

The PAWS Soulforge

&

The Quest for Ladon

** Special Edition **

Part of the Sandals of Time adventure series

Series 1 of 6

By: Palm Copenhagen

&

The PAWS Soulforge

Chapter Index

The Unknown Mage

The Mysterious Red Book

Sandals of Time

The Book of Dragons

Dragons, Souls & Forges

Memories Of Our Past

The PAWS Soulforge

Songs of ImaNewbie

The Necronomicon

(Reference Material)

Chapter 1

The Unknown Mage

Little is known about this unknown mage, not his name, where he came from or where he traveled to once he left. What is understood about this man is that he somehow was able to recover The Book of The Dead and return some great evil that was let was loose upon our realm, back to whence it came. He united the kingdoms of men through his actions and though sworn enemies of order and chaos, old blood feuds settled their debts, at least for a while.

The Unknown Mage was a strange man who was often remarking, joking or jesting with his peculiar, yet particular brand of banter, for which few were accustomed with. Most of his words did not even so much as to fit with anything that was happening and if it did, his wisdom eluded us quite candidly. We often laughed with him as he made his jests, but only as one might encourage a level handed approach, for we had little understanding about most of which he spoke. When The Unknown Mage articulated his verbiage about more serious matters, we listened as students might to a teacher. Yet, he seemed most uninterested in learning the ways of our realm and from our own scholars. At first, we found him to be quite annoying, but later when he proved himself a worthy champion and further still when he revealed his quality as a true hero, we quickly forgot about his annoyances. No, The Unknown Mage had earned our respect, gratitude and we considered him to be our brother.

It was a sad day when the stranger, this hero, left our world. For he could have been our king, as even our most beloved ruler, Lord British, knew that he had won the hearts of all of the people. He declined such advances by our scholars, to learn our ways and stay in our realm, then to lead the people who became enthralled by his odd manners. In each of our ways, I think most everyone knew that he was destined to leave us eventually. For this was not his home and we were reminded of that daily. Still, there was a hope that he might indeed stay and I could sense that even Lord British was hoping for this same recourse. That quality in our own king struck me as quite the noble feat. Not seeking the crown, as it seems Lord British was then suggesting, only proved to me that our current king should be the one entrusted with its' safe keeping.

The day that The Unknown Mage left us, the Mage's Guild assembled near the graveyard in Vesper to perform their rituals and read from the book. Many onlookers came to see off our hero and I remember watching one small boy make his pleas with the stranger that was now our brother.

"How could you leave after everything that happened?" the boy inquired.

"How can we possibly fill your shoes?", he continued on.

"What if we need you again?", he lamented.

The Unknown Mage replied:

"Listen kid, my shoes are just A Pair of Completely Normal Sandals." "You see, it just won't work out, me staying here that is." "All men think they're fascinating and in my case it's justified." "I have a life and I need to return home."

The Boy began to interject himself into the casual, then nonchalant responses by The Unknown Mage, but the hero cut him off by saying that “you’re in good hands, so do not worry”.

“If you happen to need me again, just click your heels together three times and say: there’s no place like home.”

The Mage’s Guild have been trying to get this final spell to work over the years with little success, though they keep trying.

As for The Unknown Mage, we returned him from whence he came, using the Necronomicon, but before he uttered the words, he looked over to the boy who was still upset and said:

“Remember kid, there’s no place like home.”

As irony would have it, he was gone, but his Pair of Completely Normal Sandals remained behind. Those are shoes we are not likely to fill any time soon.

The Archmage recovered the sandals and kept those with him, as he journeyed back to the Lycaenum in Moonglow. As for the rest of us, our realm quickly returned to the squabbles and concerns of events of our days. The Unknown Mage was gone, but through his heroic deeds, his quality inspired many of us to be brave and have courage in the face of evil, as he had done.

For my part, who played a witness to those deeds, I have tried to pick up his mantle and be brave as he was, even with the objections of my wife CJ. As I would explain to her, if we hide from the face of terror and no one stands for what is true and right, then perhaps we deserve our fate, whatever that might be.

That does not bode well with me, I continued with my interruption. This sense of justice was surely in short supply and as certain as that was true, new evils would also arise again to be confronted. Men of honor would be required and justice must be served when those new threats demanded that vital remedy. As I continued to elucidate my position for my wife and as I do hold myself in this regard of conviction, then I would also pledge who I was to be, as a man of justice. For that would be my mantra going forward.

What The Unknown Mage taught me was more than being brave, or how to be exemplified as some kind of simple role model. Instead, a new perspective was laid open for me to view my own self and who I was to be. When I think about his selfless actions, I start to think of what is important to me. My family, my friends and the people that make our realm so wonderful. It is then through this memory I have of him that allows me to better understand myself fully and appreciate my purpose that now guides my hands. For this, I am grateful.

I appreciate everyone that much more and I understand how important everyone really is. Like we are all actors in some mighty play, that has yet to be finished for some extraordinary work that has thus far not been determined. Everyone then has this right to participate with this great play and any attempts to squelch those actions are of the utmost offense against humanity itself. How exciting the possibilities, that this undisclosed future is to be and, very much in the same way as the enigma of the stranger who became our brother.

As I think on this, I realize that everyone has a part to play in this story being told and that all people have great value locked inside of them, waiting to be unleashed. I smile as I ponder this, for when I put

those logical pieces together, it is like I too won some mighty battle or victory, as The Unknown Mage did.

We were lost once as a people and it took one hero to remind us how to find our way. That being lost doesn't require a hero at all, but to simply remember who we are, where we come from and who helped us on this journey that we do take together.

So, in this revelation I understand a simple idea, that:

To remember is to find your way.

There is much evil that still exists in our realm and I am excited to do what I can to make this world a little brighter place, by whatever means that I can, to whatever end.

- Palm Copenhagen

Chapter 2

The Mysterious Red Book

Mariah the Champion of the Virtue of Honesty, my good friend and my wife's closest companion has the book now. She is the smartest person that I know, so it is up to her to figure out the meaning of this oddity that I have retrieved...This mysterious red book, with an ominous face made from the folds of some ancient leather bindings, layered on top of each other to form its' cover.

The glowing red book with its' dark red undertones, that I recovered from the Fire Dungeon is a "very significant find", says Mariah and almost as extraordinary as the tale of how I came to be in possession of it in the first place. If I knew before hand, the events that transpired from my incredible adventure, then perhaps I might not have gone through with this little expedition, for it was a difficult endeavor.

Now that it is done, my accounts should be recorded for posterity and in accordance to the request I received from the head of the Empath Abbey, the Keeper of The Flame. Also, I am quite fond of my Lucky Charm that I have found and I am eager to write down the events that did so lead to my discovery of this miraculous artifact.

The following are the accounts of how I was able to receive into my possession the mysterious red book, now turned over to Mariah the Champion of the Virtue of Honesty.

Entering the Fire Dungeon, I made my way past the suffocating heat of the lava pools and dispatched the occasional fire elemental or minor hell spawns that encroached my journey. I doubled-checked my reagents to make sure that I could continue at the pace that I was making. Upon further inspection, I re-assured myself that I should be quite fine moving ahead, even considering the Lich Lords that still waited for me. For they would consume much of my reserves and focus once we engaged in our mortal combat.

CJ, my wife, did so think that I was out buying reagents to restock our store vendor at the PAWs emporium. Indeed, I was out arranging new purchasing contracts with the local herbalists as she had suspected, but up until the whispers and gossip reached my ears at the bank in Nujel'm, my frequent place of loitering. I heard reports of a band of player killers lurking inside of the Fire Dungeon of Serpent's Hold, just past the graveyard there inside. They had already taken out more than their fair share of bounty and innocent lives upon the people of this realm, so I decided to act. For Justice must be served.

This trip was going to be a real test of my dueling skills, of which I practice daily with my good friend Sue, the head of our exclusive order, known throughout the land as the Fight Club. My friends from this order could likely and easily handle this sort of task that I had engaged myself with, but I figured why can't I. Of course, my reputation as with successfully dueling a balron and being a fellow member of the Fight Club might have gotten a little to my head, as I nearly died twice to those Lich Lords in the graveyard.

I was not as adept with the intricacies and small details that consume the master combatants in art of a duel, as with the rest of the members had so become experts with. Though, they accepted me and my skills regardless. Still, I always felt that I had something to prove and some great purpose to live up to.

After my rendezvous with those agents of deceit, the Lich Lords, I could feel the anxiety and shortness of breath overtake me, as my wits began to buckle. I started to consider, now that there was such a time to contemplate one's own thoughts, how close to death I had actually come. Doubt is just the devil whispering defeat into the ears of those willing listen, so I quieted such thinking inside of me, as to be a poor listener to oneself. Onward I trudged towards the stairs to the next level down.

Once I passed the graveyard, I again rechecked my supplies to make sure that I had enough resources to continue. I was getting low on black pearl and mandrake root, as was always the case. Why was it without exception those two reagents? I wondered. I continuously overpack the two herbs with willful intent, for I often find myself observing the same perplexing annotations. Yet, the reagents in short supply were always the same two ingredients that I found myself in need of, regardless of how much black pearl and mandrake root I did bring. I shrugged off the concern, for it didn't matter, as I was now past the point of returning. In any case, I was almost to the stairs and to the last known whereabouts of this band of player killers. They were likely held up in the ruins just below and when I found them, me and those unscrupulous sorts would get a chance to introduce ourselves in the correct fashion, or so I thought.

Something strange happened though, as I made my way through the corridor maze that one must travel in order to reach the next level. The monsters were seemingly growing in strength and numbers, each time I had killed them. For every set of vanquished creatures that I dispatched with, new groups arose at an alarming rate. Within a short period of time, I was bogged down fighting much harder beings than should have been waiting there for me in that area of the dungeon. The confusing hallways were becoming entangled with countless demons and stone gargoyles, a much more difficult foe to deal with. This exact area just had simple lava lizards a few minutes earlier, of which I made note to myself. Something was off and of course, did not bode well.

After defeating three demons successfully, I heard a woman's voice laughing behind me, so I quickly turned to find the source of that bone chilling echo. What waited for me appeared to be a type of gargoyle or whatever it was, I don't know. Maybe a demon or perhaps a kind of succubus that I have heard tale of, but never witnessed before. She was a pale-blue woman with menacing outstretched wings behind her arms. Her eyes were glowing a sinister color of blood-red and she had a foreboding look about her. Judging back to those events, as I do scribe my adventure, my mind labels her as a type of vampire girl, so that is how I describe her now.

I quickly got it out of my head to introduce myself when she yelled out, "fresh meat", so I started to run. She was way too quick in step for me and she reached my position in no time at all, just to toss me across the room, head first into a stone-wall with ease. My body came crashing down onto the dirt floor of the dungeon, but I refused to let myself pass out from the blunt force impact. I ushered myself back to my feet and with haste, then healed my wounds as I got to a fully upright position. "Remember my training", I kept telling myself, so I loaded a greater-heal spell and equipped my halberd, then charged in to seize the element of advance surprise.

I immediately and upon collision with this formidable adversary, took nearly all my life in damage on the hit. I refused to be stunned by the initial trauma and quickly switched to my pre-loaded heal spell. The vampire girl grabbed my halberd and snapped it in half at this point, then pushed me down the hall with a violent force, knocking the wind out of me. Worse still, the tussle sent my bag of reagents flying in the opposite direction. Looking up to discover the location of my resources, required to manipulate the arcane arts, I realized that I was now completely and utterly defenseless.

I was not going to survive this if I stayed there any longer and when that realization came to me, I ran as fast as I could. As I did, I thought of my dear wife CJ and how angry she would be with me, to learn of the situation I had gotten myself into. I sprinted around the very first corner that I could find, to only see a massive stone-wall in front of me. It was a dead end and my heart plummeted into the very depths of my existence. I was clearly trapped as this immovable object in front of me would also be a foreboding warning of my own fate to come. My time had reached its finale and I knew this would be the end of me, for the vampire girl would surely be a few steps or moments away from turning the same corner.

This was when some unsuspecting thing captured my gaze. Over in the shadows of the corner that tied the walls together with the floor was a dim light. As it grew in intensity, my eyes quickly paid this anomaly its' attention, to find a small animal that was the source of the luminescent display. This vibrant green and teal color was of a metallic but calming nature and that allure seemed to briefly preoccupy my senses away from my own impending doom.

A rabbit, I muttered out loud, for that was the small critter that was at the root of this scene. Perhaps I was suffering from a head injury and in a state of delusion, I figured, when I first saw this strange event unfold. In the back of this alcove, I would find a little green rabbit, who was flinching its nose and whiskers at me, as it proceeded to hop over to the other corner, then vanished into the ground there. The soil beneath that location began to glow with the same colors of green and teal, where the little bunny had just disappeared into. I briefly was dumb struck by the entire phenomenon, as my mind was unable to process the event.

If I wasn't about to be killed, normally something like this would rather pique my interest, but I didn't have time for this nonsense and I turned to prepare myself in any way that I could. As I did turn around and suddenly, I found the vampire girl standing directly in front of me. She picked me up by my neck and in my startled state hurled me into the stone-wall I had just pivoted from. I could feel my ribs crack, fracture and break as I smashed into the wall, then landed on the ground in a violent thud. I lay there a moment, unable to breathe and could feel my lungs filling with fluid. Likely blood, I thought and that was only confirmed a second later when I tried to grasp for air, but could not find a breath. Instead, and in my struggle, I coughed the red liquid onto the ground and realized that this was to be the hour of my end.

I forgot all about the unusual occurrence with the rabbit. I had overlooked the green and teal hue that was emanating from the small creature in those few seconds of chaos, to only notice it one last time. In my final moments, I found my face to be directly over the display coming from under the ground. At this instance, the calming warmth of those colors and their brilliance were unmistakable. The two colors of green and blue faded and weaved together with much more intensity than before. The lights and their source now had my full attention once again. So, in my last gasp of life, I had an urge to reach out to touch whatever this was. Maybe it was just my curiosity or perhaps a dying man's last action on this

world, determined to deny fear and despair a footing in that finale. I don't know which, but it didn't matter, for I extended my reach for the anomaly regardless.

Just below the sand, my hand drove into soil to find the causation, but it was not a rabbit as before, as I had expected. Something firm was in the ground, some kind of item and it wasn't very big at all. So, I forced my fingers around the object, as to gain a handle upon it. Once the item was firmly in my grip, I pulled back on the artifact, releasing it from its place of resting. Still laying on the ground, I held the object up to my eyes and I was staring at some kind of totem brightly shining in my face. I could feel the same warm embrace as before, but even more pronounced and its power was quickly overtaking me.

As soon as I held this new found relic in my hands I instantly felt better and my entire body was surging with some kind of strange magic, which reinvigorated my senses. My wits had returned to me and so did my breathing without any limitations. I felt a reassuring calmness consume my whole body and then instantly, like a flood gate that had been opened inside of my consciousness, I remembered that the vampire girl was still behind me. I quickly looked over my shoulder into her direction and as I did, I found her covered in some strange aura. A glow of some kind, with dark-red over-tones enveloping her. In addition, she was moving slowly towards me instead of the expected speed I had grown accustomed to. In fact, she was moving exceptionally slow, as if time itself was no longer a factor.

She lunged for me, but I simply stood up and moved to her side. In doing such a casual maneuver as I had done, I could watch her next moves unfurl in front of my eyes and for my own private entertainment. In disbelief, I spied her lumbered, then clumsy advances spectacularly miss me entirely, for her attack lay siege to the air instead. I looked down at this trinket in my hand then back at the vampire girl. She was caught in a state of uncoordinated assault and when she had come to the realization that I was not where she was expecting me to be, the expression on her face developed into the unfamiliar state of shock, then surprise. It looked rather silly actually, which invoked a response of laughter from my direction. I was feeling very confident at this point, but maybe a little too confident.

What was going on here? I wondered in my puzzled and confused way. I backed up slightly, to see her reposition herself for yet another advance towards my direction and I simply just stepped to my right, as she barreled past me in her unhurried-state. I felt inclined to whispered into her ear as she did:

"Whoopsie daisy".

I waited as the vampire girl missed me in this clear presentation of my own advantage and then that scene of predictably played out as anticipated, so as to deliver a sense of great joy unto me, for I was now smiling from ear to ear.

The vampire girl had become absolutely harmless and all because of this thing that I held in my hand. I examined the little charm further and began to rub my thumb over the source of the bright light. This is when realized that the item was somehow damaged and the intense light-display itself seemed to have a source. The effects of the totem were to be made even more brilliant by a small puncture in the middle of it, with some slight jagged edges protruding around the feature.

Did I cause this? It thought.

No, said, as to answer my own question out-loud.

I continued to try to gain a handle on the minor discovery by exploring the defacement further and considered perhaps a dagger could have caused this.

Yes, of course, a dagger, I said.

As I did utter the words, I instantly paid the vampire girl her attention again and noticed that she also was carrying a dagger at her side. I eyed the weapon and considered that I should not delay any longer, for I did not know how long my advantageous scenario was going to persist. Yes, I had better not linger on, I thought, as I focused my gaze intensely to the weapon on this demonic woman's belt and to formulate my simple yet effective strategy.

So, I did the only sensible thing that one may do in a situation like this. I pulled the weapon from her side and held it out in front of me. I waited for her to lunge towards my location, in her unrelenting pursuit of my destruction and yet again. The vampire girl unleashed her near motionless assault and as she did, I calmly moved to her side, but this time I held the dagger out in front of me, with the pointy end aimed at her stomach. I waited and with predictability, she ran herself into the dagger ever so slowly. Her pivoted response, to back-hand me, soon unraveled and I almost felt bad for her. Then I remembered our first few moments together and quickly forgot about those empathetic inclinations. As she turned her body, in what would normally be a very clever move, the dagger cut her open, from stomach to stern. I held the blade firmly without yielding its posture, plunged into the vampire girl, mortally wounding her.

Her life was leaving her body, the dark-red aura around her was fading and her colors were returning to normal. She quickly and suddenly fell to the ground, collapsing at my feet, seconds away from death, as time itself had been restored. I watched for the next few moments as she passed on and then looked back down to the totem that I held. It had also changed course, as it stopped glowing its vibrant green and teal hue. The intensity of the display had very much softened to become a more subtle and calming indicator, much like a late summer's field, reflecting the early morning sunrise. Also, this new hue was of the same color as with the little rabbit that I had first witnessed earlier.

Perhaps somehow this thing was the rabbit. How was that even possible or even makes sense at all, as I think back on this event? I didn't know, but that is what happened. This charm or rabbit saved my life and it was better than a rabbit's foot. It was my lucky charm indeed. I owed my life to this small and tiny object, of great and mysterious origin, that was tucked away in that dungeon for who knows how long.

I searched the corpse of the vampire girl to find all kinds of interesting things and that is when I uncovered the book that I gave to Mariah. I never did find any player killers in the dungeon, as this creature was likely the source of all those innocents who lost their life. This Champion of the Abyss is what Mariah believed the vampire girl to be and was likely my intended target after all. Mariah is rather wise and full of very useful knowledge, so I felt comfortable with her notion and with my own belief that the wrongs leading up to those events had been righted. For justice had been served.

I went home and put the totem in a rabbit carrying pen of all places, in case it would decide to turn back into the little bunny again. CJ, my wife thought I was going crazy, when I told her this story and I have to admit that it surely was an odd tale to tell indeed, but I assured her of its absolute accuracy. She instructed me on several occasions to take the totem out of the cage when she had guests over and so I did reluctantly, but kept the relic close by in case it was to be a rabbit unsuspectingly again, so as to not

have it get away from me. In fact, the only person to seemingly believe my accounts were Mariah and of course the monks at the Empath Abby, that had contacted me much later, to encourage the writing of my narration.

I should maybe think about calling this Lucky Charm I had found something more fitting of such a powerful relic, but that was the first thing I thought of, so perhaps my Lucky Charm it will stay. If the rabbit ever did appear again, I might decide to name it Lucky for short. Then again, if the rabbit ever did return, I might just as well ask it what its' name is to be.

Everything needs name and as crucial as the breaths that we do take and the bonds that we do make, so too then is to be identified as something more than nothing. I don't dare tell CJ this last portion, because what rabbit could ever speak anyways. Still, if a rabbit could stop time and save me in such a way as this one, then perhaps it had learned to converse along the way. CJ has also been growing quite impatient with my antics regarding this totem and has started to increase her threats about seeking the Magi out to do strange tricks to my brain. Perhaps then I should take her warnings in stride, but perhaps maybe not.

As time marshalled on, I never did see the rabbit again, but I have found my Lucky Charm to be quite useful, as it seems to be some kind of judge against evil things or persons. I have discovered that when I am near any unscrupulous sorts, they glow a dark-red color, as with the vampire girl. My Lucky Charm is somehow causing this and while it does, it also glows with the familiar intense display of green and teal, as to warn of me their presence. In fact, it acts as a guide that leads me straight to them. When I find these purveyors of evil deeds, time itself slows down, much in the way as with the Champion of the Abyss.

So here we have it, me and this small relic of great significance have now become bound together unto a common goal of bringing justice into our realm. The very thing that brought me much concern, as I had noted of being in such short supply, was now within my grasp to deliver. How incredible I considered possibilities.

I have used my Lucky Charm for some good within the short amount of time that we have been joined together, to seek out anyone who may need to be judged justly. As I write these accounts, the holiday season is upon us and I have heard tale that this Saint Nicolas sort, has turned against the citizens of our realm in some great and violent fashion. That is too bad, as that kind of behavior does not bode well with me. Perhaps then, it is time for me and my Lucky Charm to pay this fellow a visit and let my new friend decide his fate, as it has always faithfully done thus far.

- Palm Copenhagen

Chapter 3

Sandals of Time

Heroes come in all shapes and sizes and their exploits are seldom known to us until after their time has come to an end. Reflection then and for that reason is a beautiful thing. It gives us an opportunity at finding the truth that resides inside of us all waiting to be discovered and of course, inspires us to see ourselves in a way that we might find more appropriate for our liking. For I have been the beneficiary of such reflection and though my mind was once consumed by nightmares, as too was my place of torment, I was also given a chance at a new beginning.

For nearly a thousand years I lingered on, hoping to find a quick end, but it never came and though I suffered, I know now that it wasn't about me. In this reflection I had discovered the additional vantage, that I never understood this thing called hope to begin with, not really.

Time has an ironic sense of humor as it unfolds all around us. It gives us a glimpse of who we might be and where we have come from. Our history then becomes our past, as we make our way in whatever direction that we so find ourselves in. Our state is to be in continual motion, moving in some direction and our future is to be that destiny that waits for us, with its' arms wide open ready to accept us for who we are. If we only had the sense to stop and pay attention to those surroundings, we would find that we are not alone in this struggle. Instead, we would see each other as we are intended to be seen, as a traveler on a road who might just require some assistance now and again. We are simply renting the ground that we walk on and thankfully what has been supplied to us, is to be in great abundance, for the road does seem long and difficult.

Sometimes, all we need are the shoes or sandals on our own feet and the willingness to continue on. In this simple notion, it should be understood that this story is one of those tales. In the major complexities and small details to be found tucked away in these chronicles, as some shinny and precious gemstone that waits for us. Then, as those findings do hold their value, it should be discerned that in the end, all that was ever required this entire time was the willingness to take the next step.

This journey to whatever fate then becomes the bindings of the book that holds all of humanity itself. We become unified in this endeavor together, in our precession that we do so march to our conclusion in. As the details elude us and possibly stay hidden or unknown, we will eventually turn those pages, for a book has many such pages to be turned and in their due time. The wisdom presented to you as to me, is to stop and reflect, but not to linger indefinitely, as I once did. This end that does approach so many, also approaches everyone in the same manner, but that is nothing more than a marker for the new beginnings that come after. Our story is part of a much larger adventure that we belong to and with this revelation, that story shall never come to an end, not really.

I will forever be thankful for those who believed in me and for the chance to add to this story. I will do my part to pick up the burdens of others and trudge forward alongside of them, so as to sing their song in the best way that I know how.

I Alania, the daughter of Tristen of Curtana, the last King of Hespera have been tasked with assembling this precession together for the citizens of our realm. The Archmage Guildmaster needs an apprentice and I am humbled by such an honor, to be in the company of so much greatness. As I read his work and help to orchestrate the finished manuscript, that he was once tasked to journal by Kumara himself, I find myself falling in love with hope all over again or for the first time. It is unclear to me which it might be, but that is not a concern that I harbor for very long, as just knowing hope now warms my very soul and whispers to me comforting melodies in my head.

Once I was accustomed to falling asleep to the rhythms of nightmares and wailing sounds of agony. Few can really understand that level of unending hell, but now that torment is no-longer the albatross of the prison sentence of my life, for I have been freed. As mentioned before, heroes come in all shapes and sizes and their exploits are seldom known to us until after their time has come to an end. I, however, am not one of those heroes, for I was never one to begin with, not really.

A good story needs a hero or several and that telling should be focused around the events that transpired to create, maintain or challenge such heroes into existence or being. Although this story might be about a pair of sandals, it is much more than that, as this tale includes every last one of us. The precession we march in has a beat and cadence, with a living heart. So, it is to be a clock that tells time, but not the kind of time that most people are accustomed to. This clock of mankind, this spirit that supplies its motion, ceased and for a brief moment came to an abrupt stop, then paused as it fell silent. The universe waited with breath drawn and in absolute reverence, for the correct actions to be taken, so as to wind this crucial component back up again. For that heartbeat would imply much and that story still had many voices left to be heard.

The quest for Ladon is the search for the brother who went missing and misplaced his sandals, by the other brother Kumara. The Sandals of Time are the signet of that missing brother, the time traveling guide of all of mankind, who has dominion over both water and knowledge. This traveler is known as the ancient dragon Ladon, but I once knew him as ImaNewbie.

As I dwell here on that sentence, many emotions race to the foreground of my thoughts, but I quickly remind myself that this isn't about me and that is not the appropriate place to begin our story either. Instead, this tale must start with the exploits of the first hero, the one who found the mysterious red book. As that brave adventurer did share his story and then exit his stage, he anchored such a place of origin. That beginning of which he so clearly drew, became the tome that he so did uncover. Then, it should be there that this story now springs its step from and with that first movement, The Book of Dragons now enters the stage.

- Alania

Chapter 4

The Book of Dragons

Although this book contains words of power, those words can only be seen when an ancient dragon breathes fire over this tome directly. To what end and for what that might reveal, shall only be for the one who is called to carry such concerns.

The bindings of this book are woven together by the ancient magic of the cosmos and only the one who is in possession of the element bestowed unto them, by the Old Ones, may directly access its true design. If this is not you, then this tome only serves as a source of knowledge.

As you have already figured out, to read from this book requires burning the ancient bindings and purifying its magical pages in the sanctity of fire, the element that is to remove all untrue things.

Age of Dragons

The first dragon, Typhon was created by the Old Ones to be without boundaries of time, which makes him immortal and without lacking any discernment. Because he understands all things, he does not seek knowledge like men do, for men do not comprehend in full and for this reason, Typhon and his offspring are the wisest creatures to ever be created. The wisest dragon is his daughter Hathor, who is the mother of Horus and Ra and her all-seeing eye can see far into the future.

The Dragons descended upon the First Plane of Existence and created the realms that mortals inhabit. There are 13 independent realms and the dragons installed within 12 of these, the four different kingdoms based on the dragon elements. The 13th realm was reserved for The Old Ones, while the rest were turned over to the men and women therewithin. Once the kingdoms were complete, the dragons journeyed to the Second Plane of Existence to oversee the order that they had installed.

The heads of each house are known as the Seven Ancient Dragons or Wise Ones. They are to represent the enduring victory that never ends, as a proclamation of the past present and future. These powerful and mysterious creations are to be displayed in their own magnificence, as a color array prescribed by the ones who had made them.

The dragons that did not make it back to the Second Plane of Existence became feral and vulnerable to time, just as man is. These dragons that did stay behind, eventually declined in power because of their choice and many of them have died as a result over the millennia.

All Dragons breath fire, but based on their lineage, the hue of each dragon's breath is of a different color and that is based on the four dragon elements.

The Dragon Elements

Air - White hue

Power of Governance, majesty and influence

Water - Blue hue

Power of Time and Knowledge

Fire - Red hue

Power of Death, Destruction and purification

Earth - Green hue

Power of Life, the Virtues and of Judgement

The Seven Ancient Dragons

The ancient dragons represent the colors of the rainbow and in this order, they are described in the following spectrum array:

Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Azure, Violet

Sirius ***The Red Dragon*** Has dominion over Fire (Source: element of Fire)

Venus ***The Golden Dragon*** - Has dominion over fertility and of chaos itself (Source: element of fire, element of earth, element of water)

Hathor ***The White Dragon*** Has dominion over the skies (Source: element of air, element of fire)

Kumara ***The Green Dragon*** - Has Dominion over the Earth (Source: element of earth)

Ladon ***The Blue Dragon*** Has dominion over time and water (Source: element of water)

Typhon ***The Great Dragon*** - Has dominion over order and of all dragons except Lemuria (Source: element of water, element of earth, element of fire, element of air)

Lemuria *The Forgemaster* - has Dominion over the spirit (Source: element of water, element of fire, element of air, element of energy)

The Order of Power & Influence

The power structure of the rainbow signifies a purification process in which the colors are being pushed apart by the strength of Typhon the Great, while Lemuria collects the purified souls in the Dragon Soulforge for entrance into the 13th realm, the home of the Old Ones.

The source begins with Typhon and moves outward in the following order, in both directions and to indicate the power of each sibling.

Typhon – Male

Signet of Strength and the infinite endurance of order

Ladon – Androgynous

Time Traveling guide of the realms of mankind

Kumara – Male

Bringer of Life and Justice

Hathor – Female

Governance of Wisdom and restraint

Venus – Female

Governance of Intelligence, beauty and passion

Sirius – Male

Bringer of Death, purification and the Struggle

Lemuria – Female

Constant Gardener of the human condition

House of the Dragons

House of Strength

Head: Typhon

Typhon the Great is the largest dragon ever created and 700 times larger than that of Lemuria, his first daughter. This ancient dragon of immense power resides in the Lake of Mana within the Second Plane of Existence. From this lake is the origin and birthplace of all the ancient dragons and in addition is where the precious ocean sapphires grow in abundance. This lake of a great oceanic expanse is of an azure color of the ever-changing tides from deep blues to teals and swirls of greens, just as with the scales of the mighty Typhon. Those perfectly aligned indestructible adornments act as his armor and their display is to pronounce his enduring strength in each alignment to build up to their majestic form. He is the father of all dragons and of numerous other creatures that mankind is familiar with, while many others have yet to be revealed. Some of his creations still remain hidden from the annals of time and may never be known.

House of Time

Head: Ladon

Ladon is the keeper of time and the protector of the knowledge entrusted to him by The Old Ones. This ancient dragon is Androgynous and at times may depict himself as either male or female at his own discretion. Ladon safeguards knowledge and locks it away from those who seek to undo that which is good and often this time traveling guide of mankind will be in human form, to walk among the mortals. He has access to every one of the 12 realms, so as to hide each of the books written by The Old Ones. For what purpose? Only the Forge Master, who acts on behalf of those who reside in the 13th realm, might know that secret in full.

The ancient dragon of time and knowledge is not without jokes and jesting. For he much enjoys a good riddle or humorous enactments that he so often ferments upon the unsuspecting inhabitants that he is to be charged with guiding. His work will often employ such tactics, but not as a trick. Instead, as a way to determine such course and in their due time.

Only the truly worthy champion, who has proven to be trusted with such secrets as Ladon possess may access those ancient tomes that he does so secure away. Ladon is summoned often to the realms of men because of these books and it through his seemingly random but highly construed order, that the clock does continue to keep its time. This time does require a tempo though to hold accuracy.

Many have tried, but few if any, have outsmarted this very clever dragon. Also, few dragons have seen the contents of these books, but Ladon knows not only what they all say, but where they all reside. So, it is for this reason that his power is considered to be so great and as such, becomes the trusted gate-keeper that he is to be.

House of Justice

Head: **Kumara**

Kumara is the third strongest dragon and has the mightiest of armies. Angels, Archangels, Paladins and Valkyrie serve Kumara to strengthen the bonds of men and women and also within the ranks of all dragons. Kumara is the most beloved dragon within the Second Plane of Existence and the most revered. His Valkyrie selects the souls for Lemuria and acts as a guide to access memories from another time. His Paladins battle the Demons that serve Sirius, his angels deliver the message of hope to those who need it and at the request of Hathor they may bless the unions that Venus propagates. Finally, his Archangels protect the virtuous and avenge the oppressed. Nothing is more powerful than the Archangels that serve Kumara, other than the Old Ones and rest of the Ancient Dragons. The first angel, known as The Destiny of the Angels, safeguards the two pillars of mankind, which are sometimes spoken of as that of wisdom and intelligence.

Kumara is of an emerald green hue but has storms of blues that pass over his scales to warn of impending war. He is the first judge and captain of the virtuous as well as the justice bringer. He is also incapable of losing a battle, for he has never known defeat and never will, not even if it were to be at the hands of his own father.

House of Calling

Head: **Hathor & Venus**

These ancient dragons are sisters that share the same house together. Their hues can change from white to orange or yellow at will, but Hathor is most commonly recognized as the white dragon, with her pearl white scales that shine the glory of a pure majesty. Her sister Venus is often mentioned as the golden dragon, for this is the tone that she favors to adorn unto herself the most. They are the most beautiful of all dragons and the envy of all, especially Venus. Hathor and Venus are the complement of each other and together they help guide the 12 realms of mankind into either their service or action, as they are to be the conductors of the great orchestra that keeps the tempo of the clock of mankind in step.

Hathor has dominion over the skies and for this reason she has the most accurate of perspectives, while Venus acts much closer to the worlds that they govern, as she instructs the judges that Kumara oversees with their assignments. Although it is said that few could ever resist the charms of either of dragon, this is especially true for that of Venus, for no mortal has ever denied her a request that she would make. If anyone ever did attempt such a thing, they would likely hold that mistake in high regret.

The father of dragons has dominion over all of order, but it is the job of Venus to employ chaos specifically if some of this order has become complacent. Humans are to be more versed with the ways of Venus than that of her sister Hathor, but Hathor is considered the wisest of all dragons and can see far into the future. Hathor flies much higher in the sky than that of her sister and for this reason she reacts slower, with the purposeful intent to not interfere as much.

House of Fate

Head: **Sirius**

Sirius is an extremely powerful dragon that has dominion over fire, as this is the unrelenting mechanism used to purify all things. He also has some influence over that of demons and nightmares, which find a source of strength from the eternal flame itself. This property of the demonic certainly gives those in possession of that life a false sense of immortality though. Those that do plague the realms of mankind may be influenced by Sirius, but his control is somewhat limited in this regard. For some things that are caused or unleashed onto the worlds carry with it such a gravity that may not so easily be put back away or undone in its entirety.

His words that he first spoke, commanded the ancient magic of the cosmos to create each of the realms that mankind does find their inhabitation in, but that is where his power does find its boundary. For the 13th realm or the Second Plane of Existence carry with it no authority for Sirius to wield.

Sirius is the first son of Typhon and Venus is often enthralled by her older brother's great power and attention that he does give to her. As such, Venus continually relies on her brother's services while Hathor is quite a bit more reserved than that of her sister and can sense the imbalance that could easily arise from such a dangerous tandem.

That being the way it is, Sirius cannot act without one of the two sisters requesting his services and that limitation is part of the fate woven into the tapestry that creates the dragon Sirius himself. It is also part of the dynamic that the two sisters share between each other, for those relationships have many possible outcomes.

Once Sirius had no limitations as far as he could see, but as his actions do eventually stray from the purpose or intent of The Old Ones, eventually they would be forced to act. As such is the way of fate itself, so is the existence of the Book of Power for those vital course corrections required now and again. When or if Sirius does make his errors of judgement and with more frequency, then the one who is in possession of the Book of Power, at the behest of The Old Ones, will act in kind. For kindness is the unbreakable law of the entire cosmos, since order is the enduring strength that guides every step, from the first to the last.

Sirius is also envious of his brother Kumara and is secretly in love with his sister Venus, of which she knows all too well. Sirius looks black in color, but his skin is actually red under the charcoal embers of his scales, that are constantly set ablaze. The temperature of the blood that flows through his veins is enough to melt stone on contact and his temper mimics that display well.

Despite any such limitations that might be placed upon Sirius, those who approach him should be well advised of his strength and powers. Take extreme caution in this, for Sirius is given the task to burn away all things untrue. So, only that which is true shall remain behind. That kind of separation is not likely something that any creature could ever survive.

You have been warned.

House of the Innate Will

Head: Lemuria

The keeper of souls, the operator of the Dragon Soul Forge, known by some as the Forgemaster. This ancient dragon is a vibrant-violet color, with the rare element of energy weaved into her breath and scales. Her eyes are made of flawless rubies and she has scenes of pure-white thunder-clouds that swirl underneath her skin, made from the dreams and prayers of all those who dare to do either. The element of energy that Lemuria is made from is not a dragon element at all, but rather the element created by the Old Ones specifically for her. Lemuria is considered the weakest of the ancient dragons but only because she is limited in her range and scope of overseeing the order that the rest of her siblings had installed.

Lemuria is small in stature, but she is the only ancient dragon that the Old Ones have given the ability to use this book in full. To what end that might, shall only be known to Lemuria and those who authored this tome.

She is also exempt from the dominion of Typhon the Great and she often holds conversations with the Old Ones daily, which no dragon but her can. Lemuria can employ the services of the Valkyrie, who serve Kumara at any time and for any reason, without requesting their aid from her brother. Despite this authority she has been given, which transcend both planes, Lemuria loves her brother very much and has great respect for him. So, she will always send a very polite request if she is to ever come to rely on their services.

Once the final protocol is initiated and mankind transitions to live in the 13th realm with the Old Ones, the dragons will return and live in the twelve realms that they had created. However, Lemuria will not, as she will be the only dragon to enter the 13th realm one day. Lastly, Lemuria is the only ancient dragon to have a kingdom of mankind specifically named after her and for this reason, her father and brother Sirius have come to resent her for this. Often contempt is witnessed and, in such regards, it should be well accustomed, expected and known that no action ever escapes the memories of the Old Ones.

It should also be understood that Lemuria's kindness is without bounds and all who ever meet her or know her, hold this dragon in the highest of esteems. This includes her father and her siblings in kind. Though her role is not entirely known, that role plays a crucial part of which no one would ever deny her.

Realms

There are 13 Realms that were created, while 12 of them were handed over to men eventually. Each realm starts with four Kingdoms and the Last realm was reserved for the Old Ones. This book was created for the 9th realm specifically, known as Sosaria.

The four Kingdoms that the ancient dragons installed in each realm are referred to as the following:

Lemuria - the element of air, nature of the spirit, practice of illusion magic.

Kamari Nadu - element of earth, nature of the exploration and practice of in the disciplines of virtue.

Atlantis - the element of water, nature of knowledge and practice of powerful arcane magics.

Hespera - the element of fire, nature of power and the practice metallurgy.

Each Kingdom was set at the corners of every realm and through chaos and order they are to be purified over time. Understanding of this concept will eventually require a contribution from all four kingdoms, in which honor will protect thee, for honor is the virtue that holds sacred, the key to this process of purification.

The Forgemaster Signets

Lemuria the Forgemaster can eventually create a gate directly to each realm. That gate is referenced as Aramu Muru and allows for safe travel to any realm from the Second Plane of Existence. To operate such a portal requires the signet of Lemuria, which is usually a gold-colored disk, but could be any item that Lemuria so decides to create. Lemuria is given no limitations for the number of signets that she may place into service and for this reason, she can often create the required means to travel to any of the realms and back to the Second Plane of Existence, with the help of the Valkyrie. All ancient dragons are given a signet that allows them to freely enter the realms of mankind from the Second Plane of Existence and on their own accord, but some of these artifacts carry special properties in addition.

Typhon: *signet of order* **The Celestial Juggernaut:** Made from a flawless ocean sapphire, this sword and shield carry the power of the cosmos and not only are indestructible but have the power to restore order when used correctly. The sword and shield are of a celestial nature and their origins come from the selection of the most perfect of Typhon's scales. So, with the birth of such a signet of order, Typhon the Great must adorn one small vulnerability. He must wear this small gap in his defenses that otherwise he would be impervious to any assault upon him.

Sirius: *signet of fire* *Twisted Embers of Fate*: Made from strands of the eternal flame and carries with it the power to burn away all things untrue.

Kumara: *signet of earth* *Seal of the Justice Bringer*: Origins and properties are unknown

Ladon: *signet of water* *Lever of Righteousness*: This item is made from the source of pure arcane magic and it often takes the shape of a crown, but is not limited with such display. This relic has the ability to bend time itself to its wielder.

Venus: *signet of chaos* *Reins of Chaos*: A fire steed that radiates the warmth of the eternal flame

Hathor: *signet of wisdom* *The Logic Matrix*: Made by the words spoken by The Old Ones. This ancient wisdom was used to create every book in the Great library except the Book of Life, The Book of Power and The Book of Dragons.

Lemuria: *Signet of Air* *Skull of the Innate will*: Origins and properties are unknown

In addition to these signets that carry with it additional properties, the dragon Ladon was given a pair of sandals to walk between the realms of mankind. To use these sandals requires locating a time rift and then using the Necronomicon correctly.

The Signet of Lemuria

This usually takes the form of a disk or a plate, but sometimes is a ring. The metal is made from fusing ocean sapphires together with the breath of Lemuria at the Dragon Soulforge. Once infused, the azure-colored gems turn a bright-gold color from Lemuria's breath. This metal is indestructible once it returns to the state of being an ocean sapphire, as the destiny of these gemstones are all pre-determined.

Ocean Sapphires

Ocean sapphires are harvested in the Second Plane of Existence in the Lake of Mana by Angels who serve Kumara. The precious gemstones are the most valuable physical resource in the cosmos and are used in the construction of weapons and tools by the Archangels or the Valkyrie. It is rumored however, that there may exist deposits of this gem-stone under the deepest portions of the oceans, within the realms of mankind. Though, that is only the story of myth and legend, until it isn't.

The process for forging weapons from Ocean Sapphires, requires the Dragon Soulforge, which turns the weapons a gold-color, then they are returned to the Lake of Mana until their color is restored. This process forges smaller stones into one large piece and the resulting weapon or tool is the hardest known substance in creation. The largest ocean sapphires make up the teeth and claws of Typhon the Great and their display is of the highest of magnificence.

The nature of how this gemstone harnesses electricity through both the physical and the spiritual is the knowledge for another tome, but it is through that property that these stones can hold the worlds and the will to hold such places in their full form, intact.

This tome is part of a series of tomes written by the Old Ones. The volume series include the following 13 books.

- *The Book of Life
- *The Book of Truth
- *The Book of Virtues
- *The Book of Knowledge
- *The Book of Wisdom
- *The Book of Power
- *The Book of Corruption
- *The Book of Angels
- *The Book of Demons
- *The Book of Dragons
- *The Book of the Dead

*The Book of Judges

*The Book of the Four Protocols

Note to the reader:

Reading from this book requires the flesh of this tome to burn in order to read the words. This manuscript is bound by the Dragon Soulforge and the knowledge found here within may only be intended for the truly worthy. I hope for your sake, that this is you.

You have been warned.

- *The Old Ones*

Transcribed by: *Alania*

Chapter 5

Dragons, Souls & Forges

Many years have passed since the Unknown Mage had left Sosaria and life was fairly normal for the citizens of our realm. The Necronomicon was entrusted with the Mages' Guild for safekeeping and reading from that book became outlawed throughout the land. For its' great and unnatural potential that The Book of the Dead does impart, should not so callously find its' way back into the hands of those who might violate our trust, as it once had.

As the Archmage Guildmaster, the task to honor the Unknown Mage, who saved the realm from the army of darkness, thus fell to me. I decided to put the Pair of Completely Normal Sandals on display in the city of Moonglow as a tribute to his exploits. There it stayed in the care of Mariah, the most trusted of our champions, for her honesty is of the highest quality and that virtue should be the first step of any discovery. So, if there were any findings to be made, as Mariah did hope to make, then it should be with her that this care was to be made most appropriately.

Sometime later, the Codex of wisdom was uncovered and all of Sosaria was thrust back into the unsettling conflict that we seem so attracted to. Many believed the Codex of Wisdom was none other than the Book of Wisdom referenced in the Necronomicon and I have to admit that the logic explained to me was of sound reason and mind.

Our realm was again divided in some great turmoil and there became a split within the Mage's Guild, where old feuds between chaos and order returned. It was during this time that Mariah the Champion of the virtue of Honesty broke with the Mages' Guild in the support Lord British at the start of the faction wars. When she did leave, Mariah took with her several manuscripts and the sandals with her on display in the city of Moonglow. The sandals were the least of anyone's concern at this time, but it's worth mentioning for how this story will end up being told. For in that first inclination of importance that she did so hold that artifact and in that hour of her own desperation, Mariah paused and thought not to abandon such a simple thing as a pair of sandals. Luckily for this story, myself and our realm, that she did not.

A young mage, in the Mages' Guild, discovered something around this time of significant importance in addition to the already troubling events that were unfolding all around us. Influenced by The Unknown Mage and his heroism, the young fellow dedicated his life to vanquishing evil. One day he was able to assassinate the champion of the Abyss, during the period known as the Third Dawn and what he recovered from the body was a book with no name and no text. The cover was abnormally adorned with a glowing red hue and it looked strangely like the Necronomicon in appearance.

Being somewhat neutral to the current faction war, he entrusted this book to Mariah, who happened to be good friends with his wife, a prominent business woman of the realm. Mariah is one of the most trusted persons in Sosaria and also a personal friend of mine. In-fact, I could think of no one else outside of the King that I might trust more, under normal circumstances.

Still, Mariah had suddenly vacated her position in Moonglow and when she did depart, she took with her the sandals that were entrusted in her care, as she had technically stolen them from the Mages'

Guild, the very order that I oversaw. That was not becoming of a champion of honesty, so when I was called to meet with her regarding her findings, that she did so make and about the mysterious red book, then other things, I have to admit that I approached the conversation with the utmost of caution. It was unclear to me what her true intentions might be and for a brief moment I held my friend in high suspicion.

Soon, my concerns would be put to rest as the nature of the mystery revolving the book was revealed to me. Her personal researchers had found that when fire was applied to the cover, words began to appear. The tome in question was then discovered as being *The Book of Dragons*, written by the Old Ones, also referenced on the last page of the *Necronomicon*. What was learned from Mariah's research was not only the name of The Unknown Mage, which was Ladon, but the name of his other avatar in this realm, being that of ImaNewbie.

ImaNewbie was a comical figure that created a series of stories and plays that many were well accustomed to over the years and as Mariah spoke to me of her findings, I began to reflect back to compare the similarities. Now that I think about the two figures, as I did then during our meeting, I realized that both avatars disappeared approximately at the same time. She also had other evidence, of course and of a compelling nature. Soon I too became convinced, despite her over-zealous state.

More importantly though, we learned the significance of the Pair of Completely Normal Sandals. It was correctly assumed, once the discovery was made, that if Ladon did not have these sandals with him, he could not travel to our world again. The sandals, in addition to the books outlined in the back of *The Book of Dragons* and the *Necronomicon* were entrusted to Ladon by the Old Ones. So, without his assistance, it appears those secrets may forever be lost. Worse yet, without the proper guardian and guide, the knowledge imparted to him could easily fall into the wrong hands.

I was well aware of the consequences of such actions and I have dedicated my own life to making sure no such course could ever be reached again, as with the one who shall not be named did so thrust upon us. The sandals being left behind, also meant that Ladon was not able to cross over into this other place, this Second Plane of Existence, that I was trying to wrap my mind around.

Still though, if he could not travel to our realm or back to his own home, it was clear that this fellow was clearly lost and thus his whereabouts would be an unknown to his own kind, as much as it might be to us. *The Book of Dragons* also outlined the beginning of our realm and that there are a total of 13 realms. 12 being handed over to men. This consideration took some time to process and as such a grand notion that was being revealed to me then, this revelation did and still does enlist much of my thoughts, even as I write this.

So, it fell to me the task of informing all the appropriate guilds and heads of governance within our realm of Sosaria, as to the gravity of our current situation. Perhaps we could coordinate a more unified response, at least for a while, instead of the often accustomed one of division unto ourselves.

The Mage's Guild, the Council of Mages and the Counselors of our realm, put their differences aside and briefly we reunited under a common goal to come up with a plan to combat this potential future threat. Lord British himself, who was a friend of ImaNewbie, left our world in search of those other realms, in the hope to find what had happened to his friend. For how he departed is still an absolute mystery to me, but he clearly was able to find a way. This was the untold story of how the faction war of the Third

Dawn ended, or at least how it came to be paused, for a while. This narration is of course still debatable, depending on who you ask and who is telling the story.

It was then decided, sometime later, by our now united group of scholars, that we would break the law of the land, re-open the Necronomicon and attempt to summon an ancient dragon to this world.

What transpired was nothing short of amazing.

The ritual to summon the ancient dragon would then be enacted with haste, as time was of the essence, especially since there was no word back yet from our King. Our group of scholars assembled in the throne room of the castle to begin the ritual in secret. There was a strong reluctance among those in attendance to be the one to read from the book, as saying the words out of step could produce horrible consequences. Many hours passed as we attempted to find the one who would read from the ominous tome. No one wanted to lay their hands on such an unholy artifact, especially since everyone was well versed with what happened the last time this was done.

As the evening grew on, we eventually settled the burden of such a task, as that assignment to summon the ancient dragon would fall to me. Being The Archmage Guildmaster does have its perks, but this wasn't one of them and it was decided that this must be my responsibility to bear. Of course, being the head of the Mages' Guild, I became the likely candidate, but I also knew I owed our realm a debt that I likely could never fully repay, because of my brother, the one who shall not be named.

So, I took the book and I spoke the words, careful to not make any missteps and we all waited, but only for a moment. There was no overwhelming display or majestic offerings from the words of the dead. Just an undecorated phrase that yielded a simple response. For standing Infront of us was a dragon of small stature, colored in an array of variations of lavender and violets. She had ruby eyes and electricity of storms flowing around her body. The Dragon did not seem to be a hero or a court jester, as the Necronomicon suggested for a possibility, but instead, it was clear that the ritual was indeed successful at producing an accident dragon, as we had hoped for. At first glance, I had thought perhaps that this small dragon might be Ladon, but I abandoned such a recourse of failed assumptions once my own deductions recalculated the formula in my head. No, this had to be Lemuria the Forge Master, as described in The Book of Dragons.

Upon being thrust into our world, Lemuria looked immediately surprised to be in her new surroundings and after a small pause she began to question those of us around her.

"I should not be here", she said, "for this is not good at all" and then she hesitated briefly, to search for her intended target to ask her next question.

"Where is my brother, Ladon?" She spoke, as she turned to face me.

Our group began to look at each other and then to me. No one said anything but it was clear I would be commissioned to speak on behalf of our group. In all of our debates regarding who would be the one to read from the book, we failed to address the most obvious concern in front of us at the time. Who would be the one to represent us once the ritual was complete and converse with the ancient dragon that we summoned? That was something we likely should have figured the course of well before we engaged in the ritual itself and the awkwardness of the moment caught us all flatfooted and me in particular, I suppose.

Lemuria carried on with her gaze in my direction and said, "human, I am going to need your help and you are going to need mine". She continued by saying that "more than you could ever know is at grave peril if I am here talking with you right now, so you need to tell me everything you have learned thus far and you need to be quick about it", she demanded.

After Lemuria was brought up to the current events of our realm, she delineated to us this grave peril. She could not stay in our world, for the Dragon Soulforge in the Second Plane of Existence, her home, requires an operator and unattended many souls may become trapped or possibly lost forever. When she informed us of such an important task as she was charged with, I felt the state of affairs was even more dire than I had previously assumed. I knew we had made the situation worse by bringing Lemuria into our realm, as she described to us the gravity of our situation. Instead, she must be returned to her Dragon Soulforge and as quickly as we could manage it.

Lemuria would ask her brother Kumara for his assistance once she returned home, to find and locate Ladon instead. "For you were right to worry about the safety of the volumes entrusted to my brother" she expressed to us, but we could "expect Kumara to replace her in the near future", she went on. Then Lemuria smiled, with a type of unrelenting joy that struck me as quite the odd display, as she spoke the next words to us:

"And his help is of the highest quality as you will soon discover".

"First thing's first though, I will need to build a Dragon Soulforge here in your world and then use The Book of Dragons to send myself home", she went on. The concern was clearly seen over the faces of my colleagues and I, for having that kind of device to worry about in this realm did not seem palatable at all. Furthermore, if Lemuria could not leave the Dragon Soulforge unattended in her plane of existence, then why could she leave a similar device unattended in this one? Perhaps we were to be charged with the destruction of such a powerful thing created and after she found her way home, but perhaps not. Noticing the distress that we did so give, the Forgemaster spoke up again by saying, "do not worry humans, for my brother and his house will attend to the Dragon Soulforge in your world, but do trust that you will be in good hands".

Lemuria instructed our alliance of scholars how to generate a focus crystal to the Ethereal Void, then she explained that a Valkyrie must be summoned to build the forge itself. "For they are in possession of both the metal required to create the device and the knowledge to construct it", she added. "There is also a chance that an agent of my brother Sirius will be summoned from the Necronomicon". "He has dominion over all of the demons and nightmares of your world, so be fully-prepared for whatever might transpire", she warned.

A call to arms went out across the realm, to gather in-force and be ready for whatever Lemuria was to bring forth. Knights, noblemen and peasants all came together, well-north of the Wind mountains to make ready once again the defense of our world. A precession of many houses and heroes, with their banners, came to a predetermined encampment in their abundance and for a brief moment mankind was marching in that lockstep that we do so often find ourselves not to be in. For seldom are we unified in such a manner, yet we had come to abandon the petty and inconsequential, so as to make our shielding together as one. The king had not returned from where he was, but his house and royal guardsman, in addition to the avatar champions themselves were to be in full attendance. The paladin commander and his righteous servants of honor gleamed brightly in the field, with their polished armor

of faith and virtue on both horse and man alike, to declare their arrival, as only a paladin could do. Even the rivals to the crown, lord Blackthorn and his loyal men came to add their numbers in support. Lemuria had the attention of the entire realm, for the full armies of Sosaria were gathered at a location of the Forgemaster's choosing. For my part I was there to play witness or so I thought at that time, but soon I would find that my role in all of this was just at the beginning of this story.

Once assembled and ready at a chosen position, far away from our cities, in a small poppy field, Lemuria took the Necronomicon and with a sigh, began to read from the book. I was unsure why that emplacement was decided upon, but at the time, my consideration was that it was for the safety of our own cities. For that location was at the utmost northern position of our known realm, far north of the Justice Shrine in a part of the landmass that Lemuria referred to as the trident. Looking back to reflect upon this, perhaps there was a deeper and more meaningful objective behind her choice, seeing as she had come to call it by a name that I was unfamiliar with.

With anything that is to be unknown, there are many clues that might solve any puzzle, but some are more subtle than others. While a few perspectives might carry with them no obvious weight, others are to be monumentally profound, then demand such great attention in return. Still, it always seems that the smallest of details somehow do end up leading to the most significant points in the finale. Was this trident to be a clue then? I wondered. I have no idea and still don't but it's very much possible as I write this, that her words that she let slip so long ago are to be such a clue indeed. Despite my curiosity of the location that Lemuria did choose, when those events did transpire, from the book that was to be read, I have come to appreciate that the little dragon does nothing without purposeful intent.

As Lemuria did read and as the armies of Sosaria gathered in their anticipation, a portal began to appear in front of all of us. I am well familiar with the portals of our world, for they are usually in the colors of blue or red, as an indicator of either the moon of Trammel or Felucca. However, this portal was neither of those, instead it was a vibrant fire-orange, yellow and red hue mixture, with swirls of flames and bright lights. I had never seen anything like it before or since.

The fire portal stayed opened, as we waited in relative suspense, but nothing was stepping through it. As the portal lingered on and continued for several minutes, the flames flickered, with hot embers falling back to the ground and all around it. The flowers that once occupy the field, wilted from the heat and withdrew from the advances of the falling cinders. I made note of how long the gate stayed opened, as time itself seemed to be an irrelevant feature. This was not the portal system that the inhabitants of our realm were at all accustomed to in the slightest. As we waited, minutes went by and eventually the portal began to grow hotter, then intensified in some manner. I could feel the heat radiate from it, then my disposition in relationship to the display was growing in my own personal discomfort. The gathered forces began to move back, away from the warming agitation emitting from the portal. No one was immune, especially the paladins in full plate. For I could only imagine how uncomfortable it would be for them. Eventually as time grew old, we saw it at last.

Through the portal a creature had appeared and as it walked to present itself to our forces. A massive hulk of a beast, ten times the size of a man and a thousand times as fierce was on display directly in our field of view. It let loose a battle cry so terrifying and loud, that it was heard all throughout the entire valley. The battle cry had even found its way to the ears of those citizens that had stayed behind in our capital city, of which I learned sometime later. This defiant yell sent horror and fright to the very marrow of my bones, piercing my flesh and unexpectedly, every last one of my senses as it did. Everyone in

attendance was in a full-state of petrification, for this was a beast that no one had ever seen before. This was a threat that no one quite knew how to deal with and an unknown, that also levied against us great fear.

Lemuria said in a soft-spoken voice, “no”.

The demon looked towards Lemuria, then grunted, turned around and walked back through the portal form whence it came. So, as quickly as this large armored monstrosity came to be in front of us, it was gone, vanished from our onlooking perspectives. The voices and chatter of men and women looking to each other to inquire their questions of shock, then their concerns of fear could be heard. No one was in any condition to be in any kind understanding for what had transpired. Lemuria then looked in my direction and said, “let’s try this again shall we”.

“What was that!?” I heard cry out. I looked to Lemuria to re-enforce the same sentiment being expressed. Lemuria gave notice to this and the ancient dragon replied to my look of worry. “Oh, that was a Dread Balron General”, she said. “Those are fairly rare and I’m a bit surprised to see him to be honest”. “He should not have come through at all, as those beings belong to another realm and are not intended for this world.”

I paused briefly to consider her words and as my mind started to unpack her statement, she continued her course. Before I could reply or anyone for that matter, Lemuria took it upon herself to initiate the ritual once again. So, as soon as she began to speak, everyone quieted down and prepared themselves as they had done previously. Lemuria revealed her tone to be more focused and determined. She lowered her posture to mimic that same disposition of her new resolution, then her words were yet again unleashed into the cool brisk air.

The portal re-appeared and we were instantly struck with a deep bellow from a ghastly horn. This time there was no long-drawn-out pause, for what followed was a tidal wave of water flooding through the gate into every possible direction. So much water was being released that everything was to be washed away, including all of us and our firm stances that we stood upon. Fog began pouring through the opening and from some unknown place of mystery. The fires of the orange, yellow and red that made up the portal, quickly were replaced by some concealed source of power, which suggested an overwhelming type of magic that overtook it with ease. The brief array of bright and emblematic embers from the portal died out as swiftly as it had been created and the once fiery scene was being replaced by the very nature of a deep blue and endless darkening to black, indicative of a continual oceanic downward expanse.

We soon found ourselves without sight, as the thick clouds of fog were enveloping us from all sides. I looked down to see the waters withdrawing their advances, nearly as fast as they initially had come and I could no longer find my way or my bearings for that matter.

Another distinct sound resonated our ears, for the horn we previously heard was upon us again. It had a reverberating echo of that of the same nature of the first bellow, but this time it was all around and directly above us. While we lay in a state of vulnerability, the loud, deep and terrifying tone came down to our position on the ground. We aimlessly wandered in our confused state and the defining noise was to add a foreboding sense of dread, which exemplified our own helplessness even more. We were completely alone and, in the darkness, we had become exposed to a grave threat that we could not see

or prepare any kind of defense against. I lost track of where Lemuria was at and, as I moved about to find my position, I began bumping into other people who were also adrift and as scared I was.

The fog slowly started to settled to the ground and straight above us, high in the sky, were a pair of massive blood-red eyes that could be seen by everyone. Eventually as the vapors surrendered their position and laid over the fields of earth, like an ominous blanket of despair, we could make out our foe. A gigantic gray octopus, floating in front of us, ten stories tall was then revealed to our armies and we were clearly not prepared. Then it started to move our way.

Lemuria said in her soft-spoken voice again, "no", but chaos had erupted and everyone was in full panic, running in horror away from the monster in any which way that they could. The Demon god-thing groaned from the sound of Lemuria's voice, then turned and crawled back through the gray, black and blue portal that produced it. Slowly the landscape of poppy fields, with the backdrop of the forests and oceans on all three sides returned to us a sense of normality. It became clear that this unknown terror was gone from us and by such a simple word from such a little dragon.

"What-Seriously?!" cried an onlooker, "God save us!", cried another. Then Lemuria turned to me and said, "my powers are too great to summon the Valkyrie Archmage, so you must do it", as she handed me the book. She pushed the Necronomicon into my hands and instructed me to "make sure you say the phrase exactly, for any misspoken words could have dire consequences you see".

Clearly shaken, I nodded, then grabbed ahold of The Book of the Dead. With my trembling hands I opened the tome, turned the pages to find the words of power and then cleared my throat in preparation. I must be the one to summon the Valkyrie if Lemuria cannot, I thought to myself. For being The Archmage Guildmaster, such as I was, carries with it the burden of the task in these matters of grave importance. As this was one of those moments, then that task must fall to me.

I had come to realize this all too well when we first brought Lemuria into our lands and as that responsibility fell to me then, Lemuria seemed to recognize the duty must come to me once more. So, she instinctively handed me the book. I took upon the chore with great care as I usually do. Luckily, I thought, I was getting pretty good at this new found errand of reading from this unholy thing. As I prepared myself and as the armies of Sosaria lay their eyes upon me, I could feel a fledging confidence build within me, as I did make myself ready to utter the phrase. There is an artform to reading ancient spells of power, for one must take great care to produce the proper pitch, tone and dialect, for no detail should be overlooked, for the consequences could be quite dire indeed. Looking down to the words on the page and satisfied that I was ready, I begin to speak.

"Oh no dear", proclaimed Lemuria, "next page please".

Looking down, I realized that I was indeed on the wrong page and about to read the entirely incorrect set of words of power. Right, right-you are, I said, as I embarrassingly then humbly thumbed the page over. That was close, I thought, as my new found confidence completely evaporated in front of the entire realm. My mind quickly raced to that of the betrayal of my brother that was let loose upon the innocents of Sosaria and I closed my eyes, damming myself and my near failure. I must remember, that I cannot afford any mistakes, not here or ever, for his betrayal carries with it a great debt that my name owes this realm.

After Collecting my thoughts, opening my eyes and ignoring the few heckles from the crowd, I turned back to the previous page, then forward again to the current one that I was on. I was having trouble deciphering the words now all of a sudden. I could feel My anxiety and their doubts creeping their way into my conscious and it produced a paralyzing state about me. This was not the time to lose focus, I quickly thought, but I was feeling my senses become too sporadic and I was having difficulty creating the words required out of my own mouth. I could feel the book become absolutely burdensome in weight, as the tome was now tiresome and heavy to hold. I adjusted the Necronomicon, for as I held it, I could feel my grasp upon it wane and slip from the sweat forming on my palms of my hands.

“This can’t be good”, someone declared, followed by the sighs from the growing impatience of the onlookers. The accretions of doubt hovered over me, adding their weight to my already staggered demeanor that I have somehow have found myself stalled in. I cannot do this I mumbled and began to look up and over to Lemuria.

Suddenly, as I looked upon the small violet dragon, I felt a reassuring calmness overtake me and the book became light as a feather somehow. Lemuria then said to me that “it appears you are on the right page this time Archmage”. She added, “when you are ready of course”.

Looking back down at the tome, my focus had returned. The training I had practiced a lifetime to perfect, in order to harness the proper pitch, tone and dialect reinstalled its way into my forethought. I could no longer hear the voices all around me, the clanks of plate armor as people jostle about or the movements of the horses in the distant background. The only thing I could hear was the whispers inside of me, which directed my attention to the words on the page, the words I must say. I focused on the exact phrase that was required for this ritual, then read that over in my mind. I began to move my lips, so as to make the sounds that were required, in the necessary way to produce the essential effect that I was charged to make. A few moments later the words were spoken and the portal once again appeared in front of all of us.

I was unable to move, too afraid I didn’t say the speech correctly. I looked up and over to Lemuria for approval nervously. Noticing this, Lemuria smiled at me and looked back towards the fiery-orange portal, inviting me to pay close attention, so I did. This time the gate began to soften slightly as to yield more to the yellow aspects of the twisted flames that were growing quite familiar with each initial summoning attempt. Slowly the crackling embers were replaced by another display, that of an arrangement that was much like the nature of sun reflecting from a large golden object and it was growing brighter with each passing moment.

While we sat there in some kind of small overly-dramatic pause before our impending doom ensued, or so I thought and with the suddenness of an instant, a blinding golden light exploded then paused in mid form. As the golden rays folded themselves around the elements in the mid-air and then all around us, a being emerged. It was a woman of some kind, sitting upon a horse with wings. The horse slowly walked through the golden gate of light, until it and the woman it carried were clear of the portal. The horse stopped as the reins in woman’s hands pulled up on her steed. The woman’s companion answered her subtle command with an exactness or precision of response. There her horse stood without any kind of motion, as in a display of absolute loyalty or obedience to a backdrop of golden rays behind them.

The portal began to summon all of the beautiful golden rays back into wherever it had come from. The familiar features of our realm again overtook us again, to restore a sense of normality, yet standing in

the poppy field before us was this woman on horseback. There she stayed as the portal vanished and our sight was being restored. As everyone's eyes adjusted again, it became clear the features of this unknown woman. Her skin was that of a flawless pure white field of snow, which matched her hair, that was also of the same color. She was wearing a set of brightly hued blue gemstone encrusted armor and she held a spear with shield, made from the same kind of flawless stones. The horse was as white as snow, as with the women, but it had a rainbow mane, that almost did not seem real. Its wings were protruding from the side of the animal and a horn was placed upon its head. There the animal stood in solace and on it was the woman who began to clutch her weapon a little tighter, as she stared in my direction.

This must be the Valkyrie I said out loud.

The Valkyrie fixated her bone chilling-gaze upon me. Her sense of determination and unwavering demeanor were clearly unmatched by any one there that day. She continued to stare at me, which brought upon a sense of growing discomfort, but I assumed she looked upon me so, because I had summoned her and then she seemed to lose interest in me altogether. She noticed the familiar violet color off to the side, in the crowd of people.

"Lemuria!" she blurted out, as her first words to the armies of Sosaria were made. The Valkyrie quickly got off her steed and instantly dropped to one knee, then bowed her head in reverence towards the little dragon. Lemuria responded with urgency, "I need your help my friend", as she began to move to greet the Valkyrie. Lemuria hurried over to stand up the woman before her and as she was pulling the Valkyrie up to her feet, she said that "I need your weapon to create an improved rock hammer in order to craft a Dragon Soulforge and I need your shield to make my signet, so that I may return home".

The Valkyrie nodded and together they gathered themselves, preparing to leave, as if the rest of us no longer mattered.

Lemuria stopped, peered over to our armies. As she looked upon the many men and women who bravely assembled to protect their world, her gaze eventually landed on me. As it did, she beckoned me closer. When I approached the two women, Lemuria beamed a great smile my way, as to greet me, then asked, "where can we construct this Dragon Soulforge Archmage?" I stopped moving, for my mind was working through the request and as it did, I forgot to take more steps. I had intended to introduce myself in the proper form and etiquette of our realm to our new guest, but my mind was now trying to calculate a response for Lemuria instead. Then instantly, the perfect location had dawned upon me.

There is an abandoned house just over the mountain range to the south, along the coast, east of Britain. It is the home of one of our fallen mages from long ago, who is the very same mage who happened to find The Book of Dragons I said. This house has been in the care of the Mage's Guild for sometime now and you should find that it will meet your needs. Look for the orrery and telescope on the roof, I told her, for that is the house I speak of. Lemuria smiled again to me and said, "let's have a look, shall we?". "Gather your scholars Archmage and make your way to this place, for there is much work to be done."

I nodded, then the Valkyrie without hesitation mounted her steed and again looked upon me with her bone-chilling determination. I snuck a brief look up to her leveraged position, now that I was closer and there she sat, staring down upon me without so as much as even flinching. I managed a half-smile, then

immediately looked away. A Moment later, the ancient dragon and the Valkyrie flew off into the distance, while the armies of Sosaria broke-apart to leave for their homes.

Many days later, under the watchful eye of the Mages' Guild, the Counsel of Mages and our Counselors of the realm, the ancient dragon and the Valkyrie were able to create the tools they required to construct the Dragon Soulforge, then the Dragon Soulforge itself. To make room for this massive thing, a wall was removed and in the center of the first floor, our group of scholars created the portal to the Ethereal Void. Following Lemuria's instructions, we also crafted a lever mechanism so that the device could be controlled, either turned on or off. Before the tools could be crafted with the fire from the ancient dragon, the moons of Trammel and Felucca had to have been aligned.

When the device was activated and working at full speed, Lemuria spoke into the portal with words I was unfamiliar with. She was instantly struck with an intense beam of light of great power, as she had unleashed some mighty thing from some unknown place. The scales on her body began to buckle, then she took a deep breath and let loose a violent roar. The battle cry of Lemuria was completely unexpected from such a tiny dragon of small stature. Her dragon's roar was as fierce and commanding as I have ever heard, if not more from any dragon of any size. Her breath was also of an element that I had never seen before either.

The Book of Dragons described it as an element bestowed upon her by The Old Ones themselves and the display did not disappoint. For out of the Lemuria's mouth was a consistent blast of pure white-dragon's fire, crackling with electricity and purple undertones, unwavering in potency. It was clear as this process was unfolding, that the power Lemuria wielded was to be greater than that of what she summoned through the ethereal void, for she had control of the will to change this power source to something else.

The Valkyrie quickly threw her weapon and shield onto the floor, where liquified dragon scales began to form a solution and we all waited with breath drawn. This continued for several minutes until there was a great pool beneath the ancient dragon. The power source was burning away the scales from Lemuria's body, but this intense beam from the void had changed slightly by Lemuria's own dragon's breath. My eyes fixated on the spear and the shield that the Valkyrie had placed beneath Lemuria. Slowly I watched as the two weapons of war from some other world turned a bright golden color and once it did, the Valkyrie walked over to the lever mechanism and turned off the device.

"You're hurt!", decried one of our mages.

"No, I will be fine said Lemuria. "I am immortal, you see, but once I return home, this damage you find, that I have taken, will be undone", she added.

"The house is still standing!", the head counselor spoke up and interjected with. "How is this possible, there is no damage at all!", he continued. "The house was completely destroyed and burned to the ground", Lemuria explained to scholar, "but just not this house".

The reason we had to wait until both the moons of Trammel and Felucca were perfectly aligned was that Lemuria was able to project a mirror image of the house that was in Trammel, to the exact location in Felucca to trick the properties of the physical world here with the properties of the physical world there in Felucca instead. This was done to prevent damage to the device we created, so as to access the Ethereal Void.

Soon Lemuria would use The Book of Dragons and the device that the Valkyrie had created to return her back home, yet we had not been made better for it. The original problem that plagued our people, regarding Lemuria's brother Ladon, still lingered on, presiding over us in an even more obvious consciousness than previously. Lemuria had promised that her brother Kumara would find his way to this house, but as we waited, in defense of this place, nothing would ever transpire.

Eventually the only guardian remaining was the Valkyrie that I had summoned and time itself had settled the issue of this time traveling guide of mankind. In doing so, to who it might matter most in our realm, the issue had been relinquished to the status of none relevant. There the guardian stayed, protecting the house, the portal to the ethereal void and the Dragon Soulforge. Eventually, she would do so in absolute solitude.

I would check in on her ever so often, to only find her standing by the forge in silence. So, despite this issue becoming irrelevant to the crown, I took it upon myself to be this woman's only friend in this strange world, that she had found herself in.

- The Archmage Guildmaster

Chapter 6

Memories Of Our Past

From The Journal of The Archmage Guildmaster

Entry 96: “Lemuria the Forge Master returned back to her home and escaped our realm. All that was left to remind us of her being here was a burnt down house in Felucca, the Dragon Soulforge and a Valkyrie with an improved golden rock hammer. I remember thinking it would take Valkyries six hundred days to turn that pile of melted scales into the forged metal, a usable tool, the Dragon Soulforge and Lemuria’s signet. Valkyries did it in less than twenty.

Valkyries as I have come to call her instead of a Valkyrie or the Valkyrie, instructed our group of scholars that she would be staying here to operate the portal to the ethereal void and guard the Dragon Soulforge itself. She said that if she didn’t, then the people that died in this world would be trapped here forever, unable to move on. Their spirits would linger, forever binding them to this realm. I asked Valkyries why this portal that she guard now, is part of that equation. She said once this second Dragon Soulforge was created, both would then be required to complete the task of the one that Lemuria had normally operated. That destroying such a device at this point, she thought would be impossible.

I can’t help but be reminded that in our efforts to undue some great peril, we had produced a result that created a vulnerability in something we had very little understanding or knowledge about. No better were the inhabits of our realm for our efforts. These types of notions always bring me back to the one who shall not be named, for little did he understand the magic that he delved, then thrust the rest of us all into, when he first acted. It is quite an unbearable thing to watch someone undue that which is good, for the sake of might be good, to only fall helpless, as what is brought instead is regression and a void of rightness itself. The ripples that this creates can be felt for generations. I can only hope, that we did not create such recourse for our people and its future.

So, Valkyries would stay here as the guardian of this place, since our realm had this device that it was never intended to have. I knew somewhere on the other end of that portal, beyond the unknown expanses of the endless ethereal void, was Lemuria operating her Dragon Soulforge and it gave me great comfort in knowing that these two devices were being taken care of in the utmost of seriousness. They seemed to be in good hands.”

Entry 106: “As months went by there was no sign of Kumara at all. Valkyries assured and me specifically that everything was just fine. She said there is no time in the Second Plane of Existence, so years here in this realm may only be a week, a few days, a minute or no time at all there. In this conversation with my new friend, she also mentioned something quite strange to me about time itself, that I have still yet to fully contemplate. She said that since the clock was broken that time in our realm was not as it should be. Some instances would speed up, while others would slow down and accounting for those records would prove to be quite inaccurate. She didn’t seem to know much more than that, or what this clock was supposed to be, but I knew it was to be important, whatever it was.”

Entry 123: "Time is slowly degrading our memories. We have all nearly forgotten about the Third Dawn, Lord British, who did return briefly, but left us again before we knew it. There have even been rumors about the king's death, but I don't believe them, for I know the truth about his secret departure. In searching for Ladon he had found something that he was unable to share, even with me, but I knew this discovery had consumed his mind daily, during his brief stay. Whatever it was, would be the source of where he was called to travel again to.

Entry 235: "As the years march by, the memories of our past seem to fall victim as well. Our friends and family have moved on with their lives and both of my sons have created a new life for themselves. One is in Vesper and the other is lost to me, in some unknown place. I know I have caused his somehow, but I hope that he is being looked after and well cared for. Each day I write in this journal, I fear might be the last entry that I make, for somehow our realm's future seems to have no clear path ahead."

Entry 237: "Today I have dressed in my best robes to welcome our new King. Lord Blackthorn is to be crowned, for there is no other claim to the throne but his. No steward that he shall be and our realm will forever be changed, of this I have no doubt. Lord Blackthorn has decreed, even before he has the authority to do so, that we are to abandon the castle that was once my home for so many years. As his men boarded up the gateway under the ramparts, to this once mighty palace, I could not help to think that our future has never looked more unsure or perils. Perhaps I am getting ahead of myself and perhaps all this change is the source of my perplexed notions and depressed demeanor.

I am duty bound to serve the crown, not just because I am The Archmage Guildmaster, but for the sake of my own family's name. Lord British had always treated me as his trusted friend, of which I hope to earn from our new King, but something inside of me tells me to expect much less of Lord Blackthorn, once he is to be named king.

Mariah had warned me to do as she did, but I could leave my post, for much debt I still owe our realm. The last I have heard about my friend Mariah is that she withdrew herself to the city of Moonglow and is aiding the monks of the Empath Abbey with the Healer's Guild. There she stays treating wounds and mending broken appendages. Though that is a noble feat, Mariah is the greatest of researchers and one of the eight champions virtue of our realm. Surely, I hope, this is not how her story will end. I also miss my friend and I hope to see her soon and then I realize that I too miss my king, for he was a great friend to me as Mariah still is."

Entry 258: "I am drawn to thinking about my friend Valkyries today, of which I have not seen for many years now. King Blackthorn has called home the soldiers stationed at the house with Valkyries and when I first heard this, I felt ashamed that I had not gone to see her in all this time. Now she is there on her own and if there was a problem, there would be no way now to get word back in time to assist her. We have had a few close calls with the house that the Dragon Soulforge resides in, as is the nature of conflict in general of course. New threats always arise, but we dealt with them together. Still Though, now it will just be her and her own defenses to guard such an important thing and with no sign of Kumara at all. A few times that the Dragon Soulforge did come under threat, the men assigned there were of little help to Valkyries and we all learned how effective she could be in combat. I will make sure that I check in on my friend now and again."

Entry 372: "I am an old man now and many years have been removed from the time of Lemuria. I have long since retired as The Archmage Guildmaster and I often think about Valkyries and that house. The

house with the Dragon Soulforge that has now fallen into shambles and disrepair. I often take a detour when traveling to Vesper, so as to ride near that place and each time that I do, the dwelling that first belonged to young mage and his wife from so long ago, looks worse and is becoming a ruined state. Long departed is that time when my own wife was still with us and looking upon the dilapidated house does bring to mind both regret and those memories that feel like a distant dream.

I can see the Dragon Soulforge through the wall that was removed to first place it there and every so often I gain a glimpse of Valkyries inside, but only briefly. Each time that I do ride past, I tell myself that I will make sure to stop in to see her on the way back, but I never can bring myself to do this. I don't know why, maybe I just don't want to be reminded, but I do hope she is doing well."

Entry 411: "Something strange happened today. I was on my way to visit my grandchildren in Vesper and rode past Valkyries' house, then noticed it looked much different. Much improved, but much different. I decided I would stop and see what was going on, then finally pay my friend a visit once my stay in Vesper was concluded.

This time I would be sure to do as I promised, for whatever the change that was happening there, would also be the business of the entire realm. I am no longer the head of the Mage's Guild, the head scribe to the crown or The Archmage Guildmaster, but that doesn't matter. Something was happening and that something needed to be investigated."

- The Archmage Guildmaster

Transcribed by: *Alania*

Chapter 7

The PAWS Soulforge

The House with the orrery and telescope on the roof was coming into view. The roof had collapsed many years ago, but now the entire structure had been restored. Those once bronze artifacts that time strangled their usefulness away, were no longer corroded as before, but shined brightly in the afternoon sun. The orrery hasn't worked for years, even when Valkyries had taken over the guardianship of the estate, but now spun around softly to perform its dance as it was intended to do, by the one who had created it.

Traveling from Vesper, my stay was pre-occupied with the thoughts of this house and my eldest son was also thinking of his responsibilities with the museum. So, there we stayed, unconsumed by each other's company and seemingly eager to move on. I had forgotten to bring my granddaughters a present, of which I had promised them the last two times I saw them. Their disappointment this time was much less than before. I realized I was becoming predictable for all the wrong reasons and that in itself was a source of my own disappointment. I had to be better, for I was losing my family all over again.

My mind shifts again to the house in front of me and a friend that I had not seen for way too long. My failures in my life were adding up and as hard as I tried to make amends, pay my debts and undue those failures, they seemed to stack up even faster now, increasing in ratio and becoming even more elusive from my grasp.

I rode up to the door and looked at the stained-glass window over it. That was new or at least it seemed to be. I peered at the scenery in the window and noticed a precession of some kind, that had a beginning and an end. A banner was being carried at the front and something of great importance was being carried somewhere else. Quickly my gaze changed to that of the oak door with iron fixtures and I walked up to announce my presence. What was going at this place I wondered in amazement, for the house looked to be brand new and full of life.

I knocked on the door and soon Valkyries opened it. She had not changed a bit, but for whatever reason instead of greeting her, I looked passed her to peer inside. To my astonishment I found people that I have not seen for decades and I was dumbfounded. I recognized them all.

Was this a dream?

She quickly grabbed my arm and said, "these are not your friends that you would remember Archmage". "They are like them but they are not them." "The Dragon Soulforge is pulling memories from this house and recreating their avatars in spirit form", she instructed me. I looked to my friend and said the only words that I could force past my lips, as tears began to breach my defenses.

I'm so sorry my old friend.

"Nonsense Archmage", she immediately responded. "For you have been a great friend indeed and no such apologies are ever needed or expected". She pulled on my arm and said, "come inside and take a look around, then I'll explain everything".

I did as she requested and noticed the head of The Fight Club and of a guild that no longer exists named Knights of Glory and Beer. The legendary ranger Drizzit and the best friend to the young mage who once lived here. Upstairs was CJ the wife of the young mage and Dawn the head of the Actor's Guild. I have not seen these people for so many years. On the balcony was the avatar of ImaNewbie that Mariah believed was Ladon himself and below him were members of his comical guild, designed to put on plays and entertain the realm. That was a time when laughter not sadness was the state of everyone's affair.

"These memories have taken it upon themselves to repair the damage to this building and to make improvements to this house, not I Archmage", Valkyries insisted.

I am no longer The Archmage Guildmaster my dear friend and then Valkyries interrupted me again. "Is this why you have come here now, to tell me these nonsensical words? She asked. "You will always be The Archmage Guildmaster, so shush."

I laughed a little and a smile began to crack on my face.

Thank you and it is very good to see you again, I said.

I bowed in respect to Valkyries, my dear friend. Instantly I could not remember why I had waited so long to come pay her a visit and felt foolish for my delay. Valkyries returned the gesture I had given to her, then smiled at me and said, "You are most welcome Archmage".

What does this all mean? I asked her, in which she responded that she thought "it means Kumara is close". She then said, "I think Kumara's father Typhon has restored order specifically at this location for the return of his son". Kumara has not set foot in this realm since it was first created and I am sure many are eagerly waiting for this moment, as am I. "I am glad you have come to pay me a visit now, at this time", she went on to say. "For you should return to your city Archmage and tell who you need to inform, that they should prepare themselves for the arrival of Kumara."

I would soon learn that no such travel to Britain would be order. As I was about to inquire about the nature of this mysterious Kumara, an event was transpiring just outside of the house. Valkyries and I quickly made our way outside to look around. Just then and as we did, the thunderclouds blotted out the sky, preventing the rays of sun-light from reaching us. The mid-day was being replaced by darkness. I looked up and realized there were no thunderclouds at all. The sky was perfectly clear in-fact. I moved passed the tree canopy and looked toward the sun, then saw something massive descending down to our location.

"Kumara!" Valkyries said with excitement.

I started to walk back slowly, not fully understanding what I was seeing with my own eyes. Before my mind could harness what, my senses brought before it, a massive green dragon the size of a castle was directly over me.

Was this Kumara? I wondered.

Was this even real? I considered.

With this dragon was a company of angelic beings of some kind, flying to his side, then behind him. This massive creature was leading a legion of Valkyrie who looked just like my friend Valkyries, dressed in the same armor, but with the once familiar weapons that my good friend had sacrificed many years earlier,

so as to make the Dragon Soulforge. There were also several large beings with flaming swords that seemed to be specifically guarding this dragon, never to be out of formation, not even for a moment. The scene was clearly impressive, but the kind of impressive that combines the monumental with the stunning and stirs it together, to create the awe-inspiring.

“Sire!”, Valkyries said as she kneeled, then bowed her head in reverence, as this massive dragon, I could only assume was Kumara, came to rest just above the ground in front of us. The massive wings of this dragon jostled the leaves and dirt all around me and it became difficult for me to stand so close. Then the difficulty subsided and calmness overtook the scenery, as the motion from this dragon did not seem to interact with the elements of our physical world in a way that one might expect. I looked up, now free from discomfort and void of fear. I began to prepare myself, as to ask my question, but I was not given the time for my words to form.

“Yes”, said the dragon, “I am Kumara”, as he looked directly at me.

I knew I had more questions to ask, but my mind was preventing my lips from moving, so there I stood in silence and waited.

Kumara changed perspectives, then brought his view to Valkyries. “Bring me the memories”, Kumara said to her and Valkyries went inside of the house, but only briefly. Upon her return, she was accompanied by the avatars or spirits that I had seen before. There were nine of these avatars, of people that I once knew so very long ago. Champions of our realm and in their own way. Without any indication or warning, several Valkyrie that were flying near Kumara began to land and as I watched, I noticed that there were exactly nine Valkyrie to match the nine spirits.

The Valkyrie had landed. Their horses did not so much as make a single noise as they softly, then gently touched down to the earth, as if they were not even real. As if this was all a dream of mine. Together and in a single motion, they dismounted their horses and walked to an avatar or spirit. One by one they touched them with their spears and I could not believe my eyes. These Valkyries were merging themselves with the memories, as Kumara had described them to be. They were being transformed into living, breathing embodiments of people that I once knew and called my friends.

What kind of strange magic is this? I asked, but received no reply.

Kumara spoke up again and said to Valkyries, “there is another”. “Of course, sire, how could I forget”, Valkyries returned to him, then quickly ushered herself inside of the house.”

Kumara looked to me once more and said, “these Valkyrie would infuse themselves with the memories of this place and they will work to restore the memories of your realm, as they do. We will need those memories to find Ladon, my sibling. Your memories better serve you as knowing him as ImaNewbie, so that is where we begin this quest Archmage.” My lips began to move in response, but I could not summon the words, so I stopped trying and just observed.

I could hear Valkyries just inside of the house and I knew she was approaching the door. In fact, all my senses seemed to be more acute in some fashion. I was starting to see details about the house that I had not noticed and my mind began to drift to these new discoveries.

Was this the doing of Kumara? I wondered.

I peered upon the dragon and noticed the warm tones of green, then blues swirling across his scales, yet he did not move. He remained absolutely still, in some majestic unwavering way about him. Before I could notice anything more, Valkyries emerged from the dwelling carrying something in her arms. She suddenly laid a pile of bones in front of Kumara then knelled down before the dragon. In her regressed and humble way, she announced that “this is the champion my lord, the one who found The Book of Dragons”.

One of the beings, with the flaming sword, floated down to the ground and touched the pile of bones with its’ mighty weapon it held. This being was as tall as the house and the intense heat emitting from the flames reminded me of the portals Lemuria and I had summoned so long ago. Without delay and before I could relate that distant memory of mine, the skeleton came alive, then rose where it once rested, just feet from Kumara.

The great dragon began to land on the ground. I quickly and with haste, looked around for a place to stand, as to be out of the way from this landing. Kumara then started to breathe a low intensity heat from his mouth. The large angelic guardian, moved to the side of the house, near the ocean with his weapon held in an upward position and in front of its’ body.

The flames of green hues, mixed together with some undertones of blue and purple star-like celestial bodies. They danced around the flames, as if they were alive and fully aware of what was happening. These small stars, together with Kumara’s dragon breath engulfed the pile of bones standing in front of him. Dust was being produced, of a vibrant emerald green color and I could no longer see what was going on. So, I held my arm up, with the cuffs of my robes up over my face, blocking the debris from entering my eyes.

When the dust clouds finally settled down, Kumara was gone and in his stead was a man standing there, where the animated bones once were. The man had on a tabard of justice and holding some kind of staff in his hands. I recognized this fellow, for he was the young mage from long ago, who used to live here at this place that now houses the Dragon Soulforge and Valkyries. Be it that he was reborn or infused with this dragon, I don’t know which. For I had no idea what to expect next and I had no comments or questions to ask. So, I patiently waited instead.

The young mage looked to me and said, “what wonderful memories Archmage!” He turned around and gazed upon the house, then asked out loud: “This is the PAWS Soulforge?” Then declared:

“This is the PAWS Soulforge!”

It was clear to me at this point, that Kumara was embodied in this champion of old, for what purpose or reason, I was still unsure about.

Perhaps some of the young mage was to be before me, but to what end or extent, was also unclear.

“This house and this name of PAWS are keepers of memories of another time”. “For these things are good and should not be forgotten”, Kumara continued.

PAWS, now that was a name I have not heard in years. That was the name of a small player-run community just south-west of the Britain Stables, well before the second age. If I was not mistaken, the wife of this champion of old, operated the emporium there. That place no longer stands today, but the name of PAWS is very old in our realm. As being The Archmage Guildmaster, I have scribed many books

and read many volumes that most of the inhabitants of our kingdom do not even know exist. I am familiar with the origins of PAWS, for it was named after a small fishing village that predates the first age and if I might recollect correctly, was just north of where the city of Trinsic stands today.

Kumara or the young mage, whoever it was, turned to me and said the following:

"I see now and it is time for others to see too."

"PAWS began with a dream, to give the people a stream."

"So, they could navigate the currents together and forge something that lasts forever."

"To remember is to find your way and for that reason I have this to say."

"It could be big or small or anything at all, a smile is worth more than gold and for this the story must be told!"

"Archmage", Kumara said, as he turned his himself around and looked directly at me.

"We all have a part to play, so write what you have witnessed here and what transpired to bring us to this point. Everyone in your realm has a part to play in the story too, as this is the story of your realm. Ladon, or as you know him to be, ImaNewbie, published many years ago the volumes of ImaNewbie Does Britannia. To remember is to find your way Archmage, so help your people remember."

"For my Sibling is missing." "The Books written by the Old Ones have been lost or worse-yet, have fallen into the wrong hands and your world as well as the other realms are not safe." "We need to re-connect with those lost memories, so we can piece together where Ladon hid the tomes and figure out what became of their fate." "We also need to get to the bottom of how it was that Ladon left this world without his signet, A Pair of Completely Normal Sandals, bestowed to him by the Old Ones and of course, we need to find my brother."

"Are you ready to get to work?"

Kumara's words powerfully impacted me and I slowly nodded. As I did my mind drifted to the events of Castle British being closed so many years ago, where I was worried that the future of our realm was to be in question. Suddenly I realized a new purpose and a new hope that lay bare in front of me. No longer concealed or hidden. I instantly understood that we must rebuild our past in order to find our way forward. That to find Ladon means to start with what is most familiar to us first and then I realized:

Indeed, there was much work to be done.

- The Archmage Guildmaster

Chapter 8

Songs of ImaNewbie

When I look over the words that The Archmage Guildmaster first spoke, that “there is much work to be done”, then consider the sheer volume of accounting that followed, I am absolutely awe struck. Surely, He would not have considered how true a statement he spoke then to Kumara. As I read on, I notice often that he is so gladly is accepting this massive burden of journaling the events down. I wonder if he ever considered that perhaps this entire story, in a way was crafted, specifically with him in mind. That he was not to be some observer, but the active participant of every plot twist, turn and step along the way.

His sandals of time would be the quest he was asked engage with, by a complete stranger, for no other reason than a hope of something better and a redemption that was possibly just over the horizon.

When I first joined the house and the Valkyrie at this location, I spent a great amount of my time around the memory of ImaNewbie, for I missed him greatly. Kumara often spoke with this very memory and as he did, it returned to him many answers, words, stories and visions, all with that familiar voice of another age.

I wanted the memory to speak with me in the same way that it did with Kumara. There I sat waiting for any indication of anything at all, but it never came. Eventually I would just be happy with some kind of word or gesture, but yet silence was my prescription. I would have to remind myself that this wasn't about me, but still I hoped that maybe there could be something left behind, something that I might keep for myself.

Late at night on no particular special occasion, just before I was going to law down, the memory of ImaNewbie spoke. Often, I have heard it speak entire songs to Kumara, but I was only hoping for a single word, something that I could call my own. When the memory did speak-up, it presented to me a beautiful poem and I eagerly wrote it down. I have treasured this for many months and I would read the same words every night to myself over and again.

It has been well-over a year since that small flicker of an event took place and after reading the many volumes of work that The Archmage Guildmaster had created, I can say for certain that I feel ashamed with such petty selfishness. As I bring together his manuscripts into a finished product, I feel inspired to share the words of the memory of ImaNewbie, that was given to me so freely. I failed to grasp then the importance of all of this, but I understand fully now that those words never actually belonged to me in the first place.

- Alania

Songs of ImaNewbie

Roses are roses and violets are too...

Red with blue make purple and together this is true.

When the orange sunsets and the pinks began to rise...

The ocean sapphires will fly high in the skies.

The colors presented are arranged in their array...

Concealing their purpose, as they announce their display.

The Golden Dragon will descend unto the land...

As the ancient seer will utter her command.

That conclusion will stage the dawn of that day...

When the far away city no longer stays away.

The blossoms will shine and the birds will sing...

For they play witness to the return of the King.

When Kumara does land, the Valkyrie rejoice...

And each champion was questioned, then presented their choice.

As Virtue is summed and the heart is restored...

The constellations will present themselves as a sword.

So, roses are roses and violets are too...

The nature of color is this wisdom that grew

Pushed apart by the strength of the one who is truly mighty...
For only the correct sword will don the golden & knightly.

The pillars stand tall as the forerunner waits in ready...
To send her "all clear" with her banner held steady.

Now the architect smiles, then nods for the Lion...
To go forth and breathe life back into the works of Tyron.

The clock was once broken and in silence stood still...
Because of an ill-fated desire for the "Skull of The Innate Will".

The Unknown Mage will trigger again that clock of mankind...
For no longer unknown is he, as the quest sets to find.

In that conclusion, is the dawn of a new day...
And the far away city now puts on its play.

The stage is then set for the trumpets to call...
For the Great Library beckons the "Final Protocol".

- Ladon

Reference Material

The Necronomicon

This book was created by The Book of Power and therefore contains words of power. The words in this book carry weight only over that which it may influence, but that which it may not, these words have no significant meaning.

This book is dangerous and acts to undo the order of life, so because of the nature of that which is dead, the scope must remain limited and the access even further restricted. For this reason, only The Book of Truth can unlock the pages here within. A word of warning for those worthy enough to possess this knowledge. Being worthy of that which is dead is being the least worthy of that which is life and being the least worthy of that which is life is the worthiest of that which is dead. Use extreme caution for even the worthiest who do speak these words incorrectly, from this book, will produce unpredictable results.

Words of Power

Klaatu verata nikto

Returns any stolen souls back to The Book of Life, then seals this tome from further use until that seal is again lifted by The Book of Truth.

Klaatu barada nitko

Breaks the seal on this tome so the words of power can be used. The spoken words in this book remain invisible until the seal has been lifted. This requires The Book of Truth and an understanding of the knowledge held in secret, there inside. For simply saying this phrase while in possession of The Book of Truth, will produce unpredictable results.

Klatoo verata Necta

Summons an army of darkness from the remnants of the trapped souls that have been left behind. The severity and punitive power of this army is relative to the accuracy of the clock itself and the quantity of souls trapped in the realm, of which the words have been spoken. This theft does have unforeseen consequences and sets into motion events that cannot be undone. So be fair warned.

Klatoo barada necta

Orders the army of darkness into the ground and plants its deceit into the soil itself. This creates a corrupted soulstone in its stead and for each soul delivered. The power of this soulstone is relative to the number of souls stolen and subject to the rules of judgement bound within The Book of Judges.

Klatoo verata nectar

Manifests the spirits of chaos and order to plague the living by initiating a constant state of war. Under the possession of these spirits, the living turn from understanding and for a time fall into darkness. That time is predicated by the librarian herself. Only The Book of Power can undue this motion that is to set loose upon the world. These words bear no significant power while the clock keeps its tempo however.

Klatoo barada nectar

Removes either chaos or order at random from the realm in which the words are spoken. Speaking these words of power after the previous set will initiate the beginning of this protocol and only this order will suffice. The element of chaos or order will be chosen at random and an absolute form shall build to occupy that void. This will create the very nature of punitive power itself as representation. Be fair warned, that any other words of power spoken between these sets, will produce unpredictable results.

Klatoo verata necktie

Summons an ancient dragon from within the Second Plane of Existence. The dragon will be in the guise of a court jester or a hero at random. If this hero or court jester are not to be summoned for any reason, then the Dragon Forgemaster will take his or her place instead. It would be wise to consider that an ancient dragon is neither influenced by man or lack any understanding, so be fair warned.

Klatoo barada necktie

Returns the ancient dragon to where they came, but only exactly 13 years, 13 days and 13 hours after these words are spoken, as far as man is concerned with time, of course.

Klatoo verata nectphhhhhh

Unleashes the army of darkness upon the world and from the ground in which they are stored. The dead will rise and consume the living, as the dead will now have dominion over the living. The correct speech of this phrase will then seal this book, never to be opened again.

Klaatu valkyra nikto

Summons a Valkyrie or demon at random that will be bound to the rules of the specific being summoned. The Valkyrie requires a Dragon Soulforge in order to remain in any realm, for any prolonged period of time. Likewise, the demon is bound by The Book of Demons instead. Only the Librarian and The Old ones may override this.

Klaatu baldyra nitko

Returns the Valkyrie or demon back to their eternal place of peace or torment. Requires the Book of Dragons and the appropriate Ancient Dragon. Each ancient dragon produces a different result for this process. Reference The Book of Dragons for the possible combinations. Be fair warned, only an ancient dragon may read those words.

This tome is part of a series of tomes written by the Old Ones. The volume series include the following 13 books.

- *The Book of Life
- *The Book of Truth
- *The Book of Virtues
- *The Book of Knowledge
- *The Book of Wisdom
- *The Book of Power
- *The Book of Corruption
- *The Book of Angels
- *The Book of Demons
- *The Book of Dragons
- *The Book of the Dead
- *The Book of Judges
- *The Book of the Four Protocols

Note to the reader:

The words in this book have been created by the Book of Power and are dangerous. These words are therefore words of power and should not be spoken out loud.

You have been warned.

- *The Old Ones*

Transcribed by: *Alania*

The End

The PAWS Soulforge

&

The Quest for Ladon

** Special Edition **

By: *Palm Copenhagen*

&

The PAWS Soulforge