect *Yaldah-Baoth*. Ornyuh on the other hand tugged unseen strings that animated a zillion fleshy marionettes, designed by the Arkhonn artisan *Zaklaz*.

Azmodeuth sat singly upon one of the five hundred polygon gunners that had survived the first fight against Zpentah Maynyuh. These he had given the name: *Voladz*. Anyhow, he perceived an understated mist veiling the enemy's encampment. At his beck the succubus duo impelled their familiars to reconnoitre, but there was nothing that they could descry either. *Very well*, he thought, *mortars it is!* Azmodeuth verged on commanding the *Voladz* to release an opening salvo when a great disturbance in the sheer sheet of reality occurred roundabout the far side of Ormenh relative to his position.

Through a gash in Gymelh came the **Karnakh!** Horuz (whose falconer brow regarded the Arkhonz from atop nest of crow) made Ahoonh slow them down to a screeching stop that scraped the prow. They emptied their cargo holds midfield, unleashing the Tetramorph troops, which Horuz had roused in the abscessed Abzuh. Three oppositions^ρ now squared□ and trinedΔ one another. Uneasy aspects permeated the conjunctionϙ of those armies. Their mutual pause was palpable. Yet 'twas Horuz who would rain hot death on anyone that dared to defy him.

Correctly ascertaining that Azmodeuth was in charge of the Arkhonz, Horuz kindled a torrid comet and launched it at the singular *Voladh* carrying that demiurge—smiting it with one fell swoop! Although Azmodeuth was aghast in the face of such a show of strength, he had ejected from his seat just in the nick of time. Seeing red, he let out an indignant roar and waved his comrades onward! What followed was a harrowing brawl of bestial abandon as grotesque monstrosities gouged and tore each other apart. Those watching from within Ormenh shuddered at the bizarre skirmish happening here.

Azmodeuth assaulted the solar Neterh head on with a hefty swing of his double axe. Though obviously, Horuz was no push-over. He grasped the edge of that implement in the bare palm of his fire-hardened hand and cleanly snapped off one of its blades. Azmodeuth reeled back, both awed and worried. However, he had a secret weapon, which he now invoked:

“Heptarah-Parzhynokh!”

The empty space surrounding Horuz began to close around him, caging him inside an ontic lattice. Nevertheless, that enveloped Neterh was not about to give up so fast. Horuz

kept the enclosure at bay with the aid of Enkh and Tyamath, while rebuking:

“I am a being of violet fire—I am the purity Ayn Zoph Aur requires!”

True to his word, amaranth flames started to erupt out of the slats until their swelter effectively undid the offending framework. But contrary to what everyone expected, Horuz gave a sign for his soldiers to stand down and commented:

“I see that the Arkhonz in this region have become exceptionally powerful. Recognize then there is no need for us to combat thus. Truly, your Lord Hazzanh lives, only through me.”

After that disclosure Horuz changed his outer aspect to an uncanny likeness of King Hazzanh; complete with corona. Thoroughly impressed by this revelation, Azmodeuth, Obyzuth and Ornyuh went and knelt before their newfound liege. Asking:

“Can it really be you, oh Scion of Toolooph?”

At Horuz-cum-Hazzanh’s behest—Ahoonh disembarked to affirm their vision. They all huddled together in an impromptu parley, discussing their present situation. Striking a truce, the consolidated corps of the Arkhonz and Rah-Hoor-Khuth turned their attention toward the Villah of Ormenh. Horuz morphed back to wield double wand and spearheaded a siege thereon.

Wherefore Zpentah Maynyuh gave Metatronh the go ahead; whom made his egress along with Abbaddonh, Malphaz, and a sizable host of angelical Thrones and Powers. They clashed almost instantly with Horuz’ horde, drawn to its front line as if ‘twere their opposite magnetic pole. They fought with

incontestable courage, slaying many Tetramorphs by working in smaller squads.

Yet their initial rebuttal was foiled when Yaldah-Baoth's boas and Zaklaz' meat puppets encircled them from behind. Metatronh assessed that Obyzuth and Ornyuh were responsible, so he and Malphaz sought them out. In accordance to his own volition, Abbaddonh went up against Horuz. Raising a rod above head then tapping it underfoot, Abbaddonh mined a hole below Horuz, pointing his sceptre before exclaiming:

"Exterminans!"

A rift was rent agape beneath the Neterh, whence the limbs of dead legions scrambled to drag him down into their dank dungeon. **Abbaddonh** pushed upon Horuz' solar plexus using the rod to expedite his disappearance, condemning:

"To the oubliette of Gehenna—foul fiend!"

But when it seemed sure that Abbaddonh had done away with Horuz, the fangs of Enkh and Tyamath clamped onto the Archangel's cane, letting the hawk-head lord pull himself free. He immediately buried his raptorial rostrum into Abbaddonh's skull—absorbing his essence thence *Abstru*cting him! Meanwhile Metatronh and Malphaz contended with the twin sorceresses Obyzuth and Ornyuh.

'twas an ill time for Metatronh, since no sooner had Malphaz witnessed Abbaddonh's Abstruction than he stabbed his superior in the back to prove his worth to the Arkhonh alliance! Injured thus by that craven raven man, Metatronh was powerless to stall the black magic women from annihilating him with their abrasive rays. Horuz patted Malphaz on the back—then brazenly broke his neck—professing:

“A traitor can never be trusted by either side.”

The road to Ormenh was clear. Although when Zpentah Maynyuh saw his forwards thin out, he made an executive decision and Belphegorh heeded his request to open fire. Friend and foe alike were blitzed by this cannonade, which levelled the proverbial playing field. Nonetheless, Azmodeuth turned the tables on them—landing his Voladz directly on their batteries and upstaging their gunnery.

Inflicting the irretrievable loss of Amduzyuh, Mephyztoh, Dominions and Virtues—Azmodeuth challenged Belphegorh to single combat. Belphegorh tried to bargain with the Arkhonh; offering him the hidden riches of seven heavens. Azmodeuth upbraided the Archangel with opprobrium:

“Coward! Lift your lance and face me—or else falter in infamy!”

Browbeaten, Belphegorh brought his halberd to bear against Azmodeuth, who simply sidestepped it and summarily trounced him by burying an axe blade in his breast! Afterwards Azmodeuth had the Voladz cast nets to capture clones of Zpentah Maynyuh.

Still, the main Amezhah Zpentah remained rock steady atop a central casbah. From there he evoked his elder brethren:

“Brothers, sisters—it is I—your youngest sibling. My need now is dire indeed!”

This entreaty did not go unheard. A stupendous storm head roiled over Ormenh, then thunder preceded the timely arrival of Azhah Vahyzthah, Kzhathrah Vayryuh, Vohuh-Manah, Ameretath, Armaythyh, and Haurvatath. They were trailed

by complements of Fravahz and Yazadz from houses Bynah and Zhokmah (who came through the paths *Heh* and *Zaynh*). Precipitating themselves upon the militant menagerie besieging the fort—they evened the odds—reducing that number with blade and bludgeon!

Horuz was taken aback, but it was only momentary. With cheer he razzed:

“I Hadyth, doth see that this function attracts only the most eminent guests!”

Azhah Vahyzthah heard him chortling and offered a riposte:

“If it fancies his grace, I bid he join me in a sporting duel.”

“Happily,” Horuz heckled.

Like hypervelocity binary stars they streamed across the firmament—deadlocked in furor. Sparks flew outward in all directions, causing coronal mass ejections and supernovas everywhere in the Megalocosmos. But it began becoming clear to Azhah that each blow he struck at Horuz actually served to fortify him further. He did seem to be toying with his prey while exposing himself needlessly. And Azhah’s flaming sword seethed at temperatures exceeding its highest limits. Horuz hawked aspersions at him:

“Ladies and gentlemen—is this really the heavyweight champion of our universe? Nay I say—for he cuts the jib like an imposter!”

Horuz borrowed a page from the Arkhonz’ playbook and literally started to enfold Azhah Vahyzthah within spatial fractures, which he wrought with his own hands. Finding himself in a bind, Azhah beseeched his little brother tête-à-tête:

You must think something up quickly—or we shan't remain Invictus much longer!

Zpentah Maynyuh was at a loss as to how to help but at least Kzhahthrah Vayryuh and Vohuh-Manah were around to lend assistance. The former smashed Horuz' artifice using a weighty war hammer; the latter contrived to freeze the fervid falcon by conjuring a temporal cold front. But though it slowed Horuz considerably, it could not possibly arrest his advance. Three elder brothers stood as one and braced for the backlash that Horuz was about to let loose on them—when out of the blue came **Dex** and **Vortexyuh**.

An archway appeared amidst these altercations and for the first time, a Homh broke on through to the other side—alive! Vortexyuh cautioned him:

“This is as far as I can bring you. There are foes here beyond my ken. Trial by fire is at any rate unavoidable, and perhaps it be a blessing in disguise for one so eager to stretch his legs out in Yetzyrah.”

“But wait, I don't understand. What am I supposed to do?”

“You see, there is an Archangel in yonder tower. Though neither of you know it, he desperately ought to make your acquaintance. Go now and join him. I will provide whatever support possible.”

Without further prompting, Dex dropped into the Ether. He hadn't practised nearly as much as was needed to fly on a par with all others present. Because he wasn't native to this dimension he flew in a haphazard fashion, which was puzzling to those who were observing his movements. For instance, Azmodeuth conferred mind-to-mind with Obyzuth and Ornyuh:

What manner of being is this?

We know not, they both told him. Neither of us has ever seen anything like it.

Horuz however, intuited that something more hung in the balance here than met the untrained eye. Ignoring the Amezhah Zpentaz, he dove to intercept the intruder. Azhah Vahyzthah, Kzhathrah Vayryuh, and Vohuh-Manah pursued and blocked him, since they too had a similar insight regarding the advent of this klutzy stranger. Tackled by that ternion, Horuz had to petition his subordinates:

“Inhibit that cipher at once—do not permit it to actualize!”

Lots of loyal Apkalluh, Lamazzuh, and Zhedduh raced to obstruct the newcomer, but cumbersome as they were, Dex deked past by swerving in between them. Which was why the Arkhonz decided to take matters into their own hands. In tandem Azmodeuth, Obyzuth and Ornyuh closed in on him. Per contra, Vortexyuh still stood on the threshold of Zamekh. She appealed to the female Amezhah Zpentaz:

Sisters, goeth thither and wreath the this servant of Ketheroz; thy triumph hinges on him aligning with the Hepta-Zpentah!

Speedy, the triplets, Ameretath, Armaythyh and Haurvatath sprung to protect Dex. The first smote Azmodeuth from above—caving his head in with a flanged mace! The second and third fell upon the she-devils—bearing cutlasses that cleft them asunder! Dex was wowed by all that was happening, but soon drew closer to the observatory wherein Zpentah Maynyuh peered up at him. Their stares locked onto each other and there was an undeniable attraction that magnetized both their bodies mid sky.

Unprecedented thaumaturgy took place; the Holy Guardian Angel fused fully with the body of its human host. A Homh now wore the Arkhonh king's coat of arms, hailing:

“I Hadyth, am *Zpentah Dex*—and I will oversee—the restoration of Hierarchy!”

Hearing this enraged Horuz to no end. Releasing a recalcitrant recalescence he blew off the trinity trying to hold him down and accused:

“You are nothing more than an upstart usurper—I shall see to it that you suffer!”

Either exponent lashed out at the other then. Horuz made good on his threats by pelting Dex with igneous orbs, which hurt beyond belief. If it wasn't for Terr's mind-over-matter training, as well as Hazzanh's enchanted plate mail, Dex would have been done for. Indeed, the armour itself reacted: its antlered helm shot an electric shock that paralyzed the hawk long enough for the 'Arch-Homh' to land in Ormenh and grab an additional armament. Hoisting a kite shield emblazoned with dual grail + crossed keys, Dex spread his hexad of diaphanous wings and rose to defy the angered Neterh.

Positively fuming, Horuz glowed scarlet red. Tightly griping Enkh and Tyamath, he menaced:

“Do not assume that escutcheon can weather a wallop from me.”

“Ah—except—I possess Magistry, which surpasses anything that thou dost see.”

With that quip, Zpentah Dex unsheathed **Dyslexyuh**; her sharp edges outshining absolutely everything existing across

the Macrocosm. Even Horuz vizored his gaze with his carbon coloured palm. Noetic ostentation notwithstanding, the nettled Neterh fixed to nix these irreverent tricks!

He hurled himself at Dex, battering his buffer using biting batons. Such strikes were stressing to be sure. After all, Dex was a material human made of blood and bone housed within the Ethereal Kah of Zpentah Maynyuh. His bones rattled worrisomely, while his blood felt like it was boiling due to its proximity with Horuz.

Yet withal, he withstood the onslaught—and as he dodged—he danced around and delivered parries demonstrating that this melded dyad was decidedly a more proficient coefficient than any one might have divined. As this pile-driver waltz continued, Dex dexterously sliced through Horuz’ petrified adders; mincing them down to tiny bits!

Irregardless, Horuz was able to retract those asps since they had inborn elasticity. Enkh and Tyamath became scourges that castigated Zpentah Dex with smart cracks, which sounded like loud judgmental remarks. These stung Dex’s inner Ankh worse than mortality’s existential angst. The vicious vipers coiled round Dex to drain him of esprit.

Despite this ominous outlook, our hero pressed on. When Horuz went for the kill Zpentah Dex grazed him with just the tip of Dyslexyuh. Reluctantly, the Neterh relented. His thoughts beclouded as he pranced about in a stupor. He knew what he wanted but couldn’t recall how to express it. He reverted to a defunct dialect called Dimoori Sheol.

Laying curses in an untranslatable guttural utterance caused the ambient Orgone (that had brimmed over from Daath and

accumulated everywhere else) to froth and sprout fresh tendrils studded with grapnels. These were familiar to Horuz since he had first seen their kind when the behemoth ascended from below the Abzuh.

Some of those hellish hooks latched onto Horuz and their gross residue began corrupting him. Dex held back when he beheld this; transfixed by the horrific transformation Horuz was undergoing. The Neterh went from being a calid aquiline 'he', to an algid feline 'she'. The hawking jinx gave way to a siamese **sphinx**.

Either half had its own humanoid head, and leonine fore paws. One's fur was sooty sable. The other, starkly albino. Four amber cat's eyes examined Zpentah Dex. Horuz had now truly become **Hrumakhyz**. This tailless wonder leapt toward Dex, clawing his kite shield. Dex took a slash at it but its reflexes were extraordinary. Being humanized, Zpentah Dex staggered after multiple attempts, leaving him open for a mere moment. In that instant, Hrumakhyz penetrated his armour and sunk nails into tender flesh. Zpentah Dex cried out in pain, which was heard by his fellow Archangels.

Azhah Vahyzthah cinched the distance separating them and scored a clean cut that split the fantastic animal into two. Each sphinx then grew a pair of hind legs and a tail as a result. So rather than solving the problem, he had doubled their trouble. All seven Amezah Zpentaz now faced off against a dangerous deuce.

Together those wildcats unhinged human jaws and expelled blasts of broiling slag that reeked of rot! Soon the whole Heptad was wading knee deep in sludge, which acted as quicksand by stifling their mobility. Rendered vulnerable to these lurking predators, the Zpentaz were relieved when they saw them scamper away inexplicably.

Azhah set the tar pit ablaze, freeing himself and the others. They regrouped outside the perimeter of Ormenh. There was no sign of Hrumakhyz in this zone anymore. Zpentah Maynyuh's far reaching vision revealed the sphinx's trajectory to Dex and company; a festering spoor led them toward Malkuth.

The vanguard of Ketheroz chased after those felid fugitives. Meanwhile both mirror opposite sphinxes wove stealthily through the Zephyroth zones, until making their descent concurrently via pathways Zhynh and Quoph. Thus, when Zpentah Dex and the elder sextet were in the midst of traversing zone Yezodh, Vortexyuh reappeared.

She was standing on the brink of Tauh, and halted them with an upraised hand. For everyone's benefit, she disclosed:

"It pains me to tell you this, but those nefarious Neterz have already gone ahead and cast evil spells upon Tellz. Apart from them, only creatures which crawl on all fours at dawn, walk bipedally at noon, and on three feet in the eve can go there. Look yonder and you will see that the murk arising from Daath has spread like a disease over the whole of Orz."

True to her words, the Amezhah Zpentaz witnessed the ravaging not solely of Tellz, but also its nearest neighbour: Marz. Planet Earth's blue oceans were covered in a deep purple miasma. Whereas giant arachnids swarmed on the red planet's surface. Comprehending that he alone could do anything about this horrid state, Dex put forth:

"Leave it to me."

Then he departed from the others, trucking our space plot back down to **Earth**.



ACT FOUR

Pan-Gaeah

TELLZ / INARTISTIC INFERIOR

As Dex passed through the interzone of Tauh, profane gales inexorably divorced him of Zpentah Maynyuh's potency as well as his companionship. In spite of that, the Tyrthankarah Terr was able to temporarily reestablish a rapport with his adherent:

The Sphinx has divvied up 'tween an obscurity of yesterdays, and a glossy glaze from all of tomorrow's malaise. Hold fast to yourself Dex—Æons aren't linear arrows—they're curveballs coming at you from ahead and then behind, or is it vice versa? Anyway, my lessons were given to you in heightened awareness, so you'll retain everything even within the worst Zeitgeist. But steel your Ankh, galvanized and tempered by combat. The confrontations to come call for less aggress, and more finesse!

Before he could absorb the import of that mental message—Dex found himself sitting in the board room at **WrightBloc Inc.** His boss Rex was there too, standing aside with Jeth and

Mr. Wright (CEO & Founder). Ostensibly they were discussing Dex's future within the organization. After some deliberation, they took seats around the conference table. Rex and Jeth sat left and right of Dex and Mr. Wright faced him across the opposite end. Rex tried to reassure Dex:

“Good morning Dex. We're just here today to talk about the many manuscripts that you've submitted to our head office for publication over the past year. Mr. Wright has a number of content and style issues he'd like to address.”

This was certainly jarring to say the least. Dex was still very disoriented from his sallies into realms unreal, and hardly had any recollection regarding those aforementioned manuscripts. His responses were rather sluggish. Thus Jeth took a stab, attempting to cut the mounting tension with humour:

“Hello—Earth to Dex! Or would you prefer I refer to you as Mr. Billy Pilgrim?” Jeth couldn't help snickering thanks to his own savvy jape.

The word *finesse* echoed in Dex's mind. Finally, he straightened to ratify:

“Pardon me, but it's been a hard day's night. By all means, please proceed.”

Rex read the room while he handed out a few folders full of notes to each one present there. Rex referred them to the first example:

“Although there's essentially no cardinal sin here, this proposed META-Fiction™ is way too extraneous and wordy for the average reader. Lamentably, your writing voice makes you sound like a pretentious Poindexter—and nobody is going to like that.”

Dex wasn't frazzled any longer. He calmly countered:

"Is it really pretentious though, if one can firmly Grok what's been written within oneself? I believe that you're underestimating your readers, who in actuality thirst for artful execution and fanciful flourishes!"

"Be that as it may—" Rex was about to redress, but was interrupted by a furious Mr. Wright, who huffed and puffed before exploding:

"Let's get one thing clear here you impertinent little bastard; my thrice great grandfather didn't overcome the trenches of the second world war for you to irreverently demean his legacy with a single iota of your experimental minutiae!"

Rex waved him off like a referee, interjecting:

"I think what Mr. Wright is trying to say is that these manuscripts are **unmarketable**. Like it or not, this is a business, **not** an art house. We require that you refocus your efforts on more profitable productions moving forward from today."

"I see," Dex stammered studiously, "can you at least give me some constructive criticism to take away with me? This crucifixion of my work warrants an inquisition."

"Well if you insist," Rex replied, "but it won't be pretty. Fasten your safety belt because we'll be highlighting some painful points. Firstly, apart from your smart-alecky insistence on cramming consonants down reader's throats, there are thematic problems."

Following Rex's remarks, Jeth chimed in:

"We're not sure what you're trying to achieve with your exorbitant overuse of juxtaposition. For one who claims to

be so concerned with the readers, such contrasts seem rather inconsiderate. Research indicates that even avid bookworms have a preference for consistency in plot and uniformity of characters. The quotation given toward the end of page 17 in your docket stands out as problematic.”

“No offence Dex,” professed Rex, “but I really think you ought to lay off the reefer. There are simply too many disparate strains of thought mixed into your compositions. How on Earth is anybody supposed to make sense of all these complicated allusions?”

“Gee I don’t know,” jested Dex, “Google and the world wide web come to mind.”

Rex and Jeth gave one another a look across the table, knowing that Mr. Wright wasn’t going to be pleased with Dex’s wise crack. Sure enough, the company owner leaned forward in his armchair and coolly corrected Dex:

“Let me explain something to you mister smart mouth; people don’t use high tech to research cryptic crap written by some no-name author. They use it to look up the latest episode of their favourite TV shows and pop culture trivia. The information age gave way a long time ago to the entertainment age. Nowadays to make a mark, you must appeal to the lowest common denominator, or your career will be over before it begins.”

An uneasy moment of silence followed those exchanges, during which Jeth flipped through his folio to find a specific memorandum. He exhorted Dex:

“You know, there’s no denying that you’ve got a great deal of talent. That’s why I’ve taken the liberty of typing up a list of

suggested subjects for you to write about. Illuminati conspiracies are **still** trending. You should write a story about celebrities making the ‘Eye of Horus’ gesture. Also, anything to do with the Bohemian Grove or the Freemasonry would make good fiction. Dex, you could be the next Sutter Cane!”

“You want me to lower my standards to the sensationalism of a serial writer?”

“Dex,” Rex reproved, “if you don’t comply with our recommendations then there is only one other option: you’ll be transferred from the proofreading department to the technical writing division, where your wordiness can be put to proper use.”

For a whole minute, Dex kept nodding his head in resignation. Then finally he stood up and slapped both his hands onto the tabletop, censuring:

“I for one shall not contribute to the dumbing down of literate society! Stupidity already abounds around the globe, so it would be morally reprehensible for myself to partake of such cupidity. Mr. Wright, I might be wrong but you can go right to hell along with your bandwagon of illiteracy! I QUIT—because as of this day—I’ll go forge my own way!”

Having spoken not his peace—but a declaration of war—Dex stormed out of that office. He was so upset that he decided not to wait for a bus, and started walking home instead through the winter cold. He hadn’t counted on snow and so regretted forgetting his coat back at the WrightBloc building, especially because he always kept his cellphone in it. Calling Ruth for a ride wasn’t an option. Luckily, after an initial shiver, he

remembered how to reignite the Prana in the pit of his stomach and warmed himself as he walked.

Overwhelmed by everything he'd recently been through, Dex strayed from the known route homeward. He was much too preoccupied to pay close attention to detail, asking himself:

Was it all an incredibly vivid dream? Am I losing my loose grip on reality? Did I just screw myself out of a steady paycheck?

He continued in that vein for an indeterminate period; scoffing at their accusations of catachresis. They wouldn't know fine exegesis if it bit them on the pampered arse! Dex took a little comfort in knowing that their commentary was naught but eisegesis.

At length, he came to realize that he had wandered terribly far off the beaten path. His eyes took in a rather desolate countryside, with nothing in sight other than a rundown silo and an abandoned barn. Dex stalked through snowdrifts to seek shelter in that farmland but when he did, he slipped on a slope and was forced to kneel in the mud! As he waded out of the grout he looked about to see that there were cow corpses piled high here. It was a most disconcerting vision, soon accompanied by the howl of wolves on the wintry wind. It wasn't long until green pairs of eyes glowed on the charnel heaps, reflecting a silver sliver of moonlight.

Still on his knees, Dex sensed their imminent onrush and pleaded with heaven:

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"

The lupine pack may have kicked off its ravenous pursuit, yet Dex wouldn't fall victim to those cruel cravings. Once more

A Codex For Gnostics

the scenery shifted and Dex was transported to a very different set of surroundings, where the air was considerably hotter and a waxing moon lit crescent waves which swished against a rocky shoreline in the distance. He stood near the base of an impressive monolithic obelisk. It was a lot taller than any skyscraper Dex had ever laid eyes upon. It appeared to skim the dark blue welkin. Its glittering granite facade almost whispered:

You're across the gulf now.

TELLZ / MYTHIC ANTERIOR

A procession of people who were waving palm branches and reciting prayers drew nigh. At their core was a cleric carrying a staff capped with a winged serpent. He saluted Dex by bowing at the waist. However, he called him another name:

“Exaltation to *Quetz*—Prince of *Ataraxyuh*! Thy kingdom flourishes even though darkness encroaches. Hence have we, votaries of thy sister Princess *Metz*, come to render homage to ye here at the foot of this cornerstone. We beg thee, please bless us!”

Absentmindedly, Dex looked at his forearms and noticed that his skin was ruddier than he remembered it being. He definitely didn’t feel quite his usual self. Experiencing a spell of amnesia, he bid the priest to enlighten him:

“Sir, come hither and clarify for me—whom doth these gentiles sayeth I am? Also, what didst thou sayest regarding an infringing gloom? Lastly, what be thine own ideogram, that I may scribe it with a plume?”

“Ah, thou puts my wits to the test, noble one! Twelve tribes from four quarters all know thee as *Quetz*—firstborn son of *Ometz*. Although thine ascendancy has been questioned of late by thy scheming cousins, *Huytz* and *Tetz*—rulers of *Hyperpraxyuh* and *Heterotaxyuh*. As we speak, their forces encircle thy sister Metz’ kingdom of *Paralexxyuh*. As for myself, I am called *Vytz*—Vicar of *Ytzannah*. Thy palace attendants told us that we would find you studying the sky close to the Southwest pillar.”

Vytz handed *Quetz* a piece of parchment decorated with his signatory hieroglyph; a mountain from under which cyclonic currents rose upward. Dex-cum-*Quetz* studied it with genuine fascination. It served to jog his muzzy memory. During those

moments he recollected who he was, at least within this novel schema and its unfamiliar setting. He returned the deerskin scroll to its owner and took stock of Vytz' followers. His sense of empathy detected despair—so with gumption—he put their minds at ease:

“Fret not people of Paralexuyuh—the army of Ataraxyuh shalt alleviate thee, for I shan't forsake thy queen—my sister Metz. Hyperpraxyuh and Heterotaxyuh wilt be delivered from the erring leadership of my warlike cousins, Huytz and Tetz!”

The *Paralexyunz* applauded and dropped to their knees in worship. Quetz asked them to stand instead, and they accompanied him back to his stronghold. There he began making preparations for a campaign against his cousins. He happened to have luxuriant resources at his disposal, but he made Vytz his advisor since he was better acquainted with their destination. They surveyed a diorama modelled to represent the four quarters of **Pan-Gaeah**. Its continental stretches straddled a solitary ocean. Each pointed corner harboured an obelisk by the sea. North of their Western location lay Paralexuyuh. Southeastward was Hyperpraxyuh, domain of Huytz. Northeastward was Heterotaxyuh, demesne of Tetz. Yet by far the most outstanding feature was the scale replica of the supercontinent's central volcano. It even vented fumes, which might have made the room stink if there weren't servants fanning them out through an open skylight. Quetz was curious about this peculiar peak, so Vytz addressed his unspoken inquiry:

“That is Mount *Atlaz*, whence came fecund Ometz to seed the fertile world. It had a snowy top until recently, when a black star fell in plain daylight and cracked it open. Ever since, Atlaz hath covered the four quarters with a cloud of ash.”

Quetz mulled over that information, but they continued planning until early dawn. Come daybreak, the prince went down to the barracks and saddled a large jaguar that he had raised from a cub. He knew its name to be *Balam Qytzeh*. He mounted up and led his infantry formations out through the frontal portcullis. They bore banners blazoned with a silhouetted soaring eagle on a bleu céleste field. The troopers themselves wore gaudy apparel; plumed warbonnets, lizard leather camouflage, and coyote capes.

A fleet-foot youth ran out from the bazaar to pass Quetz a pike tipped with quartz. The prince clutched it and thanked the youngster with a bezant coin that had the masculine and feminine facets of Quetz' legendary progenitor **Ometz** engraved on either side. Quetz' warriors painted their faces with vibrant dyes while they marched and sung austere battle hymns. Paralexuh was many days away, so near the end of the first day they camped in a clearing among the foothills of a small mountain that afforded Quetz a bird's eye view of the terrain ahead. Still his eyes became distracted when he glanced East to Mount Atlaz. It spurted lava from a cone concealed in smog. Yet despite its outward calefaction, Quetz felt a chill run up his spine when looked on it.

Although everybody else slept that night—Quetz couldn't. He reclined on his dozing pet and held a campfire vigil. In the morning, he ate the same maize rations as the commoners. They also had some kidney beans spiced with red hot chili peppers, and melted cacao to drink for dessert. Having broken fast with those humble sources of sustenance, the *Ataraxyunz* strode forth purposefully. Ere noon, they entered the desert, where they would spend the subsequent four days. Here Quetz and his soldiery fought the effects of heat exhaustion. When the water from

their gourds ran dry, they bled cacti. Buzzards circled overhead while this wasteland claimed several lives with snake bites and scorpion stings. These fallen friends were piled onto a pyre and set on fire. On the sixth day they crossed a marsh and then went into the thicket of a tropical jungle. It was necessary to hack through fern fronds using sawfish swords as machetes for hours on end. There were cockroaches and mosquitoes that dwarfed their distant descendants, but Quetz and compatriots swatted them aside. Though the prince himself was bitten by an ornery iguana, which was enough to remind him that this wasn't any kind of dream. If he needed confirmation to that effect, it came when nature called him to void his bowels in the bushes. Wiping his wazoo clean with a wet leaf, he cursed his carnality.

That night they set up camp among the sylvia. Although this time, Quetz ordered them to light no fires and maintain a strict silence. Caution was only prudent since they were now well within Paralexuh.

Much of the following day was a repeat of the previous one. They carried on slashing leaves and squashing pests while gaining ground. Those skilled with bows hunted small game that kept everybody marginally fed. Later, they had to wade across bog waters that were nearly neck deep. A few floundered there and were eaten by either eels or piranhas. So Quetz had his axe bearers chop down mangroves to build bridges. As sunset neared the West, Quetz' company began emerging from the underbrush. They were met here by a detachment of their own scouts. The forerunner apprised the prince:

“Like a voice calling midst the desert, we heard thy footsteps approaching us. Huytz and Tetz lay siege to the Temple

of Transparent Walls, half a day hence. We wilt remove their sentries and maketh straight the path for thee, our lord.”

With Quetz’ blessing, they went to do those cloak and dagger deeds. During the evening, Quetz spied on both his cousin’s camps from far-off cliffs overlooking the Northern coastline. Evidently they’d been battling all day long and were thus in repose. Under cover of night, Quetz stationed platoons in strategic positions throughout various unsecured beachheads. These special units stayed occult behind blinds of dense foliage. At first light, Huytz’ and Tetz’ respective armies renewed their harrying of Metz’ estate. Yet ‘twas naught but a shot at the moon—because true to its namesake—Princess Metz’ Temple of Transparent Walls sat safely enclosed within an invisible bubble, which made their battering rams and siege towers rather redundant (to say nothing of their catapults). Overseeing this from a distant bluff, Quetz would allow them to tire themselves out.

He was biding his time, for a wise warrior knows what awaits and therefore waits. Standing, he leaned on his lance, framed between a pair of saplings. Just as preplanned, a flotilla of extravagant rafts became visible upon the incoming tides. **Vytz** had brought the strongest amongst his own entourage back home with him. Now Quetz’ herald raised a feathery banner that fluttered on Zephyr; so his archers let fly a slew of arrows! Taken at unawares, Huytz’ and Tetz’ infantrymen started to drop like flies in a blizzard. As that hailing subsided, Quetz himself led the charge, sitting aback Balam Qytzeh. Many more fell beneath the broad sweep of his pointed sceptre. Once inside the melee, he dismounted and let the jaguar maul through the milieu on its own. Screams of terror resounded through the battlefield. And because he’d become the cynosure

of alarum, Quetz' cousins soon came to confront him. They didn't appear to be their usual selves. Both of them wore robes woven from sackcloth and stared absently into nothingness. Quetz interrogated:

"Hark ye, lampstands of the East—wherefore this meaningless uprising? Whatsoever hast prompted thee to test the temperance of thy prince? Answereth righteously, that I may be convinced!"

Together, Huytz and Tetz contested:

"We hath borne witness to the onyx Sphynx—a savage but sagacious lynx—whose literary breadth inspired every omnibus ever compiled by thy creator Ometz. Verily her dream-spell ravages crops and turns rivers red with blood. She sent us here to retrieve the virgin Princess Metz for a purpose known only to herself. She hast gifted us an incredible boon, that we shouldst succeed as she hath shewn. Moveth aside cousin, lest it be thou that our damnation impugn!"

Unexpectedly, Quetz broke out laughing. A minute later, he catechized them:

"If ye only knew—damnation and I—we goeth hand-in-hand through the abject recesses of sublunar subsistence. All unfulfilled desires and pangs of agony art familiar to yours truly. Cometh then, do thy worst!"

Goaded thusly, his cousin's eyes lit up with a crimson chroma. In a trice they split away from each other and made an attempt to outflank Quetz. They were so nimble that they drew ghostly tracers behind themselves. Dizzying as this was, Quetz manoeuvred betwixt them, still possessed of calm. His gut told him when they were ready to strike. At once they spat spouts

of phlogiston that would without doubt reduce metal to calx. Which is why they were completely flummoxed when both hot streams missed the mark. Huytz hung his head to the right, Tetz tilted his to the left. Each one inspected Quetz but neither could identify what it was that had caused their surges to diverge. Yet before either of them made another move, Quetz' hands slid to the base of his partizan spear and he swung it around in a wide ellipse that severed two heads with a single stroke!

Blood-soaked, their beheaded bodies slumped into lifeless mounds and Quetz collected their heads. Seeing him lift them aloft, the *Heterotaxyunz* and *Hyperpraxyunz* lay down their weapons and surrendered to the Prince of Ataraxyuh. Not long thereafter Vytz arrived to deliver an invitation to the temple's inner sanctum on behalf of Metz—Princess of Paralexuyh. The conqueror concurred, adding a commendation:

“Well met, Vicar of Ytzamnah! Thine actions this day bespeak nobility, and I wouldst appoint thee Viceroy of the Eastern provinces.”

Vytz was grateful and his acceptance speech as graceful:

“Second only after sky-father Ytzamnah, I serve the Earthen children of Ometz. Thy stock in mine loyalty is duly placed. Rest assured, thou shalt have no regrets.”

Vytz guided Quetz to an entryway enshrouded by fog, but advised him to proceed on his own. Walking along all alone—Quetz had a brief schizoid flashback of being Dex. Here the cavernous interior exuded a welcoming yet equally outlandish ambience. Quetz caught sight of his reflection, warping upon slabs of polished emerald. He went through an aviary filled with exotic birds; their plumage of every tinge. Freshwater and

saltwater mingled in an estuary beneath a bridge (which Quetz felt it took an hour to get across). This enclave's canopy gave one the impression of permanent midnight suspended above. The cobblestone causeway was lighted by ornate paper lanterns teeming with fireflies. Intoxicating fragrances from fields of wildflower whiffed on the breeze.

Apart from being Quetz' sister, Metz was a consummate enchantress, as well as the oracle to all of Pan-Gaeah's people. Daily, hundreds came from far and wide to hear the soothsayer prophesy their future, but she only granted audience to those she chose. As Quetz got closer to the holiest of holies, he wondered what Huytz and Tetz had been talking about. It was certain that they'd acted under the direct orders of an outsider. Though who that was, remained a mystery to him. Finally, passing through silk curtains, he entered the sanctorum. There were maidens lighting incense housed inside braziers at each corner of this expansive chamber. Its inner dome was freckled with shiny sapphires that complemented the monumental moonstone in the centre. An adolescent boy sat off to one side, patting a tortoise shell drum. Steps of slate led up a gradual incline toward the main altar, where the princess perched on her pedestal, bedecked in florid raiment befitting of Pan-Gaeah's high priestess. Her salutation was abrupt but sympathetic:

"Pilgrim, cometh forth from the cloud of unknowing! For I doth sense that thou art at once my brother Quetz, and another, whose name be Dex. Lo thy lifelines twist entangled—so much so—that sombre tidings hangeth dangled..."

"Thou speakest sooth as always, Metz, firstborn daughter of Ometz. My thoughts of late art divided, such that I can scarce

figure out who dwells innate. Yet what is this ill fate that thou dost predicate?"

As if on cue, Metz' handmaids splashed water from a cistern into a crevice nearby her feet. Vapours blossomed thereunder, then reached her nostrils. Shortly she went into a sudden fit of hysteria; screaming a bloodcurdling cry and tearing away her vestments! Quetz couldn't have been more frightened as she clamoured:

"Woe unto us who live during these final days of **unity**! Hearken carefully Dex, thine enemy nests at the heart of Mount Atlaz. 'twas she who sent Huytz and Tetz to disturb the balance of this fourfold realm. It is thy destiny to confront one another, but when ye doth—Pan-Gaeah wilt be torn asunder—beginning to end and corner to corner. Brimstone haileth from on high to us down here below. There shalt be such weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Unhappily ever after, the land and its people splinter apart. They reform into warring tribes as we hath already done. But even worse, their common idiom fractures since they all evolve in isolation of the others. Like crystal shards, these fragments refract reality in a variable vein. Thus divided, petty thinkers tout their parental tongue as the univocal Truth. Taking the given for granted, they foist false ideals upon every finite encounter. Symbols wilt be mistaken for what they only serve to symbolize. Precepts get quoted out of context and rewritten for lazy eyes. Humour is lost, seriousness thrives. The many meanings of any word lie forgotten, in favour of facility. Generality breeds banal traditionality. Leaves wither; disconnected from uprooted tree. Effect and cause become inverted.

Man seeks to subvert woman—while she in turn—emasculates him. Son rises against father. Brother is beset by brother.

Daughter disparages her mother. Imbalanced, masculinity and femininity reject each other, while still trying to transform one another. Inevitably, these too become inverted.

Irreconcilable differences win over dialectic synthesis. There exists a sore lack of integral wholeness. Polarization and contention taint the best worldly intentions. Whereas streaks of success or strokes forever clever art marred by an exclusive error.

Without wits, expressiveness is inartistic. Suffering from maux de tête, the sapient cannot be considered superior—”

Metz trailed off almost as suddenly as she'd started, collapsing onto her podium. Her ladies in waiting stepped in and provided a new gown to replace the disheveled one. The drummer boy stepped up, facing Quetz. Manifestly a deaf-mute, he signed for Quetz to follow him. They went on a walkabout, going through a corridor until arriving at a doorway that opened into the mouth of a bay. Quetz shielded his eyesight against the glaring noonday rays. By the time his vision readjusted, the lad had gone away.

The scent of surf hung heavy on humid air. Quetz made out an isle close to shore. There was a statue of a griffin atop a shrine at its centre. The prince could hear that eagle-headed lion summon him: *Come!*

Quetz swam to the island and approached the fossilized griffin. When he did this, its stony exterior began to crumble as the creature within came to life. It then shook off the rubble, fazing the princeling with aquamarine irises rounding its pupils.

“I Hadyth,” it spake in a manly tone, “am *Zurvanh*—Custodian of Continuity. These forgotten realms behind us are wracked by mass unrest. The land itself is shifting out of phase with the next era. We will travel together, to salve eternal Terra. Climb on!”

Quetz did as Zurvanh asked, grabbing the downy fluff beneath his pallid pinions. Before taking flight the human rider noticed that a driftwood log had cast off from the sandbanks. It was crawling with coffee coloured ants. He thought nothing of it since Zurvanh flapped briskly and they soon kissed the sky. Gliding above the weather, raindrops glistened lucidly like diamonds. Zurvanh burst past gathering storm clouds!

The solar disc highlighted this splayed scope of Pan-Gaeah's plains opening up before them. Its beauty defied all descriptors. For a mere instant that entire vista froze timelessly. Quetz remembered then that his mascot Balam Qytzeh remained grounded. He sincerely hoped his catty companion would be alright, because they'd been through thick and thin together and were basically inseparable. His attention was drawn back when a humongous tree came into view beyond the tempestuous smaze ahead. As they flew closer to it, multifarious fruits (of every shape, size, and tint) caught Quetz' eye. All types of birds roosted on the tree's branches, eating fruit. Below on the grasslands, gazelles, wildebeest, and zebras foraged at its foot. Zurvanh clarified for Quetz:

"That is the Tree of Many Seeds. An archetype for all later creeds."

Quetz had a hasty craving for something tasty. He hadn't eaten in a while, so his belly groaned and gurgled. Zurvanh's ears were rather feline, hence he heard those gastric grounings then thought to remedy them. He set down on a thick bough and let the prince take his pick from the nearest offshoots. Quetz helped himself to pomegranates.

Unbeknownst to Quetz, following the defeat of the Heterotaxyunz and Hyperpraxyunz, Balam Qytzeh headed for the hills outside the limits of Paralexuyh's populated area.

Having sated his bloodlust, he took a snooze. However, his senses were so sharp that he was roused moments prior to the passing of a flying quadruped overhead. The jaguar spotted his friend's aura and sniffed out a trail to track him; persisting similar to a phantom limb. It was then that he happened upon a bustling queue of leaf-cutter ants.

Balam Qytzeh heard them chattering:

"Ocean ones say flying white-white carry two-leg queen."

"Two-leg no has queen," others argued. "Two-leg has king."

"What is king?"

"Is like queen."

"Why call king?"

"Descend from drone."

"Nooo! Too taboo!"

"Two-leg **stupid.**"

"'tis true, 'tis true."

Balam Qytzeh stooped to their level, growling his query:

"Where flying white-white take two-leg?"

The workers hesitated to confer with him. Instead, a brawny soldier resembling a scarab beetle came forward. Though it censured the worker ants first:

"Keep moving—less talking—more working!"

It made eye-contact with Balam Qytzeh and volunteered:

"Our drones see they flying to tree-tree. Now go spotty kitty. Let this column be."

The big cat didn't have to be told twice to get a move on. He probably knew the Tree of Many Seeds better than his absent amnesiac rider did. Balam Qytzeh had fond memories of it because for him, it dropped a delectable fruit with the taste and texture of fried fish. He would refuel on his feet in order to catch up to Quetz and the pale griffin.

A few hours ahead of the malkin, Quetz and Zurvanh condescended to the incline of Mount Atlaz. This slope was slippery as well as steep. Lava flows ran down its middle. Zurvanh landed on igneous rock, scaling the mountain with tenacity. After a while they reached a large cave, which led upward through dankness.

Quetz' quartz crystal flashed, lighting their way. Although they were assailed by coppery golems almost immediately upon entering. Quetz hopped off Zurvanh to help repel these automaton assailants. It was literally an uphill fight, but overbearing as those guardians were, they weren't quite a match against the dynamic duo. Quetz zapped them with Magick missiles—Zurvanh shoved them into each other—crushing them under their own weight. Discord manifested in a disarray of scattered debris. This went on for a drawn out interim, until finally, no more golems stood in their way.

The two exited into krummholz, composed of burning bushes and barren trunks. Pyroclastic boulders mowed down arid turf, torching all they touched. But Quetz beheld stranger things among arboreal limbs; cream-coloured ovals. The long and short hands on those melting oblongs brought to mind a moustached face.

Smarting from an ambient heat blur, Quetz' senses felt fuzzy. The very air lensed such that his head was swimming. Zurvanh tried to be his anchor:

“Do you know what these objects are, Prince of Ataraxyuh?”

“Yes—though I do not know how—they are **clocks!**”

“Precisely. Time is insignificant here. Think colder thoughts.”

Quetz made good on that suggestion and the elements responded as an avalanche rumbled toward them. It overtook the central coulee and cooled all inflamed areas, evaporating in the process. Once the clime had equalized, it became easier to proceed. Erelong, they ascended onto a broad, open plateau. Its top was featureless—apart from what Quetz figured to be a bucket, a mop, and an illustrated book about birds.

“What in tarnation?” The human mumbled while he perused that lyrical literature. When out of nowhere came the darker half of **Hrumakhyz**, pouncing upon Zurvanh! Both those felines wrestled across the terrace, each trying to overpower the other. Yet it was evident who held the upper paw. The Sphynx chomped at the griffin’s jugular, taking a vital chunk out of his gullet. Zurvanh dropped dead, spazzing and stuttering!

Hrumakhyz spit some gory pulp and glared at Quetz with mellow yellow eyes. She went on to scold him:

“It wouldst seem that the pretender hast traded bodies. But since thou art neither hot nor cold, I wilt vomit thee out!”

Quetz for his part, became uncomfortably numb. He had no doubt that he was confronting death itself. His legs trembled and saliva ran dry. Yet now **Dex** resurfaced—without a thought or any word, he broke into a merry jig! His movements were coy but well coordinated. Quetz joined in—ululating shrilly. The Sphynx was visibly perturbed by this outre display. Audibly sibilant—she crouched—preparing to lunge again. However, this

was the moment in which Balam Qytzeh returned to rejoin Prince Quetz.

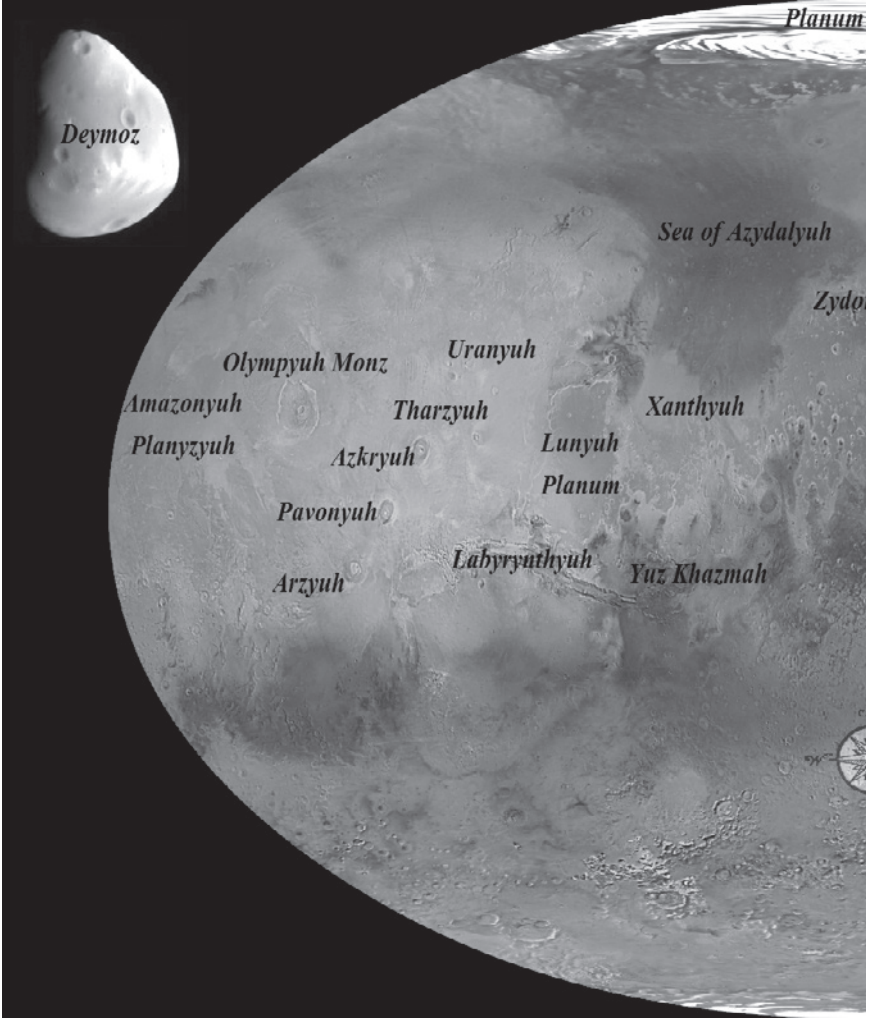
The jaguar jumped on Hrumakhyz and clung to the nape of her neck with fierce incisors. Reeling under the weight of an uncalculated contingency, Hrumakhyz railed and wailed. Balam Qytzeh dug deeper with brittle claws and held his prey in a macabre embrace. Seizing this chance—Quetz-cum-Dex aimed—tossing his javelin into Hrumakhyz' heart!

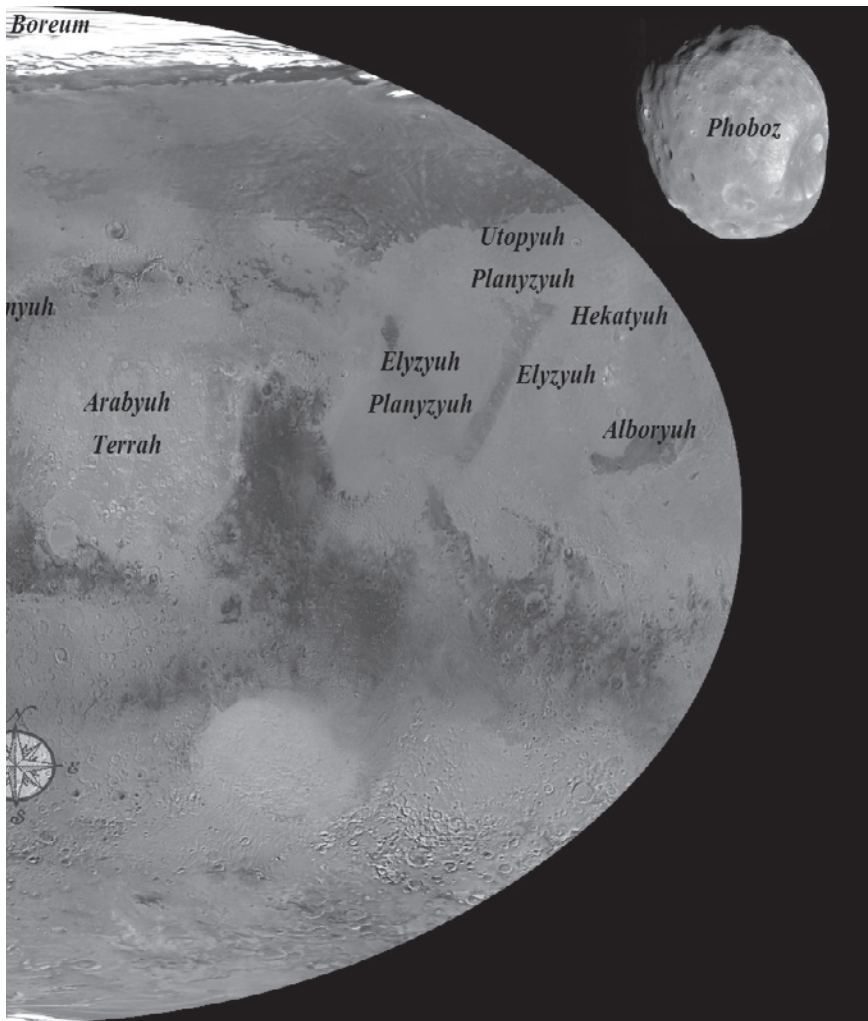
The onyx Sphynx let out a last yowl as its body unravelled, blowing away like dust in the wind. Although there was no time to celebrate because the mountain quaked then began crumbling beneath the vanquishers. Thus did Hrumakhyz take revenge on Quetz and Balam Qytzeh, along with all of Pan-Gaeah. While those two friends fell to their deaths, the four quarters of the supercontinent buckled and started drifting apart, splitting into six lesser landmasses. The Tree of Many Seeds was extirpated from soil but at least its seed pods were disseminated everywhere. Parcels of the populace would survive to become a widespread diaspora.

As for Dex—his story was hardly over. Arduously he shared Quetz' sensations (who by fire was burnt when he dropped out of the cauldron and into the furnace). Nevertheless that blistering baptism only helped to propel his consciousness fast forward into another epoch. Once more, he heard the Tyrthankarah Terr mentor:

*Steady on Dex—you've won the battle, but not the war. You're going from simplicity to sophistry galore. Leave your innocence behind in these days of yore. What's yet to come might make your loins sore. It may be easier to resist any adversary than **Babalonh**—the lusty whore!*

MAP OF MARZ





* Moons not to scale.



ACT FIVE

Zyberyuh

MARZ / MYSTIC ULTERIOR

The scalding sensation on Dex's skin soon became a soothing one, as he found himself immersed underwater. A radiant coral reef descended into inaccessible fathoms beneath. Dex almost gasped instinctively for air but he discovered that he could breathe as if he had an aqualung. Slanting solar flares gave exposure to a manatee with ram's horns chasing after schools of fish close by. Dex was fascinated, though again, he couldn't recall who he was. *Where is my mind?* he thought, then heard a fatherly voice replying:

“Current locus: Sea of *Azydalyuh*, at a depth of eight meters with an equivalent pH balance. Survey estimates 9000 new fauna and flora following only a millennium of evolutionary development. The Terraforming Initiative has been an overall success.”

Dex was uncertain from where that voice came, since it sounded external, yet it wasn't being carried by the tidal

currents. Although it didn't sound artificial, its rhetoric was rather robotic. This was affirmed by a projected holographic screen displaying a colourful map of Marz. A topaz pip pulsed off the rouge coast of *Zydonyuh*. Everything started coming back to *Djroz*, eighth regeneration of the founder *Omnoz*. His childhood had been an instructive one, to say the least. He was a proficient polymath endowed with social grace and sculpted good looks. He knew that his previous iterations had uploaded their memories into a 'compu-cloud', which he drew from and added to constantly. His genes weren't identical either, as each predecessor had modified theirs.

The querent mentally input a request: *Define your Self, then mission imperative.*

"O.M.N.O.Z.—Omnipresent Mainframe Network Orator, version **ZETA**. Mission Imperative was set by yourself, Emperor Djroz. We are conducting a routine survey of the *Zydonyuh* bay."

These words were illustrated via time-lapsed video taken by orbital satellites, which showed the Northern icecap melting from Planum Boreum and draining down into the basin below. The system then alerted him:

"Imperator, an urgent communique is coming through on your deck's console."

With a thought, a sounding line materialized and he pulled himself above water.

The deck of his barge was nothing fancy, but functional for scientific purposes. Out here he saw that there was a whole armada of naval craft coasting along the slopes of the *Zydonyuh* Mensa. He unlocked his panel by will alone and saw a photo

of someone instantly familiar. This was his lifelong friend, *Djrykh*, though the details were hazy. A baritone jived in zazzy vernacular:

“Wazzap zilch? Hate to be zeh herald of headaches but a situation has arisen in West province *Amazonyuh*. Our assistance is required by *Zvahah*, yer regent on *Olympyuh Monz*, and stewardess of *Kornuh-Kopyuh*. She’s in parties, so to speak, but it’s not yet in zeh can. I’m en route now to *Zydonyuh* from East province *Utopyuh*; passing through *Arabyuh Terrah*. Meet me in Pyramid Plaza. See ya in a zip!”

Knowing that he could leave his hydrofoil unattended, Djroz took an anti-gravity turbine from a chest and strapped it on his back with a clip-on vest. He had shed a thin membranous film when he surfaced. Already dry, he put on a pair of trousers too. A sense of reassurance came over him when he felt the contents in his pockets: a handy ultra-dagger †, GPS transponders, and a collection of clearance cards. In spite of his vaunted status, Emperor Djroz was headstrong and preferred to do most things alone. Those nearest to him knew to grant him a wide enough berth to actuate his autonomy. Nonetheless, from midair he signalled for the *Praetoryunh Gardz* to gather in the square. Hence he was regaled with showy pomp as he flew in for a landing. This certainly warmed his heart’s cockles, because although he was a loner, he also craved adulation.

They didn’t have to wait very long for Djrykh to join their ranks. Umpteen Gardz from all three *Utopyuh* townships (*Alboryuh*, *Elyzyuh*, *Hekatyuh*) came flanking Djrykh’s booster bike, each riding one as well. Since this was the popular mode of traversing Marz’ vastity, Djroz stowed away the propellant pack and mounted his own booster bike after greeting his good friend.

But before they moved out, their assembly sighted an abnormality where the albedo feature formerly known as ‘The Face’ stood. There was a whole lot of hullabaloo, but Djrykh silenced it while Djroz zoomed in using augmented vision. What he and the others saw was perplexing; a waxy Sphynx staring right back at them with citrine eyes. She sneered before leaping unnaturally high and Westward, skirting the edges of Djroz’ auxiliary senses.

“Zeh fux wazzat?” Djrykh pried.

“Not a clue,” Djroz replied, “but it looks like it’s heading where we’re going. We’d better get moving.”

The Emperor donned a helmet adorned with metallic satyr horns, then revved up his booster. He peeled away followed closely behind by his cohorts, though Djrykh sidled beside him as an able co-host. Those vehicles had thrusters that lifted them off the red Martian ground and begot a fair bit of drag from an oncoming headwind. Nevertheless, they crossed the breadth of four rivers (named: *Arezyuh*, *Zhalbathyuh*, *Ztyuh*, *Zymudyuh*) over the next six hours. *Zydonyuh*’s sister city, *Xanthyuh*, came into view, but it would take them another hour to reach it. A sanguine sunset was reflected by far-flung fields of solar panels up on the high plains of *Lunyuh* to the North. This coincided with *Xanthyuh* beaming full of prideful splendour as they got closer to it. A flashing billboard welcomed them with the population count: 12,000. It was common knowledge that this statistic had held static for centuries in the ‘*Dodeca-Districts*’. Reproduction was hardly practised anymore, except to replace somebody.

As they passed said sign, Djroz initiated communication with Djrykh:

“Something bothers me about that creepy cat back there. My lineage has long suppressed a secret, which I must tell you: when our founder Omnoz excavated into Olympyuh Monz, he stumbled on the ruins of an unimaginably ancient observatory. It was unequivocally alien in origin, and advanced beyond our best tech. Regent Zvahah is the science czar presently in charge of what we inanely call—Project ZED.”

Djrykh pondered the implications of this information, colloquially aggregating:

“Jeez Djroz, that’s intensity in ten cities! It might even explain why there’s been so many zany sightings throughout zeh styx lately. There’s unsettling hearsay circulating about monstrous spiders roaming zeh *Planyzyuh* outside my hometown of Elyzyuh.”

Their conversation was cut short when they stopped to refuel their bikes at a station supplied by CO2 collectors (a gas that remained plentiful in Marz’ atmosphere). Their group noticed that there was a large crowd at the Neon Crossing up the boulevard, held rapt by a public viewscreen. Djroz and his companions went over to see what was so spectacular. They were as shocked as everyone else there because it was an emergency distress call from the mining colony of *Labyrinthuh*, Southwest of them.

“We’re under attack!” A spooked miner was yelling. “Please advise the Emperor—we require immediate military assistance! These things, we don’t know what they are. They seem to be from another layer of the electromagnetic spectrum”—the signal cut out.

Djrykh and the others turned to Djroz as he said: “We have a sleepless night of riding ahead of us. Mount up, men of Marz!”

Half a world away, Zvahah, Regent of Amazonyuh was working in a laboratory hidden inside Olympyuh Monz. Since it was no less than the tallest mountain in the entire solar system, its vertex was also home to the stately Kornuh-Kopyuh—seat of imperial power from the time of Emperor Omnoz. This palatial estate had winding hallways that coiled to give it the outer shape of a nautilus shell. Zvahah's work was interrupted by the same distress call that Djroz had seen.

She stepped into the compartment of a short-range teleporter (which was state of the art even by Marz technological standards). This contrivance consumed copious amounts of plutonium generated by six supercolliders sprawling the adjacent Planzyyuh. In an instant she was transported to Kornuh-Kopyuh's topmost penthouse; its balcony gave her a broad perspective of the surrounding territories. Northward a storm front moved above the waters of Lake *Lykhoz*. This meant the aqueducts were in for a flood.

The twin moons *Deymoz* and *Phoboz* hung low but outshone the lights of five towns to the East (*Arzyuh*, *Azkryuh*, *Pavonyuh*, *Tharzyuh*, *Uranyuh*). Zvahah couldn't see as far out as Labyrinthyuh, but OMNOZ showed it to her by way of telescope array. She'd installed her own spectral filters on its lenses, which she cycled through while scanning for activity. After searching for several minutes, she started recording some high resolution footage of a moving mass of mauve silhouettes.

Those appeared to be eight-legged and each was roughly the size of a tractor unit. There were thousands of them, swarming into the cracks among the crags of Labyrinthyuh. The regent took her eyes off that projection, peering down the incline of Olympyuh Monz to the habitats at its skirts. She bore witness

to the exodus of a militia, rushing East with its convoy. It made her happy that she didn't have to issue any orders to these equally free men and women.

Moreover, Zvahah decided on aiding and abetting them. She contacted the leaders and let them know that she would airdrop newly engineered firearms ahead of them: "Whatever these entities are, they're localized within the gamma frequency range. In fact it appears that their bodies are composed of densely bundled Z bosons and other elementary wavicles. There are no protons, neutrons or electrons in their makeup at all. It's likely that nothing less than our 7th-Ray guns will be able to harm them."

Zvahah signed off and programmed a set of drones to deliver that deadly payload. They were as carnelian condors flying forth into the night, which compounded her sense of foreboding with their infrared light. She also called the mayors of all five neighbouring townships and assumed tactical control. Their squadrons were reigned in to team up with hers and would carry out her orders well beyond Olympuh's borders. No sooner had she made those moves on the figurative chessboard than a proximity alert beeped and blinked. Zvaha's desktop instruments began to go haywire—then no longer registered any readings. The wispy hair on the back of her neck stood up as she peered skyward. Something wan was rapidly descending on her exact coordinates.

Zvahah bashed a glass panel and punched a red button directly hardwired to the chamber of her security detail. Within moments a cadre of *Amazonyuh* Gardz arrived and took a defensive stance beside the regent, raising a prismatic barrier to protect her. They bore radium rifles but didn't get a chance to snipe at that incoming interloper.

Penetrating their force-field, the wax Sphynx put out the lights before they could react. A cacophonous clash ensued; two of the Gardz were fatally wounded by claws that ripped their armoured suits to ribbons! A third cast an electrified net that pinned their assailant down for a few seconds, during which the fourth one fired a radium burst that rippled through the mezzanine like a wave of jade. But to their dismay, this merely made the quarry's smooth coat gleam phosphorescent green. Hrumakhyz liquefied and oozed free from ferrous seams. Reconstituting herself into solid form, the jaded Sphynx renewed her rampage—giving no quarter by beheading and bifurcating the double-team!

This having been seen, Zvahah unholstered a prototypical 7th-Ray pistol and shot point blank at the vile villain. Its bluish emission was blinding, yet again it only served to change Hrumakhyz' outer aspect. Shaking off the stunning effects of that impact—she imposed her milky teats upon Regent Zvahah while proposing:

“Thou shalt be my vassal and vessel, ‘til I cometh in close contact with **Dex!**”

Next, Hrumakhyz became gassy and was inhaled by the human woman. Zvahah was zonked out for over a minute, which sufficed for her demonic possessor to probe recent memories. There were many things that the feline fury already knew.

Indeed it was she who'd breached the thin divide between Real and Ethereal dimensions. Hence the un-Abstracted Ankhs of many Homz throughout history were flooding into Marz from the supranatural zone of Geburah. They'd dragged something else along with them too; jailer and torturer wraiths from Purgatorio.

When she came to, Zvahah had zero recall of what had just happened. Dutifully, she brought systems back online and ordained robots to clean up the mess. She thought nothing of it—since Hrumakhyz lay dormant within her—glazing over her subconscious. The Sphynx also kept Zvahah ignorant of the fact that Djroz was flying into a trap...

Approaching Labyrynthyuh at first light via the broad bed of a canyon that the locals called *Yuz Khazmah*, Djroz and his cortege slowed their booster bikes down.

Gray smoke billowed from the stacks of an iron-ore refinery but the vertical farming greenhouses looked deserted. As they got closer though, only a lad (who was a rarity on this planet) came out to tell them:

“Everyone else split into posses and went into the tunnels to save stranded miners. They left me here to warn others of how desperate our fight has become yonder.”

Djroz reiterated those orders, asking the youth to stay behind with their boosters. Unfortunately their slick rides would be useless within the constricted passages that branched off in every direction ahead. Djroz unloaded a personal arsenal from his ‘saddlebags’ and partnered up with Djrykh. A thousand Praetoryunh Gardz subdivided themselves into fifty discrete scores. As did the worthies from Alboryuh, Elyzyuh, Hekatyuh, and Xanthyuh. They all proceeded on foot and spread out through the winding alleys of this perilous quandary. But in most cases, they didn’t make it very far down because the eight-legged nemeses they found were already emerging victorious from the entrances of many an underground compound.

Now they saw that although these inorganic beings resembled hulking spiders, they weren't in fact arthropods of any kind. Their exoskeletons shimmered with shifting designs that appeared to represent what they read on the minds of those beholding their outlines. Which was why some exhibited frightful fanged skulls or hemorrhaging hearts on their backs. Still, enough soldiers exerted the wherewithal to unleash strong attacks. The labyrinthine corridors echoed and flashed with concentrated firepower as these forces clashed. At first those foes scattered, giving the impression they'd been routed. Yet temerity backfired when worthies were flattered by human halves hanging from arachnids overhead who lauded:

“Such sumptuous sinew! The dead do discontinue what the living have on menu... We *Aranyuhz* wish to bring you—past the present—unto the final venue!”

Since these self-proclaimed *Aranyuhz* could read minds, the people they projected were often friends or relatives of the infantrymen below. Taken in by outer appearances, many stepped heedlessly into energized cobwebs and met with a terrifying fate. Thus did the *Aranyuhz* decimate those would-be rescuers, who had arrived just a little too late. The fallen were also absorbed by spider wraiths and served to lure more to their deaths as they tested their faiths. Rather soon *Djroz* and *Djrykh* were corralled amid the maze together with a handful of survivors from each faction. They stood back to back; forming a circle to ward off this encroaching subtraction. At least the Emperor possessed sufficient focus to see through such hocus-pocus. Few if any really knew that his family had held the reigns of statehood by controlling the dissemination of *Arkhon-Tekh* (which is what *Omnoz* figured the *Arkhoz* themselves called their own

machinery). Omnoz' lineage was a Technocracy par excellence, wherein only the most intelligent members of society advanced to positions of influence. The educational system was rigged to identify curious and ingenious tots very early on.

Knowledge was Marz' main currency, so an inborn thirst to learn was more than a reward in itself. OMNOZ' centralized AI core meted out privileges and property commensurate with an individual's contribution to bio-engineering, exploration, industry, etc. Of course (like all socioeconomic frameworks) it wasn't quite perfect. There had been much friction between the clans during former times, and no shortage of challenges to the Emperor's rule. As a result, designing cutting-edge weaponry would never become obsolete. Which at the moment was actually a good thing—because Djroz had a few nasty tricks up his magician's sleeve. He ordered his Gardz to help him assemble a gizmo consisting of seven revolving torus rings.

The mechanism began to gyrate as the Aranyuhz closed in around them. Djroz swept over their forefront with a laser pointer and excoriated:

“Inside-out—you can't cope—with my gyroscope!”

An almost imperceptible wave radiated from the centrifuge and filtered through the enemy lines. Moments later, their shape-shifting forms started to lose cohesion and unravel altogether. These wraiths let loose a blood-chilling screech when they fell apart!

But while this stalled their incursion, a singular *Aranyuh* had overseen the charge from afar and plotted reprisal. It commanded its counterparts to have each human half pick up their discarded blasters. They then took potshots at Djroz' device,

which put it on the fritz. Once again the Aranyuhz attacked head-on, galloping toward them like eight-legged centaurs who now knew how to brandish guns with their upper bodies. Emperor Djroz couldn't help but noticing that one astute arachnid remained removed behind the rest. Its humanoid was an armoured male holding not a weapon—but a vexillum—which bore a distinctive symbol: ☩. Wherefore OMNOZ informed Djroz that this matched the battle standard of Constantine The Great; Empire of Byzantium.

Think you can stave them off? Djroz asked Djrykh helm-to-helm. *I'm going after the mastermind.*

Ye can count on me ya yutz. Djrykh reassured, enthused. *Tally-ho and do not futz!* Showing no fear, Djrykh jumped into high gear. A renown warrior in his own right—that *Elyzyunh* knight gave the Aranyuhz an awful fright as they saw him flex his might. Djrykh's weapon of choice was a photon cannon, which he mounted on his shoulder as he took to one knee. He blasted a luminary ribbon of lilac that arced acrimoniously through the advancing army, Abstructing those it alighted for all eternity! Seven surviving Gardz from each town to the West also supported him with suppressive salvos that were a lot more effective at close quarters against these hesitant rivals.

Covered thus by his cronies, Djroz circumambulated Constantine's captor. Charcoal clouds discharged their content and rainfall concurred with this concurs. Choosing his words carefully, Djroz comminated the bygone conqueror:

“Flavius Valerius Constantinus—you set the tone for thousands of years back on Olde Earth. But here on Marz you are in over your head and I will expel any remnants of your outdated ideology. You now face a fastidious Iconoclast!”

That Aranyuh reared its forward appendages and stamped the ground, execrating:

“I Hadyth, have fuelled an inferno of perpetual misery since human prehistory. Your people’s pride, envy, wrath, sloth, rapacity, gluttony, and lechery—owe their extreme culminations to me. This Constantine you see, is naught but a trophy and so too will you be!”

Exchanging no further unpleasantries, the wraith swiped at Djroz with lanky legs but that Homh slid through a quagmire, homing in on his enemy’s underbelly. When the Aranyuh felt him splashing beneath, it dropped the lumbering weight of its abdomen.

Which is what Djroz had counted on—having already drawn his ultra-dagger † Djroz impaled the enemy from below, pushing up with reinforced gauntlets. He clove the Aranyuh using an ad hoc Hertz pulsation honed to its unique anatomy, bisecting and bowling it over onto its back. It continued to lash out against Djroz, but that biped lopped off its octad of limbs in a flawless succession of cuts. Disarmed, it couldn’t defend itself when Djroz took to the air with his reequipped propeller pack and shot it full of superfluous gamma radiation from his prototype 7th-Ray revolver!

Ending Constantine’s existence for good, Djroz returned to give support to Djrykh and the others. They were still heavily outgunned and surrounded, but just when their situation seemed most hopeless, the cavalry arrived. Legions of Gardz from Arzyuh, Azkryuh, Olympyuh, Pavonyuh, Tharzyuh, and Uranyuh came rappelling down the slants of Labyrinthyuh’s crannies. Wielding weapons provided by Zvahah, they dealt

death to the undead. Within minutes the Aranyuhz were totally exterminated.

Representatives from Olympyuh met with Emperor Djroz afterwards to extend an official invitation to Kornuh-Kopyuh on Regent Zvahah's behalf. Although before departing thereto, Djroz delegated the care and custody of forlorn Labyrynthyuh to her nearest neighbours. Following a brief repast on freeze-dried, vacuum-sealed field rations (during which everyone recharged their booster batteries), the Emperor continued his journey to Olympyuh Monz flanked by a reduced corps of retainers. A rancorous flurry of garnet grime flogged them along the final leg for many leagues on end.

At the very least they were greeted warmly by a family assembly when they passed between Azkryuh and Pavonyuh. Emperor Djroz stopped just long enough to give everyone his personal assurance that everything was under control, as well as to extol the dearly departed. He and his escort accepted some refreshments and then politely bid adieux to the townsfolk. Many miles still lay before them and it wasn't until the sun touched down in the West that they came close to the towering mount of Olympyuh Monz. Together with a quartet of *Praetoryunz*, Djroz and Djrykh went inside a Gothic-looking alcove and were beamed up after the Emperor swiped his access pass.

A pretty young woman whose name-tag read *Pageh* met them in the lobby:

"Salutations Lord Emperor. My Lady awaits you and yours in the auditorium."

Djroz thanked her with a customary kiss to the hand and she led them inward. They entered a spherical hall and were seated. Regent Zvahah officiated from the fore:

“Gentlemen, welcome to Kornuh-Kopyuh. I have some pressing news to relay. As everybody knows, a thousand years ago our proud people seceded from Olde Earth, then came here and seeded this quaternary sphere. They left Homo Sapiens back there on that tertiary rondure and we became known among ourselves as the *Hybrid-Us*.”

Djrykh interposed full of pizzazz: “Zeh hellz wit zeh history lesson?”

Unimpressed by his friend’s flippancy, Djroz reworded minus chutzpah:

“Yea Zvahah, we are all aware of how our forbears came to live on Marz. Yet we have but barely bested an irksome multitude of diabolical minions and ridden longer than I care to recount. Forgive my associate and I for being curt, but would you please cut to the chase? We are eager to learn what de facto is afoot.”

Switching on a projector which presented an animated slideshow to her audience, Zvahah calmly redressed:

“Our satellites have received an encrypted epistle from Olde Earth. It is writ in the cryptography of the Atavists. According to their message, we are not alone in trial nor tribulation. In fact this letter has the tone of a cry for help and I for one think that we ought to respond to its summons with utter impunity. My recommendation as regent is that we organize a small expedition back to our ancestral home world. We have been away for far too long and the time has arrived to revisit our origin story.

OMNOZ will now dictate the letter's contents so that you can judge for yourselves..."

Shalom—cousins—shalom!

Blessings from Ordo Principium.

Although you may not recall our ancient covenant we are beholden to each other, specifically during times of crisis. Such a time is the present moment. For we are bedevilled by deviant rogues from degenerate nations encircling this country called Zyberyuh. Thus do we beseech you amidst our direst need! Honour the forgotten pact—come berate with right and rod those who would injure your long-lost brethren. We await your reply with bated breath and even hold a recompense for your troubles; perhaps you have heard of a storied relic known as the colourless pearl?

A pensive silence followed these relational revelations. Thence Djroz articulated:

“Through my Great Grand Sire Omnoz—I do remember who those Atavists were. There was a grievous schism between them, and us who would become the Iconoclasts. It was exacerbated by our mutual mastery of spacefaring. Yet they only wished to aggrandize and further entrench their operations on Olde Earth. The asteroids were seen as another source of wealth. Whereas we wanted to prove that each of the inner planets could be tamed to sustain humanity's **zest**. Prior to a mass migration, Omnoz himself scuttled their navy. He would often refer to our home world as the ‘Prison Planet.’”

Djroz glanced at Djrykh to gauge his sentiment; he gave a shrug of simple assent:

“They made their bed—let ‘em die in it. It don’t matter to me.”

“Well what about this colourless pearl they mentioned?” Zvahah interceded.

“Ah, that does intrigue me,” Djroz openly admitted. “Throughout eight existences I have heard vague rumours regarding such a relic. However it is unclear what it is and even Omnoz’ private records cannot claim veracity. I would like to retrieve it myself.”

“If we do decide to go,” Djrykh went on to kibitz, “We oughta take a whole army wit us, to ensure our safety and survival. It sounds like dis Ordo Principium has many a rival. Zyberyuh depends on zeh strength of our arrival.”

“Nay,” Djroz deliberated aloud, “I would rather we take a small contingent as Zvahah suggests. Neither shall we send word ahead to announce our approach. This will be a covert mission and we should not arouse any suspicion. The only question is who amongst us can withstand every Olde Earthly condition? I could not persuade somebody to quit the freedom of Marz against their own volition.”

“Wither thou goest, I will go,” Zvahah enjoined. “Besides, you shall have need of my anthropological and psychological cognizance. I must make a mental inventory of how the people and places of Olde Earth have changed in our absence.”

“Quo vadis, vadam etiam ego,” Djrykh parroted in practised Latin. “Or did ya think that I’d let ye have all zeh fun?”

“Was there ever a doubt?” Djroz joked. “Zvahah, who will tend Konuh-Kopyuh?”

“My girl Pageh is versed for this purpose. And may I propose Lord that you also prepare your ninth iteration?”

“Indeed Lady—OMNOZ—initiate Protocol *Novem*.” Djroz then turned to those Praetoryunh Gardz who were present, admonishing: “Praetoryunz—your duty is here with the proximate Emperor. You are pledged to protect him instead of I from now on.”

These Gardz made an honorary protestation but they knew that Djroz was correct. Already in the lab below, a zygote of royal blood was germinating within the imperial gestation tank. In only ten days—it would issue an infant—wide eyed and willing to learn his role upon the red planet. OMNOZ would gradually unlock genetic memories and educate him.

That evening, Djroz invited delegates from each of the Dodeca-Districts to sup with their soon-to-depart eighth Emperor. They broke bread and ate heartily, sharing songs and stories of auld lang syne. There was dancing and laughter all through the night during which Djroz drank drafts of a psychotropic nectar called *Lotuz*. Inducing waking R.E.M.—he had visions of an odd man named Dex—before becoming woozy and succumbing to catch some zzzz’s.

The following morning, they started to make their preparations in earnest.

“As Triune we stand a better chance of infiltrating the Prison Planet undetected,” Djroz confided with Djrykh and Zvahah.

They descended from Kornuh-Kopyuh to attend a lengthy runway on the edges of Olympyuh district. There on the launch pad awaited for them a splendiferous spaceship dubbed The Star Rover. It glimmered in the afternoon sun as a ruby might.

Djroz' antecedents had foreseen many possibilities and so this craft was outfitted with all sorts of amenities, including astrolabe facilities (not to mention tons of guns). The three of them loaded their own personal luggage as well as bounteous provisions in anticipation of scarcity. After running thorough diagnostics—the countdown began.

The Star Rover lifted off with a tail of teal exhaust—tearing through Marz' stratosphere! Once in orbit they utilized a gravitational slingshot maneuver to gain speed and when escape velocity was achieved, they jettisoned their rockets and activated an EM Drive. Its propulsive waves were capable of getting them to Olde Earth in 70 days. They spent time studying languages and reconditioning their bodies for +62% gravity.

Roughly halfway through the trip, there was an unforeseeable incident; Voladz that'd fought for the Arkhonz Azmodeuth had mutated outside the spacetime continuum. They came rushing together like bees from distant Hermez and Venz, clustering around The Star Rover. They appeared on the ship's scanners, alerting her few crew. These Voladz were more streamlined than ever before and bore a resemblance to enormous hornets, flitting wings afire and threatening the ship with thorny stingers.

“Bring the Monster Magnet online,” Djroz adjured. “Let them know who is Lord in this space!”

As its name denoted, that weapon worked its magic by bunching all the Voladz into a buzzing clump of connoption. Aligned to its crosshairs, The Star Rover irradiated those vexatious insects in a brilliant nuclear explosion!

Obsidian Eagle

Nevertheless, one Voladh did manage to break loose and then cling to the hull. Its stinger damaged some key systems before the magnet's reversed polarity sundered it. Although they would make it to their destination in one piece—there was irreparable damage to their communications dish—which is how they lost contact with OMNOZ. Finally they beheld the hollowed out shell of Olde Earth's single moon. The third planet from the sun loomed beyond, begirded by what sensors designated as 'space junk'.

TELLZ / MYSTIC ULTERIOR

All too quickly the wreckage wreathing the equator grew so thick that The Star Rover was struck multiple times by scrap metal. Thus its entry into Olde Earth's ozone layer became a bumpy ride while its meteoric descent lit up an opaque sky.

The ship crashed onto greenish waters scuzzy with algae; which was fortuitous because its passengers could deploy an inflatable dinghy. Since they weren't far from the coast, they gathered their most important belongings and made for its shore.

The beach there was littered with broken bottles, empty aluminum cans and plastic packaging. An orange sunrise was the highlight of their landing and they decided to make the best of it by following its rays further inland.

Sand dunes challenged them as they advanced, along with scrappy dust devils and tumbleweeds. This proving ground went on for the better part of a very drawn-out day. At dusk, they came upon another sign of civilization—an abandoned autobahn.

They followed lines of rusting car chassis toward what looked like a ghost town. Yet by nightfall, hundreds of lamp-posts flickered on, illuminating the cracked streets and broken homes. Djroz, Djrykh and Zvahah declined via downward spiral stairway.

Ere long they encountered a signpost that read: *Panaxyuh*—Pop. 36,000. A rancid smell blew in on the wind and stung their unaccustomed nostrils. Djrykh's face was screwed with distaste when he disparaged:

“What a shit-hole!”

“Djrykh has a point,” Zvahah corroborated. “There are fecal particles in the air. Maybe these Homo Sapiens cannot metabolize ingested nutrients like we Hybrid-Us.”

Djroz spotted a lineup of urbanites down the main lane. They were congregating beneath a marquee, which advertised: *Clafsic sci-Fi—Double Bill*. Djroz got a good look at their faces, then began programming a set of ‘meta-masks’ for himself and his friends.

“Put these on and cowl yourselves. We must blend in with these folk and attend this theatrical showing.”

“Why, they are ghastly in aspect!” Zvahah scathed, but followed directions.

In truth they were as repulsive as she said; covered by lesions, pockmarks and zits. Such defects and diseases had been purged from the gene pool ages ago on Marz. Zvahah’s augmentations also detected residual radioactivity in the region (evidently fallout from a past conflict). At least she determined it wasn’t severe enough to cause their team harm.

Once in line they noticed a clerk with rhinestone eyes accepting sheeny trinkets for general admission. Djroz had prepared for this eventuality so that when they reached the booth—he held out a pebble of Lapis Lazuli—indicating with an index:

“For the three of us.”

“U mean fer þree?” Righted the clerk. “Drunk already I C.”

He ushered them in just the same. Inside there was a concession stand doling out popcorn and soda to the moviegoers. The Marz trio found it all a bit revolting and opted to enter

the theatre proper. They took seats as far back as possible from everybody else.

The first motion picture to play told the story of an alternate timeline in which apes had evolved from humans and were thus the dominant species on the planet. Chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans lorded over humans who'd become nothing more than dumb animals. Its ending seemed eerily similar to current circumstances.

A brief intermission occurred, giving the patrons a chance to urinate and then socialize in the gallery. Djroz and company kept apart, but overheard interesting tidbits:

"I do prefer be original to be prequel & sequel—reboot & remake." And:

"Ia—hey broke away too much from be cinematic canon."

Zvahah provided an analysis in hushed tones:

"They read the screen as if 'twere Scripture; a beloved pastime from long ago.

It provides temporary escapism from the humdrum monotony of everyday life. They live vicariously through fictional characters instead of living out their own stories as we do."

The second film's opening credits began to roll and everyone retook their seats. This instalment differed from the preceding one because it featured superheroes combating the forces of evil and saving the world from an apocalyptic scenario. Pseudoscience and special effects won the day—as well as the audience's applause!

Jazzed up, a motley mob left the movie house and started convening along the outer rim of a rectangular lot. The tenor told of expectation, punctuated with common phrases:

“Folks fure hað brainf back þen.”

“Ia—brainf!”

Djrykh couldn’t help jeering: “These aren’t Homz—they’re *Zombz!*”

The threesome laughed about this zinger. Not long after, a glitzy wagon arrived and four aides rolled out a carmine carpet. A heavysset bozo whose maquillage failed to cover up telltale signs of plastic surgery came out. Using a bullhorn, that person shouted:

“Citizenf of Panaxyuh—I, yer Tetrarch *Phonehtyx*—hope U enjoyeð tonight f entertainment. Nop comef þe time to ðrap lotf!”

This elicited a unified “*Huzzah!*” of approval and excitement. Phonehtyx had his quad of aids toss lots of slim white sticks into the air from fat sacks. The *Panaxyunz* caught these and smelled them with gusto. There were plenty to go around so Djroz and his accomplices grabbed some too. They waited and saw everyone else lighting their little sticks with flintstone sparks. Djroz copied them, albeit with a plasma torch.

A dingy nimbus accumulated above the whole scene. Djroz & co. pretended to inhale those noxious fumes while their masks safely filtered them out. It rapidly became apparent what the purpose of doing this was because about a fifth of the crowd was breathing viridian vapour; Marz triad included. The different groups eyed each other then commenced reorganizing themselves accordingly. Phonehtyx reminded them:

“Þhoever hufff þe Ðragon`f puff—please proceed to þe train station. Þe þho remain here þank U fer yer selflefs sacrifice. May U prosper N yer service to *Zehmantlyx*—Zealot of *Zyntaxyuh!*”

Not knowing what they`d gotten themselves into—Djroz, Djrykh, and Zvahah—tailed the rabble until they arrived at a set of railroad tracks near a dilapidated station.

Rather punctual, a steampunk locomotive came chugging on the rails. There were fifty boxcars altogether and they filled up within five minutes. Without any further ado the caravan departed. The coming day it would pass through an ashen forest of cinders and cross a silicon tundra strewn thick with oxidized circuitry. It was supposed to enter *Zyntaxyuh* that evening—but the train veered like crazy—going off the rails!

This mode of transit hadn`t been very cozy to begin with, but it became downright pernicious. Many died or sustained injuries. Djroz and the others were lucky. They got out of their carriage and ventured into the dreary twilight alongside the *Zombz*. Djrykh investigated the locomotive, noticing that wooden logs had been piled in its path (probably on purpose). His examination triggered a quarrel between two *Zombz* regarding the intentions of their Tetrarch:

“U C—I tolð U Þhonehtyx can`t B trusted. He haf sent uf to our ðeapf!”

“Nonfense! Accidentf happen. Þere`f no reafon fer þinkin þerpife.”

Their discussion was cut short when agonized cries were heard all around them. The *Zombz* were being waylaid by wolfish bushwhackers! Everybody quick with life now ran, heading toward a ruined cathedral. Unluckily they got backed

up against a wall covered in spray-painted graffiti. A tall caped figure with porcelain skin made an intro:

“Welcome to Zyntaxyuh—I B Zealot Zehmantlyx—& U already met my Þlvz. Þey`re here to enfüre none efcäpe. some of U pill ferve; oþerf pill B ferveð to my kin!”

At his fiat, more flamboyant fiends alike Zehmantlyx flashed fang and encroached on the Þanaxyunz. Underneath baroque arches they cast capes over each stunned victim and sucked on fresh blood while others could only watch and await their turn in despair. Djroz chose this moment for he and his people to reveal their true identities.

“Þell þat have þe here?” Zehmantlyx descried those three shedding their disguise then decreed: “Crofs & Þrofs—feize M!”

A pair of husky Þlvz went to enact the decree. Crofs had an inverted cross stitched on his forehead, whereas Þrofs wore a collar of interwoven circuit boards. Both were werewolves—a lot taller than either Djroz or Djrykh. Nonetheless, the knights of Elyzyuh and Zydonyuh made an admirable stand. The Emperor in exile denounced:

“Zealot Zehmantlyx—you and yours are nothing more than bloodthirsty *Vampz*!

As for these mongrels—call them off or we shall make mincemeat of them.”

Zehmantlyx scoffed and sicced his dogs on the outsiders. But before they could do any harm—bloodied patches of mottled fur flew out every which way! Djroz and Djrykh stood posing with reddened blades. The former gave one last warning:

“We have even more powerful weapons than these. Do not force our hands!”

“Pat an apful pay of fpeakin!” Zehmantyx reprimanded. “Pere R U from ftrajerf?”

“We are Hybrid-Us—whom have come from faraway Marz seeking an artifact known as the ‘colourless pearl’—release these unhappy prisoners and help us find it,” was Djroz’ earnest request.

Reluctant but interested, the Zealot ordered the other Vampz to leash their hounds and withdraw. The remaining Panaxyunz thanked Djroz and fled. Zehmantyx then invited the Triune to follow him. They passed through the vestiges of a parliament.

Across the street there lay a quay where a recently refinished yacht moored. Together the four of them boarded the Zealot’s personal pleasure craft. A luxurious dining salon neath candlelit chandeliers distracted one from the portholes, which offered a view of the river’s oily waters under a fractured moon. Zehmantyx poured himself vino drawn from the veins of past victims. With a whiff of its bouquet he went on to say:

“Pat U feek paf uncovered N þe ðomain of *Moryuh* ruled by Magiftrate *Brykolex*. I pill bear U hence N þif vefsel & C U gone.”

“Jolly good,” Djroz approved, “but I also wish to ask if you know of Zyberyuh?”

Zehmantyx hissed (rather hiffed) at this very mention, chastising (or chaftifin):

“A picked place; loŋ ago it pageð par on uf all & left þese realmf af U C þem noð. Avoið it like þe plague!”

The rest of that cruise was pervaded by a sombre silence. There was neither food nor drink that the Zealot could offer his guests so they munched on their desiccated preserves. By morning they reached another dock and waved adios on its wharf.

As Zehmantyx had directed—Djroz, Djrykh, and Zvahah followed the boardwalk until they got to a promontory that led up to an adit dolven in the mountainside. There they were denied entry and frisked by four watchmen of wee stature, whose beards nearly touched the steely toes of their boots. Each of these pickets carried an adze and communicated primarily through grunts and sign language. After repeatedly requesting an audience with Magiftrate Brykolex–Djroz’ persistence paid off—he and his friends were taken through the filigreed gate. An industrial grade elevator made their descent down a mine shaft somewhat picturesque. And though they thought that this must lead to a bare-bones underground bunker—what they now beheld blew them away—

Much more than a mere mine, Moryuh was in fact a burgeoning borough inhabited by industrious citizens and exhibiting ingenuity of craftsmanship. Here spun titanic tops that provided kinetic energy—strung with cables to conduct electricity. A filtration plant pumped water which ran through the deeps, as well as natural gases. Everywhere were construction signs, synced with the sound of jackhammers and excavators. Cement was being poured by the truckload to provide new-fangled pavement.

“A fabled den of *Dwaruz*,” Zvahah elaborated upon these sights. “Or perhaps *Dpruz*—as the Zealot would have it. So far it seems they share his Logophobia.”

Once below, they were taken inside a palazzo panelled with reflective windows. A plaque embedded above the reception desk read Moryuh Topn Hall—est. Yesteryear. The small rotund woman behind the desk grouched when she was roused from sleeping on the job. After some protest she agreed to bring them before the Magiftrate of Moryuh. Brykolex sat at a judge's bench, wearing his mantle of office and a funny wig that complemented his curly white beard. Off to the side there was a jury box, seating an octet of jurors. A court reporter sitting right of Brykolex kept track of proceedings on her stenotype. Addressing Dĵroz, Dĵrykh, and Zvahah—the Magiftrate quizzed:

“pho R U?”

“We are Hybrid-Us, whom have come from faraway Marz,” Dĵroz began but was cut short by Brykolex, who became irritated on hearing him speak, countering:

“U R *Zyberyunz!* May B even þe fame onef pho đefecrated þe tabernacle of *Azop* & pillaged þe colourlefs pearl. U pill pay fer yer impuðence; imprifon M!”

Enforcing this summary sentence, an armed bailiff remanded them to a jail cell subterranean even to Moryuh's depths. Here they were meant to wait until the manner of execution befitting their capital crime had been decided. Dĵrykh complained to Dĵroz:

“We shouldn't have let 'em take our weapons. We can still kill 'em wit ease if we try our damnedest. Why hold back and risk untimely deaths?”

“Call it a hunch,” Dĵroz avowed. “Now we know our cousins were here too. Mayhap we can contact them.”

Whereat Djroz set out to activate a pocket transmitter, calibrated to the callback frequency of Zyberyuh. Its carrier wave contained basic information pertaining to their mission and situation. In the meantime they made themselves at home and rested in the hopes that their SOS would be received by the outside world.

Those wishes weren't in vain because early the next day, muffled voices came over the wall behind them:

"Hello, can you hear us?" And upon hearing their affirmations continued by cautioning them: "Stand back. We're going to detonate a pound of plastique."

They did as they were told and following an exasperating pause came the detonation, louder and messier than they could have prepared for! Of course this set off a ringing alarm that woke every available guard. Dozens of Dprvz descended to the dungeon, eager to taze with their nightsticks. Yet they were about meet their match.

Firing Uzis that spit out armour piercing bullets and wearing tact vests, an ennead of pointy-eared pixies with grizzled-blue skin and sterling strands of hair rendered these *Moryunz* moribund. They rolled smoke grenades to cover their getaway, urging Djroz and the others into the corridor whence they'd come. Once they gained some distance from the jailhouse, introductions were made:

"Well met cousins. **We** are *Rynex—Zyberyuh* S.W.A.T.—Prelate *Pastyzhex* foretold your coming and sent us to rescue you when **Null** received your Mayday. We will escort you to *Parapraxyuh*; Capitol of Zyberyuh."

"I see you have evolved into Drow *Ekvz*," Djroz animadverted.

“We Zyberyunz are ‘None-ists’. We’re asexual and have no individual identity. By contrast, you’re known to us as ‘All-ists’, who embrace every possible permutation. Are we mistaken?”

“I would say that is fairly accurate,” Djroz conceded. “Although we prefer to refer to ourselves as Hybrid-Us. Our kind has avoided the pitfalls of cloning by constantly remixing the material in Marz’ genome repository. Our efforts are markedly successful.”

“It shows,” was the voiced consensus of all nine Rynex. “Zyberyuh and its ilk have fallen ill to the ravagement that spreads like a pestilence through Earth and Ether. We thought the colourless pearl might hold the antidote, but it doesn’t. Not for us.”

The conversation ceased when they went overground via subway exit. An armoured crawler with the name *Hellgrammite* airbrushed on its doors was parked there. Everyone grabbed a hold of something inside because this was no leisurely excursion. The Hellgrammite plowed through inhospitable terrain at breakneck speed.

It took several hours of torturous discomfort to taxi them to a high voltage fence, where someone else queried by means of an intercom:

“Password?”

“Here Is No Why,” the S.W.A.T. captain rejoined.

A gantry lifted the barrier gate to let them in. They then continued forward for about another hour before reaching central Parapaxyuh. Everyone got out and stretched their cramped legs. Looking around, the first thing to catch Djroz’ eye was a building bearing the configuration of a pentagon. Rynex were

posted outside its front doors too, although their function was rather ritualistic.

Those aforesaid sentinels exchanged formalities with the S.W.A.T. team but also took responsibility for the delivery of their visitors, who followed them past the entrance and in through the sliding doors of a ritzy lift. They were transported upstairs pronto then taken to the presence of the Prelate, whom was rather revered in the words of servile secondaries (presumably because of clairvoyant capacity):

“Oyez! Kudize Paztyzhex—Pilot of the Stone Temple. Null among null. Whom alone can prewise what will come. We bring tribute for Null to guide us into a new era of preponderant prosperity. These are our distant cousins, come from Marz.”

Donning clerical garb, Prelate Paztyzhex arose off a pedestal and sized up the extraterrestrial triplex. ‘Null’ was outwardly pleased so Djroz felt alright questioning:

“If you are all identical, what is it that makes the Prelate different?”

“I,” Paztyzhex parried, “was a quirky Jynx since my younger days. The Rynex excluded me from their games and spurned me until my teen years. Yet they soon came to terms with my precognition, since it served our societal needs. Indeed ‘twas I who foresaw your coming and extended an olive branch in your direction. Howbeit, such foresight was expanded by our acquisition of the colourless pearl. Which is why I have an indecent proposal for you: perform an act of Hierogamy with your female and engender a baby for us. In return—we will bequeath that prized relic unto you. Please take some time to consider it in the suite we have prepared for you. But do not

tarry long—unquestionably our enemies draw nigh even as I speak.” Hence, the expatriated triplicity was shown to their rooms as Paztyzhex had promised. They now conversed among themselves, with Djroz leading:

“Well, methinks the Prelate has a touch of madness. What say you, Zvahah?”

“Seeing as we came this far, I think we should get the Hieros Gamos over with.”

Djroz found her resolve a bit baffling but he was very desirous of the relic too. Djrykh threw in his two cents:

“Ye both ought go through zeh motions, if only to buy some time and provide a diversion while I hax0r zeh telecom station I saw earlier.”

“An exemplary use of subterfuge old friend,” Djroz commended. “I have here a remote actuator. Plug it into any uplink terminal aimed at Marz and it's **checkmate** Prelate 'patzer'.”

“You intend to set Sequence **XYZ** in motion,” Zvahah deduced. “Will that not result in the three of us dying along with everybody else on this godforsaken globe?”

“Each previous Imperator has perished in the line of duty,” Djroz divulged. “Immortality is naught but a flawed concept. Such a denouement was ever in the cards.”

“Let zeh dominoes fall,” Djrykh assented; eliciting a Latin resonation from Djroz:

“Alea iacta est. Efface these atavistic clichés from the face of this planet!”

After a couple of hours, an envoy intruded to find out if they'd reached a decision. They sent 'null' back with word of their compliance emphasizing a dual proviso: that the pearl be brought for them to see—and—that their privacy be respected whilst copulating. The latter was rather wishful thinking because Prelate Paztyzhex insisted on a proxy from The First Principle (Ordo Principium) monitoring their progress, albeit remotely. But at least the pearl would be handed to Djroz for him to verify its verity. Having no real choice, he acquiesced to this compromise. These negotiations concluded, the colourless pearl was produced at long last. It was encased within an opulent pyxis, bedizen with aureate runes. However, as its name implied, the item itself was visible only by virtue of the fact that it warped any ambient luminosity. Djroz was permitted to hold it and feel its weight in his hands; during which time **Dex** reawakened!

Transcending multiple timelines, that postmodern Zelig took on many identities throughout Earth's antiquity. He now understood his and Djroz' dichotomy... Since nobody else was aware of that subjective epiphany, Djroz calmly put the pearl back into the cylindrical box. He cracked his knuckles and neck, then loosened his limbs prior to demanding:

"Music Maestro—and bring some booze—let's get this show on the road!"

Paztyzhex's aids acceded, then everyone but the couple evacuated the honeymoon suite. Djrykh excused himself as well, meandering toward that floor's foyer.

Rynex treasurers had bestowed an amazing technicolor dream-coat upon Djroz and vermilion negligee for Zvahah. Engaging Djroz in foreplay, Zvahah did a dramatized dance

known on Marz as the 'wandering star', elegantly seducing with a hip.

"What has gotten into you?" Djroz puzzled out loud.

She quieted him with her pointer digit, riddling: "I am the name of the sound and the sound of the name. I am the signature of the letter, and the seal of division."

She had always been a zaftig dame, but Djroz' Emperor duties had heretofore kept him distracted from her exquisite allure. Tantalizing with the folds of her nightdress she unveiled a perfect pair of luscious breasts. She was no trifling Jezebel.

Zvahah's womanly wiles were nothing to sneeze at. Djroz felt as if he was overheating due to Eros. Zvahah wagged her bulbous derriere against Djroz' groin and animalistic wants engulfed his psyche; fluxing through the gates of five senses.

He wrapped her wavy auburn mane around his fist and she purred like a kitten. Yet now **Hrumakhyz** resurfaced, though her form had become that of an anaconda! Transfixing Djroz with opal optics, she began squeezing the life out of her male mate.

This same night, a syzygy occurred between Sol ☉ Luna ☾ and Terra ♂.

The sun's light shined through the caved out casing of the moon; flaring bedazzling scintillae into any onlooking pupils. And at that witching hour, Zyberyuh was besieged.

The Magiftrate of Moryuh, Tetrarch of Panaxyuh, and Zealot of Zyntaxyuh moved their combined pawns to close in on Parapaxyuh. Companies of Đprvz, Vampz, plvz, and Zombz dismantled the fence to oppose the Rynex serving Paztyzhex.

Every null Zyberyunh (minus the Prelate's sleazy proxy) amassed atop Parapraxyuh's battlements and Null supported them from the flat pinnacle of a pyramid; aiming a planar antenna that extruded baneful microwave pulses to the targets below. The Zyberyunz lay down suppressing volleys—forcing the invaders to fall back—but only for a moment. Beyond city limits they rallied and reinvigorated their charge. The Zombz served as human shields for Vampz and Plvz, who tossed these fodder-folk at the Elvz. Meanwhile, the Dprvz drilled into the bastions from below.

Very soon, the bulwarks were swamped with lycanthropes, vampires and zombies, stripping Zyberyuh's defenders à la tooth and nail. The Rynex couldn't contend against such aggression bolstered by muscled midgets rising from the underworld.

When they ran out of ammo—the Elvz wielded stilettos and tomahawks—fighting bravely.

Yet there was no way that they could hold out forever. The Moryunz, Panaxyunz, and *Zyntaxyunz* eventually overran the Prelate's protectors. This carnage caused the *Parapraxyunh* streets to run red with blood... Brykolex, Phonetyx, and Zehmantyx ganged up on Paztyzhex—but embattled by their gambit—he raised them a bazooka!

Quadruple incendiaries left a smoky orchid bloom behind as they blazed a trail to the Magifrate, Tetrarch, and Zealot. The resulting combustion was deafening to hear and hazing to anyone's vision. Although **magically**, the troika emerged unscathed. Together they dashed the Prelate and stuck Null on the end of their swords!

Thus fell Paztyzhex, not unlike Constantine XI overthrown by the Ottoman Turks. This ongoing state of chaos was most advantageous for Djrykh (who'd infiltrated deep into pentagon headquarters). It wasn't hard for him to rig a computer and send Djroz' directive to Marz. At perigee with Tellz, Sequence XYZ took four minutes to transmit.

OMNOZ relayed the signal to Deymoz and Phoboz—where between them unfolded the infrastructure of a solar conductor cone. It gathered incalculable gigawatts from an incoming photonic tide, focusing that into a beam as might a magnifying glass. Scientists had forecast Earth's expiry billions of years too late; tonight was its date.

But in the meantime, Djroz-cum-Dex still tussled with Zvahah-cum-Hrumakhyz. Discombobulated as Djroz was, Dex stepped in, channelling the ****asterism**** of Aquila.

His cathexis was so zeroed upon it that Altair and Tarazed became beryl eagle eyes. Dex's chosen Zodiac sign put the side-real Serpens in check.

Hrumakhyz now watched the star-crossed lovers jealously, unable to interfere. Djroz and Zvahah consummated their sweet delight with a mutual climax as Marz' magnificent mirrors redirected the raging fulmination to usher in Earth's endless night. Yet they felt naught but bliss even when heaven's lathe atomized this planet unto Lethe.



EPILOGUE

Æon of Zaynh

Dex was abruptly thrown into space, and time kept on slipping—slipping—into the future. He spread out refulgent wings, flying in pentacle formation to a splendorous sea. Diving beneath waves of subliminal awareness; his Ankh felt at home. For an inexact interval—all sensations ceased. Then his Ethereal eyelids lifted, again beginning to see the light. His memory was jet-lagged from the lengthy flight, but Terr spoke cordially within him:

Athirst, you've tasted the unconsciousness of Lethe's waters. Now go forward and slake your thirst on this other river; it is the Mnemosyne.

Doing just that, Dex was distressed by memories of Djroz and Zvahah.

Worry not about your friends. They shall soon live again on Marz. But you my dear Dex are destined for loftier goals. Brace yourself—you're among the Neterz!

As if they had heard that unuttered word, a portal was noisily flung wide open. Anubyz, Bazteth, and Theuth came through it, nattering the whole time. They circled round Dex, looking him up and down. Crest of Cat and Crest of Jackal both nuzzled him while Crest of Ibis wrote notes on papyrus. They were rather in a tizzy to have a Homh in their midst. Enthusiastically, Theuth eulogized in comprehensible speech:

“Welcome Dex, to the **Duath**. Do follow us, we have such sights to show you!”

Dex did as asked and was led into a mausoleum where an arcade’s colonnade ascended to a height out of sight. They entered a commodious courtyard, and there awaited the scales of Maath, guarded by Ammuth. A male baboon also sat in front of a scorching caldera. A pair of prisoners were then brought in by the troll, Bez.

“We must thank you Dex,” Theuth confessed. “You have cleared the blockage that once prevented any unrefined Ankhs rising from Orz to this level of the Megalocosmos. Finally we can put on trial those who have been evading our justice. These first two are a special case in point. Allow us to introduce *Flavius Josephus* and *Eusebius Pamphili*; court historians / propagandists who colluded with political powers of their day to bear false witness. Their state-sponsored Apocrypha became canonical and literal interpretations based thereon resulted in centuries of oppression and persecution. Truly the winners do write history but writing itself is a sacred art and those who produce such forgeries must answer to the Grand Author. For you see, Dasein can scarce divine deepest design of either a sigil or The Sign.”

That being said, Anubyz and Bazteth proceeded to extract hearts from both the accused. Eusebius and Josephus gasped when this was done, but had been rendered speechless. When Dex came to think of it, he too was unable to say anything. He could only passively observe as those cardiac organs were placed on the left platter one at a time and weighed against a lustrous ostrich feather on the right side. In each case, the heart outweighed the quill.

After Theuth recorded the results, these heavy hearts were unceremoniously chucked into the famished muzzle of Ammuth, Devourer of Kah! Ammuth stood upright on two hind hippopotamus legs to catch this morbid meal in her Nile crocodile mandibles and leopard forepaws; licking her reptilian lips with an alligator tongue. Thence the lingering Ankhs of those scribes were given over to *Babeh* the baboon, whom now exercised his power of speech:

“Yea! Every profligate liar—shalt have their portion—amid the lake of fire!”

Indeed those scraps of shade were consigned to suffer in eternal burning sulphur. Theuth then gestured for Bez to take a hold of Dex’s arms and apologized:

“Forgive us Dex, but we must be impartial in our judgment. Amoun-Rah himself has requested your presence—yet we cannot let you pass through the Field of Reeds until you ace your final exam...”

Inside his evanescent head, Dex was freaking out! Bazteth was kind to remind:

“’twas one of mine that twined thy skein back in the anterior tine.”

She caressed Dex's countenance before reaching into his chest and removing his vascular muscle as delicately as was possible. Anubyz placed it gingerly onto the platter. For one second the two weights hovered in a tenuous equilibrium—but then—the feather dropped below the old ticker. Unfurling a scroll, Theuth did exonerate:

“This person possesses a rare degree of levity. Which is hardly to say that he is beyond reproach. Looking back on his story there are certainly major errata and lacunae. For instance, why could Paztyzhex not foretell his own downfall? Although perhaps that is more of a question to pose to the prelate.”

Bazteth reset Dex's internal clock, which incidentally restored his voice as well. Drawing an exhilarating draft of hallowed air, Dex cachinnated gleefully! Dex's mirthful outburst was contagious even to the Neterz—Ammuth, Anubyz, Babeh, Bazteth, Bez and Theuth all tittered together. It took them quite some time to recompose themselves. Therewith, that zoological courthouse faded away and Theuth briefed Dex:

“Behold, the Field of Reeds. Head to yon sycamore.”

Dex did as he was told. He now noticed that his Ethereal body was more buoyant than his previous transubstantiation had been. Everything felt effortless and portended smooth sailing from here on out.

These intuitions proved bona-fide because **Vortexyuh** Etherealized atop the tree. Embellished with bijoux, she came exalting:

“Excelsior Dex! Thou hast squared the circle and expunged the decay of Daath, dispelling the torpor that wrought such a tzimmes—an uproar—throughout Yetzyrah. Knoweth then

that ye must part thy Khabz from Khuh to pass via Bynah and Zhokmah. Aye, open up the heavens! Rise unto Ketheroz and be forever Un-Reborn again.”

Always ascending—Dex halved himself—hanging upside down—aloof in two places.

An influx of liquidized crystal purified those halves and then brought them into unison upright. Dex dipped a tiptoe into that empyreal undercurrent and it sent ripples outward. Hovering over a fjord on the horizon—seven magnificent Amezhah Zpentaz oversaw him immortalized. Garmented by gemstones he rose to their vantage, shaking their hands one by one—Ameretath, Armaythyh, Haurvatath, Azhah Vahyzthah, Kzhahthrah Vayryuh, Vohu-Manah, and last but not least **Zpentah Maynyuh** whom exultantly embraced him! Once again—they were conjoined—but Dex didn’t mind.

Whereas Zpentah Maynyuh had previously magnified Dex, it was now the other way around. The Archangel could only achieve his highest potential within such a host. So together they were taken to the court proper, where Amoun-Rah didn’t delay in *Etherealizing*. He came forth flaunting pulsars upon his crest. The Preceptor of Neterz wore a luciferous cape and vest. The other six Zpentaz took up their trumpets and played a ballyhoo for you know who. Amoun-Rah raised an illustrious cerulean blazon and extolled Dex:

“Ave—Zpentah Dex—et Pax Vobiscum!

Thou maketh two into one; the inner as the outer. Ye edify the lowest and undermine the loftiest. Both sexes hath been harmonized inside thy conscious **Being**. Thine extrapolation of Essene essence is more than twofold and runneth over in

every tense. Yet thee maketh these excisions with a very tactful sense. Thy Sprezzatura reconciles and reintegrates the opposites, giving rise to a Gestalt. Extremists quaver at thy verbose assault!

Surpassing Logomachy such as that, one attains to plains without need for absolute nor absurd claims. Let giddy gaiety reign unrestrained by grammarian brains! Accompany me to the edge of doable verbs. There awaiteth worlds beyond the pale of words. The benighted cannot conceive what an enlightened Ankh can achieve.”

Respectfully, Dex announced an antiphon:

“You overstate my case and give too much credit to mine arrant disgrace. I have whiled away many days, adrift, confused and dazed. I am NOT the very model of a modern major mage. I may be but a buffoon fumbling his lines upon existence’s stage.”

Amoun-Rah curtailed him:

“The Fool, Magus, and Hermit Sage act as one by thy wilful ways. That thou hath arisen here far outweighs sinful trysts since long gone yesterdays. Embrace ye today’s grandiloquent exposés. Amongst the ascended, hold steadfast, having earned thy place.”

The Preceptor of Neterz then clapped his hands so loudly that their surroundings trembled and crumbled away. Amoun-Rah and Zpentah Dex were now suspended at the periphery of knowable space. Forcible gales from an unseeable whirlwind thrust them higher still, affording them a view of dual dazzler cities far removed from the rest of the multiverse. Everywhere, these twin beauties were the central cores of infinity’s wheel. Their primary hues were complementary blues and reds,

blending into one another as this pair rotated in and out of eccentric orbits with each other. The black Bythos between (as well as around those apical cities) was an astounding vastitude of halcyon silence.

“Here we verge upon Apeiron,” Amoun-Rah expounded. “Over there lieth the archetypal megalopolis of Barbēlō and her sister Pleroma. Exceedingly few Homz hath ever risen to this altitude—but those who doth—abide in yon loci. Such a sight is off limits for those who would argue about the name and nature of this or that divinity. For in truth I too am but a servant of the indefinable and ultimately unthinkable Ayn Zoph Aur. Lesser intellects cannot contemplate abstruse **Gnosis**, thus they seeketh to narrow any noumenon with monosyllabic labels. Wording the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient ‘like so’ BUT NOT otherwise; unaware of the contradictions inherent to definitions.”

“Presently, we must part ways,” Amoun-Rah rambled on. “Yet before that—I wouldst anoint thee with a farewell benediction. Doeth good by me—please kneel one last time.”

Zpentah Dex didn’t hesitate to receive his consecration. The preceptor produced an unguent from the palms of his hands. Its scent reminded Dex of old library books he’d read during childhood. Moreover, it had the effect of reuniting many strands from all his temporal lifetimes. He recovered countless memories whilst Amoun-Rah praised:

“I gift thee the plenitude of thine own former experiences. Knoweth that I may invoke thy help in parallel planes. Self-completed, we art as one under ΣΕΜΕΣ ΕΙΛΑΜ—soar now thou eagle!”

Dex took wing, commencing his definitive flight toward Barbēlō and Pleroma. When he got about halfway to them, it became clear that these weren't 'cities' in the ordinary sense of that word. They were something totally distinct from anything he'd ever encountered. They stretched as stellar nurseries unbounded by spatial constrictions. He himself was just the tiniest mote by comparison to those gargantuan superstructures. Yet once he neared them enough, they both gave off intensive emissions, which washed over Zpentah Dex. Hence he sensed that his metaphysical stature was being maximized to approximate the gigantesque enormity of any dwellers therein. Before he knew it, Dex found that he'd come to a frictionless stop amid a bucolic meadow.

Here were two nude damsels. The closest was kneeling by a clear pool of water with her right foot steeped in it. In her hands she held matching pitchers from which she poured glinting liquid into the lagoon and onto the land alike. Her marigold mane was ornamented by a tiara that bore eight twinkling sequins. Behind and above her, her sister floated midair, twirling two batons. She was a frizz-haired brunette, wearing a loose perse sash that did little to conceal her nudity. The blonde asserted:

"Firstly and finally it has come to pass; a deathless Zpentah has amalgamated with a mortal man and risen above the babble below unto immortal Barbēlō. I—*Alethyuh*—welcome him to mine abode."

The other supernal made a similar statement:

"Freed from the rounds of rebirth, let it not be in Heaven as it has been on Earth. Here is no place for profanity. Divisiveness dwindles midst the plenum of Pleroma. I—*Zophyuh*—also welcome you to our perfected spheres."

Prompted by their expectant looks, the neophyte enunciated: “Zpentah Dex is my name and Pansophy is my game.”

Alethyuh and Zophyuh were charmed per Dex’s verbal formula, as well as when he used the Clinamen to pull an ace of spades ♠ out of thin air! Without further need for clunky exposition, they took him on a grand tour. The houses of the holy were majestic beyond compare. There were gardens wherein grew trees that emoted and empathized with anyone that ate of their pomes. Zpentah Dex became familiarized with eminences from many diverse worlds. He swiftly learned that spoken speech was ‘non grata’ here. Instead, everyone would discourse via **ESP** but even more so through images and music. Barbēlō and Pleroma espoused creativity in all its most abstract expressions. Intercourse was of a higher order too; there were disembodied fusion orgies culminating in Agape:

Tellz’ truisms are upturned overhead—Love is the Law—Love above Will!

From time to time, a hunt would play out in the open space between both nodes. This was also a very elevated endeavour because as rare sparkles of incandescence arose from universes far and wide, they were captured by riders storming forth mounted on winged horseback, issuing through pearly gates. At times seeming to be kingly stags, those quarryies were actually concepts and ideals lost due to ignorance in lower worlds. Zpentah Dex himself caught an uncommon one that looked rather like a white rhino. Since it ailed, fatigued, Dex blew on its horns the way one does on ashy embers to rekindle a bonfire. This archaic revival was to become Dex’s new pet, awarding him with yet another yarn, unheard of since first hearth and without any ending in sight.

ZONE OF DAATH

Although King Hazzanh had been deposed by Horuz, two ancient Arkhonz still lived. These were the architect Yaldah-Baoth and the artisan Zaklaz—whom resided in Geburah and Zhezedh—respectively. Now by traversing an imperceivable passageway betwixt Heh and Zaynh, they converged at the abyssal apogee of Daath.

A whorl of pother swirled and within it, sporadic flashes insinuated that there was a tremendous whopper of a whale beneath its tumultuous brume. This was in fact the colossal aberration which Horuz had jailed extemporaneously. The Arkhon twosome went to work on effecting the liberation of that culprit. Yaldah-Baoth boasted:

“Foregone be the gadzookery of Ketheroz! Nay—instead may chaos hold sway within the unwhole multiplicity where no Neterh can gainsay; Heptaparah-Parzhynokh!”

Zaklaz averred zealously: “Logos is voided. Lay bare Zarathustra’s Gathas to dubious interpretation. Atemporal universal dispensation; Heptaparah-Parzhynokh!”

Thus the seventh seal was broken, unshackling many more minor hellions alongside the Big Kahuna itself. They immediately began interpenetrating and permeating ubiquitously through all the differing Megalocosmos. Hence the Arkhonz retired to their zones and built up forces for yet another Armageddon.

Once those ranks had swollen to a maximum, Yaldah-Baoth and Zaklaz relocated them and their entire operation to a planetoid within Daath but on the outer edge of Orz. They renamed this place *Nybyruh* then spread likewise to other

trans-Neptunian objects and centaurs such as *Eryz*, *Kerez*, *Hygyuh*, *Pallaz*, *Veztah*, and *Zednah*.

From there the Arkhonz could oversee the retaking of Malkuth, albeit this time they would need to go through Marz and its hardy inhabitants. Yaldah-Baoth and Zaklaz hadn't failed to note that these newer Homz were being born without delusions induced by a Kundahbuffer organ. Never before had that species come into its own upon the wider interstellar panopticon. There was cause for concern among the denizens of all higher zones. It might even be said that Ketheroz' second oversight was a tad deliberate. Parasitic though they were, these Arkhonz were equally the only predators that kept those hubristic little worms in check. Overcoming such a hurdle was a rite of passage. Djroz' descendants however, were about to prove themselves equal to the task at hand. They already had unmanned probes patrolling the Kuiper Belt and were amassing a fleet unparalleled by any of humanity's past ventures.

MARZ

ßeroß was the ninth iteration of Emperor Omnoz. Currently eighteen years old he was nothing short of a prodigy. Regent Pageh had been a paragon and pillar during his lightning fast upbringing. She had helped to mould him into a man much respected in the Dodeca-Districts. Of course, OMNOZ had supplemented his learning, providing an authoritative backbone. His know-how kept him abreast of recent stirrings in the space surrounding their newly renumbered third planet. Orbital detritus was all that remained to tell of Tellz—a diffuse circumstellar chain—belittled by the main asteroid belt.

Yet *ßeroß* had done well to infuse its breadth with nanobots because these converted it into a reliable early warning system.

Something had definitely gone awry amid that inner rim, though the Emperor didn't know what to make of those readings. For this reason he'd boarded his bateau and released the locks holding back dams at Arezyuh, Zhalbathyuh, Ztyuh, and Zymudyuh.

He sailed down from Zydonyuh to Labyrinthyuh, where his boyhood chum *Zadokh* had been born. Since Djroz had sent him away when the Aranyuhz aggressed, *Zadokh* became the only survivor and prospered as head honcho of the Repopulation Initiative.

A baby boom was turning into a 'teenage riot' in Labyrinthyuh; rebuilt as a port. Eligible bachelors were in low supply but high demand here. *ßeroß* knew it could be challenging to drag his fellow from this civic duty. Triply interconnected, they talked:

Come Zadokh, we must hasten to prefigure whatever might outdo our Being bigger.

A Codex For Gnostics

Very well, βeroß, I'll gather the gentry and dispatch every able-bodied sentry.

Pageh stressed: *Neither the righteous nor the wicked may remain for long at rest.*

Similarly this triptych was pleased to meet another tripliate; strapping youths from the up and coming Generation Z. The eldest was **Zeudh**, followed by his brother **Falderalh**, and their close confidant **Qalyuh**. Together they speculated on what might be causing those fluctuations within Tellz' Telos. Everyone continued by way of led zeppelin toward Kornuh-Kopyuh, where Pageh had summoned a summit of local leaders from the community at large. With finality 'twas understood that the Hybrid-Us of Marz must advance as a cohesive Monad.

NEVERVERSE MANIFOLD |
META-MATRIX OF MAATH

Enfolded in the outstretched wings of the Mater of Matter—Tetra, Hexah, Oktah, Dohdekah, and Ykhozah flitted mid a nonexistent cloudless sky. Far beneath those six, the entire existent Megalocosmos was being crumpled up like a badly typewritten letter. The Big Crunch went on quicker and quieter than one's intuition might suppose it to go.

"And all these little shocks, I do ride in our imaginary dynamo," Maath mouthed.

Tetra touted in turn: "As an old house crumbles onto its foundation, so should this universe be reset to zero before we reconstruct it brick by brick. Let us descend then to that plot-hole widening below and destroy everything we touch!"

Hexah hinted: "The iconic is laconic because a picture is worth _____.

Yet putting two and two together tends to get on dummies' nerves!"

Oktah okayed: "A rolling stone gathers no moss but anybody's mind may be taken in by gloss. Better to expiate such dross and be grateful for its loss."

Dohdekah didn't dilly-dally: "Plunging into Infinite Interval—enjoy the silence. The avant-garde does disarm, but words are very unnecessary, they can only do harm."

Ykhozah yammered not. There really was no need for exaggerated braggadocio. *¿Could perhaps the whole Macrocosm CAPSIZE when they extrapolated it once again?*

∞ Only **mime** would tell ∞



GLOSSARY OF RECONDITE TERMINOLOGY

Herein are defined most terms underlined throughout the preceding work. Items initially *italicized* are proper nouns or verbs within the context of this tale and so do not appear.

Ahlspiess: A.K.A. ‘awl pike’. A type of Austro-German spear from the 15th and 16th centuries. Used here for its alliterative value.

Albedo Feature: A large area on the surface of a planet which shows a contrast in brightness or darkness (albedo) with adjacent areas. Historically, these features were the very first to be seen and named on Mars and Mercury.

Amanita Muscaria: [Latin] Commonly called the ‘fly agaric’ mushroom. Both its caps and stems are rich in psychoactive compounds that induce hallucination.

Apeiron: [Greek: ἄπειρον] Literally ‘boundless’, ‘infinite’, ‘limitless’ (denoting that which is unlimited or indefinite). In the cosmology of *Anaximander* (circa 600 BC) it is the origin and ultimate destiny of infinite worlds. It gives rise to all opposites, such as hot and cold. It also produces endless elements while itself remaining unsullied by decadence or impermanence.

Apocrypha: Biblical or related writings not forming part of the accepted canon of Scripture (usually of unknown authorship or of doubtful origin). Biblical apocrypha were originally a set of texts included in the Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate but not in the Hebrew Bible.

A Priori / A Posteriori: [Epistemology] According to the German philosopher *Immanuel Kant* (1781) they are **a)** 'knowledge independent of all particular experience' and **b)** 'knowledge derived from experience'. In other words, primary causes as opposed to secondary effects.

Arahants: [Pali, or **Arhat** in Sanskrit: अर्हत्] A Buddhist term meaning 'Worthy One'. These adepts are considered either on the verge of enlightenment or having already attained Nirvana, depending on which school of thought is consulted.

Asterism: [Astronomy] A group of stars such as a constellation, but not necessarily one of the 88 officially recognized modern constellations. Aquila = The Eagle.

Auld Lang Syne: [Scottish] Literally 'old long since'. Olden times; especially those remembered with fondness.

Barbēlō: [Greek: Βαρβηλώ] Variouslly called 'First Emanation', 'Mother of the Æons', or 'immortal realm'. A supreme female principle although she may also be referred to as 'The Triple Androgynous Name'. Many Gnostic sects regarded her as the highest truth.

Bythos: [Greek: Βυθός] Meaning 'depth' or 'profundity'; it may at times refer to a primordial stage during the universe's evolution.

Catachresis: Misuse or strained use of words, as in a mixed metaphor, occurring either in error or for rhetorical effect.

Cathexis: A charge of psychic energy invested in an activity, idea or some object.

Clinamen: [Latin] Coined by *Lucretius* (99-55 BC), it is the unpredictable 'swerve' attributed to atoms in support of tenets first put forth by *Epicurus* (341-720 BC). Lucretius even goes so far as to associate this swerve with free will.

Chthonian: [Adjective] Concerning, belonging to, or inhabiting the underworld.

Dasein: [Phenomenology] As per the German philosopher *Martin Heidegger* (1927), Dasein is the actual Being (fundamental presence) in the world of a human individual.

Desmanthus Illinoensis: [Latin] Commonly called Illinois Bundle Flower. The root of this plant contains dimethyltryptamine.

Dimoori Sheol: [Hebrew] Sheol {לֹאִשׁוּב} is the place of darkness where all of the dead end up. Dimoori Sheol is rumoured to be the language of fallen angels.

Drow: [Dungeons & Dragons] Better known as dark elves. It is also notable that Drow is 'word' spelled backwards (making it an anagram).

Eisegesis / Exegesis: a) Interpretation of Scripture that expresses one's biases and ideas instead of the intended meaning of the text. b) Critical analysis of a text or just a portion of a text; originally concerned with the Bible.

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? [Greek transliteration of Aramaic] The lament of Christ upon the cross. Usually translated as “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

EM Drive: Electromagnetic Drive—A.K.A. Radio frequency resonant cavity thruster. At the time of writing this work, a mostly theoretical propulsion system soon to be tested in space. Such a reaction-less engine might violate Newton’s third law.

Essene: A member of a religious sect that flourished in Palestine circa 200 BC–100 AD. The famed Dead Sea Scrolls are thought to have been written by these monastics.

Exterminans: [Latin: ‘Destroyer’] Another name for *Abaddon* [Hebrew: אַבְדֹּן] A.K.A. *Apollyon* [Greek: Ἀπολλύων]—the angel of death.

Flavius Valerius Constantinus: [Latin] Full name of *Saint Constantine The Great* (280-337 AD), the first Roman Emperor to convert from ‘Paganism’ to Christianity. Conversely, Constantine XI (mentioned further on) lived between 1405-1453 AD.

Frenemy / Frenemies: [Informal] **a)** A person who pretends to be a friend but is actually an enemy; a rival with which one maintains friendly relations. **b)** Plural form.

Gathas: [Avesta] Hymns held to have been written by the Persian prophet Zarathustra [Zaraθuštra] (circa 1500 BC) whom was called *Zoroaster* [Ζωροάστρης] by the Greeks. These Gathas appear to have influenced the German philosopher *Friedrich Nietzsche* (Thus Spoke Zarathustra, published in 1891 AD) as well.

Gehenna: [Latin] From the Greek *Geenna* [Γέεννα] which was in turn derived from the Hebrew *Gei Ben-Hinnom* [גֵּי בֶן־הִנּוֹם] 'Valley of Hinnom'. It was here that infant sacrifices were rendered unto Moloch by apostate kings of Judah, and hence it is considered cursed. For clarification, read Jeremiah 32:35.

Gestalt: [Psychology] An organized wholeness that is perceived to be more than the simple sum of its parts.

Gethsemane: [Greek: Γεθσημανή] From the Hebrew *Gat Shmanim* [גַּת שְׁמַנִּים]. This urban garden near the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem is where Jesus reportedly suffered a night of sorrow before being betrayed by Judas Iscariot and given over to the Sanhedrin.

Grok: Coined by *Robert A. Heinlein* in his 1961 novel *Stranger In A Strange Land*; implying an intuitive understanding of any particular concept, experience, or interaction.

Hierarchy: Christian 'angelology' is based mainly on *De Coelesti Hierarchia* composed in Greek by *Pseudo-Dionysius The Areopagite* (circa 500 AD). However, it is often overlooked that Avestan angelology anticipated it by millennia, as was also the case with Monotheism. See **Gathas**.

Hierogamy / Hieros Gamos: [Greek: ἱερογαμία / ἱερός γάμος] 'Sacred Marriage'. Dating back to the dawn of civilization in Mesopotamia; a ritualized act of sexuality in which the king and high priestess publicly role play a god and a goddess. This was done to imbue the land with fertility and its people with fecundity.

Kuiper Belt: The region in which Pluto and many other planetesimals are found. It lies 30 to 50 AU (Astronomical Units; approximately 93 million miles each) from the sun.

Lapis Lazuli: An ultramarine semiprecious stone worn by the priesthood and royalty since ancient times.

Lethe: [Classical Mythology: lé:t^hε] A.K.A. *Ameles Potamos* (River of Unmindfulness). One of five rivers in Hades; causing memory loss in those who drank from it. The other four rivers are *Acheron* (River of Sorrow), *Cocytus* (River of Lament), *Phlegethon* (River of Flame), and the well-known *Styx*.

Logomachy: An argument over the meaning or use of whichever words are in question. Ironically a hallmark of such arguments is the incorrect usage of certain terms, resulting in meaningless meandering. Also a card game that assigns alphabetical values to cards.

Logophobia: An irrational fear of words; possibly longer or uncommon words. It may even bear a bit of xenophobia because unknown tongues tend to offend the finicky ears of unilingual speakers.

Logos: [Greek: λόγος] Oftentimes mistranslated as ‘word’. In Western Philosophy, since the pre-Socratic *Heraclitus* (circa 535-475 BC) this refers the underlying logic of any philosophical position one can take. In Christendom, the Gospel of John identifies Jesus Christ as Logos incarnate: “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.*” [1:14]

Magick: [Thelema] As per Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), “The Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will”. This outmoded spelling was adopted to

differentiate paranormal practices from the staged theatrics of showman magicians.

Magister Templi: [Latin: 'Master of The Temple'] First grade above the abyss and third to last grade in secret societies such as the A.:A.:.

Magistry: [Latin: 'Mastership'] Another name for the true philosopher's stone; that which is able to transmute baser elements into higher states.

Magus Magnus: [Latin: 'Great Wizard'] Self-explanatory.

Maux De Tête: [French] Literally 'headaches'; used here to indicate weak-mindedness.

Mazzaroth: [Hebrew: מַזְרָתִים] 'Garland of Crowns'; alluding to the 12 astrological signs. Read Job 38: 31-32.

McJob: [Informal] An Americanism popularized by *Douglas Coupland* in his novel *Generation X* (1991). It can refer to any dead-end job.

Megalocosmos: [Kabbalah] Also called *Ayocosmos*. It is the second tier in this system:

1. Protocosmos; the original causal source from which everything else proceeds.
2. Megalocosmos; the entire universe taken as a whole with its galaxies et al.
3. Macrocosmos; the expansiveness of our own Milky Way galaxy.
4. Deuterocosmos; the solar system level, which all central stars occupy.

5. Mesocosmos; the planetary level, where Earth symbolizes similar celestial bodies.
6. Microcosmos; the individual sphere of existence. Humanity mirroring the skies.
7. Tritocosmos; the atomic and molecular layers of the material plane.

Mnemosyne: [Classical Mythology: mnɛ:mosý:nɛ] Goddess of Memory. A Titaness begotten by Uranus and Gaea. She is also mother of the nine Muses by Zeus. Cults of Orpheus taught that one should drink from her obscured river in Hades so as to break the cycle of Metempsychosis (transmigration / reincarnation). See **Lethe**.

Monad: [Greek: μονάς] Meaning ‘oneness’, or ‘unity’. Possibly originating from Pythagorean thought (circa 600-500 BC). Both Gnostic and Platonic thinkers regarded it as a predominant principle; the primacy which begets all else without diminishing itself. In the Gnosticism of *Valentinus* (100-160 AD) this Supreme Being is also seen as the producer of **Pleroma** as well as the Æons, including Christ. In the Neoplatonism of *Plotinus* (circa 250 AD) said Monad is equated with what he terms The One. Plotinus taught that man could reunite himself with The One through a contemplative process: *Henosis*.

Neteru: [Egyptology] Several different deities worshipped in ancient Egypt. They may sometimes be taken to represent various facets of the central sun *Aten*.

Noosphere: Derivative from Greek *Nous* [νοῦς; mind] and *Sphaira* [σφαῖρα; sphere]. Defined in 1922 by *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* as an analogous layer to the atmosphere and biosphere in which human thinking and our social interactions

begin directing evolution on Earth. At present it notably coincides with the advent of the internet.

Orgone: A hypothetical life force proposed in the 1930s by *Wilhelm Reich*.

Pansophy: All-knowing wisdom.

Pentalpha: Another name for the Pentagram. In a spurious Testament of Solomon (written in Greek between 1-500 AD), King Solomon receives a signet ring from the Archangel Michael bearing this Pentalpha. With its power the king goes on to tame demons that aid him in the construction of his eponymous temple.

Planum Boreum: The polar ice cap covering the North Pole of Mars. Please refer to Map of Marz.

Pleroma: [Greek: πλήρωμα] ‘Fullness’. In either Christian Theology or Gnostic codices it refers to the perfect totality from where the highest powers hail.

Prana: [Sanskrit: प्राण] ‘Vitality’. The animating breath that instills quickness in life. *Pranayama* (breath control) can be used by Yogis to regulate body temperature.

Purgatorio: [Italian] Purgatory, as described by *Dante Alighieri* in his Divine Comedy (1320 AD).

Pyxis: A small box used by ancient Greeks and Romans to hold medicines or toiletries.

Senet: [Egyptology] One of the earliest examples of a board game (3100 BC) for which the rules are now lost among the sands of time. Known as ‘the game of passing’, it was held in reverence and is even mentioned in the Egyptian Book of The Dead.

Sprezzatura: [Italian] An affected asymmetry characterized by fashionable nonchalance especially when found in Renaissance styles of art and literature.

Stygian: [Adjective] Relating to the river Styx and / or Hades itself.

Stymphalian birds: [Greek: Στυμφαλίδες ὄρνιθες] A mythological breed of bird, subdued by Heracles as the sixth of his twelve labours.

Syzygy: [Astronomy] Any alignment between three large bodies in space (for instance, a lunar or solar eclipse).

Technocracy: A political ideology that became prominent during the Great Depression. It entails governance by engineers and scientists rather than businessmen and politicians.

Telos: [Greek: τέλος] 'End', as in: the means to an end. *Aristotle* (384-322 BC) knew it as the Final Cause. It is also the root of Teleology, which studies goals and purposes within human history as well as nature.

Tensegrity: Conflation of tension + integrity. A combination of physical movements and mental disciplines taught by *Carlos Castaneda* (1925-1998) to help humanity access higher dimensions of Being and Consciousness.

Tête-à-tête: [French] Head-to-head.

Tetrarch: [Greek: τετράρχης] The ruler of the fourth part of a kingdom.

Tetramorph: [Greek: τετράμορφου] ‘Four forms’. In Judeo-Christian iconography these are the Living Creatures mentioned in the book of Ezekiel (eagle, lion, man, ox).

Thaumaturgy: [Greek: θαῦμα ἔργον] The capability of Magi or saints to work miracles.

Triune: Consisting of three in one; an alternative name for the Holy Trinity.

Vexillum: [Latin] A pennon carried into combat by Roman legionnaires.

Wavicles: [Physics] Subatomic entities possessing properties of both wave and particle.

Z bosons: [Physics] Theorized by American Physicist *Steven Weinberg* prior to their discovery in 1983. Together with the W bosons, these mediate the ‘weak interaction’.

Zend: [Avesta] The presupposed naming of the most ancient Persian language in which the **Gathas** were first written. This term is no longer in use as such.

Zephyr: [Greek: Ζέφυρος] *Zephyrus*; the West wind. He is reputed to be the gentlest among the *Anemoi* {Ἄνεμοι; winds}. His three brothers are: *Boreas*—the North wind, *Notus*—the South wind, and *Eurus*—the East wind.

Zohar: [Hebrew: זֹהָר] ‘Splendour’, ‘Radiance’. A title for the Jewish literature from where doctrines concerning Kabbalah originated. These volumes first came to light during the middle ages in Spain (then called Castile), when they were published by *Moses De León* (circa 1240-1305 AD).

Obsidian Eagle

ΣΕΜΕΣ ΕΙΛΑΜ: [Greek] Eternal Sun. As it appears on archaeological icons like those Abraxas stones traced by *Charles W. King* in *The Gnostics And Their Remains* (1864) :



A Codex For Gnostics



Obsidian Eagle is a pen-name derived from the ancient Toltec tongue (*Nahuatl*): ItzQuauhtli.

His passion project is to promote the verve of Hispanic Anti-Poetry [pioneered by Nicanor Parra and Pablo Neruda] to erudite English readers.



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