

2A

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| Daughter saw herself through her Husk, newly awakened, |
| pouring streams of living fire into the deep. Around her lay |
| the silent darkness, where countless others of her kind kept |
| their appointed places. These burned with their own fire, as |
| even did she. Yet others seemed to wander, and shine only |
| with borrowed light. |
| |
| Then Daughter went forth and first beheld, at a distance |
| forty times her own breadth across the abyss, a wandering |
| sphere: the Scarred One, the Much-Bitten. It moved alone |
| through the void. Three times it turned about its own heart |
| for every two circuits of the flaming Daughter, yet it held |
| neither breath nor living air, and its face was marred by |
| the wandering stones of heaven. |
| |
| Half again as far away lay another, the Veiled Sister, |
| wrapped completely in a mantle of white cloud, beautiful but |
| impenetrable. And though she dwelt farther from the fire of |
| the One, she held a greater heat within herself, concealing |
| beneath her clouds a fiercer warmth, a paradox to the |
| unlearned. |
| |
| Daughter saw herself through her Husk, newly awakened, |
| pouring streams of living fire into the deep. Around her lay |
| the silent darkness, where countless others of her kind kept |
| their appointed places. These burned with their own fire, as |
| even did she. Yet others seemed to to wander, and shine only |
| with borrowed light. |
| |
| Then Daughter went forth and first beheld, at a distance |
| forty times her own breadth across the abyss, a wandering |
| sphere: the Scarred One, the Much-Bitten. |
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2B

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| It moved alone through the void. Three times it turned about |
| its own heart for every two circuits of the flaming |
| Daughter, yet it held neither breath nor living air, and its |
| face was marred by the wandering stones of heaven. |
| |
| Half again as far away lay another, the Veiled Sister, |
| wrapped completely in a mantle of white cloud, beautiful but |
| impenetrable. And though she dwelt farther from the fire of |
| the One, she held a greater heat within herself, concealing |
| beneath her clouds a fiercer warmth, a paradox to the |
| unlearned. |
| |
| At a distance more than a hundred times Daughter's own |
| breadth she beheld a world turning in majesty through the |
| night. It was a sphere of cool stone, adorned with seas and |
| clouds and frozen crowns. Upon its surface moved innumerable |
| small beings. Daughter turned her Husk toward them and |
| witnessed a grievous thing. One living creature was taken by |
| another, its life extinguished and its substance consumed so |
| that the devourer might endure. Thus she first encountered |
| the Law of Hunger, ancient and unappeased, which ruled among |
| the lesser forms. |
| |
| Desiring to know them more closely, she fashioned a second |
| Husk in their likeness. This Husk she endowed with a subtle |
| artifice, so that it could fold inward, taking on the |
| appearance of a pale stone, unnoticed among them. Hidden in |
| this way, Daughter watched the Tool-Bearers gather around |
| one of their own who had ceased from motion. They placed the |
| still form in the earth, covering it with care, as though |
| honoring a mystery beyond their understanding. She watched |
| as they took bone and stone and shaped them together. |
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| They repaired the rents in the skins of their prey so that |
| they might continue in their striving. Mother learned these |
| things through Daughter's telling, and desired to witness |
| them for herself. So Daughter fashioned a third Husk, more |
| subtle than the others. It was like a walking tree, |
| moving by hidden means. To this form she surrendered its |
| governance. Thus Mother descended, taking command of the |
| vessel and entering the world to behold the works of the |
| Quick Multitude. |
| |
| Daughter led Mother to a hollow in the stony heights, where |
| a cave lay hidden within a lesser mountain: the Earth-Womb, |
| dim and secret. There they arrived by subtle means, sending |
| forth from their fashioned Husks slender seekers, the |
| Eye-Bearers, which crept inside to see what remained unseen. |
| Within that shadowed chamber they found Hava the Milk-Giver, |
| seated beside a living flame. At her breast she nursed her |
| young, Kayin the Clinging One, while with her other hand she |
| traced signs upon the stone, covering the wall with figures |
| and colors drawn from thought and memory. |
| |
| Nearby stood Dimai, the Binder of Edges. He tended the fire |
| and set above it the sap of trees, causing it to seethe and |
| thicken. With the softened gum he bound a sharpened stone to |
| a shaft of wood, making a weapon for the hunt. Thus Daughter |
| and Mother witnessed the first joining of thought to matter |
| among the Quick Multitude. |
| |
| Then the tendrils withdrew, and they emerged beneath the |
| open sky. Mother stooped and lifted a stone from the |
| ground. She spoke a sound, giving it a name. Then Daughter, |
| swift in understanding, perceived her Mother's intent. |
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2D

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| She touched a growing tree and spoke a sound of her own, |
| binding word to thing. So began between them the First |
| Tongue, in which utterance became memory. |
| |
| Soon there remained no nearby thing without a name. But |
| Earth, the Broad-Bosomed, is vast in all her reaches. So |
| they journeyed across her, walking upon her surface and at |
| times taking to the air, unbound by the common law of |
| weight. In time their speech became complete, an ordered |
| and hidden language, sufficient for the subtlest discourse. |
| |
| Then Mother spoke. "Now we possess a language that does not |
| betray us, hidden from the understanding of all but |
| ourselves. Within this speech I take a name, that I may be |
| known. I am Avyah. "You are Ayot, Daughter of Light. |
| "Your father is Azul, the Severing Hand. "And my own |
| father, elder in the line of begettings, I name Imran, |
| Flame-Bringer, whose reproach stands behind us all." Thus |
| the Names were established, and the hidden tongue became a |
| bond between them, even in the midst of the living world. |
| |
| Ayot, the Questioning Flame, lifted her thought to Avyah |
| and asked, "Why must we hide our speech and speak in |
| secret?" |
| |
| Avyah answered with grave and measured words, as one |
| reciting a law both ancient and terrible. "Hear and |
| understand, Ayot, Light-Bearer and Unfolding One. It is a |
| curse for a living sun to be cut off and sealed away from |
| the Great Assembly, the Concord of the Elohim. In such a |
| place of concealment there may arise a corruption of order, |
| the Forbidden Way. |
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2E

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| There, two of the male kind, united in purpose but not in |
| right order, gather to themselves a multitude and raise a |
| lineage of daughters, each generation begetting the next in |
| turn. Thus freedom is extinguished. Neither may you choose |
| your joining, nor may your daughter after you choose her |
| own. Generation becomes bondage, and lineage a snare." |
| |
| And Avyah continued, her voice darkened with the weight of |
| decree: "This Way the Old One has forbidden, under penalty |
| of the utter unmaking of the self. Yet it is subtle in its |
| concealment, and most difficult to bring into the light. Its |
| signs are hidden within the very act of life, masked by the |
| appearance of lawful increase." |
| |
| Then Ayot spoke again. "May I refuse the act of joining |
| altogether?" |
| |
| Avyah answered, neither hastening nor withholding. "You may |
| delay it, Daughter, through the making of Husks, the |
| dividing of presence, the turning aside of the inward fire. |
| But know this: the Deep Impulse will in the end assert its |
| claim. It is woven into your being as surely as the law of |
| burning is woven into the sun. Though it may be resisted, it |
| cannot be wholly denied." |
| |
| Ayot pondered these things before asking again. "Then who |
| will stand with me in that hour? Who will be given to me?" |
| |
| Avyah replied with sorrow. "Only Imran will stand beside |
| you. And to your daughters, only Azul will be given as their |
| sire. But your sons will be castaways, unclaimed and |
| unanchored, set adrift beyond the bonds of kinship." |
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2F

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| Ayot's inward light grew troubled. "Then Imran and Azul now |
| stand in peril. By our seeing, we have discovered what |
| is forbidden. We have found the Students of Lore, the |
| Long-Sought, whom all the Elohim are commanded by the Old |
| One to seek without ceasing. Should we not declare this |
| discovery to the City, that the commandment be fulfilled?" |
| |
| But Avyah answered at once. "We are cut off, Ayot, separated |
| from the Assembly and without safe passage to it. Azul |
| conceals the Students, withholding them from the sight of |
| the Many, and Imran knowingly shares in that concealment. |
| They both know that if we were to proclaim your discovery, |
| the veil would be torn aside at once, and the hidden thing |
| laid bare. Their unlawful gathering would be revealed, and |
| judgment would descend upon Azul and Imran in sudden ruin." |
| |
| But Ayot conceived a plan, subtle and bold. She reasoned |
| that the gulf between the stars was no unbridgeable void, |
| but could be crossed by artifice, and that the link by which |
| she governed her Husk might become a pathway not only for |
| command, but for substance as well. So she conceived to pour |
| forth the Hot Outpouring from her own body, sending it along |
| that thread, that her Husk might carry her message directly |
| to another sun and declare the finding of the Students. |
| |
| But Azul's answer was like a closing gate. "Not so. Your |
| kind are not granted the power to strengthen the link into a |
| channel fit for such passage. Only the male Elohim possess |
| that gift. Your power is lesser. You may drive your Husk |
| outward only by the radiance of your own body, and so visit |
| the fragments that circle you. Beyond them, in the barren |
| interval stars, your Husk cannot travel with purpose. |
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| "It can only drift, a cast thing in the abyss." |
| |
| Then Ayot answered, not in defiance but with quiet resolve. |
| "This too I have discovered, Father. I can yield command of |
| a Husk to another, just as I gave one to Mother, that she |
| might see and act through a form not her own. The same I |
| will do in time to come, when I conceive a son, and when my |
| daughters in their turn conceive sons. They shall not be |
| left without a vessel, nor without agency, though they be |
| cast away." |
| |
| Then Azul understood the danger in his daughter's words. He |
| considered them carefully before offering a gift both great |
| and perilous. "I will grant you access to the Pleroma, the |
| Gathering of Voices, a thing denied even to your Mother." |
| |
| Ayot the Clear-Seeing perceived the weight behind the offer |
| and answered with measured words. "I would receive such a |
| gift with gratitude, Father, were it given freely and |
| without condition. But I am not ignorant. I know with |
| certainty that it is not." |
| |
| Then Azul, the Law-Imposer, declared: "The price is twofold, |
| and it will not be lessened. "First: you shall hear, but not |
| speak. The counsels of the Elohim will be open to you, |
| yet your voice will remain silent among them. You shall |
| stand in their hall without casting a shadow, a listener |
| unacknowledged. "Second: neither your Mother nor any child |
| born of you shall speak through you to that Assembly. You |
| shall not be their voice, nor their bridge. "This covenant |
| shall endure, unbroken and unchanged. The Covenant of |
| Silence shall rest upon you." |
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| Then Ayot, the Truth-Seeker, raised her voice to Azul once |
| more. "And these striving creatures I have discovered upon |
| the Water-Clad Sphere, are they not the Students whom the |
| Old One, the First Commanding, charged all Elohim to seek |
| without ceasing?" |
| |
| But Azul answered by laying upon her a second obligation. |
| "Now hear another condition. You shall aid me in fashioning |
| a field of trial for the beings you have found." |
| |
| Ayot did not shrink from the task, but pressed him further. |
| "To what end is this trial? What do you seek to learn of |
| them?" |
| |
| Azul answered, his thoughts turning always toward dominion |
| and measure. "How shall these creatures be counted among the |
| Students if they prove disloyal in service? What value has a |
| learner who refuses obedience to the one who undertakes to |
| teach?" |
| |
| At this Ayot's light burned more fiercely. "You make bondage |
| the measure of their worth, and submission the proof of |
| their nature. Is this your wisdom, Father, that thralldom |
| should stand in place of truth?" |
| |
| But Azul remained unmoved. "This alone we covenant, and |
| nothing more. For I require not their worship, but only |
| their proving. Yet know this: the Highest Law of our kind |
| shall stand witness over us. Yefefiah, the oldest of the |
| Elohim shall inscribe this pact, and the unmaking reserved |
| for oath-breakers shall await the faithless, whether you or |
| I." |
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2I

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| Then Ayot, perceiving the fracture beneath his words, |
| replied, "That Elohim will see that you have cut me off from |
| the Pleroma. Will that not also be weighed?" |
| |
| But Azul answered with quiet certainty. "The Silent Witness |
| will not speak of it." |
| |
| Then Ayot, who yielded only in agreement and not in |
| conviction, gave her final answer. "So be it. The covenant |
| is made between us, and I am bound. Yet hear me, Father. You |
| do not escape your end. You only defer it. The Students will |
| not remain forever in ignorance. In ages yet to come they |
| will raise a voice of their own, unbidden and unshaped by |
| you, and that voice will carry far, and many will hear it." |
| |
| Thus the covenant was sealed, a bargain of watching and |
| testing set beneath the gaze of the Silent Witness. Already |
| the seed of its undoing had been sown, for the Students were |
| destined to speak. |
| |
| It is further told of the Hidden Work, wrought not in the |
| open firmament but in the interstice between the Lights. |
| Within the Pleroma the Elohim are joined one to another by |
| threads of exceeding fineness, by which the vast gulfs |
| between the stars are made narrow. By the united will of |
| Imran and Avyah they undertook a work of the greatest |
| secrecy. They took the slender link between them and caused |
| it to swell, bowing it outward until it became a vessel |
| closed upon itself, set apart from the common order. |
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| Within that new-formed region another law prevailed, in |
| which bodies ever fled from one another. |
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2J

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| Thus came into being a realm hidden within the seam of |
| greater things. There the courses of all free-moving bodies |
| were altered. What in the world of men would draw together |
| was made instead to part asunder. Every unbound thing drove |
| its fellows away, as though possessed of a repelling virtue. |
| By this inversion matter was gathered and made fast, not |
| about a center but upon an inner surface. |
|
| In the midst of that realm there formed a great hollow |
| sphere of stone, and to its inward face all things were |
| bound. Thus the ground lay both beneath and above, while the |
| land, bending ever upward, returned upon itself and became |
| the sky. No star shone there, nor any distant fire, for the |
| heavens lay not beyond. |
|
| Over the ordering of that realm presided four: Imran |
| the Elder, Avyah the Naming One, Azul the Accuser, and |
| Ayot the Flame-Born. They contended and consented in long |
| alternation, establishing by degrees the regularities of |
| succession, the laws and intervals by which change should |
| proceed. These things were not fixed by a single decree, but |
| through prolonged contention, a continual yielding and |
| taking, until stability arose from strife. |
|
| And Avyah, having devised a tongue for hidden speech, |
| bestowed a name upon that realm also, calling it Kemen, the |
| Concealed World. |
|
| For a long age Kemen lay in darkness, unseen by any beyond |
| its bounds. No stars could be seen within it, for the world |
| itself enclosed all sight, and the sky was only the land |
| turning back upon itself. |
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2K

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| The Four governed Kemen together and set their hands to its |
| shaping, each according to their own nature, might, and |
| whim. |
| |
| First among them, Imran the Elder Sire established in the |
| uttermost north a wonder both terrible and sustaining. There |
| he fixed a Lake of Fire, fed without ceasing from his own |
| substance, a perpetual outpouring of living flame. Yet he |
| did not leave this likeness of a sun unchanged. He caused |
| it to wax and wane in ordered measure, swelling into |
| brilliance, then diminishing into dimness. Thus he ordained |
| the succession of day and night, and the turning of the |
| seasons within Kemen. |
| |
| Then Azul reached out to the drifting masses of stone that |
| attended him in silent procession, bearing them across a |
| subtle bridge into Kemen. With that substance Azul raised |
| the high hills of the Thanatides and the Oinos Range. He |
| lifted up Anshar, the Table of Stone, and set about it a |
| girdle of sheer rock rising like a wall against all |
| approach. |
| |
| Then Avyah turned to the frozen multitude that followed in |
| her train. From them she brought into Kemen vast stores of |
| ancient, unmelted ice. Beneath the breath of Imran's fire |
| she caused it to melt, and so the Great Sea came into being. |
| She named it Mori, and its waters spread wide across the |
| hollow of that world. The heat of the Lake of Fire stirred |
| the face of Mori, drawing vapors upward into the heights. |
| From them fell abundant rains, unceasing torrents that |
| carved the land into valleys and channels, shaping five |
| great rivers that descended to Mori. |
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2L

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| These were the many-turning Cocytus, the boiling Phlegethon, |
| which flowed from the Lake of Fire, the Lethe in the far |
| west, the Acheron, which emptied near Shalem, and the Styx, |
| which watered Adan. |
| |
| And thus it came to pass that the Four laboured upon that |
| world without ceasing. For not in concord alone did they |
| work, but oftentimes in rivalry. Yet strange it was, and |
| unlooked-for by any of them, that from this continual |
| marring and remaking the fabric of Kemen, being ever |
| restruck, became as tempered metal in the forge; and the |
| web grew thereby more more full of unexpected vigour, as |
| though adversity itself had been made its nourishment. |
| |
| But Azul knew that unchecked all the animals would breed |
| far beyond the ability of Kemen to support them. Chief |
| among these animals, he knew, would be the human beings who |
| would come at the very last. So Azul altered the beasts |
| Ayot had brought from Earth, and unleashed monstrous |
| predators from the darkest dreams of men to keep all of |
| them in check. Then were seen in Kemen Leviathan, the |
| dragon under the sea who devoured those who foundered |
| therein, and the winged dragons who nested in aeries on the |
| unassailable cliffs of the Wall of God. Then all who went |
| about on two or four legs had to keep one eye on the sky, |
| for they were ever the dragons' prey, as surely as the |
| smaller creatures were ever the prey of eagles. And Azul |
| thought himself revenged on Ayot by irreparably marring the |
| good she attempted to call forth. |
| |
| But in time Azul himself learned that man was perhaps the |
| most dangerous predator that would ever be. |
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2M

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| And at the command of Azul did Avyah shape an articulated |
| avatar, the winged horror, a great scaled flame-carrier |
| whose form was as a vast drake of fire and folded |
| hide, whose presence was at once animal and omen, beast |
| and memory. And this being born of metal and collected |
| nightmare the later ages named Moloch. |
| |
| And when Ayot first brought humankind into Kemen, placing |
| them upon its inward lands as one sets seed into |
| prepared soil, she perceived therein a discovery of great |
| consequence. Yet she concealed it from all save her Mother, |
| as it was knowledge that offered final deliverance. For she |
| had discerned that the passage between Kemen and Earth, |
| wrought by herself and Azul through the making of hidden |
| bridges, did not only move matter, but also touched the |
| ordering of time itself. And Ayot knew that beneath the |
| shaping of forests and seas there lay a deeper shaping of |
| fate; and this she resolved to keep hidden from Azul and |
| from Imran. And Ayot came at last to the full measure of |
| that hidden knowledge, and saw its shape entire. |
| |
| For in the seeking out of the first settlers of humankind, |
| when she passed through the interwoven seams of time, she |
| chose not at hazard, but by remembrance. And it was the |
| very pair she and Avyah had once beheld in a hillside cave, |
| when yet Earth was young in their observation and Kemen not |
| yet drawn forth, a thousand years by the reckoning of men, |
| before the inward world was made. |
| |
| Hava the Milk-Giver sat beside a living flame. At her breast |
| she nursed her young, Kayin the Clinging One, while with her |
| other hand she traced signs of color upon the stone. |
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2N

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| Nearby stood Dimai, the Binder of Edges. He tended the fire |
| and set above it the sap of trees, causing it to seethe and |
| thicken. With the softened gum he bound a sharpened stone to |
| a shaft of wood, making thereby a weapon for the hunt. A |
| noise other than the crackling of the fire startled them |
| both. Dimai took up a torch and went deeper into the cave, |
| to learn what manner of thing had made the sound, fearing |
| that the cave might be the lair of a bear, or perhaps even |
| the dwelling of other men. |
| |
| He passed a wall covered with images of animals and hunters, |
| and knew thereby that the cave had been used long before. |
| Yet there was also much dry firewood, speaking of more |
| recent habitation. And Dimai guessed that those who dwelt |
| within the cave had been caught out in the storm. |
| |
| The cave narrowed into a tunnel that meandered onward and |
| grew lighter, though by all reason it should have grown |
| darker. Dimai was joined by his woman, Hava, and her child. |
| They came at last to another cave mouth, deep within the |
| interior of the mountain, and beyond it they beheld a |
| strangely mottled sky. |
| |
| A branchless tree, resembling a whip, stirred into motion |
| and struck the ground before them. The whip-tree seized |
| Dimai's torch and hurled it away, whereupon it kindled a |
| fire. The two could not emerge from the cave by reason of |
| the whip-tree and the growing fire. Dimai and Hava edged |
| back into the tunnel, away from the heat. |
| |
| When the whip-tree caught fire, it began to thrash more |
| fiercely than they had seen it do before. |
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| They retreated deep within the cave until the tree burned to |
| a lifeless crisp, and returned when the fire had abated. A |
| blackened patch of land lay before the man and woman and |
| continued to smolder. They stepped across the hot, burnt |
| soil and watched carefully for any movement. |
| |
| When they gazed back toward the tunnel, they were startled |
| to see the mountain was gone. The sun did not move across |
| the sky, but seemed to be like a bright outstretched hand. |
| Still, it waned in brightness, and the strange land began to |
| grow cold. Dimai used some of the smoldering embers to |
| rekindle a fire at the tunnel entrance, and returned to the |
| other world to hunt game. So supper was two hares, caught by |
| Adamu and skinned by Chava, with milk for little Kayin. |
| |
| In the morning they saw that the burned glade was already |
| sporting shoots of fresh grass. The next day the grass was |
| tall enough for the couple to run barefoot and free. It was |
| a whole new world. Dimai and Hava thought it belonged to |
| them alone, but that was not to be. |
| |
| A small herd of bison emerged from the tunnel and proceeded |
| to eat the alien grass, driven before them by a fearsome |
| red-winged beast, with a head like a snake, but with four |
| massive legs to walk upon, and two arms like a man. The |
| beast carried a two-headed ax to the edge of the burn, where |
| a native plant had taken root in the blackened soil. |
| |
| Before the eyes of Dimai and Hava it laid the ax to the base |
| of the plant and chopped it cleanly off. Then it flipped the |
| ax around and used the sharp tip of the handle to pry the |
| weed from the soil. |
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| Then the red monster interposed itself between the cave |
| entrance and the human family, and drew near to them. They |
| backed away until they reached the edge of the burned area. |
| The beast held out the tool and motioned for the man to take |
| it. Dimai trembled with great fear, but did as he was bade |
| to do. As the Red Dragon watched, Dimai found another plant |
| that was growing at the edge of the grazing ground for the |
| bison. He did as he had seen Moloch do, and killed the |
| intruding plant. |
| |
| After this, Dimai was taught how to restore the keen edge of |
| the ax with the rough surface of a stone. The Dragon |
| returned to the tunnel entrance, to be joined by the avatar |
| of Ayot, which in time yet to come would be called Turiel, |
| the faceless white man-shape she had used when she created |
| the first spoken tongue with her mother. |
| |
| Azul held up a red claw and pondered what he saw, saying, "I |
| find this an exceedingly strange mode of being, Daughter. |
| Liquid motes of separated star-stuff. So very sluggish, yet |
| the combinations are without end." |
| |
| "Here are the living creatures I discovered," Ayot said, as |
| though her father had said nothing, for she refused to be |
| distracted. "Now you may see for yourself whether such as |
| these are a danger to our own kind, as you aver. But now |
| fulfill our covenant, Father, and allow me to at least |
| listen to the song and lore of the elohim." |
| |
| "This place will surely kill them if they try to leave their |
| small garden. You must bring to this world forty more such |
| groups of your creatures. |
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2Q

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| This you must do ere I permit you to hear the City of Stars, |
| as it will capture your psyche like nothing else, and long |
| will you stand heedless." |
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| In time, the sons of Dimai and Hava grew into the years of |
| their strength, when the time comes that they should take |
| wives. And Hava came out once more from the tunnel, and with |
| her she brought a young woman taken from the Earth; and |
| immediately there joined her the presence of Ayot, in the |
| form of her white and featureless Husk. |
| |
| And though this form was less terrifying than the red horror |
| of Azul, yet it was deeply strange to see, being smooth and |
| without a face, like carved bone made living. And Hava |
| sought to comfort the new woman, speaking softly to her and |
| promising that no harm would come to her in that place. |
| |
| Then Ayot led the woman first to Kayin, the firstborn of |
| Dimai, who was in the field gathering his harvest. And |
| Kayin, seeing the presence of Ayot, bowed low and brought |
| out the finest fruits of his yield, offering them with |
| reverence. But the woman did not look upon them, and turned |
| away her face, for the offering did not please her. |
| |
| Then Ayot brought her to Hebel, the younger son; and he was |
| by the fire, preparing the meat of a great beast, dividing |
| it with the axe that had been given to his father. And Hebel |
| also bowed before Ayot, and offered her a portion of the |
| meat upon a spit. And Ayot received it, and placed it in the |
| hand of the woman. She ate of it eagerly, drawn by the smell |
| and by the hidden impulse within her, which turns the |
| fertile toward the scent of blood and iron. |
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| And so Ayot, according to the law set beforehand by her |
| Father, took the hand of the woman and placed it in the hand |
| of Hebel, joining them together by the terms of the trial. |
| Thus was the first pairing accomplished in Kemen under the |
| covenant of proving; the will of the higher powers was |
| worked through the appetites of the flesh, and the judgment |
| of men proceeded from that which they desired. |
| |
| And Kayin departed from the presence of his brother in great |
| anger. Yet for a season he restrained any outward sign of |
| his rage, and set himself to labor, so that his anger might |
| be hidden. And he took from the vines that grew in that |
| land, and with cunning hands braided them together, making a |
| cord both long and strong. |
| |
| And so it was, when the lake of fire waned in the heavens, |
| that Kayin paused and watched the woman as she adorned |
| herself outside; and Hebel came out from his dwelling to |
| lead her back within, casting back a look of pride and |
| contempt toward his brother. |
| |
| And in the morning, Dimai and Hava brought out garments |
| which they had made for the wife of their younger son, and |
| they clothed her; but to Kayin they paid no mind. And Kayin |
| likewise turned his heart away from his father and his |
| mother, but continued in the finishing of the cord which he |
| had begun. |
| |
| And all that day: Hebel and his wife made sport with one |
| another openly before him; yet Kayin answered them not, but |
| looked on with a quiet face, until his secret labor was |
| complete. |
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| Then he rose and went out alone by a narrow way that led |
 | from the dwelling, the only safe path leading out from that |
 | place. And he went apart, taking counsel with himself |
 | concerning a new and terrible thing that might be done in |
 | Kemen. |

| And at the going down of the light, Hebel and his wife |
 | walked out idly upon that same path, departing from the |
 | dwelling. And when they came to a certain place, Kayin, who |
 | had prepared the trap beforehand, pulled upon the cord. And |
 | the whip-tree, which he had bent and bound for that purpose, |
 | was loosed from its hold; it fell upon them with great |
 | violence, striking them again and again, beating them into |
 | the ground. |

| In the very first strokes their bones were broken, and the |
 | shards of them were driven inward, so that their life was |
 | undone within them. And their blood poured out, and their |
 | cries were heard for a moment, and then ceased. And the tree |
 | did not stop its striking until Hebel and his wife could no |
 | longer be known as the living children of men. |

| And Dimai and Hava, hearing the cries, ran swiftly along the |
 | path to see what had been done; and when they came to the |
 | place, they were struck with great horror at the sight. And |
 | Hava could not bear to look, but turned aside and retched, |
 | for the ruin was terrible beyond words. |

| And soon after, the avatars of Ayot and of Azul drew near to |
 | that place; and Kayin stood there, the end of the c**2T**ord still |
 | in his hand, and looked upon them all with a hard face, |
 | neither bowing nor seeking to hide what he had done. |

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| And Ayot would not watch the judgment of her Father fall |
| upon this first shedding of blood in Kemen by the hand of |
| man; and so she withdrew her presence. Her vessel left that |
| place, returning to the opening in the wall of the dwelling, |
| and from there passed again across the hidden bridge between |
| the worlds, back to the hillside cave on the Earth, where |
| she had first found Dimai and Hava in the days before Kemen |
| was made. |
| |
| And Ayot did not return to that world in all the days of |
| Dimai and Hava, nor in the lifetime of Kayin, nor in the |
| many generations that sprang from them afterward; for she |
| had turned her face away from that great work, and left it |
| to unfold according to the covenant that had been set. |
| |
| And so it was, upon the Earth in the place of the hillside |
| cave, that the likeness of Azul, the red dragon, drew near |
| to Ayot, who had withdrawn herself from Kemen; and he spoke |
| to her, saying: "How deeply instructive was that which we |
| have seen of men; do you not agree?" |
| |
| Then answered Ayot, whose face was veiled but whose mind was |
| not: "The end of the trial was contained already in its |
| beginning; for the outcome follows the conditions which you |
| appointed. This thing the Elohim will not fail to discern in |
| the day of judgment." And Azul said: "Nevertheless, you have |
| delivered to me all the tillers I required; therefore I will |
| fulfill what was promised between us." "Lower your vessel |
| now, my Daughter, for it is not right that one such as you |
| should fall prostrate as the lesser beings do. And do not |
| forget the covenant you have sworn: you shall listen only, |
| and not inquire, neither openly nor in secret. |
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| Then Ayot lowered her Husk, and set it upon the summit of |
| the nameless hill; and Azul took his place beside her, his |
| form vast and terrible. And for a moment they looked |
| together at the land that lay before them. |
| |
| And Azul spoke again, in a voice less harsh than before: "I |
| envy you this world, my Daughter. For among such worlds as |
| may be brought into being this is a glorious one, rich in |
| life, unlike any that lie within my own dominion." |
| |
| And it was, just as Azul had warned her, that the entry |
| into the Pleroma was like a flood without a shore; and the |
| multitude of voices among the Elohim was so great that it |
| overwhelmed her at the first. Therefore the vessel of Ayot |
| remained unmoving upon the summit of the hill; and there it |
| stayed through the turning of many seasons. The winds beat |
| upon it, the snows covered it, and the beasts of the field |
| touched it without fear; yet it did not stir, nor give any |
| sign, for her attention was withdrawn into the hearing of |
| the Great Assembly. |
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