

Book 3

Upon re-entering The Realm, the banished Lords of Evil retreated into the unknown. No murmur was heard. No trace was seen. Depleted by the hunt, the pursuing lords each took refuge in familiar lands to renew their waning power. The fifth Lord of Evil, known as the Wretched Queen, sought the continued worship of the Cult of Zel for rejuvenation. And so, she returned to the still-occupied Temple of Zel that rested deep within the mountains of Perilous Peaks. Believing their prayers to be answered, the cult embraced the lady of Pestilence as the envoy of Zel. Their servitude to her was immediate.

South of this temple, and yet even deeper within mountainous terrain, stands the Ruins of Zel. This now rubble-laden kingdom is where Zel birthed his sacrilege and established his formal religious doctrine. Once this unhallowed place was discovered by devout followers of the great Divine, this site became the focus of the war campaign. Much of the conflict was staged here in the belief of "slaying the dragon within its lair!" Oddly enough, although he was not a dragon, Zel did commission one into his service.

The Forsaken is the third Lord of Evil. Often manifesting as a dark-haired human sorceress, Forsaken is the three-headed queen of dragons from the forgotten-but-known Dragon Planes. She is the vile lord of Destruction. How and why Forsaken left her plane of existence for The Realm is among the unknown. What is known is that about two hundred years ago, she conjured more dragons from that plane into ours. The amount can be counted on a single hand, but these few have caused an imbalance within The Realm. As it pertains to the banished lords, Forsaken halted her hunt to take refuge within the Ruins of Zel. Since then, these ruins have been transformed into a nest of things foreign to this world.

The remaining Lord of Evil is also the first Lord of Evil. Zel believed passionately in converting many creatures within The Realm to the praise and worship of Zel, the steward of the great Divine. He craved the feeling of being adored, the knowledge of being the brightest star to countless souls, and the desire of being more than what his station allowed. Although this campaign began with a willing volunteer, Zel found it frustratingly difficult to find more "willing" volunteers. And so, he crafted his first Lord of Evil.

Zel needed a creature that could infiltrate communities to convert those inhabitants into service without anyone losing personality, lifestyle, or purpose.

He found the perfect vessel within Blood, the Vampire Lord, for he was charming, crafty, and patient. And so, Zel plucked him from the unknown.

Blood broke his pursuit of the banished lords once he could no longer smell their essence within the midnight air. Blood already knew that the banished lords escaped to the unknown, for it was Blood that showed them, in secret, the way.

Blood had no keen interest in serving Zel. Many times, over & over again, Blood had been used by mystic beings for their nefarious gains - and never for his own interests. He being loosed from the unknown, and with his handler now trapped inside the underworld, Blood could finally have his own.

Perched upon a windy mountaintop, Blood gazed upon the distant sands of the Deadlands. His nose caught the first indicator of living, breathing flesh. As he peered intently into the distance, a solitary flame broke the darkness. He spotted a rustic village within dunes. Blood then took his time... traveling by foot to this village... helping the simple folk there with their chores... and then, one-by-one, sinking his silver fangs into their unsuspecting necks. It is not known how

many villages Blood has corrupted. But it is known that his influence was not secluded to the Deadlands.

Mystic beings are living vessels that dwell within the unknown. Their abilities and knowledge of things rival or exceed that of Zel. The purpose these creatures serve is unknown to the creatures of The Realm. When I was searching the cosmos for comfort to my grievance of lost loved ones, I learned of four mystic beings that were loosed from the unknown. These beings visited distant worlds... and with them followed pain, suffering, and conquest. Their true names are foreign to me. But I can describe them if ever, great Divine forbid, they enter The Realm.

The first was just a skeletal grin encased within an endless hazy dark fog. The second was a large purple-gray, pus excreting, boiled-etched tenacle. The third was a giant rusting suit of ebony armor. And the fourth appeared to be a grotesque rotting figure with protruding needle-sharp fangs. My eyes beheld this, and my mind did its best to recount the tale. But this is all that I know about these vessels. So let this information be recorded now if ever these unwanted beings were to enter The Realm.

- Gundul the Dark Wizard

