

Book 2

*Since the events of **Xel's Door**, **The Realm** has been healing throughout its borders. In part, trying to abandon the shocking memories of this unfathomable tragedy... and in whole, bearing the continual grievance of lost loved ones. During this period, I, **Gundul the Dark Wizard**, took interest in studying other realms beyond our own. My intent was initially academic. However, the grief eventually consumed me. I became intrigued with how creatures of species akin to that of **The Realm** handled both grief and tragedy.*

One particular planet was not experiencing an interplanar war, nor was its inhabitants slaughtering each other for survival. No. But each creature had grief and tragedy all the same. A pandemic spread quickly from continent to continent. It was faster than what their best healers and researchers could do to respond and counter this invisible foe. The infrastructures and systems to which these creatures relied were crippled within mere moments - as the humans that operated them became ill or worse.

*My heart cried out to them. Here I was searching the cosmos for comfort and solace, only to find more grief and tragedy. And I could not bear to watch - nor could I stand by and do nothing. And so, I temporarily left my post as watchman of **The Realm** in order to lend my aid the ailing planet called **Earth**.*

I was only absent for no more than two years, which is a drop of time for one who is able to live naturally without end. But in that fraction of time... evil stirred.

During the bloody war against Zel, the followers of the Devine learned through great anguish that Zel both created and commissioned six Lords of Evil to lead his armies. Each lord was bestowed a particular proficiency designed to expose weakness and suffering to The Realm. These proficiencies are better known to us as curses. Because we had no idea that these powered curses were unleashed upon us, we suffered greatly!

Upon reaching the events of Zel's Door, we gained enough knowledge to slay only one of the lords - but we did not understand the two magic orbs he was protecting. And so, when Zhain the Undying fell, Zel's ranks broke open allowing us to seize one of the two magic orbs. I will not write again... of the tragedy that immediately befell us from this act.

Zhain the Undying is the sixth Lord of Evil. The curse that he wielded was a mystical ability to coerce any creature into undying & loyal service to him. One can only imagine how this curse greatly influenced Zel's ranks for the war. When the final blow was stuck upon Zhain, his body fell in an odd way. His right arm was hyper-extended upon the ground with his index finger landing squarely upon the edge of a non-descript book. After the battle, his body remained,

but his index finger now pressed upon his battle weapon. The book was nowhere to be found.

As I have written earlier, the conclusion of Zel's Door led to Zel and his legion being trapped inside a splinter astral plane where this underworld is now referred to as the Gates of Zel. It is here where Zel gained equal quality-time with each lord which represented an aspect of himself. In all of his acts and doings, it was here that Zel was finally forced to reckon with himself.

The second Lord of Evil, Oni Ogata, is the wondering lord of Calamity. The fourth Lord of Evil, Absence of Devine, is the heinous lady of Despair. Both were banished from Zel's audience while in the underworld. Upon engaging Oni Ogata, Zel constantly felt reminded of the sum total of his actions: calamity, which all began with him encouraging creatures within The Realm to worship Zel. As her name suggests, upon engaging Absence of Devine, Zel constantly felt alone and separated from the Devine. She is a reminder of how his actions has left him absent of the Devine's presence. He created these machinations to penalize and torture the creatures of The Realm. When in truth, he performs these acts to himself.

The Lore of The Realm ©

The struggle between Zel and these two Lords of Evil shook the cosmos. It was not too long into The Realm's mourning period when a mountain within Perilous Peaks began to quake. In my brief absence from The Realm, these two lords discovered a mystical weak point and escaped from the Gates of Zel. The interplanar barriers prevented Zel from pursuing them, and so Zel sent the three remaining lords to imprison the escaped banished lords, and to continue the torture and enslavement of The Realm.

- Gundul the Dark Wizard