

Journal Entry,

Moranda was quite the storyteller. It was amazing the kind of details she was capable of divulging. With this knowledge I would be able to understand the Dornarian population further. My travels to their towns continued, and I developed a heartened defense for their weaker, more vulnerable half. Syrenne and I decided to bring justice to the land. It was at this point we decided to call ourselves "The Minstrels of Murder".

Our travels continued. We continued to sing songs of the lost and wronged, spreading empathy and love to the darkest of corners of Dornar. In those instances where we felt there may be hope, we would continue into the bogs in search of the lost and attempt to rescue them. In the cases where they remained lost, we sought justice. We learned how to fight demons from the demons themselves who had been protecting their kin from Dornar. We were then given costumes so all would recognize us. The costumes were reinforced with strong leathers and woven with rare metals, and the blades were sharper than any other.

For a time we became lost in the darkness, too. Our moral compass had fallen south and we became enthralled with punishment over justice. The swamp itself began turning us. Even my language became more poetic, a personality shift brought on by the costume that had developed into a new persona. I would become the hands of poetic justice in the swamp, and I became feared by those who indulged in malice.

It was as if months rolled by within the swamps. We had almost forgotten our native land, where we would roam free in the plains among the beasts natural to this world. We had become obsessed with our conviction to the point of complete selflessness.

During our travels, we heard rumours of a boat made of flesh and bone. The possessor of the boat had abandoned it. It was rumoured that he belonged to the island of ash. We had been amused by this rumour and went to investigate.

The rumours were true and there it sat on the coast. A boat completely made of the ribs, bones and flesh of some mighty predator, its joints and seals were made of caked blood. Unfortunately there were no signs of its possessor.

We continued to search for this fabled resident of the ashen island, but we never found him. The odd thing was Syrenne and I agreed that we almost felt his presence as if he were stalking us and covering his trail to avoid being found. It was obvious that he had been covering his trails, as he made foolish attempts to brush away his tracks. Even with the brushing, it was obvious that he was only human.

Weeks more rolled by without an appearance of our guest. We paid no mind and continued on our business. If anything, Syrenne and I stepped up our performance in hopes that he would be watching and be impressed by our gifts. Every night we sat silent, hoping he would present himself.

Eventually we crossed paths with the stranger. Clothed in steel and black velvet, he appeared war torn and helpless yet I could hear it his pant. His heavy, lion-like breaths muttering a destined royalty among beasts proved that he would long outlive any armour that would sustain him in battle. His eyes were red as rubies, peering through the slit of his steel mask. His ghostly white hair was banging forward over the mask and covered by his black velvet hood. Even his skin was crusted and flaked as drought covered ash plains, and gray as thunder clouds.

At first, we could see him examine us through the mask. We did not know how he managed to sneak up on us, but he directly crossed our paths and stopped us in our tracks. He stepped forward slowly, bladed hands down and his posture relaxed as if to lessen the distress. As he approached, he... smelled us.

"You are human. Why would you want to traverse these swamps? Do you have any idea what means to feed on you in this forsaken swamp?"

"And you are... very dark and obviously ill-fitted for these swamps. Should you not at least be wearing boots?"

"That is my concern."

"And our fate is ours."

"Correction: Your fate is also my concern. It is not safe for your kind here. I will help you find your way back to the plains."

"No."

"What do you mean no?"

"We have chosen this, and in turn the land has chosen us. They need us."

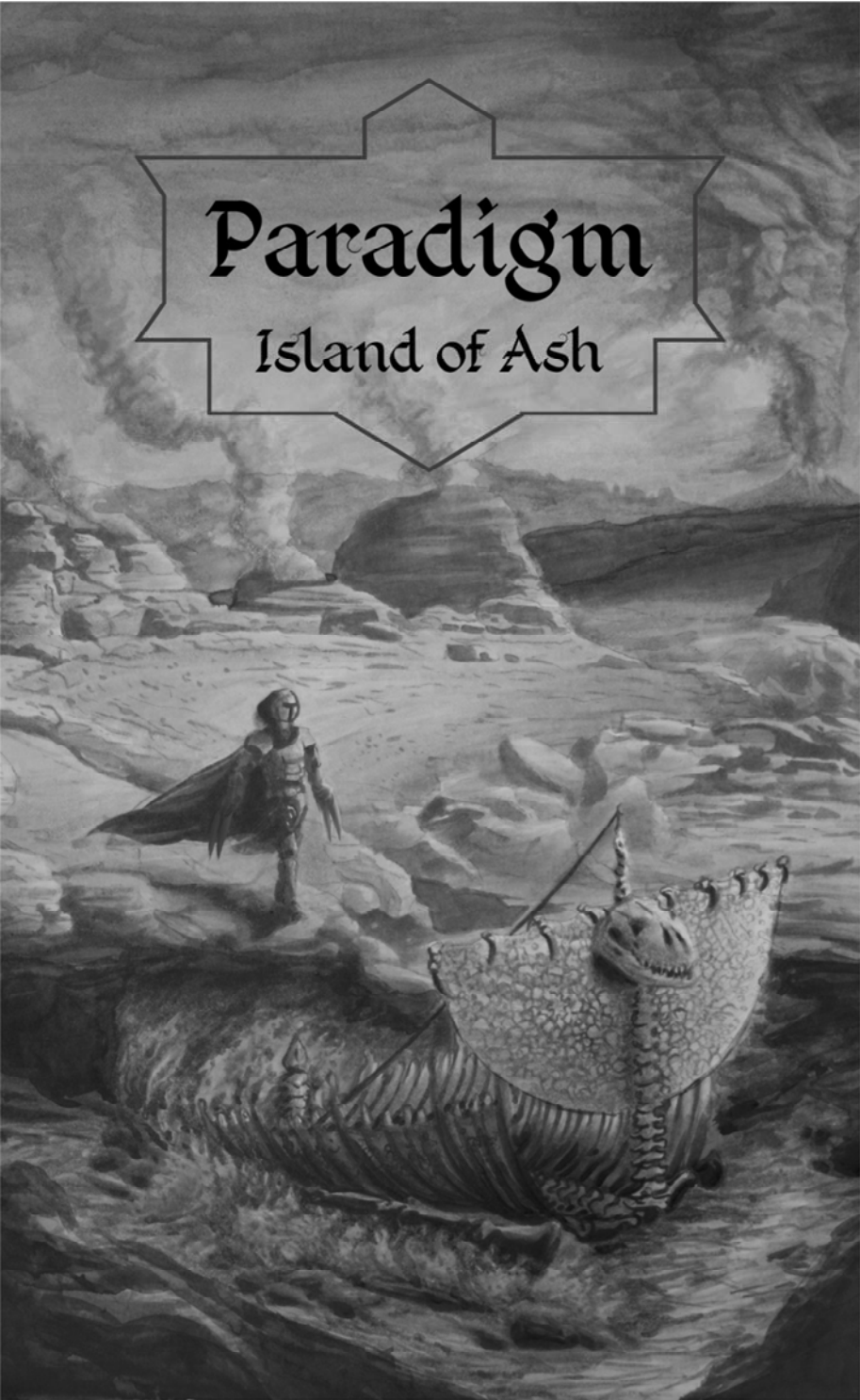
"Need us? Do you know what kind of vile creatures live here?"

"No! It's a lie! They are not all vile! Some of them live in fear. Some of them even live in rebellion of their forefathers. We have learned that they have the capacity for love and peace. Please, don't force us to go. We can help them here."

"You are an interesting folk. I'll tell you what. I will let you stay but you have to promise me that you will not let them taint your heart. If it comes down to violence, let me wield the hands of fate. A fist of judgement is not your call to make. Leave it to me."

"Who are you?"

"I am Benneth Aldercaine, and I am a chaosblood."



Paradigm, Island of Ash

As a chaosblood, I can tell you this. Nobody ventures to Paradigm. Not now, not ever. Not even the parents of those forsaken.

Long ago, when angels and demons first began inhabiting the land, they learned they had the ability to procreate with the humans. Why this would ever happen is a marvel of nature, but from what I take from it is that we were all created with the same cast, just created in different ways and in different places.

Despite the obvious, it started as a blessing and evolved into a plague. Half demons and half angels were having children, either from a half angel falling in love with a half demon, or a half demon having their way with a half angel. The circumstance of the event was inconsequential, but the result was this: Chaosbloods were being birthed into the world.

One of the leaders long ago decreed that chaosbloods could not be trusted. Either they would be too "good natured" to live among demons or too "parasitic and unknowable" to live among angels. So rather than exiling them elsewhere so they may fend for themselves, they took it as a potential conflict for those they would reside with. They simply spat them out into desolation.

Along the shores of Draemoria, their parents were forced to sail off the isle of Paradigm and launch their children on rafts toward the coast. If the child was given supplies, they were lucky. Many of these children never even survived the trip to shore. Fortunately for some, they would not be discovered until their youth where their more dominant features would then make them noticeable. At least as a youth they benefitted from life skills. Every chaosblood would be endowed gifts of a peculiar nature caused by the blending of the two bloods coalescing into a specific trait that would make

them stand out among their kin. These gifts and prior knowledge would aid in their survival.

Paradigm was an island brewed from a fault line. Over time, the ash, cinder and magma bubbled out, making solid ground. The land was rich in nutrients, but little to no foliage could survive its wicked terrain. The only beasts that lived there were carnivores. How they arrived there no one knows, but most of them could not be seen anywhere else.

Survival on Paradigm without wisdom was bleak at best. With such an open terrain, beasts and children alike could be seen for miles with very few terrain aids. The only chaosbloods to survive this experience were properly gifted with either equipment or beneficial gifts given by blood.

I myself am an interesting story. I am Half Angel, Half Demon. My existence is purely coincidence. In a world where angels and demons have found their way to coexist among humans, over centuries their blood has crossed through children born of human blood. I was an extremely rare case where my parents, half angel and half demon, managed to pass on their angel and demon blood without a trace of human blood.

My mother was a simple farmhand in the Elysican flood plains, surrounded by lush fields of wheat and barley. A child with my abnormalities, having skin as ashen flakes, was discovered out very early in childhood. My mother attempted to hide me by raising me in the house as a scribe but it was no use. Eventually I would need sunlight and eventually someone would see me running in it. My mother was forced to sail to Paradigm alone and cast me into the oceans on a small raft. The violent creatures of the deep circled my raft but did not partake. I was lucky.

When I landed on Paradigm, I had barely any goods with me. I had enough bread and fish for the trip, and no skills to aid in gathering or hunting. Fortunately, I was found and raised by one of the oldest of chaosbloods. He managed to survive into his adolescence with great guidance. He never told me his name, though. I don't think he even had one.

He bore a great suit of armor, and grafted hand blades to his wrists that would allow him to fight to the death. His blades were unique. It appeared as though he welded two blades to each of his gauntlets. The blades were

mounted on either side of the wrists, and the blades themselves were hooked near the hands. I can see why he designed them this way. He would use them to grapple with his enemy, catching their claws between the blades and twisting in such a way the blades would cleave their appendages. The hooks on the blades would aid him in catching wild swings or catching at different angles. His entire martial art was focused on the blades themselves. He eventually taught me how to fight this way by making my own fist weapons using leather and bone from his fallen victims.

Unfortunately, poor circumstance led to my learning of a gift to step into an alternate plane. We were hunting for food one day rather than fishing. My master felt it best that we would slay predators together so he can guide me through combat. Our predator had the advantage. There were more of them.

We were weaving through the ash made smoke stacks that spewed soot into the air. Most of them were no more than ten feet tall, but several of them could be much larger. The predators favoured this area since it provided camouflage and cover. We thought we were striking a weak one down. It had been mauled by a much larger beast and was whimpering for an end. We approached it in pity and that's when they struck as if they were planning on our arrival.

Seven of these beasts rushed my master and began to tear him limb from limb. They chased me down, but luckily I tried to jump into a swell but ran into the side of it instead. Rather than running into it and falling to the ground, I had crossed through. I was in a parallel world. It looked exactly like our world, but the sky was filled with stars. There was no moon and no sun. The land was flooded with an eerie, unnatural light, just enough to see but too little to provide any real definition or depth. Where shadows should be, I saw the living world, the world where I belonged. I was looking into a mirror.

I could see the beasts feeding on my master's corpse down to the bone. They left nothing but metal plates. They even pulled the flesh of his hands from his weapons. Eventually they moved on. I could see them travelling into the distance from numerous shadows away. I could see for miles there. After they had left, I tried to step through into the living world again. It was like walking through a door. The two worlds were seamless. I reclaimed my master's gear and brought them into this parallel plane with me.

Rather than living in Paradigm, I utilized this gift and remained in this alternate plane where there was no life. The world was absolutely barren except for the bones of beasts that had stuck out of the ground and were as stiff as stone. They had been there for ages and there was no sign of immediate life. I quickly learned that I could walk over and even touch these mirrors to the natural world. I would have to intentionally pass through them and even the shadows. My first step through must have been out of instinct. At first I used this gift to hunt, simply ambushing the beasts as they slept. I didn't even need to leave the shadow. I learned that I could make fires in the shadows, and it never altered the gateways. Fires in the living world sealed them up. My gift was tied to the living world.

I began to tan the hides of my prey and use them to piece together my master's armour. I also began building practice dummies to reinforce the martial art my master had been teaching me. I never became fully confident in my combat prowess, since his training was never completed, but it was more than enough when accompanied with my gift.

I realized I had become the alpha of this land and became bored of the monotony of survival. I figured there must be more to life than a never ending loop of hunting. I began to build a stockpile of bones and leather. I also learned that mixing animal blood with ash made a sort of black pitch. Using the dried out, buoyant animal bones, I built the framework for a raft, lined it with hides and sealed it in blood pitch within the shadows.

Then I would face the real test. I would have to kill a ferocious beast, one with skins large enough to make a gate. I began scouring the shadows in search of such a beast. Then I found it. It was a hideous reptile, well over twenty feet tall and with eight legs. It was monstrously muscular and its scales appeared to be sharp as daggers. I figured I would bait it.

I began moving from the smoke stacks and toward the beast, remaining in the shadows, and dropping meat in the living world. I formed a trail that eventually led to the home of the beast. The beast began to sniff. It turned and saw me. It ran for me, looking at me like the meal of a lifetime. I jumped into the shadows and it began flailing around, thinking that I had jumped at it. After it came to rest, it began eating the meat. It then began following the meat trail. Once it was in the smoke stacks, there was no escape.

I waited for it to relax and lay for a nap. At that moment, I jumped out of the shadow and hamstringed its rear legs. It coiled back and let out a shriek then stammered to its feet. It began to circle and defend itself again. It was hopeless. I would leap out and strike at its legs then return to the shadows before it could even make a movement. As I fought, I noticed its own shadow made it vulnerable. I began clawing and sawing at its feet every opportunity it would afford me until it was in too much pain to stand. When it began to lay down is when I began to strike its vitals. Eventually it would submit and it passed away.

It would take some time, but I managed to flay the flesh from the corpse. I dragged it into the shadows using its own shadows. I dragged it to shore where my boat rested. I had to fight with a smaller shadow to get it back to the living world. That took me a while, but it happened. I used it as a tarp and made a lean-to with bones for support, and then dragged the boat into the living world. From there, I sailed back to the main land.

From what I have said, that is all anyone would probably ever learn of Paradigm. There was no culture, no community, not even a population. My master had been the only one to survive long enough to meet me, and during my stay I rarely, if ever, saw a boat from a mainland. Most of the chaosbloods cast here would die in the ocean.

That was probably the most disturbing part of my stay. The waters never tested my boat. Not even the creatures below me. Then I recalled my journey here. Even then the creatures would swim along my raft. It was like they had accepted me as the alpha of their world.

At first I didn't even care about my destination. I just figured I would plot a generally east course that would save the boat from damaging tides and weather. My concern was more of surviving the trip. When my trip had ended, my boat found rest on the shores of Dornar.

My first reaction was to run for cover and enter the shadows. Dornar was perfect for its canopy enveloped the land. I could move in and out of the shadows at will and any time. I began spying on Dornar to see the truth behind their culture. There was no culture, just an endless, parasitic and chaotic chain of feeding on vice and vanity. It was disgusting. They were even rounding up humans as livestock and play toys.

I still considered my boat as base camp so that I could keep my bearings on the land. Every so often I would return. Obviously my visits were too often because Dornarians had picked up my scent. They began spreading rumours of my existence, and that's when I would encounter the most intriguing of people yet.

Sorrownote and Syrenne had found their way to my boat and had examined its build. It appeared to make Syrenne nauseous, but Sorrownote was intrigued by the craftsmanship. They had found my trails. A solid month it had been since I set foot on the surf and still. They had found my trail.

I began to follow them. Even in the living world. Hiding among the shadows lacked grace. I wanted to clue them into my presence. After a while of fun and games, and witnessing their overall good nature, I decided to approach them and make my presence known. From there, we became friends.

Over time and through several encounters with my newly discovered, good willed friends, I had figured out that my gift of moving into the shadows wasn't a gift of living in the shadows at all. On an island filled with beasts, the terrain of the shadow plane seemed desolate. Now that I resided on the mainland, I realized its true nature. I had been Purgatory, where I walked among the dead at the moment the world had ceased to live.

I began piecing the concept together when I first arrived. Back on Paradigm, all was petrified as if it had been there ages. When I entered the shadows in the mainland, all life was rotting. Not even molds were alive. It was just a chain of decay that went on forever. Life had simply ceased. After demanding her secrecy, I eventually told Moranda of my story, and she used herbs to run some tests on me. That is when I had found out that I had no human blood. My soul had become so conflicted that I was torn between the two worlds, and shot into infinity where I managed to reach the end of time.

There came a time when our journeys in the swamp, while vanquishing a Dornarian that had slain an innocent victim, we were approached by three angels and a demon. It was a very odd company, and I embellished the tone of my introduction to see how they would react to my existence as a chaosblood. It seemed to weird them a bit, but the demon looked excited.

As Sorrownote mentioned, my demonic blood had provided me with a subtle sense of smell that could tell me the very makeup of a person's blood. One of the angels and the demon were not angel and demon. They were human, but contaminated with a strong dose of light and darkness, as if they had been imbued with pure essence. I didn't want to say anything at first, but Moranda confirmed it.

They seemed excited to see Moranda again. All I have to say is pure angels are amusingly delightful. I enjoyed travelling around them. Their very presence was uplifting, like they could heal the swamps just by setting foot in it. It was an experience I held onto dearly. I would continue to follow this band to the ends of the earth. I would protect them with my life. My life had now been given purpose. After her tests and incantations, Moranda divulged a plot from Dornar. It was planning a massive scale attack on Elysica. She didn't know when or where, but it either had to be prepared for or stopped. This is when we decided to take our corners to warn our people, and the demon Joseph and I were best suited to deal with Dornar. I requested that Joseph would travel with me. My previous experiences in Dornar would aid me.

In the shadows, Dornar was unique. It is then that I learned that souls could drift off into eternity, not finding a fate in the heavens or in the abyss, simply anchored to the world with no future. Time became timeless and they would continue to walk along the rotting terrain. Their faces were gone and they had no distinguishable features. I attempted to communicate with them but none of them would even respond to my gestures. I could not even move them. They were frozen in time and yet could wander by themselves. I was then confronted by a group of these denizens and they were capable to speak.

They warned me of the coming war by giving me a piece of paper. The piece of paper read the fate of the world, and I was told that it was the last page in the book of its life. The page read;

Today is the day I feel the world will end. King Rammathan had managed to storm Elysica Keep and vanquish Nobelan in pure hatred. There was no cause, no disruption, just a bloodthirsty ambition to slay everything good in this world. His demons were forever slaying the angels, even to the best of their ability, the angels had fallen.

The gates to heaven have closed themselves in the anguish of a lost plane, and preventing Rammathan and his minions from stepping through. It has been a week since the trumpets had sounded, and there were no sided kings left to answer the call. Rammathan and his minions kept feeding on the people. There are no humans left save for us. Nobelan managed to hide us in a passage that had an escape vessel waiting for us. We had sailed for the Hall of Great Kings in an attempt to save this land. I am afraid it's too late. The War Lock will make this world fall. He will clean up the mess that should have never been. The world is over. I just wish I could live long enough to hand this to....

And the last page ended abruptly. The War Lock, sitting at the end of time, had found this journal. He was reading it when he began reading of me. That is when he handed this page to these denizens to deliver to me, right on that very spot. They claim that even this quote I am writing now was contained in this journal.

What amuses me is Sorrownote never reads these stories. He is so preoccupied with gathering our stories and writing stories of his own that he never actually reads anything. I wonder if he will write of this one day, or if he will ever know that his book lived to the end of time. What interests me now is how this book will end. If we change the fate of this world, this part of time just happened. These writings are still here. Will the War Lock still get a hold of this book? I wonder.

At the time we entered Dornar, I was not aware of its condition and we happened to be on the east end, which pit us against Anger. Fortunately for Joseph, it wasn't violence. Anger is a much different trait, one more self-involved, and the demons were more concerned about themselves and others than for some random wanderers. I would tell him to run through the land, and I began to use my gift to slay whatever stood in his path. It was a pleasurable feat, jumping from shadow to shadow, delivering killing blows to demon after demon. I did not enjoy killing, but the feat itself was challenging and amusing. What interested me, the fallen demons within Purgatory would disappear. As I slayed them, they no longer existed within Purgatory. Mind you, not all of them existed there in the first place. My guess is that they had moved on before the end of time came. But the ones that did. Their bodies

would simply vanish as if they were erased from time. It could not be Purgatory, for their soul was not trapped. They simply did not live long enough to become trapped. It was just the end of time, and time had halted.

I would love to continue on this story for you, but apparently Sorrownote has plans for the current matters. He asked me to go as far as necessary to explain where I come from and this last dose of knowledge is my end. I will leave you on this note, and hope you have pleasure in reading Sorrownote`s interpretation of what happens next.
