Kill Six Billion Demons » KILL SIX BILLION DEMONS – Chapter 1

“Let there be no Genesis, for beginnings are false and I am a consummate liar.”

-Psalms

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 1-5

YISUN on the conquering king:

A conquering king must come with violence in his self of selves. He must splay the guts of his enemy with no weapon but his hearstrings. His lips must spit sweet music that pulverizes his enemies, and his eyes must tell a brain-cleaving tale of loveliness. He must quench the sword of his tongue in the love of his enemies.

Spasms 31:12

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 1-9

On the night of the 88th Marquis, YISUN queried his servants that were gathered in the hall of the Glass Temple of the 90th water. “Where shall we resolve this tale of the one we have not met yet?” said YISUN, and smiled in the 3rd way.

The servant Nighzmarquls, who was recitant said:

“The key is set, unlock the veil and show her the firmament of all things. Take her to the truth of unclothed and let its glory burn her.”

The servant Gordon was eager to please YISUN and said:

“The third eye has been burnt into the flesh, mind and soul of one unready. Like a tea party with the rug pulled out from under it, reality would alternately crumble and shatter, but this mind lacks the breadth to see it for what it is, so would see nothing at all, until the pieces settled into a new order, and the nothingness resolved itself into something else.”

The servant Driftwood, who had arrived late to the gathered, cast off his suggestion:

“Apparently she is going to the distant future.”

YISUN was pleased for he saw these were good things, and made it so.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 1-10

YISUN let the servants continue and was content to watch.

The servant Brian offered a suggestion:

“She is being taken away to a deserted planet for exiles.”

The demiurge YE, who had returned from a black crusade and secretly plotted treason in his heart said:

“To the 66th Netherrealm Gateway.”

YISUN knew of these answers and was pleased.

The servant Kris C, eager to please YISUN, offered a new suggestion.

“She’s going to hell,” said he. YISUN smiled in the 4th way and saw that tutelage was required. “Hell is an illusion of our inner self, that terribly enemy called I,” said YISUN.

Hearing this, the Aeon 9 Wolftamer spoke up:

“She is going on a journey into the physical representation of her own mind,” it proclaimed. YISUN made a small bird gesture with the right hand and pulled a plum from the Servant’s tables. “This is a good answer,” spoke YISUN, “For there is no form or substance that does not have its roots in the TOWER, which is under assault from the EGO, that terrible enemy called I.”

The disciples were pleased with this lesson and sat attentively.

Quoted from YISUN’s 33rd psalm, section 12.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 1-11

Last night, alone, I met the moon

I saw its halo and the love around

“Now take the path, don’t ever lose your time

Just watch the light you have inside”

I watched inside and my eyes burned

The moon was right

Roots so deep, head so high

I want to be in and watch it out

I know the reasons why I failed

The stars illuminate my being

Behold thy servant, you the force around

that makes the planets be

-Gojira, “Love”

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 1-14

Introducing 82.

There will be multiple updates this week and I am going to get a persistent blog up so it’s a little more consistently known when new kung-fu angel comix will be released.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 1-15

Couple of site updates on the way as we roll near the end of the first issue! Once there’s a proper issue up, there’ll be a way to easily track/access it as well as a persistent blog.

In the meantime, enjoy Kung Fu Angels, The Comic.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 1-16

YISUN walked with his disciple PREE ASHMA in the garden of bones and plums, which was one of YISUN’s more favored places to walk for it set the mind at unease.

PREE ASHMA, who knew the syllables of royalty and the seven intonations and could smile in the first, third, fiftieth, and twentieth ways, was very proud in her accomplishments. Thinking herself wise, she posed a question to YISUN. “Are you a giving master, oh one of ones?”

YISUN, who was in the mood for games, plucked a plum and bit into it. “I am consumed with love for myself.” PREE ASHMA knew the syllables of royalty so she knew this to be a yes. Cleverly, she posed a question to YISUN, prancing with delight.”Then, oh flesh of all flesh, may I (who would never ask you anything) ask you this: what is your secret name?”

YISUN smiled at this question for it was a clever one. PREE ASHMA knew that the Secret Name of God was immensely powerful and in her breast she had long nurtured to the point of gluttony a growing red hunger for dominion.

“Why it is known by all,” spoke Yisun, and as they walked but two paces further they came upon a handsome red buck with ten antlers who was the ancient protector of the garden and had slain seven million of YISUN’s white children.

“O handsome son of mine,” spoke YISUN gently, “do you know my secret name?”

“Of course,” spoke the buck, and bowed mightily. “Tell me,” implored PREE ASHMA eagerly, but the buck would not. “You know not?” said he with a tone of surprise. “It is known by all, and it is not in my nature to know how to say otherwise.”

YISUN smiled in the third way at this response while PREE ASHMA’S heart roiled with discontent. YISUN reached out with a soft gesture and plucked a sparrow from the sky. “Let us ask another,” said YISUN, “-my small son, do you know my secret name?”

The sparrow nodded and bowed his head, but was quiet, for he was old and the winter would come soon. “Tell me!” said PREE ASHMA, but the sparrow could not for he was weary. PREE ASHMA fumed, and in irritation struck at a plum tree, which recoiled in ash.

“Let us ask one more,” said YISUN. “Oh mightiest of mighties,” said PREE ASHMA, hot with frustration,” if I can not find out I will go mad! You, the most generous and merciful will deny me this small indulgence?” YISUN spoke not but reached upon the plum he held and PREE ASHMA beheld a small and humble flea there.

“Do you also know the secret name of God, you wriggling thing?” screeched PREE ASHMA. The flea bowed, and said nothing. PREE ASHMA turned scarlet with frustration. “How the world has conspired against me!” she spat, “Oh master of masters, you play a trick on me! How could you torment your daughter thus? You maker of false promises!” YISUN was disappointed in PREE ASHMA, for her face was as ugly as those of  the white children in her rage. In her tantrum great gouts of fire consumed one beautiful plum tree after another, and their bows withered in ash. YISUN was saddened at the nascent ruin of the plum garden and held up the hand of YISUN in a small gesture that meant disappointment and cessation.

“Will you reveal this to me now, oh Queen of Queens?” hissed PREE ASHMA, her beautiful face contorted into furrows of intense longing. “Reveal it to me, I demand you!” The grip of dominion had reddened her flesh.

YISUN was saddened, and spoke the seven syllable secret name of royalty, which is YS ATUN VRAMA PRESH, and assumed a universal form. The blood drained instantly from PREE ASHMA’S face for she saw her gift was a suffering she was not prepared for. Before she could avert her gaze, the winds of YISUN’S body scoured her flesh with deep grooves and lashed at her pretty face, disfiguring her with shrill screams.

With mighty hands, YISUN grasped the spokes of the Universe, which is the WHEEL, and wrenched it on its side with no more force than a feather fall. PREE ASHMA then beheld the Universe from its side and in that moment understood the secret name of God and laughed at her stupidity. Her eyes flashed like drops of water in a pan and were gone instantly for she had willingly hungered after what was hers all along. Her beauty was lost and her flesh scoured, the blood pooled around her small white feet and she spoke the secret name of God aloud.

“I”.

Psalms: 10:26

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-17

Aaaand that wraps up issue 1!

Issue two will start updating this Friday. Looking to get a more friday/sunday update schedule going as well as find some time to polish the site some more. I have added something to the Daemoniac for your viewing pleasure though, and there will be more forthcoming as well as another opportunity to interact with the comic!

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-18

“The first wisdom – abolition of self,

The second wisdom – always brew coffee before breaking fast.”

– Vym Yrttr, priest of ATUN

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-19

First impressions.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2- 21 (THRONE)

Needless to say, that took a while.

Our regular schedule will return next week.

FULL SIZE: http://killsixbilliondemons.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/throne.jpg

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-22

God of Ways, the Eye Revealed, bearer of the Shape.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-23

UPDATE: Internet Achieved, Japan achieved. Normal update schedule shall resume!

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-24

Good lord, that was quite a wait.

Kill Six Billion Demons will be updating in COLOR from hereon out. Also expect a proper blog at some point in the next week, and expect a lot of suggestions from the last page to be taken into account! It might be a bit jarring coming from the last few pages and I can’t guarantee they will all be of this quality, but color jams a lot more with what I want to get accomplished with this comic, so here you are.

Reminder to follow my tumblr for updates http://killsixbilliondemons.tumblr.com OR http://orbitaldropkick.tumblr.com

Updates will probably come on a Sunday or Monday!

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-25

A silver tongue

A golden claw

An iron heart

– “The three qualities of a White Son of YIS”

Pravam Wat, blood priest of Namon, BDO 1994

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-26

YISUN reclined one day the third palace, which was the palace of emptiness and glass, and situated in an empty place that YISUN had made for this purpose. The air in this palace was constantly humming with silence. YISUN was pleased with its stillness and so summoned disciples to observe. Attending YISUN was a black fifth disciple viceroy, Pavlov and the master haberdasher, INVGSLD.

After some time YISUN desired to break the silence and made a small motion with the little finger of YISUN which was a powerful motion of division which means breaking of symmetry,

The viceroy PAVLOV spoke:

‘In order to unlock a key, one must know the Door.

And truly To know a Door, one need ask a Doorkeeper.’

YISUN was in agreement.

The master of helms and arms then said:

Existence is not a fabric to be woven, but a sculpture that must be hewn from nothingness. A Key of Kings is a masterpiece of the Craft, and no master creates a peace without leaving their mark. They go to Preem Nand, who is well known for his appreciation of the Art, that they may divine the Key’s origins.

They remained in stillness for 4 more days and then left that place.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-27

EXPOSITIIIIIIOOON

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-28 to 2-29 (CITY OF GOD)

>>FULL SIZE <<

GLORY TO THE DIVINE CORPSE

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-29.5

The Flame Immortal, whether hot or cold, burns eternal

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-30

Hansa was one of the oldest of YISUN’s servants. His bones were old and weary and ground down from the dust of five hundred thousand worlds, and he lived in a black house made from iron nails with his daughter Prim. A cold had settled in his flesh from his conception and his temperament was sometimes quite brittle, yet he was a smooth talker, an excellent patkun player, a worldly smoker, owned several fine wooden tables and a carved bone tea pot; he was fond of his smoking pipe, his sword with a hilt of white ash, and his multiversal flame manipulator was well oiled, he was not fond of talk shows, politicians or smokeless fires. He had a peculiar belief that causal reality was a particularly harsh joke, and luck could shatter with a slight finger push. For this he was widely considered the wisest of YIS’ black sons.

Lord Hansa is never pictured without his smoking pipe, his legs must always be crossed or he must be reclining in his old age, he has 3 arms and only one head. His skin must always be blue. His third arm often holds his black lacquer sword sheath. He rules the elderly, the reticent and doubting. His number is 33.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-31

Prim and the Mendicant Knight

Prim was Hansa’s daughter. She lived with her father in seclusion in their black house made of iron nails, where she packed his pipe and attended to his meals, tended the hearth, and swept the floor, which was constantly filled with the dust of twenty thousand universes. Her father had many visitors that stumbled often drunkenly and usually brazenly across the black threshold of his high hall, wisdom seekers and old friends, pilgrims and warriors clad in brass, those that had come to seek her father’s counsel or those that had come seeking revenge. She was an average cook, and she was besides pale and spare. The skin on her knuckles was constantly raw from the harsh work of caring for her father, but there was no finer daughter, and she was a comely maid of radiant and humble visage.

One day, a tall pilgrim swathed in the red of a Mendicant Knight appeared at the threshold of the black house of iron nails and inquired within. Prim, who was a well-versed daughter, attended to the stranger and brought him into her father’s hall and served him with liquor and dark bread, as was the custom.

“Stranger,” said she, with a practiced modesty, “I’m afraid you shall wait here for longer than is tolerable. My father is abroad advising the great lords of infinity and will not return until nightfall. If you return again on the morrow, I’m certain my father will receive you well.”

To this, the tall pilgrim gave a peculiar smile, and threw back his crimson greatcloak. Prim gave a small gasp, for there stood a shockingly handsome man, tall, golden haired, and with a strong leg, a broad shoulder, gentle eyes that radiated a fair warmth and a beautiful white smile.

“Fair lady,” spoke the Mendicant Knight, “I have not come for your father. I have come for you! In my travels, I was regaled by many pilgrims of the story of the house of your esteemed father, and the rare and radiant beauty that dwelt within. At first I did not believe it, but the tales became more and more vivid, as much so that I made it my life’s quest to seek you out and confirm your beauty for myself. I have taken great pains to travel here, and now I see it is more than I could have imagined!” He gave a deep and sonorous laugh, and kneeling, took Prim’s roughened hand in a gentle grip and kissed it softly. “Fairest of fairs,” said he imploringly, “will you not leave your father’s house and come with me?”

Prim was deeply moved, for she had long fantasized at leaving her father’s house and making her way in the world. The beautiful stranger moved with an incredible purpose that she found thrilling and invigorating. However, her father had warned her against the company of strange men. There was no finer daughter, and her duty quickly rose up in her mind to eclipse all her golden dreams of escape. She cast her eyes downward and let out a thin sigh.

“Alas beautiful stranger,” said she, “your words move me, but I must still sweep my father’s floor, make stock of my father’s house, and cook my father’s dinner.”

The Mendicant Knight seemed perplexed, but his smile grew wider. “The tales of your dedication to your father are widely known,” said he, “and I had made preparations for just this!” Prim was intrigued, and her heart fluttered and she sat and leaned as the stranger pulled a long, blindingly white feather from his greatcloak.

“Behold!” the pilgrim said, “A feather plucked from the Screaming Roc, the interstellar scourge of thirty worlds! After hearing of your beauty, I made great pains to assemble a company to seek about the beast and engage it in mortal combat. Ah, if only you could have seen it! The battle raged for a week and a day, and its fires scoured the stars end to end.”

The Mendicant Knight flashed his white smile, and with a single motion he whipped the feather across the house made of iron, and there was a great sound like the tearing of space and the hollowness of wind through an old stone, and suddenly there was a great hurricane throughout the house, which lifted every last mote of dust and grime, and decay that had been trekked through over the years, even those that Prim had missed, and carried them out the door of that great house and into the void in one rushing instant. Prim was delighted, and her heart swelled with wonder.

“Now will you come with me, and ride the Roc, as I did, and join me in my tender love for you?” said the Mendicant Knight, stowing his feather with a flourish, and bowing deeply and mysteriously.

“Of course I would,” said Prim plaintively, with her voice full of wonder and longing, “but I must still take account of my father’s house, for his time and temper are most valuable!”

There was a slight flash of annoyance across the Mendicant Knight’s youthful and shining face, but he snorted in defiance and laughed it away. “I knew, of course, that your father was an esteemed man of accurate and some would say, miserly account.” He winked.

“Therefore, I took great pains to travel to the Interlocking worlds and consulted with the grand artificer there, who bade me complete seven times seven tasks for him in seven times seven days, which I did, all in hope of your love. And after I completed those tasks with peerless achievement, he awarded me with this!”

From his greatcloak the Mendicant Knight produced a shining silver case, and when he snapped it open Prim gave an even louder gasp, for she saw it was a Quantum Perfection Engine, the likes of which were seldom seen across all the Wheel. With a hum of its silver limbs, the engine froze causal reality and counted all up states and down states and side states and thus calculated the exact quantity of everything inside the black house of iron nails before Prim could even draw a breath, blink an eyelid, or think one tenth of a thought.  In excitement, Prim leaned over the humming engine, and saw that it had counted every eyelash on her face, even the possible ones that had never existed.

“Come with me, dear Prim, and we will see these wonders and more. I will build you a better house, a golden one of glass and music, and even the grand artificers will be aflame with jealousy!” said the Mendicant Knight, imploringly. His beautiful face was filled with genuine longing and Prim felt the radiance of love and warmth that was there. But still, the shackles of her duty to her father bound her.

“Oh beautiful pilgrim,” said she with terrible longing to escape with this beautiful man, ” I would, but my father’s dinner still needs cooking, and without food in his stomach after his travel, I fear he will be taken dreadfully ill!”

“Are you your father’s daughter or his maidservant?” said the pilgrim quite rudely, but Prim forgave him for she could see the desperation of his love, and her father had taught her to hold her judgement in all things. There was no finer daughter. “Forget your father’s dinner! I have worlds to show you! Come and be my wife and let me languish in your radiant beauty forever!”

Prim was quite desperate. “Oh stranger, if only I could, but the needs of my father are like a black chain around my heart!” said she, grasping him by the arms. His flesh was firm and steady and warm.

“Come with me,” said he after a moment, his voice quavering, almost wheedling, and somewhat impatient, “but for an hour. There is plenty time yet to cook your father’s dinner. Step outside and let me show you the stars! You are not your father’s slave, forget him but for a moment and relish this time with me!” His face burned with intention and he quivered with anticipation of her answer, watching her thin white lips.

Prim was fearful for she seldom set foot outside her father’s house, for there was no finer daughter, but the allure of the beautiful knight and the world of color and sound outside her father’s dank iron house proved too much.

“Oh, let me come!” said she with an exasperated and thrilled air, and the stranger let out a mighty sigh. Donning her vela and pouch, she met the pilgrim in her hall. Before she crossed the threshold, she stopped, for she had forgotten something dear to her. “Let me retrieve my greatknife,” said she, surprised at her carelessness, “how thoughtless of me!” For her father had warned her about leaving the house, and though those iron chains around her heart still stung, there was no finer daughter.

“No need!” the Mendicant Knight said tersely, and then relaxed and gave a broad smile. “I’ll protect you.” He stepped out of the threshold of Prim’s iron house with a flourish, his soft and supple boots making small and beautiful sounds. Prim’s heart was bursting with love and she rushed to join him, letting out a laugh like clear bells from her small, pale, and wiry body.

No sooner had Prim, daughter of Hansa, stepped out of her father’s house than the Mendicant Knight’s beautiful face turned ugly and he leapt upon Prim’s small and frail form, laughing in his deep, sonorous voice. Prim laughed as though she would share in some kind of merriment, and then he ripped off her fine vela and tore it and let it fall on the hard earth and she instantly knew she had been fooled and his intent had been to dominate, enslave, and ravish her all along. Her father’s words rang in her head and iron chains in her heart were like a lifeline she had carelessly cast aside. Hot tears sprang to her eyes as she cried out.

“What an empty girl! What a pretty, perfectly beautiful, empty headed girl!,” gasped the knight, roaring with laughter with his ugly face and tearing at her clothing, breast, and sex like an animal. “As soon as I heard of you, I knew I would have to take great pains to claim that beauty for myself and no one else, and pluck you from your miserly father. Now you’re mine, mine mine!” howled he in triumph, his fingers ripping at her pale flesh.

The knight had forgotten, however, that Prim had sat in attendance at the tales of fifty thousand travelers, had served black bread and alcohol to more men of staggering power than the knight would see in his entire life, had learned secrets whispered around a dying hearth fire and diligently listened to her father’s instructions on the secret ways of annihilation, for there was no finer daughter.

Prim had been taught many ways of dismantling a man by the masters passing through her father’s house and did so with a single strike in the way of Pattram Sword Hand. All the vital fluids passed from the Knight’s body in a violent flash from the terrible violence Prim inflicted upon him and his body was torn apart by Universal Division and was scattered to thirty places.

Prim wiped the tears from her eyes and washed her bloodstained clothes and took up her torn Vela and mended it, and she felt a little better. She buried the greatcloak of that knight and gathered the torn pieces of his body and cremated him properly, and then felt a little better. After that, she indulged in a fragant bath, and she felt a little better, and by the time she had cooked dinner, she was at peace and awaited her father and did not recount the story to him for some time.

She did eventually leave that house, but only after her father died. There was no finer daughter.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-32

CITY ORDINANCE 335999

DS 20313, SUBSECTION 33

ALL PERSONS HAVING EXPIRED OF LIFE, HAVING BEING DRAINED OF VITAL ANIMUS, OR NO LONGER POSSESSING AN ATUM (BEING A BODY) MAY NOT

1. PANHANDLE

2. SLEEP IN PUBLIC SPACES

3. ENGAGE IN LOUD ACTIVITY AFTER 10PM IN PUBLIC SPACES

4. TRAVEL WITHOUT PROPER AUTHENTICATION

5. REMOVE BODY PARTS SO AS TO DISTRESS PASSERBY OR OTHERWISE ENGAGE IN UNPRODUCTIVE MISCHIEF

IN EFFECT: DS 2000 (see section 30044 for more detail)

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-33

Welcome to Hell.

I won’t make a habit of updating pages like these, but if I disappear for 2 weeks like I did with this page and the Throne page, it might be because I’m working on something like this.

There are 100+ individual figures here, see if you can find them all! Also guess who is Preem Nand. It’s really hard.

Also, spot the main character of Jake Wyatt’s sweet comic Necropolis in there!

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-34

Who might this be? Her last name happens to be ‘Murder the Gods and Topple Their Thrones’, but we are uncertain of her first name. Perhaps you can elucidate us?

In the meanwhile, a prayer of the Mendicant Knights:

————————–

VM ASRA, VM ITTM

YISUN PATTM ATTRA AM

AUN VS UTTR

AUN VS YA

YTTR AM!

ATOMUS UNSM

VM ITTR A VSK PRET

YISUN ATUN!

To the sky

To the other-side that is not sky

YISUN is the Universal Lord

Of nothing he was

And nothing he is now

What a paradox!

We must constantly seek salvation and perfection through division.

Seek heaven through violence.

Praise YISUN!

– 3rd Middle Hym, transcribed from the Song of Maybe, transcribed from UM ( sometimes lengthened in English to Universal Metaconstant) into English.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 2-35

Meet Preem Nand,  a demigod and mammal afficionado.

KSBD will go on a quick break next week and possibly the week after for holidays/building up a backlog! More updates in the blog ASAP.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Prim Leaves Her Father’s House

Prim Leaves her Father’s House

From the Song of Maybe

There came a time when Lord Hansa entered the hollow and singing hall of the multicolored Akaroth, for lunisnight celebrations. There was a great feast there for a fortnight or more, and there, caught in a heated philosophical fugue with Akaroth, Lord Hansa in anger committed the  violation of letting his pipe smoke rise and befoul the all-wind that permeated that house and nourished the ways of the void. Fueled by wine, Akaroth was driven into such a drunken rage by this insult that he harnessed fifty winds to his will and at once slew Hansa with a single stroke of his war fan and felt little regret at the time. Later, in grief, he did heavy penance for this act, for he slew a widely respected man, but all agreed that Lord Hansa had committed a grievous offense.

When Akaroth’s archons learned of this offense, they snatched up the cooling body of Lord Hansa and rode the void to his estate, and there they slew his servants in the multitude and cleft the skulls of his retainers and set fire and lightning upon the land. They tore apart the house of iron nails that stood on that land and within found Hansa’s virginal and radiant daughter Prim, who was preparing her father’s supper, as she did every night. “Look,” said Thunder Cleaves Stone, who was chief in majesty among the retainers of Akaroth, “here is that maid or daughter which he makes a slave. How piteous and crawling a thing!” They fell upon Prim and shaved her beautiful locks and in insult demanded black bread and liquor for hospitality, which she could not fulfill. “Dog!” said they, “and daughter of a dog, live a dog’s life!”, and threw they before her her father’s mangled corpse and left her raw with their laughter in the scoured and smoking ruin of her father’s estate. Later Akaroth learned of their conduct and was greatly enraged for Hansa had been a great wise man, and he had the Archons tied to a flensing tree which stretched the seven corners of the multiverse and there flayed them with lashes of lightning as they had flayed the house of Hansa, and all agreed this was just.

Prim was despondent but did not cry for there was no finer daughter. She took up her cloak and vela and great knife, and felt a little better, and she smeared the ashes of her father’s house on her face and body as was the custom, and she felt a little better, and she wrapped her father’s poor body in a linen shroud and she felt a little better still. She prepared to set upon the road, but she had never left her father’s house, and the thought terrified her, so she plucked a single iron nail from its smoking ruins and pocketed it. So comforted, she slung her father’s corpse over her small back and set off on the road of the Ruling King, which wound seven times through the void and the Wheel, and looked for a place to bury her father.

Soon she came upon a grand field on which the ground quickly became slick with the ruins of men and heaved with the wetness of lives smashed by incredible violence. The earth shook terribly, and carrion birds circled, and a mighty stench filled the air so that she was afraid and gripped her great knife. She came upon a devil there who was perched upon a corpse and gorged upon its eyes. “Look thee craven,” said the devil, “for great lords are doing battle here.”

Indeed, Prim shortly came upon a conflict so brutal that its noise split the earth and heavens both from end to end. The Gods Sivran and Ogam-am were settled in their destroyer aspects and were doing battle with their armies. Great tides of men and horses were dashed aside by their dueling, the ground shuddered and cracked, and the air was thick with the slurry of violence. Prim felt the coldness of fear in her heart, but gripped the iron nail in her pocket, and spoke in her small voice. “Great lords, where may I bury my father?” spoke she, and then again a score of times for her voice was weak and lost easily in the cacophony.

“Who is this ant,” howled Ogam, frothing with rage as he finally noticed her, spouting flame from his navel,”so ugly and ash covered?”

“It is Hansa Primpiyat, that small Prim who you may know, who was the daughter of a great man,” spoke Prim in her small voice, and both Gods ceased their brawling and craned to hear, for she was a piteous thing and they recognized her broken burden as the master Hansa. Prim shrank back, but it was a good question, and both Gods reposed a while to contemplated it, while the blood dripped and smoked from their wounds and their armies continued the slaughter.

“Bury him on the battlefield,” commanded Sivran after a while, “for then he will die a conqueror’s death, which is a righteous death of glory and struggle.”

“Bury him on the battlefield,” roared Ogam, as molten steel dripped from his mouth, “for it is not a weak and womanly death, and his mighty corpse deserves veneration!”

So agreed, both Gods returned to their mortal drama. Prim considered for a moment, and then followed their command, though she was struck more than once by a passing bolt or a hurtling stone, for though the lords’ advice was sound, they were mad with battle lust and thought little of the lives of small things.

Prim returned to the road, and bound her bleeding wounds, and slept, for she was weary, but barely a day had passed when she heard the voice of her father’s corpse rasping. “What a din!” he said, “I can barely sleep for this racket! What terrible excuse for a daughter has interred me in this madhouse!” Prim returned once again to the battlefield with fear and obedience in her heart and though she was struck by hails of bolts and the the gore of the ruins of men, she retrieved her father’s body.

Tired and encrusted with filth, Prim once again set on the road. She trod for many days more, and her fine vela became torn, her dress became ragged, her back ached, and her shoes ripped. Interdimensional winds lashed at her, the ground betrayed her, and she came to hate the very air. Eventually, she came to a place where the road met emptiness and there encountered the angel 7 Sound of Clear Water Through a Grove, which bade her halt. “Traveler,” said the angel in its middle voice, “you look sick and weary. The lady Pravi reposes not far from here. Please pay her a visit.” Prim reluctantly obeyed, for the filth and pain of the road was wearing on her, and strode towards a grove of white glass with swollen feet.

There in a rippling expanse of frozen space the lady Pravi was ensconced on her dais with all her court around her. Her scalp was burnished and oiled, her fingers were very well trained and elegant, her left half was singing a song of love, her right a song of longing, and her cleft form was lovely and sensual. Her court burned fragrant incense and sang accompaniment and bared their breasts to the cool infinity, and indeed it was an awesome sight to behold. Prim was pricked with fear, but she clutched the nail on her pocket and set on.

“What mud spattered vagrant and dirty thing defiles my presence,” spoke the right half of Pravi and the left half made a small gesture of cessation and the music stopped most painfully. “It is I,” spoke Prim in her small voice, “the orphan of Hansa.” Pravi was a poor and abused soul herself, though vain and self-indulgent, and she took pity upon Prim and her grisly burden. Her attendants bound Prim’s feet and layered oils upon them, and sang gently to blunt her pain and found fresh linens for Lord Hansa, though they gave her neither bread nor liquor, for fear of impurity, and did not attend to her wounds. “Great Lady of Pleasure and Enjoyment,” said Prim in her small voice, “where may I bury my father?”

“Bury him in a beautiful field,” said the left half of Pravi, “so he may repose in light and silence and warmth and rest in beauty and peace, for in all things these are good qualities. This is known by me.” And her right half proclaimed that this was good, and she called upon her attendants to oil her silky flesh and bring her fruit and that was that.

Prim considered this for a moment, and then followed her command. When she had done so, she set back upon the road, and lay down to sleep, as she was very tired and in great pain. Not a day had passed however, when she heard the voice of her father’s corpse. “What deafening silence!” it rasped, “What putrid soporific sweetness is this? How insipid and smothering a place to bury such a great man as me! What wasteful  and negligent daughter would do thus to a father?” So, Prim set back to that place, and wore out her boots to shreds, and went back on the road barefoot with her rotting burden.

Exhausted and smeared with grime and ash, Prim traveled for many days, where the road tore at her every minute and blackened her bare feet with blood and calluses. Eventually she was halted by a pair of peregrine knights in the middle of a ten year watch when they came upon her filthy and hobbling figure.

“Halt Yea,” spoke the first knight, “traveler, the road will devour you before long. Over there is YISUN’s speaking hall.”

“A great gathering is there,” spoke the second knight, “pray ye ask for relief or rest, stranger, from those gathered, for ye shall proceed no longer on our watch.”

Prim gripped her knife but she was too weak to fight. She was afraid to enter that hall because she knew her dreadful appearance would surely offend her father’s peers and invite their wrath down upon her. But, she clutched her iron nail, and the assurance therein sent new strength into her cracked and bleeding feet, and she went on.

YISUN’s speaking house was full of light and sound, its feathered arches were gold and russet from the warmth within. As Prim entered, she saw a great assemblage of lords in attendance, some in their speaking forms, some clothed as great animals or birds, some as a heat or pillar of stone, some great dark roiling clouds, some stretched their limbs through quantum states and others reclined, lotus-like, through probability as they made merriment. A great cry set up when Prim came to the threshold for her feet made black marks upon the gilded tiles and the ash and filth caked upon her form befouled the scented air within, and she was so bent with the weight of her father’s corpse that there were almost none who recognized this torn and broken thing. The gods, forgoing custom, made to cast her out, so foul was her appearance, but Het, who was the doorkeeper, was the keenest among them and did not speak roughly to her. “This is the orphan of Hansa, the poor and broken wanderer who was Prim,” she chastised to the gathered, “shame upon your heart of hearts!” She struck the ground with her stave, and the gods were shamed. Still, they were so repulsed by how ugly Prim had grown that they called only their servants to approach her, who bound her feet again, and served her black bread and spirits, and wrapped her face and ragged shorn head in a binding cloth so the gods may hold her in their sight and set her gently upon the proscenium. Thin wine was brought to clear her throat and fresh and golden cloth was brought for the decaying corpse of Hansa.

“Great masters,” croaked she in her small voice, “where may I bury my father? I have searched and searched, and still he will not be at rest. How may I please him?”

“Annihilate his body with fire and free yourself of his burden,” spat weeping Ashma, but Prim could not, for there was no finer daughter.

“Pass him to me, ” spoke bloated Kaon, “so I may bring him to YISUN’s gardens.” But Prim saw his smile of greed and gripped her great knife.

“Set him walking on the road,” said Pedam, tapping his staff in thought, “so he may never tire of his surroundings.” But Prim had grown to hate the road.

There were more.

“Set him in the deep mountains,” bellowed Yam, the high.

“Give him a crown so he may rule the dead,” said noble Payam.

“Make him a coffin of air, so the emptiness may pass through his bones,” said Ovis, fluctuating between five different time states.

“Give him a silver death mask,” said Kami, who tapped upon her ribcage and fingered her string of heads.

“Feed him to my sons so he may live a new life,” said the God of Pigs.

“Make his body into birds,” said Voya, “small birds, so they may pass easily through holes in the universe.”

There were more, and more besides. Prim could not decide on any of these things, and all they did was rip at her heart relentlessly, and the gods grew restless and discontent. The hour grew late, and with relief, the assembly ushered Prim out of the light and warmth of that hall and onto the cruel and jagged road and freezing morning, and Prim went on.

By degrees, Prim grew more and more bent as the corpse of her father grew bloated and swollen. The cloths on her face and feet became soiled, her great knife bent and chipped, and her beautiful vela grew ragged and torn. All the while, the corpse of her father berated her. “What a horrid excuse for a daughter,” it rasped, “I still lie uninterred! How infantile and unaccomplished! My daughter’s life amounts to less than a flea’s! Better she kill herself than allow this shame to rattle my sorry corpse! She should have died in that iron house with me where she belonged!”

After a while, Prim’s feet were fed to the road and became too swollen with blood to walk, and so she crawled like a guttural beast, and all she passed on the road gave her a wide berth and were horror stricken by the stench of death which surrounded her.

Eventually, it was too much for Prim, and she could go no further. Following her father’s last instruction, for there was no finer daughter, she set her feverish mind to one thing – dying in that iron house as her father commanded. With claw like hands, she wrenched that iron nail from her cloak and with all her strength, pounded it into the rough earth of the road. In a flash and with a terrible groan, all around her grew the terrible jagged eaves and beams, the arches and hollows of the iron house of nails. It was just as she had remembered it, even the dinner she had been preparing before the destruction of her father’s estate. Crawling, she unburdened her cargo and dragged her father’s corpse onto his throne, and prepared to expire.

But suddenly, in that moment, a most undaughterly sentiment came over Hansa Primpiyat. She saw eternity stretching before her, a servile eternity, a comfortable, familiar, and putrid eternity, her rotting corpse serving the ruin of her father in that awful, devouring iron house in perfect, decaying, daughterly obedience, forever and ever. And she felt true fear.

She crawled out of that house as soon as her bloody limbs would take her, with terrifying clarity, and hauled herself over its cold black threshold and away from the grip of eternity. But as soon as she did, there was a sound like the closing of a great tomb, or the dropping of a great stone, or the ringing of a deep bell, and a rush and a clap and there was no sign of that iron house any more in all the cosmos. Suddenly, Prim felt the awful stab of ten times the fear she had before, for all she had ever known and cared about was gone forever with that house, and all that remained was that pitiless and hungry stranger called the road, her new master, crueler and more relentless even than her father, and she curled in a sodden ball and cried an awful keening wail that split the heavens and reached even the archons on their flensing tree. Great filthy tears poured from her eyes and nose and her belly was wrenched with terrible spasms of pain and grief.

A pale face came before her and she was abruptly struck from her despair as though by a great hammer. A beautiful stranger had appeared, mild and tall, of milky flesh, spare in figure, but radiant in voice and visage. “I know you,” said the stranger in a small voice, “you are Prim.”

“I was Hansa’s orphan, the slave, Prim,” croaked Prim in response, “and now I am nobody, just a small dirty thing in great emptiness and here I will die.”

“No,” said the stranger, and the clarity and firmness of her voice and smile send a shock through Prim, “you are Prim, and Prim only, and Prim you shall be.” And Prim there realized her tears had made a great pool and she was greeting her own reflection. And she fell into that murky pool and straight away it turned clear as crystal and Prim vomited forth a great black knot from very deep within her, and her body was scoured and lashed by the icy waters of that pool, and great draughts of poisonous filth and despondency were drawn in rushing gasps from her wounds, and her skin was sealed and her soiled trappings were purged and the caked illness and death was ripped away and she rose from that pool fresh and humming. Her back straightened and she scarcely thought on her father’s corpse or the faintest echo of that iron house. The air was quite pleasant and the road which had seemed cruel now seemed to whimper and bend before her, and she stood up and laughed a perfect laugh of dominance, and its sound rang like a bell as the warmth of life steamed within her, and the road stretched on and it was good.

That is how Prim left her father’s house.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Chapter 3

Kill Six Billion Demons will return with chapter 3 AND a consistent Tuesday update schedule starting this coming Tuesday the 14th!

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-36

The king on the throne, alone one day,

Took all the words in his mouth and threw them away,

First came the servants, the first of the seen,

Who built him a house, and kept his hearth clean

Next came the tall men of stone and cold fire,

To seek out all sinners and add to the pyre.

Then came the beloved, the storied and told,

The first to lay claim to the cosmos of old.

Last came the white men of bones teeth and eyes,

Who swallow all truths and spit out only lies.

-Children’s rhyme.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-37

YISUN sat with the Attendants one day in the twentieth palace of Bone and Silver. There was a great feast laid out and YISUN directed all in attendance to forgo the custom. Black bread and spirits were served, salt was cast upon the throats of the repentant.

YISUN’S attendant IMVTTR was fond of violence and skilled in the art of separating men from their wealth and bodies. He had long hungered after the secret name of God as YISUN’s other disciple Aeshma had, but the sorry and torn sight of Aeshma’s pus weeping eyes had dissuaded him. At this feast he attempted through other means to coax some secret and dread knowledge from the universal King.

‘Oh master of masters,’ asked he, as the salt came around, and plucking absent strings upon his glyphic quorric and palming his flayer he spoke a bird into the air which sang a singular song and dissipated.

‘What is the great art known to your royal mind?’ sang the bird.

YISUN smiled in the third way for this question was anticipated for a long time.

‘Lying.’

IMVTTR spent three centuries trying to learn the equivalency of this utterance and resigned to hermitude where he went mad.

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-38

In which we learn the ins and outs of the dreaded Black Speech.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-39

YISUN sat once with his disciple Hansa in YISUN’s second clockwise glass palace. Hansa was one of his most ardent students and a grand questioner of YISUN. Unlike Yisun’s other disciple, Pree Ashma, he had no hunger in his heart for dominion of the universe, but a miserly scrutiny and a heart of iron nails. He was not an aspirant for royalty, and thereby attained it through little effort.

Hansa’s questions were thus:

‘Lord, how must I question space?’

‘With an age, an ant may encircle a giant five million times,’ spoke YISUN.

‘Lord, how then may I question time?’

‘A giant’s stride of a moment takes an ant a week to surpass.’ YISUN spoke and smiled in the 4th way.

Hansa was discontent with this answer and rubbed the stem of his long and worn pipe which he always kept with him and would eventually lead to his annihilation. Since he was royalty, he knew this, and kept it close to him as a reminder of his circular death.

‘Lord, then which should I be, the giant or the ant?’

‘Both,’ spoke YISUN,’ or either, when it suits you. Destroy the grand enemy called ‘I’.’

Hansa contemplated this in silence. Later he would recount this proverb to his daughter.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-40

Kill six billion demons: the only comic where the story happens with or without the protagonist being remotely competent at anything except freaking the hell out!

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-41

(Fixed the wonky art on this page)

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-42

Meet the King of Kings.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-43

Illustrious ruler of all things

Wield your razors, carve the flesh of man

Control, guide and lead us

Into the nightmare of your wishes fulfilled

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-44

What makes a knight?

A shining blade or bloody battered steel?

Let us name the Orders Four and the truth within reveal.

THE GEAS KNIGHT unknown by name, the seeker proud and true,

His endless quest hath rent the stars yet known is he by few,

THE PEREGRINE, whose bell always rings the crack of breaking day,

It’s nameless peal will drive the ceaseless evil from the ways,

THE BLOODY KNIGHT, belligerent, her edge tastes skulls and lives,

The viscera of common men and royalty besides,

THE MENDICANT, the beggar knight, roughly clad and shod,

He lives as though he were a beast, but fights he as a God.

– Children’s Rhyme.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-45

ii. The lie of the iron plum

There was once a king named UN-Payam who sat at the right hand of YISUN’s throne and ruled a palace of burnished gold and fire and dispensed justice in all things. It was let known once that Payam had grown an extraordinary plum – enormous in size, with adamant skin that was burnished as a breastplate and fifty times as hardy. Payam was desirous of a pillow friend of fiery heart and excellent skill with their mouth and let know that whosoever could break the skin of that plum with their teeth he would swear to share his bed with for three nights in whatever disposition they may desire.

Many gods were in attendance at Payam’s hall on the first day, and even more on the second day, but by the third day of this strange contest few remained who had not tested their mettle, for the plum remained implacable and immaculate and turned many away with sore teeth and roiling frustration in their brains. A great cry rose up and YISUN was called forth from the twenty third clockwise palace of carbon where YISUN had been meditating on the point of a thirty acre long spear of crystallized time. In companionship with YISUN was Hansa, who followed along.

“See this Payam!” cried the gods, “He deceives us! He cruelly abuses our lustful hearts!”

YISUN was very fond of plums and immediately grasped the iron plum and took a long, succulent bite, praising its merits to the amazement of all.

“How!” wailed the attended.

“Why, it is a plum of flesh, and quite ripe as well,” said YISUN plainly, and indeed, it was apparent to those gathered that it was the case. The plum was passed around and touched and indeed it was sensual and soft and pliant. Hansa was not so convinced. “It is still a plum of iron,” said he, “there is some trickery here, oh master of masters.”

“Indeed, it is so,” said YISUN, and it was again apparent to those gathered that the flesh of that plum was as hard and impermeable as a fortress. “How can it be so?” said Hansa, “How comes this fickle nature? Plums and the fifty winds are not so alike I think.”

YISUN said, “I told you of this and, believing it, it was so. We are all secret kings of our own tower. In truth, it is whichever you prefer. In truth, there is no plum at all, just as there is no YISUN.  A plum has no shape, form, or color at all, in truth, but these are all things I find pleasing about it. A plum has no taste at all for it has no flesh or substance, but I find its sweetness intoxicating. A plum is a thing that does not exist. But it is my favorite fruit.”

“A pipe is a thing that does exist, and it is my favorite past time,” said Hansa, lacking understanding, and growing in cynicism.

“What a paradox!” said YISUN, smiling, “I shall share my love tenderly with Payam.”

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-46 (MAGUS GATE/KING’S DOOR)

“Let the ruling king always keep a clown about him and on his council, and let the fool babble on what he like, and relentless mock the king and all his grand and royal plans and designs at the idiot’s discretion. For there is no greater councilor than one who will clearly speak truth to folly.”

– “Fifteen ways of ruling”, DE 1559, attributed to Au, the Pankrator of the Yellow City of Vesh.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-47

Hail the tyrant saint, the great bereaver

You will bow before the emperor crowned

-Meshuggah

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-48

And you thought there wouldn’t be a plot arc to this comic.

Story time over.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-49

In which an old man runs into some trouble.

Update: Next page will be up a day late again. You might see some familiar faces (finally incorporating some submissions!)

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-50

First of the reader submissions made it in! See if you can spot them!

iv. The lie of the small light

Hansa was of sound mind and proud soul and only once asked YISUN a conceited question, when he was very old and his bones were set about with the dust and bent with age. It was about his own death.

“Lord,” said Hansa, allowing a doubt to blossom, “What is ending?”

It was said later he regretted this question but none could confirm the suspicion.

“Ending is a small light in a vast cavern growing dim,” said YISUN, plainly, as was the manner.

“When the light goes out, what will happen to the cavern?”

“It and the universe will cease to exist, for how can we see anything without any light, no matter how small?” said YISUN. Hansa was somewhat dismayed, but sensed a lesson, as was the manner.

“Darkness is the natural state of caverns,” said he, vexingly, “if I were a cavern, I would be glad to be rid of the pest of light and exist obstinately anyway!”

“Hansa is observant,” said YISUN.

-PSALMS

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-51

She’s really enjoying those noodles. After all, she paid for them.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-52

“Do you understand the true power of a sovereign? A raw man must kill with his bare hands. The battered warrior, a weapon. The commander, his bellowing voice, the conspirator, a whispered word. But all these pale compared to kingship. A true sovereign need not flex a single muscle in his body, and a hundred men die. A true sovereign may murder without a single impulse, or even intent, sight, breath, or even though of his murder. He is an idiot indifferent to his own violence. He has sublimed the act of obliteration.

That is the meaning of kingship.”

AU VAM, Pankrator of the Yellow City

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 3-53 to 3-54

>>>>FULL SIZE<<<<<<

Suffer no pretenders to the throne

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-55 to 4-56 (CHAPTER 4)

>>>FULL SIZE <<<<

“O! Corpse-gods of chance!

Affix your hooks in our supplicant flesh!

Lead us from the dreaded shoal of margin to the hallowed shores of holy Profit,

and may our ledgers be ocean!”

-Common guild prayer

\*Update\* – The beast has been slain.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-57

“The angels, though sturdy and true to their original purposes and long alloyed to the corrupting influence of infinity through reincarnation, experienced a profound sundering with the Universal War. The Shattering, as it came to be known, broke the long compact the angels had with the races of the omniverse to uphold the Law, and the Law itself was splintered and broken. The oldest and most holy among the warrior monks of the Concordant knights were shattered during the war, not to reincarnate for millenia more, leaving many young angels, still in their vapor or liquid states. Seeing the broken, burning remnants of the Universe, and the subsequent rule of the Seven destroyed what confidence many of them had in protecting reality, and still more came to the conclusion that reality itself was better purged, better purified through bloodshed than left to rot.

Now, the Concordance is a shattered, corrupted remnant of its former self, and rogue angels wander the worlds and the king’s road, selling their extreme skill in the ways of annihilation.

And through the void and the kings road atop steeds of glass and fire ride those terrible steel figures with their spined carapaces – the Holy Thorn Knights.”

– Preem Payapop Pritrum, introduction of 5th Treatise on Aeons – what to expect of the Pact

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-58

“Let us cut God to see if he bleeds!”

-Slogan of the Belligerent Knights

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-59

Pree Aesma was YISUN’s thirty second student, after Hansa died. She was rather small, and unlike the burnished cynicism of Hansa harbored only a brutal ambition and a tendency to fly into rages which reddened and contorted her delicate face. Nevertheless, YISUN found her brash manner somewhat refreshing.

One day, as YISUN and Aesma were skipping stones, Aesma tore at her clothes and ran about quite wildly, then asked YISUN quite brazenly, ‘What is the principle exercise of life, oh father and mother?’

YISUN skipped a stone through fifteen quantum states. It became a small, bright bird, and then a flame. YISUN then said, quite plainly,  ‘Violence. Your selfish ego proclaims sovereign and self-severs from the omnipotent umblical. Your homeostasis offends entropy.’

‘What does that mean, then?’ said Aesma, discontent, not understanding the least what YISUN was saying, stamping her feet.

“Plainly, the only true peace is in unbeing,” said YISUN.

“Well that’s pointless!” said Aesma, fuming.

“Yes,” said YISUN, “It is fantastically boring.”

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-60

The plot thickens

Kill Six Billion Demons » KBSD 4-61

Our first glimpse of the Art in the Kill Six Billion Demons multiverse.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-62

In which Allison discovers something.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-63

Oh killer of men and splitter of fate, cut us the path with your blade, tempered well in the hot breath of the dying

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-64

“He who drinks oceans of blood shall never cease bleeding from the mouth.”

-Proverb of the Concordant Knights

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-65

“From the cracked shell of the angelic concordance sprang a hot and putrid rose, and a thousand thousand wild burning seeds poured into the smoke of the corpse of the universe, and there spread with a terrible incandescence. But along with these wild embers came a greater power – the sleek and awful perfection of the Thorns.”

– Preem Payapop Pritrum, 5th Treatise on Aeons – what to expect of the Pact

Kill Six Billion Demons » KBSD 4-66

Coming soon: Ciocie Insult Generator

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-67

Cio is an excellent mentor.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-68

Release.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-69

Only once was there a question which YISUN hesitated to answer. Strangely enough, it was asked by Aesma, the least wise of their companions. They trode a stony road together, and Aesma’s feet grew hot and sore. She swore and spat, and clutched her feet, and asked YISUN a stupid question.

“Lord!” said she, in roiling frustration, “Before you said there is no such thing as Universal Truth!”

“It was so,” said YISUN.

“Then what is all this! This foolery!” said Aesma, with an exaggerated sweep of her ashen arms, “Isn’t creation itself, the entirety of your own grand work, a self-evident truth? The only self evident truth, in fact!”

“It is not so,” said YISUN, stopping their pace.

“Then what is it?” wailed Aesma, starting to tantrum. This was the question that caused YISUN to hesitate. They meditated on it for a short time only, but Aesma was aghast with wonderment at the power of the question.

“My opinion,” said YISUN, finally.

“Is it a correct opinion?” said Aesma, awestruck.

“Aesma is observant,” said YISUN.

– The Song of Maybe.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-70

“Beware the swordsman who carries no blade.”

-Proverb

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-71

“YISUN was questioned once by their disciples at their speaking house. The questions were the following:

‘What is the ultimate reason for existence?’

To which YISUN replied, ‘Self-deception.’

‘How can a man live in perfect harmony?’

To which YISUN replied, ‘Non-existence.’

‘What is the ultimate result of all action?’

To which YISUN replied, ‘Futility.’

‘How best can we serve your will?’

To which YISUN replied, ‘Kindly ignore my first three answers.’ ”

-Spasm 8

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-72

‘Our lady’s quite a portly one,

But rarely does she eat.

She cracks apart the bones of God,

And sucks off all the meat.’

– Bard’s rhyme

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-73 to 4-74 (Concordance of the Demiurges)

>> Full size <<

KSBD will go on a break until the first week of January.

May you reach concordance.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-75

“I have long suspected the Belligerent Knight’s single minded devotion to Jagganoth as a natural outgrowth of the core tenets of their order. When a core part of your knightly creed includes the phrase ‘If it has a pulse – remove its skull!’, what can you do about a thirty foot immortal monstrosity impervious to physical harm and with complete mastery over space-time?

Worship it, of course.”

Preem Payapop Pritrum – On the New Gods

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-76

“To train with the sword, first master sweeping.

When you have mastered sweeping, you must master the way of drawing water. Once you have learned how to draw water, you must split wood. Once you have split wood, you must learn the arts of finding the fine herbs in the forest, the arts of writing, the arts of paper making, and poetry writing. You must become familiar with the awl and the pen in equal measure. When you have mastered all these things you must master building a house.

Once your house is built, you have no further need for a sword, since it is an ugly piece of metal and its adherents idiots.”

– Meti’s Sword Manual

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-77

“A brain is useful only up until the point when you are faced with your enemy. Then it is useless. The only truly useful thing in this cursed world is will. You must suffuse your worthless body with its terrible heat. You must be so hot that even if your enemy should strike your head off, you shall continue to decapitate ten more men. Your boiling blood must spring forth from your neck and mutilate the survivors!”

-Meti’s sword manual

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-78

Meti’s Sword Manual

Argument

1. Glory to the Divine Corpse, o breaker of infinities

2. I am Meti, of no house but myself. In my 108th year I am surrounded by fools. My compatriots cling obsessively to their destiny, and my only apprentice is an idiot speck of a girl with more talent for eating than skill with the blade. Therefore I have decided to die drowning in the boiling gore of my enemies, of which there are many.

3. My master was the greatest lord general to the king Au Vam, Ryo-ten-Ryam, who first coaxed me into learning the ways of turning men into ghosts. As his interest quickly turned to the wholly uninteresting and most useless parts of my body, I returned the favor and relieved him of his.

4. It is my personal opinion the straight sword is best if you can obtain one, but I also favor the sabre. The spear, stave, or club are peasant’s weapons of which I am wholly unfamiliar and so will not speak on them.

5. Upon meeting me, you might find that my appearance is quite dreadful and unkempt. I have been spat upon by priest, king, and merchant alike. I have no retainers, and possess nothing except a straight sword six hand spans (5 and a half kret) long (this is the proper length). This is because I am Royalty and the undisputed master of the principal art of Cutting. I will fight naked with ten-thousand men.

6. From the age of thirteen I practiced every day with the straight sword. I followed a strict vegetarian regimen, and harsh training of barefoot sprints (five) between cities, squats and breathing exercises (two bells), and sword drills and resistance training (three bells).

7. By the age of sixteen, my body was a steel edifice. I was so often mistaken for a man I began to wear my hair long with no pins and unbind my breasts. I could break stone with my hands with no effort, I could sprint between the Yellow City and the Lunar dominions in a day or less and barely strain my breath. My mastery of the sword complete, I enlisted in the Middle Army’s third legion, where I was widely respected as a swordswoman of incredible power.

8. When it came time to face my first real opponent, the Colossus of Pardos, in my youthful pride and immense skill, I brought all my training and mastery to bear. Scarcely half a day passed before my sword was shattered into thirty pieces, my right leg was almost torn from its socket, and my honed body was broken pathetically in a hundred and forty places. I defeated him by gouging his brains out through his breathing valves. My thumbs, in this case, proved far more useful.

9. At that moment, with my thumbs in his brains, I had a revelation. I had trained far too broadly. Existence and the act of combat are absolutely no different, and the essence of both, the purity of both, is a singular action, which is Cutting Down Your Opponent. You must resolve to train this action. You must become this action. Truly, there is very little else that will serve you as well in this entire cursed world.

10. I hope that by reading this manual, you will be thoroughly encouraged to become a farmer.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 4-79

Long Live the King

Kill Six Billion Demons » KBSD 4-80

Meti’s Sword Manual

Mastering the sword

1. YISUN’s glory is great, and you may know this by two paths, the sanctioned words, and the sanctioned action

2. The sanctioned words are YS ATN VARAMA PRESH. The meaning of these words is YISUN and their attainment is Royalty.

3. The sanctioned action is to Cut.

4. To Cut means division by the blade of Want, that parer of potentials that excises infinities.

5. To train with the sword, first master sweeping. When you have mastered sweeping, you must master the way of drawing water. Once you have learned how to draw water, you must split wood. Once you have split wood, you must learn the arts of finding the fine herbs in the forest, the arts of writing, the arts of paper making, and poetry writing. You must become familiar with the awl and the pen in equal measure. When you have mastered all these things you must master building a house. Once your house is built, you have no further need for a sword, since it is an ugly piece of metal and its adherents idiots.

The 18 Precepts

1. Consider: there is no such thing as a sword.

2. Your stance must be wide. You must not be spare with the fluidity of your wrists or shoulders. You must have grip on the handle that is loose and unstrained. I heard it said you must be tender with your sword grip, as though with a lover. This is patently false. A sword is not your lover. It is a hideous tool for separating men from their vital fluids.

3. Going onwards, you must adjust hands as needed, do not keep the blade close to your body, keep your breathing steady. This is the life cut. You must watch your footwork. Your feet must be controlled whether planted on fire, air, water, or earth in equal measure.

4. Breathing is very important! Is the violent breath of life in you not hot? Exhale! Exult!

5. You must strive for attachment-non-attachment when cutting. Your cut must be sticky and resolute. A weak, listless cut is a despicable thing. But you must also not cling to your action, or its result. Clinging is the great error of men. A man who strikes without thought of his action can cut God.

6. To cut properly, you must continually self-annihilate when cutting. Your hand must become a hand that is cutting, your body a body that is cutting, your mind, a mind that is cutting. You must instantaneously destroy your fake pre-present self. It is a useless hanger on.

7. A brain is useful only up until the point when you are faced with your enemy. Then it is useless. The only truly useful thing in this cursed world is will. You must suffuse your worthless body with its terrible heat. You must be so hot that even if your enemy should strike your head off, you shall continue to decapitate ten more men. Your boiling blood must spring forth from your neck and mutilate the survivors!

8. You must never make ‘multiple’ cuts. Each must be singular in its beauty, no matter how many precede it. You must make your enemies weep with admiration, and likewise should your head be shorn off by such an object of beauty, you must do your best to shed tears of respect.

9. When decapitating an enemy, it is severe impoliteness to use more than one blow.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Aesma and the Three Masters

(Update will come tomorrow and this will move to the blog section, along with part 2!)

 – Aesma and the Three Masters –

(And The Lessons She Never Learned from Them)

There came a time when YISUN and their disciple, Aesma, came to be in YISUN’s speaking house, which was often host to the drunken brawls of the many gods as they engaged in heated, and often bloody debate. The previous night had been no different, and the bronze walls still smoked and glowed with the fury and violence of their words. YISUN, as master of the house, reclined as the servants of that place set about undoing the devastation of the night with tired and practiced ease.

Aesma was small in stature, of raw black skin, many teeth, a large mouth, and a bright red tongue. She nurtured an evil and burning passion for dominion over all things, and thus an ugly hunger constantly ruled her otherwise pretty face. YISUN was extremely fond of her, as it was with all ugly children.

“Master of Masters, King of Kings, Empress of Empresses,” said Aesma greedily, “Who is the most powerful of your servants?”

For this had been the topic of the night before, and none in attendance had been fit to answer it, for each of them loudly proclaimed themselves king over the other. YISUN had declined to make a judgment, as was the manner, so Aesma was surprised when YISUN shook from their reverie.

“Plainly, it is a difficult question,” said YISUN, pondering, “but I would have to say my three Masters of space-time, aesthetic, and ethics.”

“Why they!” said Aesma, fuming.

“They have been my disciples for at least 30 kalpas, they have studied well my teachings, and each is the holder of an absolute and insurmountable truth, “spoke YISUN, gravely, “If you are so discontent you may find them on the road and challenge them if you wish.”

Without a word Aesma rudely snatched up Pedam’s walking stick, which could hop thirty leagues at a time, and Akaroth’s feather cloak, which could ride winds both interstellar and terrestrial, and bashing aside servants in her mad scramble, she leapt to the edge of that house and rode the void to the road of the Ruling King.

– Aesma and the Master of Space-time –

Almost immediately Aesma found the estate of the Master of space-time, a lunar domain of immense proportions. It was incredibly hard to miss the Master, as he was a man thirty stories tall, with skin speckled as a night sky, and in his tangled hair, among his shaggy brow, and scattered in his great knotted beard were a multitude of burning stars. He had served for uncounted centuries as chief architect of the gods after attaining his mastery, and even now was building a mighty dark tower greater than any mountain, and the clangs of his immense silver chisel shivered Aesma’s bones as she approached. But she had little regard for his mighty stature as a furious mischief was in her.

“Ho there! A Godling! Young Aesma is it?” boomed the Master of space-time, and as he turned his sweat drops scattered the earth like mighty boulders.

“I have heard you are the strongest of YISUN’s disciples,” said Aesma viciously, “How can that be true?”

“From whom?” spoke the Master, furrowing his brow.

“From YISUN!” danced Aesma, frustrated.

“Ho!” rumbled the master, and stroked his mustaches. “I suppose it is true then. I have long studied the scope and stretch of YISUN’s work, and through immense effort I have attained knowledge of the shape of all things. Down to the exact nano-angstrom!”

Aesma was disbelieving, but the Master showed her each Planck length of each mountain on his estate. And still she was disbelieving, and he showed her the exact number of grains of dust in the universe, and the number of carbon atoms in her body, and the potential shape and shadow of every animal that breathed, swam, flew, or flashed through quantum states.

But still she was not content, so the Master set down his mighty chisel with a crack and gestured to the wide plain and bade Aesma look, and showed her the way to look. He bade her bring forth her illuminated consciousness, and she did, and the master was humorously surprised, for it was a small, evil thing, a nasty red coal, and he wondered why she was so favored as YISUN’s disciple. But then he brought forth his own mind and it was as a great celestial blaze, and as he cast it on the landscape before him, Aesma saw it warp and shift, the hills like water that flowed from form to form. The sky cracked and ignited and was replaced by fire and light, and darkness swallowed and disgorged the land like a great bulbous blossom. Aesma realized then that the Master had perfect knowledge not only of the precise shape of things, but also all the shapes they would ever have and be.

“I have attained mastery of the ultimate and insurmountable truth of Form. Thus, through my mighty studies I know the exact measure of YISUN’s work, the way it is, and the way it always will be. So my knowledge is all encompassing, and perfection is my breath,” said the Master. “Even small things such as yourself, young Aesma,” he said with a jovial wink.

“What are you building?” said Aesma, with dark intent, as a furious scheme was bubbling to the top of her evil mind.

“My Panopticon,” said the Master of Space-time proudly, and clapped the stone of his construction with a sound that shook the dust from the seven corners of the multiverse, “the ultimate observatory. Though my knowledge is limitless, my sight is regretfully less so. With this I will contemplate all things at once, and I will truly be the highest in the land. I will have no need for mundane struggles once I can contemplate all of infinity!”

“That’s stupid!” said Aesma, and kicked the dark construction, stubbing her delicate toes. Her yelp of pain set the master to chuckling mightily as this poor vicious girl, but then Aesma shot him a ferocious glance and asked a stupid question.

“If you know the shape of everything, what is the shape of the universe!” said she.

The Master scoffed humorously at this precocious question. “Well clearly, I know it from the inside!” he said.

“How can you know the shape of anything if you only look at it from the inside!” snapped Aesma, evilly, and the Master gave a great booming laugh that shook stars from his beard, and as they crashed to the dust in great fiery trails, Aesma had to scamper to dodge them.

“Can a man bend his eyes to look at his own face? What an odd question!” said the Master, “It has no outside shape, little one, and thus it is and will always be so.”

“I’ll take a look and tell you, worm!” spat Aesma, and she tore off her clothes wildly.

“What are you doing?” rumbled the Master, bemusedly, but before he could finish, Aesma had planted her feet and took a great hot breath. Her skin puckered and her chest swelled and her small wicked form grew outwards suddenly to fifteen stories tall. The sudden change disoriented her, and she fell over, denting a mountain. The master chuckled at her idiocy as she huffed and puffed and stumbled about, and went to turn back to his work, but then there was another great breath and Aesma swelled monstrously, to twice the Master’s height.

“Ho! Stop this foolishness!” said the Master, amazed at this idiot girl, but before he could say another word, she took another mighty breath and swelled to ten times the Master’s height. The mountains shuddered and the Master’s great unfinished tower shivered as though struck. Now true worry gripped the Master, and he shouted for Aesma to stop, but her monstrous, straining face grew further away as she grew to a hundred times the Master’s height, and then a thousand, and on the fifth breath the land itself was rent up, and the mountains buckled and warped, and the great stones of the Panopticon were ripped from their foundations in the terrible gale of Aesma’s inhalations. The Master was dumbstruck, for though his illuminated mind was much larger and fiercer than Aesma, he had not glimpsed this destruction. And still Aesma grew a million times, a hundred billion times larger than the Master, and the stars bent and space-time itself warped with her great weight. Finally, it gave way, and Aesma tumbled through and outside creation. The great clap as she ripped through woke the archons on their flensing tree, and the worms that shivered in Hansa’s corpse outside reality, and the plum garden of YISUN’s speaking house was so shaken it bore very little fruit that year.

Had Aesma looked then, she would have glimpsed the entirety of existence and non-existence in its totality, and in viewing it she would have discovered the secret name of God, and avoided her maiming by asking YISUN this question some time later. But at that moment, her hubris and pride at her besting of the Master were the only things on her cramped and evil mind, so she gave it but a glance, and discovered that it was somewhat wheel-shaped.

It was extremely cold outside of existence, and Aesma was quite naked, moreover holding so much air in a form so large was quite painful, so she abruptly and quite mindlessly let it go, and plummeted back through the crack in existence and back to the feet of the Master of Space-time, who was thrown around like a leaf in the great storm of her exhalation.

“Plainly you are not the strongest of YISUN’s disciples!” cackled Aesma, and danced naked and stuck her great red tongue out at the broken and defeated master. “Tell me, as you promised!” implored the Master of space-time, hot tears thundering to the earth like mighty comets, “What is the shape of the universe?”

“It is somewhat wheel-shaped,” said Aesma, which was a completely wrong answer.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Aesma and the Three Masters: Part 2

(Regular update coming a little slow – sorry! The story is not intended to be a substitute and I won’t make a habit of reverting to text posts. It was meant to be more spaced out with several comic updates. Hopefully I can get the last part up and a comic page for you tomorrow!)

Aesma and the Three Masters

-Part 2:Aesma and the Master of Aesthetic-

Aesma left the Master of space-time humiliated and battered and set upon the road again, but the heat of victory very quickly cooled into the smoldering jealousy that was her usual manner, and she struck on.

The estate of the Master of aesthetics was not difficult to find either. It hung suspended like a brightly glowing jewel in the blackness of the void. Aesma was taken aback as she hurtled closer, for it grew quickly in in her vision into an expansive palace the size of a city, whose shining streets and ways were packed to the brim with admirers and followers of unbelievable shapes and sizes. As Aesma stowed Pedam’s walking stick, she could hardly move without being assailed with a riot of color and sound and personage. Sprays of brightly plumed dancers spun in the air and sang in speech, thought, and machine code. The cafes were thick with serious-faced philosophers and wild, frenetic writers from the seven corners of the multiverse burning a hundred thousand tongues into brightly fired glyphs. Thick-armed artists and poet-engineers packed the streets, perched over glowing canvases, crowds of admirers and assistants gathered around them, goggle-eyed and gaping.

Any god or man could a spent an age swallowed in the glorious spectacle, but it merely frustrated Aesma, who rudely cleaved her way through the impossible crowds for three days, scavenging from luminous cafes, and using Pedam’s stave to viciously fend off uncounted party invitations. But finally, she made her way to the center of that palace, where there was a hall the size of a cavern, filled with rich music, celebrants, and docile animals from a thousand stories. As she smacked and wrenched her way through man, beast, and admirer alike, she came upon a large, beautiful pool, and there seated upon the water was the Master of Aesthetic.

Aesma was somewhat taken aback, as the riotous chaos of the Master’s estate had led her to expect the Master’s art to be quite shallow. But the Master herself was an extremely plain looking woman, dressed almost completely naked in a simple wrapping cloth, her skin and eyes a dull white, her head and brow shaved, and Aesma immediately understood the power she was dealing with.

“YISUN tells me you are the strongest of their disciples,” spoke Aesma, striding across the pool like a great ugly, disheveled bird, and seating herself on the water.

“Young Aesma, who has trumped that gigantic clown, the Master of space-time,” said the Master of aesthetic in a perfectly unremarkable voice. “What an odd question. Did you not stay and observe my estate before coming here?” she added.

“I don’t have time for such frivolity when my reputation is on the line!” fumed Aesma,

The Master made a subtle motion and bread and liquor were brought for Aesma, who also loudly demanded flesh.

“It is so,” said the master as they sipped their liquor.

“How so!” said Aesma quickly.

“Though I have sacrificed much, I have attained mastery of the ultimate and insurmountable truth of Art, “the Master said, “No movement of mind, muscle, or voice is unknown to me. I can measure sorrow, or joy, or pain, or love as plainly as the fingers of my hand. I have laid bare the great filaments of color and sound that connect all life in the multiverse, and I may pluck upon them as I please. Perfection is my breath.”

“Nonsense! Any fool can say what Art is!” protested Aesma, chewing. “My face is said to be beautiful to many!” she said, contorting her expression so her face resembled the shy, demure, maid that she never was. The crowd of onlookers gasped, so sudden was the transformation. “But for me,” she said, relaxing her expression into her usual demonic countenance, “It is a hideous face of weakness.”

“Have you not seen my estate, my Palace of Resonance?” said the Master. “It is the ultimate cynosure, my final work. Until the end of days the greatest minds and artists will flock here in hope of drinking of my perfection, but never attain it.”

Aesma conceded that she had not seen the estate.

“Show me your illuminated mind,” commanded the Master in her perfectly normal voice. Aesma did, and the Master was shocked at how writhing and wicked it was. She quickly resolved to give Aesma some tutelage. Motioning for Aesma to follow, she walked out into the city-palace.

Aesma quickly realized that in her hurry to find the Master, she had made a critical oversight. The Palace itself was more than an estate, it was a gallery of monumental proportions, whose architecture thrummed with a harmony that she felt in her bones.

“We will start,” said the Master, “with a work to your liking.”

They stopped at a grand, worn looking theatre. Inside they lingered and ordered drinks while a comedian began a ballad of bawdy poetry. “Of my design,” said the Master, and as the poem progressed, Aesma, though reticent, quickly found herself unable to contain her mirth. By the end, most of the audience was in stitches on the floor, and Aesma’s sides were raked raw from laughing. “A fine work,” conceded Aesma, “but not perfect!”

“An early work,” said the Master slyly, and they progressed to a grand golden dome, where they watched an opera of the Master’s design and ordered increasingly more expensive liquor. At first, Aesma was merely amused by the opera, a simple work about a heroine’s conquest of her fears. But as the work progressed, she found herself increasingly more involved in the plot, which dragged her from emotional high to emotional low, hooked into her throat so tightly that it was raw from screaming from joy and fear. And by the end, she realized that the opera had been written about her, Aesma. It truly was perfection.

“Very well!” conceded Aesma, hoarsely, as they proceeded onwards. By now they had gathered a tail three leagues long of admirers and followers. “But my earlier point still stands,” she continued, gathering her wits, “Aesma has enjoyed your work. But who’s to say she will enjoy the next.”

They went on to observe a humid subterranean dance, a rhythmic, pulsating affair. Aesma found very little pleasure in it, and was about to crown herself victorious, when the Master spoke.

“It is true what you said before,” said the master, “that Art is a matter of perspective. So is reality. The Master of space-time was a fool precisely because he failed to see this. No matter how deep he looked, he could only see with his own eyes, the consummate fool.”

“I have also mastered perspective, “she said, “so I will teach you the way to change your form and the shape of your earthly mind, and the color of my meaning will become known to you.”

They changed their form and bearing to two bearded youths, young men, and it wasn’t long before Aesma felt a stirring in her root and a quickening in her chest. The dance had a perfect effect on her male form.

“Blast you!” she spat.

“You will see nothing is unknown to me,” said the Master, laughing heartily, “Meaning is the essence of existence, and it is a tapestry I weave at my pleasure.”

They spent the rest of the week like that, moving from dance, to art born in light and blood, to song, to music, to performance, to transcendental math, such staggering works as Aesma felt a lifetime pass with each one. Each time they shifted from form to form like the flickering of a candle. Sometimes they were beasts, drinking in the perfection of a fresh kill, sometimes they tuned their ears to trans-dimensional winds. They lived as masochists, as beggars, as kings, as gods, as men, as women, as hermaphrodites, as worms, as stars. The time wicked away like quicksilver, and soon, having gathered a crowd that trailed behind them nearly the length of the palace, they retired to the pool at the center of it all. Aesma near collapsed from exhaustion, and quickly demanded copious liquor to cure her hangover. The Master was wholly unaffected and reclined in the center of her pool in her perfectly plain flesh.

“So you see,” said the Master, “I have mastered Meaning in all its forms and perspectives. My insight is the deepest there is, and so all come to bask in my perfection. That is why I am the strongest of YISUN’s disciples.”

“Now I am sure YISUN keeps you close out of amusement or pity,” continued the Master, “but if you wish to improve your meager talent, I will allow you to present yourself as my student.”

“Die screaming,” croaked Aesma, and the hot fire of jealousy gathered itself within her, and she spat out another stupid question.

“If you understand so deeply, then what is the universal Art?” said Aesma wickedly.

“There is none,” said the Master, untroubled.

“There must be one!” said Aesma, fire rising in her heart, “What’s all this about meaning if there isn’t anything universal about it!”

“I had thought it to be love, or perhaps lovemaking,” said the Master, dismissive, “But of course, universal thinking is shallow, did I not tell you this? Meaning and existence are exercises of self. So it is, and always will be. You should know this, Aesma.”

“Of course there’s one, you smug fop!” spat Aesma, and rage began to bubble up in her boiling mind. “I’ll find it, here!”

“I have little time for the unworthy,” said the Master, and made to call for her servants to cast out Aesma. But before the Master could even extend her littlest finger, Aesma let loose a wild howl and began to tantrum.

“I’ll show you!” she roared, and clothed herself in death. “I’ll find you a universal Art in the ruins of your palace!!” Her tongue lolled, and her eyes weeped blood, and she spat fire and tore out of the pool. She began to rip apart the docile animals there, and their cries of pain brought a hundred martial artists from the crowd, who made to stop her. But Aesma in her destroyer form was a fiendish creature with thirty five arms and three ancillary battle consciousnesses, whose skin was plated like iron and gave off acrid smoke that seared the weak. She beat them bloody and then ran amok in the crowd, breaking and slashing and hurling men and women from fifty thousand worlds to and fro, destroying priceless works of art millennia in the making, and generally making a mess of things.

Her rampage lasted three days and only ceased when the Master herself sallied forth from her pool with thirty five mendicant saints who impaled Aesma on puresilver lances. Her berserk rage finally draining from her body, Aesma conceded.

“Why do you tear up my house, you wretched thing!” said the Master.

“To find the universal Art!” howled Aesma.

“There is no such thing, stupid girl,” said the Master, and Aesma dealt her a single blow across the face. And as the Master was struck, she realized terribly and immediately that Aesma was right. Although Aesma in her blind rage did not realize it, she had spoken with a language understood by all the great men, artists, beasts, philosopher-kings, angels and poets from a million worlds gathered at the Master’s estate.

“The universal art is violence,” said the Master, shocked.

“Aha!” said Aesma in sudden realization.

The master could say nothing.

“I told you!” Aesma cackled, as she was dragged away, and thrown off the shattered and burning Palace into the void.

“That’s awful,” said the Master.

Her body drooped and crumpled, and all the lights in her beautiful glowing palace slowly died as she dragged herself to her pool, which had grown an ugly shade, and wept.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Aesma and the Three Masters, Part 3 and 4

-Aesma and the Three Masters-

(And the Lessons She Didn’t Learn from Them)

PART 3: The Master of ethics

Flush with victory and battle, Aesma took to the road again with extremely little regard for the beautiful community of light and sound she had so violently shattered, and with ignorant glee, she whistled as she rode the void in search of the Master of ethics.

The estate of the Master was easy to find, as it lay atop a shining mountain whose peak was so tall it could be seen from near all creation. Aesma scoffed at such an obstacle and with a mighty stroke of Pedam’s thirty league stave, flung herself to the top. But as she spun up its sides, she saw up its slopes were crawling with grand streams of men, beasts, and demigods. And when she reached the top she beheld a great cacophony, a heaving sea of pilgrims, and rising majestically out of the center was a great shining temple of unbelievable breadth and width, with a peculiar shape that Aesma couldn’t quite make out.

Almost immediately Aesma was smashed to and fro by a mass of bodies of every color, shape, and gender imaginable, and the discordant litany of a thousand tongues nearly deafened her. Irate, she swept the legs out from a broad swathe of pilgrims a kilometer wide with a single swipe of Pedam’s stave, and questioned them  viciously as they crawled about in pain.

“Where is the Master of ethics!” she spat, lashing the prostrate pilgrims as they clutched their bleeding shins. Among them Aesma couldn’t see a single unified creed or dogma. There were bell-ringing pilgrims, and cat-burning pilgrims, and hands-and-feet beating pilgrims (who were crying in joy at the exquisite beating Aesma had dealt them), and many more besides.

“Ask the holy men!” cried the pilgrims, and Aesma saw that sprouting from the mighty temple’s base were an uncounted number of smaller temples, growing like ugly ornamented mushrooms as though to squash the life out of each other. So with the hook of Pedam’s stave, she lifted thirty of them clean off their foundations and shook them vigorously until a number of ruddy, sweating priests fell out.

“Begone demon!” the priests wailed in unison, grasping for various holy symbols, so Aesma gave them a drubbing with her stave.

“Where is the Master of ethics!” she said, picking her nose as she sat upon a holy man’s chest.

“He is the holiest of holies and has hidden himself from the sight of the wicked!” gasped the priest in great pain, for Aesma’s evil body was heavier than iron and hotter than a forge, “and ye shall never learn the secret way to pass unto his ultimate truth!”

So Aesma rapped him in the stones, and resolved to ask a dog, as they were far more reliable than both pilgrims and holy men.

“He is in the temple of 109 chambers,” said the dog, “each holier than the one before, and only the successively more pure of heart may pass through.”

Aesma kicked the dog, and turned to go, but the dog said, “By the law of dogs, you must carry my burden for a single day. And so I grant you my fleas, so I may rest a single night,” and all the fleas of the dog jumped to Aesma and she howled and scratched and struck at the dog, but the law of dogs was exceptionally strong, and so she could do naught but mutter angrily at being tricked as she pressed on.

As Aesma closed in on the temple, she saw that it took the form of an immense lantern, with shining gates for its apertures, and through one of those gates she could gaze all the way through its 109 chambers to a tiny pinprick of light.

She sprang through the first gate, but was immediately set upon by a great flock of ten thousand multicolored priests, who slammed the second gate shut before her.

“You may progress no further,” shrieked the priests as they flapped about her, “until you have performed the sacred rituals and proven yourself worthy!”

“What are they?” grumbled Aesma, beating priests off her ankles. But the ten thousand priests gave ten thousand answers. Some of them claimed Aesma needed to cleanse the ghosts of her past lives, others claimed she must douse herself in virgin’s blood, others still required her to stick pins through every hand length of her body. Soon the priests’ disagreement turned to rage and they set upon each other, and still would not let Aesma pass. But Aesma had little time for this foolishness, so she plucked ten-thousand feathers from Akaroth’s cloak, and breathed fire into them, and each became a perfect copy of her evil body, which performed the rituals requested with terrifying quickness, and dissolved into ash. Bested, the battered priests unlocked the gate, and Aesma leapt through into the next chamber.

Immediately, Aesma was set upon by a great crowd of nine thousand shaven monks, all requesting she chant a different mantra to pass, each proclaiming the other charlatan. And as before, spitting curses, she plucked nine-thousand feathers from Akaroth’s cloak, and up sprung her simulacra, and she continued.

So it progressed, from monks, to hierophants, to bearded sages, to ten-thousand year old yogis. And eventually Aesma ran out of feathers in that great cloak, and it was scattered to nothing, so she began to use the threads of her clothing. And when her clothing was likewise spent, she turned to hairs on her body. And when she was plucked completely hairless, she turned to eyelashes.

Finally, Aesma came to the 107th chamber. The walls were silver, and inside were ten beautiful, glowing youths, wearing only transcendental smiles and silence. Yet still they could not agree, and they motioned to ten scrolls, where ten ancient koans were written, and each bade her read a different one. But Aesma, raw, naked, itching from the fleas that still clung to her skin, was quite irate, and instead dealt them a wicked lashing with Pedam’s stave and dove into the next room before they could recover.

In the 108th chamber, the walls were gold, and there were five wise and august elders seated on five golden thrones, wielding scepters of command, with tongues of brass and curled beards of iron. Behind each elder was a different golden door to pass through to the final chamber.

“Out with ye, devil!” proclaimed the elders in solemn voice, “never shall thou learn the secret way into the final chamber, for thy soul is black as midnight!”

“I am Aesma the Destroyer, you old fools! Your reward for your impudence is my greatstaff,” snapped Aesma, thoroughly sick of this whole scenario, and swung Pedam’s walking stick and caved the whole wall in, though with a mighty flash the famous stave shattered into 50 smoldering pieces, which were later gathered by the pilgrims fleeing that place and still burn to this day.

So plucked raw, and clad only in fleas, Aesma leapt into the final chamber, which was full of light and sweet music.

Aesma knew immediately that the Master of ethics was the most powerful of the three Masters, and truly the holiest of holies. They were a hermaphrodite of pure, blazing, gold-brown skin, with long, glossy black hair, a perfect smile, and crowned with flowers and fire. They sat hovering in the golden air ringed with nineteen virginal attendant demigods who swooned and sang choruses of praise.

Aesma was struck with wonderment, for the great light of Truth emanated from the 109th chamber, and she was surprised she had not seen it before. The pulsing light scoured her blackened mind, and she felt strong and sudden trepidation.

The Master of ethics did not befoul their perfect lips with air, but instead  smiled in five ways as they spoke with a mind-voice that rung with eons.

“I have heard of your defeat of the the other Masters,” they said, intoning gloriously and knowingly. It is true that I am the strongest of YISUN’s disciples.”

Aesma scrabbled against the great light in that room, and sucked her itching hands.

“How so?” said she.

“The Master of space-time was mighty, but his gaze was singular. The Master of aesthetics had a broader gaze, but still she looked outwards. These were their fatal flaws. I have looked inward,” said the Master of ethics, making a small gesture of humility and song, and their virgin attendants gasped in wonderment. “It is only through mastery of the internal self that we may master the external self. Now all who gaze upon my temple may learn the righteous way.”

Aesma tremored at that, for the light of that great temple seemed very powerful indeed.

“I have studied YISUN’s teachings,” the Master continued, “and every holy text produced by man or mind besides. I have aligned my sight and every aspect of my being away from violence and towards gloriousness and the moral right of all consciousness. Therefore I have mastered the ultimate and insurmountable truth of Truth itself, and perfection is my breath.”

“Aesma, I pity you, for though you wallow in it, I have excised myself from struggle. I have never committed an act of violence in my life,” said the Master sadly, and all their attendants wept.

“Nonsense!” spat Aesma, incredulous.

“No, it’s true,” the Master said, casting their infinite eyes downwards, “I was born immaculately from the lotus that sprang from YISUN’s right eye, and so caused no mother pain. From birth I had the knowledge of a full grown man or woman, and so taught myself to regulate the flow of my consciousness to never require food or drink.”

Aesma was disbelieving, as the Master continued.

“I was raised by the three legendary beasts that hold up the throne of YISUN. From the Roc, I learned discipline of language, to never harm another by words. From the Behemoth, discipline of body, to perfect my spirit and flesh and never raise hand to man or beast. And from the Leviathan, I learned discipline of mind, to purge all evil thoughts before they are formed.”

Though cowed and squinting, Aesma was incredibly irritated by the singing and swooning of the Master’s virginal entourage, and her bites itched hotly, and so she asked yet another stupid question.

“Then why are you still here, you self-righteous twit? If you’re so holy, isn’t it selfish of you to stick around?” she hissed, enraged at the purity of this luminous being.

“Truly, I wish to sublime,” said the deity, and their attendants bowed their heads in pity, “but the single selfishness I allow myself is to exist. I alone am the sustainer of this great light of Truth that shines here in this temple, by which men may learn enlightenment, the beacon that can be seen from all corners of the universe! Without my teaching, a great darkness would surely wash over creation.”

At this Aesma was confused, for the light had seemed quite small when she stood outside the temple, and she had barely perceived it until now. But still, she could find no fault with the Master’s words, and fumed and gnashed her teeth in defeat.

“Why do you hold so much pain in your heart, Aesma?” spoke the Master gently. “Open your illuminated mind to me, so I may help you align yourself with righteousness.”

Aesma obeyed, and the Master beheld the painful red embers of Aesma’s mind, and saw how twisted and writhing it was. Such was the intense pity in their perfect breast at this wretched sight that they wept tears of pure crystal, and they took a single golden step earthwards, reaching out towards Aesma.

But at that precise moment, exactly a day had passed, and the fleas on Aesma’s body, as bound by the law of dogs, ended their tenancy in all directions at once. And as the Master’s perfect and supple foot touched the ground,  in their great pity and distraction, they quite carelessly stepped upon a single flea and crushed the life out of it.

Immediately the nineteen attendants of the Master screamed and pointed and laughed at the Master’s momentary transgression Their faces became ugly with shock and horror, and they danced about, wailing. The Master was stunned by their careless behavior and thoughtless actions at the Master’s minor breach of self, and cast their great, shining mind upon them, and was struck dumb, for though the attendants had spent their infinite lives at the Master’s side, the Master could see that not a fraction of the great light of Truth had penetrated their souls, and their minds still teemed with impurity.

With great consternation, the Master flew rapidly to the 108th chamber of the great temple, where the five august elders lay battered, and saw that not a single scrap of the great light of Truth had penetrated this room at all. So they strode with increasing concern to the 107th chamber, where the ten youths lay groaning, and saw that not one iota of the great light of Truth had even entered through even the door way.

And so the Master strode, from chamber to chamber, hurtling through each shimmering gate in horror, and each time the already dim light of Truth grew increasingly dimmer. And finally the Master exited the temple, and saw the heaving discord outside, and cast out their mind with an awesome heat and glorious fire that nearly flattened the ground itself. But as they stood, golden, with molten sweat dripping off their perfect form, they could not detect one speck the great light of Truth anywhere outside that temple in the entirety of creation.

“How could this be?” gasped the Master, but as they turned, they saw that, although already hardly visible, the light in the temple was sputtering and dying. Planting their golden feet, the Master hooked into their transcendent consciousnesses  and swallowed the stars, and directed their immense and dread will towards the light.

But no matter how hard they burned with glorious incandescent power, the light grew dimmer, and dimmer, and as it flickered, a great murmur went up amongst those inside and outside the temple.

“The light in the temple is dying!” murmured the cat-burning pilgrims, squinting.

“Do you see a light, dying there?” said the bell ringing pilgrims, peering into the temple.

“What light?” said the hand-and-foot-beating pilgrims, straining to see.

Eventually there was agreement that there hadn’t really been a light there in the first place, and with that, what little remained of it finally sputtered and vanished as the temple went completely dark. A great ripple went out through the heaving sea of priests and pilgrims, and ever so slowly, they began to drain out of the temple and off the mountain in great tides, and then streams, and then rivulets.

Finally the nineteen virginal attendants ran shrieking past the straining Master, holding up their robes, and pattered their way down the rocks. A dog came close, and sat, and scratched its haunches.

Then, at the very last, Aesma stumbled out of the blackened temple, goggling in disbelief.

“You!” gaped the Master, “What have you done?”

“Truly, nothing!” protested Aesma, and the Master realized then that they had never sustained the great light of Truth at all, but it had been a false light, fed not by the purity of a single great consciousness blazing outward, but by the gazes of a million small and ignorant minds gazing inward.

With this terrible realization, the Master sat down heavily in the dust, and for the very first time felt a black twinge of hatred.

“You!” sputtered the Master again.

Aesma didn’t learn this lesson at all, as she was far too hot, itchy, and confused to focus on such trivial things as her enlightenment. She kicked the dog once, and returned its fleas, for which the dog was grateful. Then, scratching her buttocks, she rode the void stark naked.

-Aesma and the Three Masters-

(And the Lessons She Never Learned from Them)

PART 4: Aesma in the Speaking House

Though Aesma as she traveled was far too ignorant to realize it, a great note of discord had been struck and now rang with terrible fury across the universe. The estates of the three great Masters were shattered and wasted, and, disgraced, they gathered up what few followers they could and their instruments of debate and war, and rode at once to YISUN’s speaking house to vent their anger.

“Your oafish disciple Pree Aesma has wrecked my Panopticon,” bellowed the Master of space-time.

“That hideous worm burned my Palace,” sulked the Master of aesthetic, whose skin and clothing had turned the color of bruises, and knotted her lank hair.

“She has scattered my students, and darkened my temple,” wept the Master of ethics, “who now will teach the truth of your Word?”

At that moment, Aesma returned to the hall, quite oblivious, and a great wail went up amongst those assembled. YISUN motioned for silence and said, “I told Aesma you were my strongest disciples. This was a lie.”

The three Masters were taken aback by this assertion, and loudly protested, but YISUN continued.

“You, the Master of space-time, are exceptionally strong indeed. But you limit yourself by the shape of what is, and not by the shape you want it to be.”

“You, the Master of aesthetic, are strong as well, but by seeing only beauty you blind yourself.”

“And you,” YISUN said, to the weeping Master of ethics, “are of purest mind and heart, but by looking only inwardly, can not perceive external illusion.”

“Who is the strongest, then?” clamored the Master of space-time, banging his great chisel with a crash that shook the speaking house, “Let me know them and I will take their measure!” The others echoed the same, and the hall was soon filled with imploring cries.

“Plainly, I will tell you,” said YISUN, “it is Pree Aesma.”

“What!” spat Aesma, furious, and the others echoed her sentiment.

“The three of you were content with your mastery, but Aesma is not,” said YISUN.

“But she is an idiot, and a loathsome schemer!” wailed the Master of aesthetic.

“This is true,” said YISUN fondly, “but she carries with her the most powerful mastery, which is the hunger of desire. She is the Master of want.”

The three Masters considered this statement, as there was a lesson in it, and as they were each exceptionally wise, they realized its power, and one by one they slunk away to their ruined estates.

“What three lessons did you learn, Aesma?” asked YISUN after they had left.

“The universe is somewhat wheel-shaped!” said Aesma, proud.

“Surely, but only from one angle,” said YISUN, amused.

“The universal art is violence!” continued Aesma, hotly.

“Truly, but the second and far greater is lying,” said YISUN.

“The Truth is dependent on those who uphold it!” she finished, stamping her feet.

“There is no such thing as Truth,” said YISUN, “rely on lies instead. They are far more consistent.”

“Why, Lord?” sputtered Aesma.

“Because we constantly strive to uphold them.”

“What is your meaning, oh lord of lords, oh queen of queens!” growled Aesma,  gnashing her white teeth. “You sent me on this fool’s errand!”

“You are a liar, and you have a mind of boiling wicked schemes,” said YISUN, “and for this you are my favored daughter. You alone among my disciples struggle.”

“Struggle, Lord?” said Aesma, trying to catch some meaning.

“Struggle is all there is,” said YISUN, “want and struggle are the twin essences of existence, and to rest is death. You are a mercurial fighter, quick of finger, you hate stagnation and thirst terribly for power. You accept the world not as it is but  seek greater shapes beyond, and strive fiercely to carve it to your will with the dread instruments of hunger. For this you are my strongest disciple.”

“I still don’t understand,” fumed Aesma, frustrated.

“Perfect,” said YISUN.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 5-81

Meti’s Sword Manual

The 18 Precepts

10. A man who finds pleasure in the result of cutting is the most hateful, crawling creature there is. A man who finds pleasure in the act of cutting is an artisan.

11. Man always strives to cut man. Therefore he who draws his sword the fastest is the survivor. To pre-empt this, you must live, eat, and shit as a person who has their sword drawn. It doesn’t matter whether your blade, in actuality, is always out of its sheathe, though you will look like an idiot if it is.

12. Consider: The undefeated swordsman must be exceptionally poor.

13. The weak swordsman reserves his sword strokes. He clings excessively to his blade. His footwork is unsteady. His grip is too hard and he is afraid to crack the earth with his step. He has a shallow and wandering gaze, his tongue is sluggish and pale. He refuses to exhale the hot breath of the Flame Immortal.

14. The weak swordsman clings to victory. He thinks of his life, his obligations, the outcome of the battle, his hatred for his opponent, his training, his pride in his mastery. By doing so, he is an imperfect vessel for the terrible fires of Will. He will surely crack. He will not laugh uproariously if he is cleft in two by his opponent’s blade. When his sword is shattered, his hands will be too reserved to tear his enemies’ flesh.

15. The weak swordsman strikes his enemy down and thinks his task done. He relishes in victory. He casts away his sword and returns to his lover. Little does he know his single cut will encircle the world five times and strike him down fifty-fold.

16. The weak swordsman clings to his instrument. It is better you have a sword, but death must lie under your fingernails, if need be. Learn death with your elbows, death with your knees, and death with your thumbs and fingertips. It is said death with the tongue is useful, but I find words too soft an instrument to smash a man’s skull.

17. In manners of terrain, you must learn to cut yourself from it. You must cut even your footprints from it, if need be. Have complete awareness of each crawling thing and each precious flower, each blade of sweet grass and each clod of bitter earth, each beating heart and each being that thrums with love, hope, and admiration. Only then are you qualified to be their annihilator.

18. Excess heat and excess coldness are undesirable. Learn to read the weather.

Closing

1. It is said the greatest warrior-kings may sublime violence and forget all they learn about the sword. This is true. But the only true path to kingship lies through regicide.

2. Moreover, only the worst kind of idiot strives to be king.

3. My extreme hope is that some measure of wisdom will penetrate the thick skull of my apprentice. If not, may reading this manual demonstrate your powerful disinterest in it, and may its true value die with me.

4. Reach heaven by violence.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 5-82

“The necessity of communication across vast swathes of multidimensional space has gouged a deep and persistent need for the consumption of devil flesh. As useful as it is, the whole hideous process is prohibitively messy. Why, myself once spent a week passing a small blue devil and afterwards was only able to speak Goblin for my time spent straining and sweating in my bunk. It is far wiser to do away with the whole process and hire a Tellan or guilder, and save yourself the potential disfigurement.”

-Preem Payapop Pritram, foreword to Seat of the Gods

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 5-83

Wherein the clever (or observant) will ascertain a terrible secret about our heroine.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 5-84

Inquisition

Quick edit without disrupting the contest post below – This week’s update will be a little late (3/19/15)

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 5-85

“It is a fool that mistakes a princess for a weakling, for she carries the tower in her heart, and upon that chthonic root dark and terrible edifices may grow.”

-Au Vam

(Sorry for the placeholder delayed coloring this week, I’m finishing up

A: The Japanese School Year

B: My anthology piece for New World, which you should all check out

Regularly scheduled color should return later this weekend)

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 5-86

“Dread those with the terrible star on their brow, for they are my kin. They trade in flesh, smoke, and star-knowledge. Their reins of power are made of coursing flame, and their chariot wheels trample the world in any direction they wish. When you see them you will know there are many ways to fill a man with death, and the walls of the world will feel thin to you indeed.”

-Au Vam, Pankrator of Vesh, ruler of the Yellow City

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 5-87

“Pour me a little more, and gather thee chopwise, and I’ll tell the the tale of Koss and the Flames.

It’s said the race of Men was created because of a strained back. Gob thee not! I’ll tell thee shortly how it came to be.

The lord Koss was the caretaker of heaven in the days when YS-Pravi was split in two by her lovers, and in the war that followed his cramped and hot workshop was filled to the brim-o-brim with broken chariot wheels, bent swords, and breastplates warped and battered. Ole’ lord Koss worked ceaselessly, for his peers had naught but contempt for him and gave him no respite. Thus it came to pass one day after long hours of toil, he knelt to lift his tongs from his hearth and strained his back.

The lord Koss gave out a mighty yelp of pain (oh what a simmery yelp!). Oh, he spat and stamped, and spat many a curse, and there he resolved to do something about his crushing workload. With his bare feet (for he certainly had no chariot) and carrying his tongs, he trudged to the edge of the world, where the bodies of father UN and mother YS lay.

There he rooted around their ashes with his tongs, here and there, until he found what he was looking for. It was a ferocious white flame, a brilliant splinter from the eye of might father UN. However, as he grasped it with his tongs, he eyed it far too rigid, and moreover, it burned with a fierce and terrible cold. He flung the flame far into the void, and rooting around, found another.

This one was a hot black flame, a writhing, awful, hungry flame from the tongue of his ole’ mother YS. But as he grasped it with his tongs, he saw it a-licking at his wrists, so hungry and chaotic it was, so he flung it too, far into the void. And rooting around, he found another.

This was a warm black flame, an inquisitive flame (aye!), from YS’ heart. Koss was curious and found it gentle enough to hold, but it would not stay in his grasp, and sputtered as it writhed about. Pleased, but not yet satisfied, he put it in his leather pouch, and rooting around, found another.

This was a cool white flame, from the fingernail of his father. And Koss was pleased, (oh how pleased he was!) for it was a pliant flame, a stable flame, yet cool enough to hold.

Koss took the cool white flame and worked it for a year and a day. And when it was to his liking, he took his bronze chisel and split it with a mighty crack, and out sprung up all at once the first order of the race of Servants, the Sustainers. There were servants for mending wheels, and servants for sharpening swords, and tending Koss’ hearth, and servants for sweeping his floor, and many more. And he struck it again, and out came the second order of servants. And when the sound of his chisel ceased ringing, the red city was bustling with canal cleaners, and glass-blowers, and brick-makers, and many more besides.

The God were at once astonished and horrified. They rode the void to Koss’ workshop and accosted him. “What have ye done, fool!” they cried, and Koss realized what they meant, for in forging his new creations, his raw material had been the Flame Immortal, the heart and soul of the mighty YISUN. And so, the Servants were no automatons, but all filled with the awful heat of Will, and they very rapidly grew rebellious.

Koss quickly thought about the warm, black flame in his leather pouch, but it would not fit his purposes (how clever was he!), so he reached out to the void to that terrible cold, white flame, where it had splintered into seven hundred and seventy seven smoking shards. But even one of those shards was still far too cold to bring back into the world. So clever ole’ Koss plucked them in one by one and smothered them in the ashes of his hearth. And from that hearth arose the Aeons, the Protectors.

The Gods were even more astonished, for the terrible fires of Will burned even stronger in the Aeons. But Koss was exceptionally crafty, and very quick. Before the Aeons could struggle free from his hearth, encased in their shells of ash, he grabbed them with his tongs, and he beat the good ole’ Law into each one with his silver chisel. Grasping them, he flung them into the streets, where they quickly set about quelling the rebellious Servants with terrifying efficiency.

The Gods were all agape, and praised Koss, and Koss’ heart swelled with pride, for he had indeed done a mighty service. With the servants to take care of their daily affairs, and the Aeons to hold the Law, the Gods were freed from menial tasks to quench their hearts desires (a terrible thing indeed!). And indeed, they would have remained in that city, living luxuriously, in a circular and stagnant existence, for the rest of infinity, had it been for but one of their number.

As the Gods left, Pree Ashma hid her hot and evil body beneath the ashes of Koss’ hearth. Jealousy burned in her wicked breast, for the praise that was heaped upon Koss. She waited until Koss was sound asleep, and with pickery fingers, plucked his chisel from his belt.

Out of Koss’ leather pouch she slipped the warm black flame, and grasping it, cackled as she struck all about it with the chisel. But it would not ply easily, and Aesma was monstrously impatient. As she hammered wildly, the clangs of the chisel grew so loud that they awoke Koss, and the sleeping city, and even reached vestal Prim, where she fought the Archons, lashed to their flensing tree.

Rushing to the workshop, now filled with clashing sparks, the Gods shouted at Aesma to stop. But in defiance, she grasped that chisel in two hands and brought it down in a single wicked strike, and the flame shattered into tiny burning embers. And where the embers touched the dirt arose the race of Men, the Perceivers. And at first the Gods made to stamp them out, but stopping, they were dumbstruck.

Aesma, in her fury and impatience, had very poorly worked the warm black flame of YS (oh poorly indeed!). In her idiocy, she had forged impermanent beings – the first mortals, and in doing so had inadvertently created the Gift of Death. The Gods were bowed in awe, for the little lives of Men burned with meaning many times more potent than the creators of the Red City themselves, and the terrible fires of will burned so brightly within their brows that each was a Universe on their own, and the Gods could say no more.

It was said that this even inspired them into their self-annihilation by Division sometimes later, and the forging of the wheel, and the abandonment of heaven. But it is certainly known that the children of Aesma’s Mistake would go on to be powerful indeed, and exceptionally foolish. It was their race, after all, that tamed that Hot, Black Flame, and in doing so, brought the first of our kin into the world.

Oh lovely, wicked Aesma! And all because of a sore back, my fellows!

Now, bring me more liquid lubrication, will thee not? The night is ripe and I am exceptionally thirsty…”

-Old devil’s tale

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 5-88 to 5-89

>>FULL SIZE<<

There’ll be an additional update tomorrow with the absolute last two pages of Book 1. If you’d like a little preview, click here

Kill Six Billion Demons » KSBD 5-90 to 5-91 (SUMMONING)

>>FULL SIZE<<

“Here lies the domain of the wielders of names,

No bound or lay-line encircles it,

For from step to step

They span the span, aft and fore,

They are world straddlers, and their stride is shod with fire.”

-Inscription on the main speaking house of the Concordance of the Demiurges

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names – Cover

The long awaited cover.

Kill Six Billion Demons will resume regular updates in early August. I’ll also be updating the whole comic then (dialogue, coloring, some art fixes, etc), trying to get things printed, and launching the patreon, so keep an eye out. It’s a lot of work and I can’t hold myself honest to finishing it unless I give up the regular comic for about 3-4 weeks. But when we come back, it’ll be all out. See you then!

In the meantime, starting next week, for the next few weeks I’m going to try and run some guest art. If you’re interested, please tweet me @orbitaldropkick or message me on tumblr (orbitaldropkick.tumblr.com)

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-2

Extradited to the gods of chance, the deities of all things random

Alive, multicolored, twitching in their dead monochrome world

-Meshuggah, Catch 33

(There’s a very short page previous to this one)

TEXTLESS VERSION: HERE

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-3

“Be wary of the stone men. Though we have shaped their shells in exchange for their service, their hearts are of cold fire and law, and their bodies are hammers for shattering the weak.”

– Pericloss, Master Craftsman of the Circle

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-4

KEN N’GOLL T’GULA AN

ZOSS K’AON B’SOLL  B’AYLL ONN T’BARO N’TE KEN’AO A

(If ever ye doubt the hunger of man, look ye to the time when ZOSS wrestled with giants of stone and fire)

-Goblin Inscription

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-5

The Concordance of Angels. If it can be called that.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-6

“Here may pass only the worthy,

The pure and righteous of spirit

Who disdain impurity

Alone may wield this cursed flame without temptation,

Shattered, but the fires of God were not enough

To quench its thirst so here it shall be watched eternal.

So it is.”

-Unknown, carved in the base of the Angelic Concordance.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-7

Justice.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-8

It’s Wednesday where I am so have a slightly early page

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-9

This next character intro is perhaps my favorite so far.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-10

“The lightn’ings on which they rode were bent with talon’d lash,

An’ few there were that rode ahead and batter’d out their path,

But others reach’d with grasping hands to pluck fools from the fray,

An’ best as known them sorry souls are ridden to this day.”

– Folk rhyme

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-11

“It doth not suyt a Sum’nr of Devyls to speak on their Propertys, as those godsblood Fools who speak them into beyng must by varyos Means know their Nature as the Back of their Hand. But here I shall make a vayn Attempt for those who doth possess Wyts markedly Thin and Tyme markedly Lyttle, and thereon elaborate wythyn thys Tome.

Let us begyn symply:

Fyrst, the Pallyd, also known as the order Cacodaemonya. The weakest of Devyls and, yea, the most numerous as well. The Pallyd Devyl posseseth a Body most fyne but he also possesseth a weak Intellect. Hys form doth resemble an Insect or other such crawylng thyng, hys Blood argent, hys Mask whyte or fayntly yellow. He is most suytable for Tasks menyal and of low complexyty. He feedeth on Blood and Livestock. Great Care must be taken for he is bydden to count any Item whatsover strewn before hym with a passyon most confoundyng.”

– Thulsa Drulle’s Daemoniac Maleficum

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-12

“Next I wyll speak on the Ymps, or Blue Devyls. Ymps are flymsy of Body but possesseth a Tongue most vyle and skylfull in the Art. The Blue Devyl possesseth Skin of nyght-hue, hyr Mask is royal, and hyr Blood is ebon. Ymps have a certyn Fondness for Lyquor and Vyce that suiteth a crafty Sum’ner well should he wysh to gayn Employment of these Fiends.”

– Thulsa Drulle’s Daemoniac Maleficum

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-13

“Next I wyll speak on those Devyls most pryzed and sought by Kyngs, Rulers, and those Fools who clasp for earthly Power. The Crymson Devyl, or War Devyl, is massyve of Form and Syze and myddlyng of Wyts. Hys Flesh is ebon or royal, he is well Furred, hys Mask sanguine, his Blood ebon. He hath powerful Fangs, Horns, or other natural Weaponry for whych to dysmember his Enemeys, for the war devyl is extremely fond of Vyolence. He is greatly pryzed in thys Matter, synce for the pay of a few bottles of Lyquor or feeble Trynkets he wyll dysmember well-trained Soldiers from Dusk until Dawn for he does not partake in Sleep. A sum’ner may consyder hym a dull Creature until they fynd he has exployted some Loophole in theyr Contract and feasts upon their Entrayls.”

-Thulsa Drulle’s Daemonica Maleficum’

(AUTHOR NOTE: Next update will be Saturday the 20th, since the Patreon hit its funding goals, and then Tuesday/Friday from thereon)

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-14

“Next I wyll speak of the Verdant Devyl, or Dead Man’s Devyl as they are called. Hys Skyn is scaled or horned verdant, he carries the Vysyge of a Death’s Head, hys Mask verdant, and hys Blood thyck and argent. The Verdant Devyl is a remarkably strange Creature for he affects a certayn Languor whych could be mystaken for a lack of Motyve, hys blood is cold and he moves with Torpydyty. No Thhyng could be further from the Truth, for in hys Languor he collects many dire Secrets and has an insatiable Appetyte for Ruin. He is fond of Bargayns and lyes often. He wyll Peel a man lyke a Grape, should it please hym.”

-Thulsa Drulle’s Daemonica Maleficum

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-15

“Next I wyll dyscuss the Gylded Devyl, or Yellow Devyl as they are sometymes called. The Gylded Devyl has the appearance of one tall and shrouded, hyr Mask is Or, hyr Blood is Ebon. Hyr shryveled Flesh is sayd to have a certayn corpse-lyk Qualyty. Gylded Devyls are in Possessyon of the most terryfyng Intellect of common Devyls, and for thys reason Summoners are advysed agaynst attemptyng to bynd them. The Gylded Devil is fond of Moneys and other items of Wealth, she remembers Anythyng whatsoever sayd or seen, and she counts everythyng in metyculous Detayl. Moreover, she cultyvates a profound and honed Malyce whych she wylll not hesytate to turn on Mankind most cruelly.

I myself had an Apprentyce once who summoned one to take care of hys Book Keeping only to fynd to his great Dismay some Weeks later she had bought hym as a Slave.”

-Thulsa Drulle’s Daemonica Maleficum

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-16

“Fynally, I wyll speak on the Ebon Devyl, or True Devyl.

A Devyl when he is born as Pallyd has many hundreds of Names, none of whych are useful to hym, a method of his Bynding that gyves Shape to rawest Chaos whyle styll allowyng him to be controlled. As he grows older he makes secret Bargayns with Fools and finds clever ways to lop these Names off, and thus metamorphoses, changing Color and Shape most drastycally. Thus does the Pallyd become Blue, the Blue become Crymson, the Crymson become Verdant, the Verdant become Gylded.

An Ebon Devyl has but a syngle Name. There are but a few Dozen in all of Creation.

I wyll speak no further on the matter of Devyl Bynding for the Hour grows most late and a Chyll is settlyng up my old Spyne..”

– Thulsa Drulle’s Daemonica Maleficum.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-17

“Sure I’ve got a few debts in me, and I’ve got the marks to prove it. But power’s quite the mistress, fool. Tell me, have you seen this before?”

– Splitpin, Devil Binder

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 1-18

“Them that’s young and well and free and yearn to do their part,

is tenth as worse as them that’s old with hunger in their hearts.”

-Folk saying, attributed to upper Shades

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-19

The breaking and mending of wheels

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-20

The Breaking and Gaining of Divinities

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-21

Het and the Rakshasa

(Part 1)

         In the days when the King’s Road was scarred with the tramping of soldier’s boots and littered with the detritus they left behind, there was Het, who was a watchman. Het was very tall and straight, and she had arms like sinewy boughs. She was very good with a staff but very poor with a straight sword, which drew her constant disapproving looks from the Sergeant, since the staff was a peasant’s weapon, and not befitting a proper executioner of the Old Law.

The Sergeant’s name was Ramys, but that is neither here nor there, for he was a proper Sergeant. He was very calm, and very handsome, and he had a flawless Watchman’s Eye – that’s why he was promoted. Het pined for him piteously but in vain, for it was astounding how completely dry he was of anything that could possibly resemble love. He took his morning tea bitter, he sat rod-straight, and his nails were exceptionally clean. He was an excellent policeman.

Het and the Sergeant traveled together with a third person, who was very uninteresting. He was the Centurion, and he was a blunt instrument that had been hammered into the shape of a person. He had a neck the size of a tree trunk, and about as knotted. He loved his sword, and the shape of his sword, and most of all, he loved to use it. He was masterful at killing with the sword, which made him an exceptionally poor swordsman.

So it was that Het, the Sergeant, and the Centurion were summoned to kill a demon, for that was the job of watchmen in those days. The demon was a Rakshasa, which was a special kind that crawled down a person’s throat or nostrils when he was sleeping and filled him up with bile. Since it wore a person about it like a skin, it was exceptionally hard to find and root out. It fed on blood, stole milk, and abhorred the sound of lying. This was known to Het, who was studious, and the Sergeant, who was very intelligent, but not the Centurion, who cared only about swords.

The Road was on fire with war most of those days, so their travel was exceptionally slow, and the Sergeant kept them to the back paths. It was no place for men of the Law, for the Law had abandoned heaven. So it was a full six turns before Het, the Sergeant, and the Centurion reached their destination.

When they arrived, they saw at once that the Rakshasa had been exceptionally cunning. For this was a land of mires and muck, a low, sulfurous land where people eked out their living in filth. So covered head to toe were they that everyone looked almost exactly alike. Passing her gaze from person to person, Het could scarcely tell the young from the old, the man from the woman, or anyone at all, and she shivered, for she was exceptionally clean, as all watchmen were. Watchmen were men of class and stature in those days. They wore shiny boots and spotless uniforms with gleaming buttons.

They were met by the lord of that place, who lived in a palace built on a promontory rising out of the muck (the only promontory around, in fact). The lord was exceptionally beautiful, and had perfect nails, just like the Sergeant. He was borne aloft by four servants who sweated and heaved his palanquin far above the filth below, even though they themselves were often buried up to the waste. It was necessary, in those days.

The lord expounded to them at length about the trouble he was in. “Oh please,” he said, fanning himself with great consternation, “Do something about this filthy Rakshasa! Why, just the other day, it broke into the palace and left a terrible mess. A flock of my prized doves were all torn apart, and its muddy footprints were everywhere!”

“You’ve not to worry,” said the Sergeant, with the utmost confidence, “I rarely fail in my quest to root out evil. We’ll smash your Rakshasa within the week, in the name of the Old Law and the fourth name of God.” Het could attest to the Sergeant’s efficiency, and gave her firm affirmation.

The Sergeant, indeed, seemed to have a terrifyingly strong sense for evil, a pre-natural ability to sniff out even the tiniest bit of it’s stench clinging to a person. This was his Watchman’s Eye. It was a fine instrument of justice, and a great source of admiration for Het, who still thought herself a rough-spun peasant girl in braids. In fact, she was a head taller than the Sergeant, and twice as brawny, but that’s a tale for later. For now, she saw the Sergeant’s perfect fingernails, and his handsome mustaches, and his dramatic brow, and felt a strong swell of pride and longing.

The lord was very happy. He promised to give them proper accommodations at his high palace and a bath everyday to clean them from the muck of the land and keep them in proper watchmen shape, as long as they returned by the time the gates closed.

And so it was that Het, and the Sergeant, and the Centurion set about the land on the first day, looking for the Rakshasa.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-22

Het and the Rakshasa

(Part 2)

The land was very foreign to Het and she held her stave tightly to her as they wandered about the mires that passed for streets in that place. People slept on the street, or with animals, to her great shock. The buildings were low and hunched, and covered in the muck of the earth, and in that respect, they were just like the people. Here and there she could peer into their smoky interiors and see a woman bent and crooked over a fire, a man picking through junk, a youth carrying a lashed and heavy bundle over her back. But that was about as much as Het could tell apart, for the muck that covered them made them all look alike. Their eyes were white and hungry and Het shivered as she passed the listless clusters of them lining the street.

The day passed and the sergeant asked many fine questions, as his perfect fingernails tapped the polished hilt of his straight sword. Het and the Centurion followed him to and fro, from dwelling to dwelling. The Sergeant would knock, and bend his handsome head just a little inside. He would step once, twice, great policeman’s strides, and in his polite way, inquire about the terrible happenings in the community. Het was very impressed, for the dwellers were sullen and hard to read with their faces covered in muck. They spoke very little and Het was sure they were hiding some dark secret away.

The Sergeant, however, was nonplussed. “I am piecing together little by little the location of our monster,” he said to Het and the Centurion. His back was very straight, and he was utterly confident. Het saw that his Watchman’s Eye was working very well indeed, and longed to know its secrets.

The day grew very late and Het was very anxious to get back to the Palace and her bath, for the eyes of the populace followed their party like hungry beads, and the muck had piled up around her shiny boots. But as they drew up in front of the last low and sloping dwelling, the Sergeant gave them a knowing look. As he knocked, there was a tremendous noise as a man stumbled out of a side alley in a dead run. The sergeant gave out a cry, and before Het could even ready her stave, the Centurion had closed thirty paces and struck the man down with a single horrifying blow.

The Centurion was extremely happy, but Het was not, for as she drew closer, she saw among the man’s scattered entrails there was scarcely a demon to be found. In his outstretched hand was a purse of silver coins. “He shouldn’t have run,” said the Sergeant sadly, and wiped his brow, “A common thief, no more.” Het felt repulsed and regretful, for the punishment for thievery was not death. But then the Sergeant noted the hour, and Het thought of the palace and her bath, and they returned at speed.

The Sergeant’s confidence was hardly dented at all. “The poor sap was just a criminal, not a demon as I suspected! The information was very poor, but I’ll keep at it,” he said. “The people of this land are sullen and poorly spoken, but that doesn’t mean they don’t deserve our protection!” The lord of the land agreed. They had a pheasant dinner and a fine bath, and slept well. Het, however, could scarcely sleep and spent her night staring out at the muck below.

In the morning came tales of dead livestock and stolen milk. This made the Sergeant more resolute, and gave Het hope as they set about the town. The Centurion followed along eagerly. He had cleaned his sword.

This time, a strange familiarity came over Het. Having seen the town and its inhabitants before, passing through a second time her curiosity got the better of her. As they passed through the bent and filthy streets, she peered once again into their cramped interiors. Here again was the woman bent over a fire. But Het saw that the fire was a kind of kiln or oven, and the woman had a long stick she was stoking it with. Here again, was the man bent over junk, but here and there Het saw glimmers. And here again, was the youth bent low by her heavy load, but Het saw all of a sudden that her load was a cloth of interesting texture.

The Sergeant once again passed from dwelling to dwelling, relentless. “I am very sure this time,” said the Sergeant, “For these leads have the stench of evil about them. Where dwelleth evil, dwelleth demons, don’t you think?”

Once again, as the hour was growing late, the Sergeant’s inquiries drew them close to a dwelling by a choked and polluted river. And as soon as the Sergeant rapped on the door, a woman scrambled out the window and dove into the river. Once again, the Sergeant cried out, and once again, the Centurion sprang eagerly forth. He leapt into the water and speared the woman through the belly like a fish. She spent a long time dying as the Centurion cleaned his sword.

She didn’t have a Rakshasa inside her, just the rotted teeth of a long time Glass addict. The Sergeant wiped his brow. “She shouldn’t have run,” he said, his eyes sad. Het was despondent, for the punishment for using Glass was not death. She was glad that they were rooting out evil in this land, no matter how small, but it still weighed heavily on her as they trudged through the mud back to the palace and their bath.

The Lord was very happy with their progress, even if they hadn’t caught the Rakshasa, and Het lost no confidence in the Sergeant’s Watchman’s Eye, for it had indeed detected evil, even though the dwellers of that land were uncooperative. But a bath could not clear her mind, nor could clean clothes. Once again, she spent her night staring at the muck below. And this time, a strange impulse struck her. She donned her uniform, put on her shiny boots, and clambered out the window.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-23

Het and the Rakshasa

(Part 3)

        Resolute that she could find some new information for the Sergeant (and perhaps impress him), Het struggled down the muddy slope into the land below. And when she arrived there, she saw a strange and terrifying sight indeed.

In the square there was a great gathering of the dwellers of that land. A long and warped table had been laid out, and all the dwellers were all gathered around a terrible fire, which threw ghastly light upon their dark and white-eyed faces. Het saw there the fire-stoking woman, and the junk-sifting man, and the bundle-bearing youth. The entire gathering was giving forth an unearthly wail, their hands outstretched in claw like shapes, their faces upturned and monstrous. A great lightning bolt of fear struck Het about the heart and she fled at once back to the palace.

In the morning, she told the Sergeant of what she had seen, and he congratulated her for her find, and promised to redouble his investigation given the new evidence of wrongdoing. So it was that even though Het’s boots and uniform were already muddy from the night before, that morning she set out warm with pride and her chin thrust in the air, the Centurion ahead of her with his sword hand flexing.

Het’s discovery seemed to invigorate the Sergeant. He set about questioning the dwellers at twice the speed he had before, and very shortly they had a suspect, who the Centurion cut down with incredible speed before they could even ask him a question. He did not have a Rakshasa inside him, but, in fact, turned out to be simply a bad debtor. So it was with the next person the Centurion slaughtered, a woman who turned out to be a forger of the king’s coin. “We’ll have a very busy day,” said the Sergeant, cleaning his perfect fingernails.

Het was roiling with frustration and guilt. How could they have been so misled? Petty criminals were not what they had come for. Surely the dwellers of this land had some awful secret they were hiding away, especially given the dark gathering Het had stumbled on the night before. Perhaps there was an entire clan of Rakshasa, scheming away at their demise. The mud-daubed faces of the hunched and twisted people around Het looked more similar than ever. They seemed to be laughing at her.

With great intent, Het excused herself from the Sergeant and Centurion, and rushed to the hut of the fire-stoking woman, knocking her door open with the butt of her stave. “You there!” said Het accusingly, “What are you doing?”

“I am making bread,” said the astonished woman, “For this land is harsh and scarce, but it gives to us all the same. It’s what we have.” Het was suspicious and took three fine steps into the room, in the way she’d seen the Sergeant step. But the woman showed her the oven, and the way it was stoked, and the thin and flimsy looking bread that she was baking there. And since Het could find no fault with baking bread, she left and ran to the dwelling of the junk-sifting man.

“You there!” she said as she reached his dwelling. She gripped her stave tightly, for she feared trouble. “What is your business?” The junk-sifter turned to her, astonished. “I am preparing amulets, made by the townspeople,” he said. “For this land is harsh and bleak, but its people are resourceful.” Het took two great steps inside the dwelling and saw that he was telling the truth. The amulets weren’t terribly well made, but they had a certain crude beauty to them that was undeniable. Growing increasingly uneasy, Het took up her stave and fled to find the bundle-bearing youth.

It took her very little time, for Het was in a great hurry. A terrible suspicion that she was being deceived had taken hold of her, and she began to walk square shouldered and narrow-eyed, like the Centurion. Her hand even hovered around her sword handle, but never touched it, for she was terrible with the sword.

She accosted the youth, who turned to her wide eyed. “You there!” barked Het, and she took a single step and grasped the youth’s shoulder. “What are you scheming? I know there’s something your people are hiding from me!” The youth gaped at Het and said, “Please! I’m carrying the burial cloths! For this land is harsh and its rulers cruel, but it’s people are resilient.” It was then that Het realized she was crushing the youth’s shoulder and let go. The trembling youth unfurled the cloth, and explained how the cloth was dyed and folded. Het saw it’s intricate pattern, but still her suspicions were not quenched. She shoved the terrified youth aside and ran in a panic to where the Sergeant and the Centurion were executing a root seller who was selling their produce over-price.

“A terrible shame,” said the Sergeant, and wiped his brow.

As Het approached him, she told him of her suspicions. “ A conspiracy is boiling here!” she said, breathless. “I am certain now the dwellers of this land are hiding the Rakshasa!”

“I thought as much,” said the Sergeant, “Which is why I have stepped up our investigations once again.” The Centurion said nothing, but only cleaned the viscera off his sword in well-practiced motions. He had butchered seven dwellers that day and was exceptionally happy for it.

Het told the Sergeant of her plan. She would stay behind and follow the dwellers to their night-time gathering, and get to the heart of the matter. Part of her daring plan, to be certain, was a desperate final bid to win the Sergeant’s affection. But the large part of it was a deathly fear that the demons of this awful, muck-ridden land would surely get the better of them and they would be ripped apart.

“If you stay behind,” said the Sergeant, matter-of-factly, “You shan’t get in the palace in time. You will miss your bath and you’ll be terribly filthy. I would think you’d have to sleep outside.” He looked pointedly at Het’s boots and uniform, doubly soiled with both the filth of that day and of her exploits the night before. Het’s heart sunk, but she was resolute.

So it was that the Sergeant and the Centurion abandoned Het and returned to the palace. Het found a thin and dead tree and huddled under it, filled with fear and trepidation, and even touched her sword handle at some points. The bleak sun grew low in the sky and darkness swept across the land. Het crawled forth from her hiding place, trudging through the muck, until she saw the light of the great fire start up again in the distance. Her heart jumped as she grew closer, as once again she saw the dark forms of the dwellers gather together and lay out their table. But fear had made her feet unsteady, and all of a sudden she slipped and tumbled through the muck until she lay battered in the street, in plain view of the gathering.

Het struggled to her feet, and gathered her staff close to her, and prepared to die. But the white eyes of the dwellers held looks of sadness and compassion, not of hate. “Come closer, stranger,” they said, gathering her in and soothing her. And Het realized that she herself was so covered with filth at this point that she looked no different from anyone else standing around that great fire. Dazed, she was pulled into the gathering, and given water. And there, Het saw the fire-stoking woman. She was laying bread out upon the table, in roughly woven baskets.

Her mind racing, Het looked around, and found the junk-sifting man, and she saw him laying amulets upon the eyes of someone lying on the ground. The person was so still at first, that Het thought they were acting, but then Het saw the bundle-bearing youth wrap them in a burial cloth and realized it was one of the dwellers that the Sergeant and the Centurion had slaughtered earlier that day. That she had slaughtered. And she looked to the fire and saw the bodies burning there, and the wailing started, and there Het began to cry.

After Het had finished weeping, it was as though the tears had cleared her eyes of something dark and terrible. The people, who had looked so alike in their covering of dirt and their rough clothing now stood out stark as day. Here was a kindly woman with a lined face pulled tight in grief for her lost son. Here was a young and sun-worn man beating his chest for his dead sister. They were simple faces, dirty and weather-beaten, but in that moment, sublimely beautiful.

After the fire and its grim contents had burned down to coals, they sat around the great table and ate the thin bread that had been laid out there. As each person bit into it, they bowed their heads and loudly praised its fine taste. Het didn’t touch it at first, but was urged on by the mourners. To her surprise, the bread was bitter and dry. “How can you praise this bread when the taste is so poor?” said Het, astonished. The dwellers looked at her strangely and said, “This land heaps pain and indignity upon us. We are small people, so we must be grateful for the small things. Otherwise, what do we have?”

Het was sickened by her own blindness. “In truth,” she said, “I am a watchman come to town to hunt for the Rakshasa.”

“We know,” said the dwellers. “The Rakshasa has plagued us for some time. It steals what little livelihood we have and inflicts pain and malice upon us. At first, our funerals were only for those that it took in the night. Now we must work twice as hard to mourn those the Law takes as well. We resent it, but what can we do? It is the way of things.”

Het thought of the Sergeant and his perfect fingernails, and felt a sudden and strong revulsion. “It is not the way of things,” she said. An idea struck her then, as pure and clear as a bolt of lightning.

“Do all attend these gatherings?” she asked the dwellers. “No,” said the dwellers, “there are some who stay silent in their grief, or resent our mourning.” Het thought a moment, then planted her staff and stood up. “I will find this Rakshasa for you,” she said, speaking to those assembled. “Are there dead that are not yet burned?” The dwellers showed her that there were, and Het bade them delay their final rites. There was a great clamor among the dwellers, but Het planted her staff again, and they listened, partly in fear, and partly in awe.

“The Sergeant will start his investigation again tomorrow,” said Het in a voice she didn’t knew she had yet. “You will burn your dead when the sun is high, instead of at night, and you will bid all the town come to the funeral. Those that are not at the gathering will surely be in danger, for the Sergeant has promised me he will step up his investigation. You will bake the bread, and make the amulets, and prepare the burial cloth, just as normal, and in turn, I will reveal to you a secret way to draw out and kill the Rakshasa.”

The dwellers were in turmoil at Het’s suggestion, for it was a grave breach of custom. But the Rakshasa had plagued them for a long time, and the suggestion of relief from its scourge was just enough to motivate them. They set about finishing their funeral rites, and preparing for the next day. Het, for her part, trudged in the cold and dark back to the palace. But, as promised, the palace gates were closed to her. She slept in the mud and awoke cold and wet, but full of purpose.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-24 (Incarnate)

Het and the Rakshasa

(Part 4)

         When the Sergeant and Centurion strode through the palace gates that morning clean and shiny, they reacted with a start when Het rose to greet them, for she was so covered in mud that she appeared just like the dwellers. But the Sergeant recognized her stave and questioned her at once about her inexcusable appearance.

“Delay your investigation” pleaded Het, “For we have treated these people with nothing but brutality and cruelty! Out of your love for the Law, please let the Centurion sheathe his sword today!” The Sergeant denied her of course, for there was not one ounce of anything resembling love in his whole body. As he denied her, Het found her longing for the Sergeant slip out of her like a cold liquid, and she felt deeply saddened, for it confirmed what she had known all along. But it was an expected loss, and resolution quickly filled its place.

The Sergeant immediately began his investigation, rapping on doors and even windows with his perfect fingernails The buttons of his uniform suddenly seemed too bright and sharp to Het, and the glint from them hurt her eyes. She heard the sweaty palm of the Centurion rubbing over his sword hilt.

But true to their word, the dwellers had gathered absolutely everyone to the central square for the delayed funeral rites, and there was nary a soul to be found in any of the humble and stooped dwellings of that land. For once, Het saw the Sergeant taken aback. “Well this is awfully strange,” he said to Het with a cold look in his eye, and the Centurion fumed. It was then that the funereal wailing started, and following its sound and the smoke from the fire, the group made their way to the central square.

“Stop this nonsense!” said the Sergeant in his very reasonable policeman’s voice as they strode amongst the gathered masses, but nobody listened. They were filled with grief and resentment at having to delay their funeral rites, and many of them threw spurious glances at Het as they wailed. “Hold a moment,” said Het, and they held as the bread was laid out. “A little longer,” said Het as the amulets were laid on the eyes of the dead. “Just a little longer,” said Het, as the cloth was wrapped around the bodies. Out of the corner of her eye she saw that the Centurion’s expert sword arm was bulging with unreleased tension, and the cords of his neck were thick and red. But at the moment Het was sure he would spring forth, foaming at the mouth, the funeral was over, and the breaking of the bread began. It was then that Het jumped into action.

“May I have some bread?” she asked the fire-stoking woman, and was handed a thin and meager piece. She swallowed it down as the Sergeant watched, cold and irate, and then pulled herself up to her full height and planted her staff. In fact, Het was very tall, and her arms were corded like boughs, and her staff was so heavy that a rough man of the fields who worked a plough all day would scarcely be able to lift it. Even though she knew none of these things, everyone else recognized them very quickly, and so it grew very quiet indeed when she stood up.

“This bread is the finest I’ve had in my three years of service,” she proclaimed, loudly and precisely. “Why, I’d deign to say it’s better than the bread my grandmother baked.” The assembled dwellers nodded in approval, even though they knew the bread was bitter and dry. The land may have been cold and harsh, but they were gracious for what they had. “How is your bread, auntie?” Het asked the fire-stoking woman. The woman caught the glint in Het’s eye, and all of a sudden a wave of understanding and excitement passed around the gathered dwellers. “I’d deign to say it’s the best bread I’ve baked yet,” said the woman at the top of her voice, “The best bread in a century!” There was a loud chorus of approval, and other voices joined in.

“The best bread on this side of the Wheel!”

“See how sweet and fresh it is!”

“They should serve it in the capital!”

More and more voices joined in until it was a cacophony of praise. Ridiculous, overfed, hyperbolic lies tumbled back and forth through the air, and Het stood at the center of it all, with her eye bright and sharp, and both hands on her quarterstaff. She was beginning to lose hope, when there was suddenly a shrill and piercing scream.

The scream came from an old and shriveled woman, who was bent double over the great table, and bile was pouring from her mouth and nose. For, as they all remembered then, the Rakshasa could not stand the sound of lies, and it crawled right out of the woman’s mouth and writhed in a black and suppurating mass on the table. “Enough!” It shrieked, but Het scarcely gave it pause before she dashed forth and smashed its skull into five hundred pieces with a mighty blow of her quarterstaff. The blow was so powerful it split the table clean in two and send echoes all the way up to the palace where it shattered the lord’s prized crystal chandelier with the mere sound of its violence.

A great cheer went up and the broken body of the Rakshasa was beaten and bludgeoned by the furious crowd and dragged into the muck where it was later eaten by dogs. The old woman was brought immediately to the dwelling of a healer where she recovered through the healer’s strong skill in herbal cleansing and lived another decade, demon free.

But it wasn’t over for Het, by far. If anything, she gripped her quarterstaff even tighter, for while the crowd had been filling the air with lies, she had noticed something bizarre that filled her up to the brim with dread. The Sergeant had been trembling and quaking the entire time, just like the old woman, and his handsome face was lined with pain.

And Het turned to him in fear and said, “You too, have a Rakshasa inside of you.”

“Of course,” choked the Sergeant, “It takes a demon to find a demon, didn’t you know? That’s why they made me a Sergeant.”

“You don’t have a Watchman’s Eye at all,” said Het, choking back tears, “You just know whether someone is lying or not.”

“Yes,” said the convulsing Sergeant, bile pouring from his nose and ruining his perfect mustache. “I am very good at catching liars and criminals. If you want to fraternize with the filthy, that is your business. I, however, am a perfect policeman.” Het had to admit, he was right. He was a very good policeman, with very clean fingernails. But he was a very poor person.

“Liars and criminals are not the same,” said Het, and struck the Sergeant a mighty blow across the chest. At that, the Centurion, who had been waiting to kill someone all morning, sprung forth with a lustful, sputtering cry and drew his sword. But although he far outmatched Het at skill with the sword, he was a very poor swordsman. He got a few good cuts in on Het, which she bore for the rest of her life, but she was filled with the terrible fires of Will, and he was not. The moment she got a good blow on his over-swollen sword hand, it was over. He whined like a dog as Het gave him a thorough beating.

“Kill me,” he begged, broken and bleeding, and cried piteously. It was the only thing he ever said to Het.

Het looked him over in pity, unbuckled her sword belt, and then threw it in the muck, for it was a killing weapon, unlike the stave. In this respect, Het was a very good swordswoman. She left the Centurion weeping and bade the dwellers teach him a more useful skill than killing. It was said he became a middling carpenter, but that’s a story for another time.

Het turned back to the Sergeant. He had coughed his Rakshasa out into the dirt, and it was dragging itself feebly away from a ring of furious dwellers, who were harassing it with sticks and stones. The sight of it disgusted Het, for it was a greatly fattened and pampered thing. She bashed its brains out with very little thought and hurled its body into a sucking mire. When she returned, the Sergeant was bent over, quivering and cold. Without the demon inside of him, he was a small man, thin and sickly looking. Het was suddenly aware how much taller she was than him.

“You fool,” babbled the Sergeant, “What will I do now? How will I make my living? How will I afford the money to keep my boots shined and my nails clean?” Het looked at him, all clean-pressed and sharp, his eyes feverish and hateful, and over to the funeral pyre, which was burnt nearly to ashes, and the sorrowful gazes of the dwellers who bent there. Truly, she thought, she would waste very little time on this small and cruel man, so she walked away.

“Thank you for slaying the Rakshasa,” said the dwellers, and went back to their harsh existence. They were gracious for it, nonetheless. Het shed her uniform and her boots and spent the last of her pay buying a good traveling cloak, a set of rough-spun clothing, and iron-nailed boots.

“Where will you go?” asked the fire-stoking woman. “To the Road, of course,” said Het, for that was the nature of things. Het abhorred violence. But there were Rakshasas about, and worse. Indeed, though her stave was used for cracking skulls very rarely, the skulls it cracked were very famous indeed. You may have heard of a few, and perhaps also how she came to be the doorkeeper of YISUN’s speaking house, and how she met Prim again on the road some time later. But those are stories for another time.

Before she left, Het offered her old clothing to the dwellers, who declined. “Your boots are very impractical for walking in the mud,” they said, and Het had to agree. If you had to wash all the stains out every night, stains ceased to have meaning.

It didn’t stop Het from taking a bath later, however. Some habits die hard.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-25 (Challenger)

“Kings and fools are not so disparate, I think. Both are freed from the petty restraints of mortal men and are free to soar above reason.”

– Anhos, Sky Piercer

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-26

“The Devyl is gyven as much to merryment as he is to slaughter. Some may fynd thys puzzlyng. I fynd it necessary.”

-Thulsa Drulle

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-27

“Ever sang with a Devil before? You’ll be completely clobbered drunk or stone cold dead before the fifth verse. Which … I’m never sure.”

– Mars Pallatrix, Belligerent Knight

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-28

Dhuutholmel

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-29

“A Devil can be the most horrifying warrior, untiring manservant, or cunning secretary that one could wish. But unlike humankind’s weak Black Flame, the flame of the Devils glows hot and raw. It must be fettered. Otherwise, they will surely tear Throne apart, angels be damned.”

– Par Vam, Undersecretary of the Yellow City

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-30

“The power drawn from strength is mighty indeed. All men respect the sword.

Greater still is the power drawn from ultimate weakness. When a man has nothing to cling to, he has taken the first step to becoming Royalty”

-Words of Dyon, Knight Mendicant (est. third century post second-conquest)

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-31

The breaking of chains

(The next update will be Sunday the 22nd of November!)

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-32

Camilla: You sir, should unmask.

Stranger: Indeed?

Cassilda: Indeed it’s time. We have all laid aside disguise but you.

Stranger: I wear no mask.

Camilla: (Terrified, aside to Cassilda.) No mask? No mask!

– The King in Yellow, Act 1, Scene 2d

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-34

“My apprentice asked me why I prefer the company of dogs to men. I told her that a man is an kind of intolerable monkey who clings obsessively to his own fate. To subvert his mortality, he inflicts death and unfathomable torture upon the world. My apprentice told me that I was being a little severe, and asked me about dogs.

I told her that dogs keep my feet warm, and they care very little how badly I insult them. In this respect, they are also better than apprentices.”

– Meti, of the Yellow City

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-35

‘On the topic of dogs, a passing priest once pressed me quite fervently on the subject of my own mortality. He was very concerned about preserving the nature of my immortal essence. “Grandson,” said I, “I am old and my bones are sopping with death already. Why should I care?” He went on to describe in great detail the rituals that could be undertaken to guard one’s soul against degradation and ensure smooth passage to the next realm.

“Do you perform these rites every day?” I asked him, trying to humor him. “Of course, auntie,” said the priest, “Every morning before I wake fully I perform my rites, then four more times a day before rest. It keeps me in good health and spirits, knowing that my death will be a golden door to paradise.”

“Four times a day?” I said, incredulous. “Of course,” said the priest, “Don’t you think about dying, auntie? You should be worried, at your age.”

“Do you think about dying?” I asked him. “How about before sleep?”

“Yes,” he said, seeing that I was clearly straining his good nature. “How about when you bathe?” I asked him. He thought a moment. “Well, sometimes,” he replied. “How about when you shit?” I said. “Never,” he said brusquely.

“Not even once?”

“Well maybe once, but I don’t see the point! Who knows?” he said, clearly seeking to draw away from me and peddle his wares onto more the more gullible trash that populated the gutter. “A dog has more sense than you,” I said to him, and thumbed at a lazy mutt that was picking through the market. “He doesn’t think of death at all. Not when he sleeps, not when he bathes, and certainly not when he shits.”

“And I supposed there’s a point,” said the priest.

“You and he will both die,” I pointed out to him. “The four great elements of your bodies will collapse one into the other and you will both become no more substantial than a fart.” I should mention at this time in my life I had very little patience for rhetoric.

The priest spat on me later. I didn’t mind.’

-Meti, of the Yellow City

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-36

“A Coat of Arms is, like many devil-made creations, completely useless in the wrong hands, and completely and utterly devastating in the right ones. It does of course, all depend on how many hands we’re talking about.”

– Paricos the Gilt-footed, Guild Scion

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-37

She’s going to run out of paper eventually.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 2-38 (PURSUERS)

The Pursuers

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-39

“Retain not the beast of burden as your pack animal – being made from the effervescent heat of the Flame Immortal, the animal possesses such a weak Atum that he will disperse upon entrance into the Void.

Troublesome as it may be, the only reliable way to carry your heavy cargo is by use of a sorcerer or devil binder who will surely gouge a great chunk of Profit for his services. The Shades of the recently dead are too numerous to count, pliable, and lack awareness – for this they are perfect mounts. The Thrull, the Follower, the Necked – these are fine and cheap forms of Shade and easy to warp.

The only other way is by use of automatons, which will decay rapidly if left unattended, and the poor man’s way, which is by foot. But the stride of the poor man is not lined with gold.”

-Void Trader’s manual, early circulation (Copy purchases from Yellow City underwarrens circa 600 S.C.).

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-40 (CREATION)

Creation

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-41

YISUN walked once with their son, Ogam, through YISUN’s plum garden, which was in full bloom. When the winds blew well and nourished the trees there, their blossoms were sublime, and they bore so much fruit that the great ten-antlered guardian of that garden was very busy keeping intruders out.

The rumor stood that a single succulent bite from a plum of YISUN’s garden could grant immortality, and so hundreds of fine warriors, sages, and wisdom seekers constantly assailed its walls in times of plenty, seeking the bounty within. It was said this perplexed YISUN, who would not wish such an awful curse on any of their children.

“Father-Mother!” bellowed Lord Ogam as they walked along the winding path, and thumped his cavernous chest, “Have you seen that I am a great warrior?”

“I have,” said YISUN, “You are very skilled at reducing your opponents into their constituent parts.”

Ogam was very proud, but then bent his rough knees and turned his scarred pate towards YISUN in supplication. “Oh Father-Mother! I have thought upon this for some time. Let me perform a great service as your son. Surely, you must have an enemy that I can destroy for you?”

“That is a good question,” said YISUN, “Do I have such an enemy?”

“If such a man, woman, or godling exist, I shall not rest until I scrape his brains from his head,” bellowed Ogam, and made a fist in salute.

“Once in the market I saw a man in a great rage,” said YISUN, “He spat and cursed his enemy, and tore at him wildly. Blood flew from his fingernails, and spittle was around his lips, and his fight was fierce indeed. He was a mighty warrior.”

“Was he successful?” said Ogam.

“No,” said YISUN, “He remained locked in combat for the whole time I watched him, and though he panted and heaved with sweat, he saw no success. His struggle was eternal. The man that he tore at was himself.”

“A madman, and a fool!” proclaimed Ogam, and spat upon the ground.

“Ogam is observant,” said YISUN.

– Psalms 10:27

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-42 to 3-44

“Do not jest with the laughing god, for his mirth is more brittle than a fingernail”

-Folk Saying

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-45 to 3-46 (Mykos)

>>FULL SIZE<<

“Only an insect expects a giant to watch his step.”

-Folk saying

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder Of Names 3-47

Heir

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-48

The splitting of paths

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-49

“Oh! The day was bright. A sound came upon the earth, and the Ardenwood itself bent and screamed, and the sky was rent with light. Such a tear it was, horizon to horizon, and from that fiery scar, a great heavenly host rode forth on steeds of smoke and ash. And at the head of that host was enthroned a bright queen, and her hair was like liquid gold, and star-fire was on her brow.

The great masters of this world drew up their spears and locked forearms in alliance. They rallied their armies to them, and girded themselves with battle lust. Ten times ten thousand men rode out to meet that host, all thick-armed soldiers from the seven great nations of this world. They rattled the earth with their passing, by God. I still remember the sound.

And all those ten times ten thousand men were rent into pieces and the pieces were tramped into the earth, and the soil was burned, and their bones were smashed to powder and fed to the soil. For that Queen was true Royalty, and not the pale and sluggish imitation of our former kings. Within her blazing tongue was the power of the holy Septagrammaton, and it’s name was the Glory.”

– Excerpt from Age of Fire, attributed to the sage-poet Avsa Galman. Said to be an early account of the conquering of his world by the god-queen Mother Om.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-50

“The first to go was our ignorance. For even our greatest and wisest could not have foreseen that ours was a story told a hundred thousand times or more. None could have seen that terrible red corpse city, and its inhuman masters, whose exhalation was death. The next to go were our laws. The tablets of our old prophets were ground to dust and the law of the Bright Queen was raised in their place. It was a molten law, an absolute law, and touching it brought swift and painful death.

In the end, creation itself was stripped from us. Wolves in the shape of men and things more awful belched forth from the fiery wound in the sky. They had iron boots and smooth fingers made for rubbing gold, and their bellies were always empty, and full of cruel and inhuman laughter. They ate up all the Ardenwood, and stripped it bare, and then they slurped all the rivers up, and the hills were scorched with acrid smoke. The valley dells where the beasts of the wood gathered were ripped asunder, and the beasts were ripped into a million parts and sold piecemeal to make women’s trinkets.

As for our kings, they were gelded and flayed. They were treated no better than the beasts in the end.”

– Excerpt from Age of Fire, attributed to the sage-poet Avsa Galman. Said to be an early account of the conquering of his world by the god-queen Mother Om.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-51

“Never trust a man who claims to know the path ahead. You will find his boots conspicuously clean of mud.”

– Pilgrim’s Guide to Throne

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-52

Infiltration

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-53

The angels are (clockwise)

10 Vigilant Gaze Purges the Horizon

22 Shake off the Sodden Words of the Faithless and 35 Purity’s Griffon Harbors Only Brightness in His Heart

38 Dark Spear of Thought Will Plunge Into the Flesh of Heretics

29 Red Word Excises the Wicked

52 Holy Mists Rising From the Abyss

75 Ambulant Blade With A Ragged Edge

12 Questioning Fate

There’s a pretty good angel name generator here!

Kill Six Billion Demons » WON 3-54

And YISUN came forth from the plum garden and spoke a Word called Royalty, and that word had seven parts, and each part shone equally with the brilliance of Law and the ripeness of Chaos, and the heat was unbearable to all those that were there. No man could stand before it, and no god either, and all the beasts of sky, sea, and star, and all the crawling things of the earth, and all the hungering potentates; all the argent saints and hell-forged heroes were bent to the dust by it’s enormous blast. For the Heat of the Word was the Heat of YISUN’s Voice, and it was fed by the Flame Immortal.

-Spasms

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-55

“Any man who trusts an angel had better get used to sticking his hand in fires.”

-Splitpin, devil binder

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-56

Burdens

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-57

“Lo! And there was one, who had a name of seven parts in seven, and it was a shining name, and it’s words were writ with the Flame that nourishes creation! He came in his chariot, whose rims were the Wheel, and pulled by the four beasts that dwell at the foot of YISUN. Such heat issued from his mouth as to scorch all the stones of heaven – it was a terrible sight, even to the faithful. Oh God!”

-Shard of the prophecy of the Successor, attributed to Acolyte Periptos of the Eye Revealed. Uttered twenty seconds before death.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-58

“The angel is a mighty judge, for his gavel is a fist of stone encasing a terrible and unforgiving fire. A corpse-ocean of criminals have been fed to that flame, yet oceans more shall never quell its unrelenting hunger.”

-15 Ways of Ruling

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 3-59

“I heard a man’s heart is worn on his sleeve. Well, it ain’t exactly correct by my reckoning, but close enough. Men is easy to read. Their heart shows all up in their eyes and face. It comes out in their breath, their voice, and the slant of their walk. Men is living things, beautiful and simple.

Where does an angel keep his heart then, I wonder? Troubling thoughts, my lads. Troubling thoughts, indeed.”

– Volk, Stoker’s Guild scion

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-60 (Palace of Radiance)

>>FULL SIZE<<

“And there they sat, and basked a while, and though their hearts were gay and their spirits high, in their deepest place there crouched a cold and lingering terror, for they knew that the warmth of that light they enjoyed was not the nurturing light of a summer day, but the awful radiance of Glory.”

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-61

“Do not surround yourself with splendor. Spend your treasury sparingly. Stock the halls of your holdfast with sturdy and plain men, and do not adorn your walls. Abhor gold. If you sit next to the sun too long, you’re likely to go blind.”

-Au Vam, 15 Ways of Ruling

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-62

“The land was gone. I couldn’t believe it. Whole stretches of the earth were all rent up, as though torn by some monstrous beast. Ash covered the land where the orchards had been, and even the air was choked with an oily rain. I grabbed a passing indigent, picking through the filth like a stray dog.

‘What in Hells’ name happened here?’ I asked, aghast.

‘The queen came to take what was owed her,” said the man, looking dazed. His flesh was spare and cracked, like leather. I was suddenly aware of the bones poking up under his skin.

‘Debts? The orchards? The crop? Blast it, man, what did she come for? Why wreak such destruction across the whole land?’

‘No,’ gaped the man, ‘That’s what she came for.’

‘What?’ I said, with sudden realization.

‘Everything,’ said the man. I released him and he stumbled back to picking through the dirt. I covered my face with my scarf. The black rain fell. I didn’t stay long.”

– Payapop Pritrum, Memoirs

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-63 (Glory)

A familiar face.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-64

Truth

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-65

Once, on the road, Prim met a mendicant sage. The sage was chewing umbral blossoms and sitting in a ditch, filthy and ragged. Curious, Prim crouched down and asked the man what he was doing, for the day was quite hot, and there were beasts and worse about.

“What makes a man the most powerful?” said the sage. “I’ve wondered about this question for a good three days now. I’ve scarcely drunk a drop, or eaten a morsel, or got a moment’s sleep!” Prim itched to leave and continue her journey, but instead gave the man water and sat beside him, as at one point in her life she had been an excellent daughter, and old habits die exceedingly hard.

“Is is the strength of a man’s arm?” said the sage, “Is it the timbre of his voice? Is it his luminous gaze? Is it the way the light strikes his face?”

Prim was sure it was none of these things, and told the man so. “I thought as much,” said the sage, “so I considered further. Is the root of power buried in the soil of violence? Must it be nourished with blood? But many violent men are overthrown with ease by those who use only words. So it must not be so. Does power lie in the throat, then? Does a truly powerful man keep it in his body like a deep and mighty lake, boiling and bubbling in his guts, only to spill forth when he parts his steaming lips?”

Prim was certain it was none of these things, and told the man so. The sage nodded and continued, chewing on his leaf. “I think so too,” he said. “In truth, my conclusion is that the most powerful of men are neither wholly violent, nor strong of voice. The most powerful of men are radiant. Their power suffuses the air around them, and enslaves the will of others around them, by their own unwilling consent. It is an illusory power, which makes it all the more dangerous, since it feeds off belief. Such a man can kill without thinking, if he so chooses. He is sovereign from the laws of other men.”

“What do you think?” asked the sage, looking equal parts exhausted and pleased. Prim didn’t have an answer. “Well, none of that! I’ve been on this for three days!” sputtered the sage. “Which do you think? The violent man, the vocal man, or the radiant man?”

Prim thought of the violent men who had passed through her father’s house, and the iron rod of her father, with which he had not been sparing. She thought of the silken-voiced men that whispered near her father’s hearth. And she thought of the royal men, who came in processions to consult with her father, carried on their palanquins.

“None of them,” said Prim, at last.

“What?” said the sage, aghast.

“The most powerful man has the capability to be violent, charismatic, or sovereign, all,” said Prim, “but he chooses to be none of them, because if he does, he has become cruel, and a cruel man has lost all claim to power.”

She stood up and dusted herself off. “If God were a mere fisherman, he would earn my respect,” said Prim. She gathered her things and returned to the road, leaving her canteen with the sage, who remained there a day longer. He then gave up on the question, and later abandoned his sage’s rags to become a successful farmer.

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-66

A strange mercy

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-67

Long Live the Queen

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-68

“Take care when ye walk when there’s a dim age about. Many awful lights will spring up a-hungering when men’s hearts darken. When the darkling sky reigns, a man’s eyes grow so adimmed he can scarcely tell the glimmer o’ window light asides from the terrible heat o’ the forest fire.”

– Peregrine Knight Enric

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-69

Good luck, Allison.

Kill Six Billion Demons will take a quick break and return with the final part of Wielder of Names next Friday, April 1st.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-70

Tap.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-71

Het and the Three Companions

Part 1

There came a time when the dust of the road grew too thick for Het, and her great stave grew heavy, and the days grew dead and cold. She lifted her brow to the horizon, and spying the faint light of shelter, set her shoulder to the wind and drove on. It was not long before she came upon a cramped and hardy town, set into the earth as though frozen there. The roads were well used, and smoke and steam coiled from hot chimneys, but although the light had not yet died, there was not a soul about, only a few spare and desperate looking dogs. This troubled Het, being a former watchman, but she pressed on, for travel by then had worn her so thin that she feared to trust the strength of her arm.

It wasn’t long before Het came upon a narrow and weather-stained hall, and there a door with iron nails in it. As she entered, something caught her eye. Over the threshold was an old sprig of holly and and a writ of forbiddance against the things that preyed on men, the paper fresh and crisp. Inside the hall a long hearth tried fitfully to push back against the chill that seeped in through the cracked walls. There gathered on the straw were some dozen locals, their faces haggard and creased, and sitting some ways off were three others, who stood out by their color – for the rest of the place was dull and smothered with gloom. The first was a man with a crimson cloak, a beggar knight with a knotted beard and bulging eyeballs. The second was a priest in a stained white vestment, chewing on sweetroot and spitting the juice into the straw. The third was a golden-haired woman with milky skin and burnished armor. She had on her a great number of weapons, all polished to a sheen, and many emblems were fastened to her breastplate, which was fashioned in the likeness of a snarling beast.

Het thought it a strange scene, but stranger still was the cold and hollow silence in that place, broken only by the shuffling of feet, the light tap of utensils, and the occasional sound of the priest spitting into the straw. “Ho friends,” said Het, feeling as if she was breaking glass with her very words, “May I sit by this hearth? The nights grow long and the path is hard and stony.” There was no response, so Het took a second step into the room, and saw at once the grey and downturned faces, the hollow and reddened eyes, and the empty expressions of those seated there. Het saw that the hall, narrow that it was, was built for far more to supper there, and she was suddenly aware of the great emptiness in that room.

“Death has made her abode here,” said Het.

“So she has,” said the red-cloaked beggar knight, and bade Het come share bread.

Het sat down amongst the three strangers. The bread had been broken some time ago, and was stiff and dense. Het chewed it and tried to warm herself, but her cloak was thin, and the the hearth barely touched the room with its heat. “Where is the waymaster?” asked Het. “Dead,” said the priest with the stained robes, and spat into the straw, “And you won’t get much out of anyone here about it. Not a soul in this town dares breathe a word, or lets their boots protrude an inch outside more than they have to. All industry and life in this town fled long ago. It’s as dead as the poor waymaster.”

“How so?” said Het.

“They are paralyzed with fear. There’s a demon about,” said the priest, through his mouthful of root. “It goes about pick-a-pack and kills what it pleases, be it man, woman, or child. So I hear it, at first it began taking a little – mutilating livestock and the like. Then before long it got a taste for man flesh. It hasn’t killed when the sun is high yet, so folks have figured that’s the only way to stay safe.” The priest picked at a scar on his nose and continued. “Trouble is, it seems lately it hasn’t been following the rules. It’s lifting latches and throwing catches and crawling in through windows and spilling the guts of folks in their sleep. So they all figure the quieter they are, the less likely they are to lose their innards.”

“Makes for poor hospitality,” wheezed the beggar knight, and took a long drink from an iron flask at his hip. The golden-haired maiden simply looked on, her expression bitter. Het found the pale woman’s silence troubling. Her massive hands searched for the grip of her great stave, for she was familiar with demons, and had spent a great deal of her days on the road driving them out of the places she passed through. Here, near the edges of the world, they clustered on the hamlets spotted across the bleak landscape and fattened themselves like ticks. “Well, hasn’t anyone thought of killing it?” said Het.

“Didn’t you see the tree on the way in?” said the beggar knight. Het shook her head, as she had no idea what he was talking about. The three other travelers passed a look between them.

“Well come have a look,” said the priest. He heaved to his feet and spat his sweet root out, and grabbed his preaching rod and an old iron lantern, which he lit with a foul-smelling oil. Het followed him as he limped out the door. Strangely, he paused on the threshold, foot planted as though waiting for something. Het was about to ask why, but caught the sheen of sweat on the man’s ruddy neck, and the slight shake in his hand, and realized the priest was afraid. She held her tongue as the beggar knight, and then the golden-haired woman, gathered up their armament, then rose and followed them into the biting dusk. The light had almost wicked away to nothing. The streets they passed through were hollow, and even the dogs had disappeared. Their footsteps echoed off the walls of that barren place, and through the freezing air Het could sense the invisible and terrible grip of fear.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-72

Het and the Three Companions

Part 2

They arrived after a short while at a low hollow in the earth, what might have once been called a town square. In the middle, the broken and knotted form of an ancient tree jutted forth from the ground. In times of plenty, Het could have seen it bear a thick crown of leaves, or perhaps colorful blossoms. At a time it may have been majestic, a sentinel watching over the town. But Het realized now she had been lucky to avoid its sight when the light was better. For as she drew closer to the tree, and the quavering light of the priest’s lantern picked up the jagged tangle of its branches, she could see that they were smeared with a strange, crusted sap. Here and there, the sap had dripped to the ground in smears and blotches, creating a strange patchwork among the gnarled roots. And as the party drew right up to those roots, Het saw that there were tattered cloths hanging from the tree, like discarded laundry, hanging here and there as though carried in by a gale of some sort. Hundreds of them hung there, limp and lifeless in the frosty dusk.

But it was not sap. And they were not cloths.

They stood there a while. Het was not sure what to say. Her breathe had quickened and she thought she might swallow her tongue a moment. She waited until the beating of her heart had subsided, and let the cold fingers of fear retreat from under her skin. “Nobody dares take em’ down,” said the priest finally. The whites of his eyes were very bright, even in the dusk. “Some tried, and were added to the rest. Seems a few would-be-heroes came through town, and thought to go after the beast.” He raised the lantern higher, with slow and deliberate movements. “There’s many up there.”

“Ten,” said the beggar knight. He licked his lips, his bulging eyes flicking back and forth among the branches and their grisly banners. “I see em’ up there. It hung their cloaks and banners next to them.”

“Why does it flay them?” said Het.

“Who knows,” said the priest, “God didn’t give demons a reason for killing. They don’t even need to eat.”

“We shouldn’t be about, now,” said the beggar knight, his eyes wide and darting, his voice barely a croak. The tiny circle of lamplight surrounding them seemed to be dimming, and the hollow spaces between the buildings surrounding the square seemed to swell, filling with a thick and pregnant blackness. The silence was suddenly completely deafening. Het felt as though she herself was missing her skin, and all the eyes in the world were burrowing into her flesh, hard enough to draw blood.

But at last, a voice like a firebrand cut through the silence. “I’m not afraid of any demon,” said the golden haired woman. Her radiant white face seemed to rise up in the lamplight, and Het suddenly relaxed her painful grip on her stave, and her breath grew calm as the cold sweat on the back of her neck evaporated. Had she been that afraid? “I’ve been trying to convince these clods for hours,” said the woman, motioning with her chin at the priest and the beggar knight. “We should go about when the sun is up and slay the beast in it’s lair.”

“You’re as afraid as we are,” protested the beggar knight, his thick beard bobbing as he spoke.

“Nay, friends,” said the woman, “I am never daunted. I will go after it myself if I must.” There was a ring of steel, and she drew a heavy, gleaming blade from her collection. “I had hoped to go while the light was about, but if I must, I’ll head it off now and we can get this whole business over with. If any man join me and cannot banish the measly scourge of fear from his heart, he is of no use to me.”

“Wait!” said Het, not wanting the woman to leave, for if she did, Het knew her fear would surely return. Looking about, she saw the same hunger in the faces of the beggar and the priest, and she knew instantly that the same terror had them in its grip.

“Do you doubt me?” said the shining woman. “I’ve dueled with soldiers of the corpse-legion and won. I’ve killed giants with naught but a broken axe,” said the woman,” and I’ve hacked off the heads of fiends and crawling things from one end of this blasted world to the next.” Het saw that this was true, for the woman’s gleaming breastplate was flush with colorful emblems, and she had a great number of pale and puckered scars crowding her beautiful face. Het saw the confidence with which the woman held the handle of her blade, and the steadiness of her polished boot, and the beautiful line of her strong and confident brow, and knew then that there was not an ounce of fear inside the woman.

“Now join me or quake by the hearth some more,” growled the woman, and made to leave. But the priest put a hand on her shoulder, and in the other raised his lantern high. “I shall join you,” said the priest, “For God spake and said to cast out demons wherever they are found, and forbade us to feel fear while doing our holy work. I may be of some use to you.” But as he spoke, Het saw his quivering hand, and his shaky gait, and his white eyes that were constantly darting up to the tree and its grisly adornment.

“Nay” said the golden-haired warrior, who had seen it too. “Fear has his grip on you, and you’re of no use to me”

“I feel something like fear,” said the priest, “But I cannot be afraid, for God has taught us fear is naught but an illusion. I deny my fear, and in doing so, conquer it” He set his pale face, shiny with sweat, in a resolute expression, and from his habit produced his preaching rod, which he clutched in a strained grip. The golden-haired woman gave him a discerning look, but at last waved him forward. “Very well,” she said, “Stand by me here, and hold the lantern,” she said, and made to leave.

They had scarcely walked two paces when there was a cry. “Wait!” said the beggar knight, “I think I told you I was afraid, but I am sure now I wasn’t. My drink is clouding my mind.” From within his cloak he produced his flask and took a long swig as if to prove a point. Then he produced a stout wooden cudgel for beating away dogs, as was the custom.

“Is that so?” said the golden-haired woman. Her eyes were mistrustful. “I must plead for my food,” said the beggar. He tugged on his beard as he spoke, and Het saw he was shaking almost as badly as the priest. “From dawn to dusk I am looked down upon by even the lowliest of men who pass me. Some think I’m no better than an animal! If all of you think less of me because I am afraid, then I will endeavor not to be!” He puffed up his chest, and thumped his cudgel against the cobbles.

“Very well,” said the golden haired woman, finally. “You may stand behind the priest and steady his hand, for I’ll need consistent lamp-light if I’m to do my grisly work.” She hefted her heavy blade, and the three of them turned to leave, but then Het cried out, for she could feel fear returning as fast as the lamp-light faded. “Not you too, surely?” said the golden-haired woman. “Dare you tell me you are not afraid as well?”

Het looked around at the darkness, and turned her eyes away from the tree, for it was too terrible. She planted her stave, and leaned into it. It had served her well in defending the weak and poor. She had smashed the skulls of many terrible things with its thick end, and she had faced down death many times. Het knew that she was regarded as brave by many people. She was confident in the strength of her arm, and the skill of her swing, and the power of her watchman’s eye to catch out and destroy evil. But at all that time, even when swinging the mighty bulk of her stave into the jaws of death, she could never once say that she hadn’t been afraid. Fear had been her constant companion, as much as she would have liked to have banished it. She could not be like this shining and decorated warrior before her, golden-locked and striding into the darkness with confidence and poise.

“I am afraid,” said Het. “I’m very afraid. Even though I’ve spend the last odd year of my life hunting demons, there’s been a shiver in my grip the whole time.” She felt ashamed. But it was better to tell the truth and bear it on her back. It was what a good watchman was supposed to do, if Het had still been a watchman. In truth, Het was a better watchman then than she ever had been when she wielded a badge and uniform. In truth, Het had slain thrice as many demons as the golden-haired woman. Het was, in fact, a head and a half taller than any of the other three travelers. Her arms were like oak boughs, and none save her could have dreamed of lifting her heavy stave. But she knew none of this, and so she felt ashamed.

“Well then you’re of no use to me,” scowled the golden-haired woman, “But there’s no use either sending you back to the hall to cower. Stand a ways behind the beggar, and hold on to the tail of his cloak. Now let’s be off!” So the golden-haired woman gripped the rugged haft of her blade and set her jaw and stormed off into the night. And behind her, the priest raised his lantern, and behind him, the beggar followed with his cudgel. And at the very rear was Het, who clung on to the tail of the beggar’s cloak, and brought her stave close to her chest, and hung her head low. Her one reprieve was that the heavy and matted locks of her hair, which had grown long and dense during her time on the road, hung like a curtain and hid her shame from the others.

They made a strange party as they crept through those empty streets. First, the golden-haired woman came, with her profusion of weapons, and her steely gaze and confident stride. Each time she stepped, her boots slapped the cobbles with such a profound sound that Het almost jumped. Then came the priest, with his lantern held high. The tremble of his hand made the light waver and swing violently. Profuse shadows would grow and clutch from the hollows and recesses of the crooked buildings around them until the beggar reached out and steadied the lantern with his callused hand. There was no sound except for the slapping of the golden-haired warrior’s boots, and their breath, which by degrees became louder and louder to Het, until it was almost deafening.

It quickly grew so dark that to Het it seemed they stood in the void itself, and nothing else existed in either shape or sound beyond the swinging circle of lamp-light they carried with them. The cold dug under Het’s meager wrappings, and sent nails under her skin. Her knuckles cracked and bled, so tight was her grip upon her great stave and the ragged cloak of the beggar. An hour or more passed, and the truth of that place began to unfold itself in frozen vistas of emptiness. The world was black and total, a place that mocked light, sensation, and the meager heat inside them that they bled out into the uncaring night. Occasionally the golden haired woman would stop and stoop, and they would wait in silence while she examined the earth, or where a low wall of stones had been broken, or where a window shutter had been torn off its hinges. At these times, Het would lash down her breath and release it in a sudden burst when they moved again.

It wasn’t long before the priest’s lantern threw its light on a a terrible scene. The dwellings surrounding them were ransacked and empty, their windows hollow. Their doors were splintered or torn, the contents of their interior vomited into the street. Broken furniture and trash were piled almost wall to wall, so that as they proceeded, they picked their way over the mud spattered detritus of vacated lives. Finally, the golden-haired warrior raised a gauntleted hand and bade them stop. There was no sound at all as they came to a low and hunched building that stood aside from the others. The ground was torn and mangled here, and pressed into it like strange cobblestones were the strange and precious oddments of every day life- a tea set, a shoe, a child’s doll, a crumpled wrapping cloth, an antique plate. There was a single door in the building, and over the door frame, a ward against evil. It had burned up and curled into a black and barely recognizable mess.

Over the eaves of that building, hanging like dull banners, were dried and tattered skins. The door was swinging on its hinges.

“The beast dwells here,” said the golden-haired woman in low voice, and motioned to the building. And as the last of her exhalation left her lips, from the open doorway something terrible and massive poured, and unfolded all its awful limbs and hurtled towards them, screaming.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-73

Het and the Three Companions

Part 3

The golden-haired woman had no fear in her heart at all, and so her feet were quick and true. Bellowing a mighty cry she raised her gleaming blade to strike. But since she had no fear in her, her blow was rash and prideful and full of none of the self-preserving wisdom of longer-lived warriors. The beast was a twisted and hateful thing, and it took the blade upon its flesh and hacked up bloody spittle as the cold metal dug deep into its shoulder. But there the blade lodged, and as the golden-haired warrior struggled to pull a new weapon from her collection, the beast shrieked and lifted her into the air with unholy strength, and cracked her rib cage and sucked her guts out in a second, and that was that.

The priest gave out a cry, and swung his lantern at the demon, for dogma had taught him that such creatures hated light above all things. And indeed, dogma had taught well, for the beast spat a frothy spittle and recoiled from the lantern, and the priest struck out with his preaching rod, as he was taught to do. But while confidence guided the priest’s blow, it was an illusory confidence, driven by his refusal to accept fear. The shaking of his limbs that he had so long ignored turned his blow, and it struck wide. The sweat of his palms greased his grip and his weapon flew from his hand. He tried to utter a prayer, but found to his surprise he could not speak a single word. He cried out as his head was split and devoured, and his lantern was knocked aside and snuffed, and that was that.

With the other two dead, and having little regard for Het, the beggar had absolutely no reason to continue to appear brave, and ran shrieking into the pitch black, where he was set upon and torn apart as he tried to scrabble over a low wall. And that was that, and only Het remained, quaking with terror, unable to see beyond her nose, and clutching a torn shred of the beggar’s cloak.

The demon ceased its screaming, and prowled in circles as it licked its gory chops, for Het was surely easy prey. Het could scarcely control the shaking of her limbs as she heard the click-clack of its nails, and felt the charnel heat of its breath staining the night. Finally, tired of toying with its prey, it fell upon Het all at once with its limbs splayed out, and its eyes all aflame, and its lips ripped open in an awful shriek.

But it what it could not have known (and neither could Het) was that Het had not denied fear a place in her heart of hearts. It was an uncomfortable guest, but a familiar one. Unlike the golden-haired woman, fear quickened Het’s step and pumped through her blood, refining her purpose. Unlike the priest, she knew the ways in which it tugged at her, and contorted her senses, and so she made extra effort to straighten her back and steady her hand. And unlike the beggar, Het cared little for the appearance of bravery, for she did not think herself brave. Lacking an audience to impress, her resolve had not wavered in the slightest, for Het was an aspirant to Royalty, and her mind was as a mighty Tower, with walls a hundred thousand paces high.

So it was that as the monster dove at Het, and reached out with all its hooks and nails and instruments of death, Het struck out with her eyes and limbs all filled with lightning. She swung with a purpose sharpened by fear into a perfect cutting edge, and smashed the demon’s brains out with a single fantastic blow. So powerful was the impact of Het’s stave upon the demon’s skull that the earth itself shook and the villagers who huddled inside their low and lonely dwellings thought the end of the world was upon them.

The demon was flung fifty paces, where it shrieked and died in spurts and spasms. And that was that.

After some pains, Het re-lit the priest’s lamp, and waited and shivered there until morning as the corpse of the beast cooled and froze, and the faint warmth of the sun bled over the horizon. Then she dragged it to the town square, and made to take down the skins hung on the great tree.

When at last the curious villagers emerged, they were exuberant, and lifted Het upon their shoulders, and spat upon the corpse of the great beast. A party was sent to find and bury the three other travelers, and the rest of the grisly display was taken down from the old tree. Het was fed thick gruel with honey, and the light and heat of the town grew in strength with the day, so that by noon, the fires in hearths were roaring, and the houses steamed in the cold, the dogs pranced in the streets, and children emerged to goggle at and pick at the monster’s corpse with sticks.

For her part, Het was happy to see a little life return, and relieved for the light of the day. She slept much of that afternoon, and through the night, and in the morning set again upon the road, glad to be rid of that place. But she took its memory with her, and kept fear a close and intimate friend. Later it would serve her well on the road.

But that is another story.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-74

My ignorance cast in the mold of all things absolute

I sustain forever my gaze. A stare fixed on the distant oblivion

Resting in the inverted state of being dead, non-sensory matter

As all the earth, the wind, the fire, the sea behold and learn to pity me

-Meshuggah, ‘Catch 33’

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-75

Legacy of the Red God

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-76

“I like thunderclouds. As soon as ye see ’em, ye can be assured when they’ll come around. It’s a damn courtesy when one rolls over the horizon, I tell thee.

It’s the thunderclouds you don’t see that get my worries all astir.”

– Splitpin, devil binder

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-77

“Old trees bend hard

For old trees most scarred.”

-Saying of the Forked Monks, 448th iteration of the Splinter Root Anhang

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-78

Temptation

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-79

“It’s said a man should put prudence before power. Well them that says that don’t have power do they? And them that has power don’t have the time to think about prudence. They pull their bloody swords out and hack away!”

-Mars Pallatrix, Belligerent Knight

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 4-80

There was a night when YISUN’s speaking house was full beyond measure. The Gods were deep in their cups, and time was stretched like sheet glass to accommodate the length of their assembly. A score of pearlescent techno-saints labored with very little mirth and a great deal of sweat to prevent it from snapping completely.

During that time, there were thirty and one questions asked.

Here is the first question: “What is the taste of death?” asked Pragma, whose beard was woven with the bark of the grieving tree. He was a melancholy fellow who scarcely could be found imbibing penumbric nectar as was the fashion of that age.

“Steel,” said Ogam-an, who was accustomed to war. But this was a poor answer. It was not a metal word that was sought.

“It is a sweet taste,” said Ovis, who spoke only in hollow noises, “I crave it. Build me a coffin out of it.”

And they did, for Ovis was fond of coffins, especially those made of glass, air, or rhetoric. But very shortly she grew discontent, asked for holes to be drilled in it. When pressed, she admitted she expected death would very quickly become boring and she had a lot of business to complete first.

“I amend my answer. It should not be craved. Death has a sweet taste because it is a circle-cleaver,” said Ovis. “Otherwise it is more bitter that the bitterest ash.”

“This is a good answer,” said YISUN.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-81

Famous last words

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-82

“May God drag down the lids of those that watch the sleepers, and may their rest be unperturbed.”

-Prayer to Incubus

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-83

Knight of Thorns

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-84

“I can’t stand it!” howled Aesma, “Your elegies are dull! Your saints are all liars. Your youth are pallid and weak, and your wine tastes like piss. One cannot as much fart in here without being preached at.”

“Out, demon!” said the Hierophant, and brandished his stave of authority. A score of priests stood beside him, robed in their aprons and strewn about with their golden chains. The light of good and righteousness sharpened their noble features and rugged eyes.

“Were violence not forbidden in this most holy temple, we would have thee out by the stave,” boomed the head priest. “I pity thee, crawling thing, for thy black heart is all shriveled and malnourished without the guidance of moral authority!”

“At least I’m not being sucked on by old men!” spat Aesma at the holy congregation. She then pulled down her loincloth and mooned them, to great dismay. Then the staves came out after all, and she was thrown out of the temple in a short order.

“Get thee a husband,” said the exasperated priest, and slammed the door shut.

Aesma thought this was not a bad idea at all. Husbands were rumored to be better than dogs. She set off.

-Excerpt from ‘Aesma and the Red Eyed King’

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-85

“And then was given to him a mighty wheel, all heavy of iron, and rimmed with brass, and inside the wheel was a thing called Truth. And it was said to him ‘Hear, if ye wish to lift the burning wheel, ye must first be broken upon it’. He agreed, for he knew his holy duty, and he was taken before the priests, anointed, and ordained, and broken for seven times seven days. Such screaming has ne’er been heard since that time.

But at the end of that time, they took him off, and they cast his limbs in steaming metal, and even though he never healed, he could lift that wheel, though no man could have hoped to. And inside the wheel was the awful thing called Truth, and he broke a thousand times a thousand sinners on its rim.”

– Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-86 (Ball)

The flickering light of Glory

>>LARGER SIZE<<

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-87

Golden Chains

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-88

“First of all you will eat all the bodies

No matter they pray for freedom they’ll kill you

Forward you crush those going backwards

The wolves are now your lords

Voracious flames upon the earth

Second step you eat all the creation

Swallow the trees, the lakes and all the valleys

Crush the moon and drink the river flowing

Deeper than ocean blue

Burning all that, burning all that

They teach you how to conquer and rule the world

The towers that you built so strong, no man can touch

They tell you how to find and raise the fears

And let them grow inside of your heart, they need no walls”

-Gojira, ‘Wolf Down the Earth’

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-89

Aesma and the Red Eyed King

Part 1

Once, and always, there was Aesma Ten Yondam, who was a very powerful goddess. She had anywhere from two to forty five arms, she was exceptionally strong, and had an insatiable red hunger for dominion. She knew five ways of smiling, ten of the forty five forms, and all the syllables of Royalty, though she understood none of them. In her blackened heart she let many wicked schemes and plans ripen and kindled an endless rage against the inadequacy of the universe, which made her one of YISUN’s favored companions. She was poor at Patkun, could not tolerate pedantry, and her ribald jokes and raucous behavior frequently got her thrown out of YISUN’s speaking house.

On one such occasion, Aesma was thrown out long before she could get at the wine. Her wailing and pounding at the doors of the speaking house drew nearly two score of pilgrim-saints, who were passing on the King’s road. When they approached to inquire about her distress, she engaged them in a ferocious battle that lasted the better part of five hours, as was her custom. The battle was so fierce that it cracked two roaming moons and threw part of one into a primal sea, which boiled away to steam.

“That’s better,” sighed Aesma, when the dust had settled and the sea had finished boiling. “Hey,” said Aesma to the battered and bloodied pilgrims as an idea struck her, “Where can I get some wine about here?”

“Foul creature! If it’s nourishment thou seeks, get thee the great and holy Temple of the Disc of the Sun,” croaked a furious pilgrim. “Drink thee of the consecrated wine there, not thy common lecher’s milk, and purify thy fetid soul!” Aesma was grateful, and turned the man into an exceptionally large golden fish as way of saying thank you, for she was fond of well-colored fish. She grabbed a strand of frozen light and broke it into the shape of a door. This was an old and popular trick which the god Un-Kaon had taught her in return for Aesma stealing sweets, for Kaon had a terrible sweet tooth. It was called Division, for it was a cutting art, of which there are thirty and one.

Aesma leapt out of her skin and through the door, and then back into her skin, which was waiting on the other side, through a tangle of twisted planes of space. As she emerged, the temple of which the man spoke lay directly ahead of her. It was a grand and stately building, with sandy white columns, and the Holy Sun Disc enshrined there was visible for fifty or sixty leagues about, so bright it was.

The priests offered libations and chants to the great altar of the Sun there, and payed homage to the stars, and studied in minute detail the nature of a man’s soul. Each was a scientist and philosopher of clean and manly visage, who wore a neatly pressed apron. He discarded ostentation and valued virtue above all else. Members of the temple spent many hours contemplating the proper roles for women and men, the just ways of proper rulership, and the ways in which a man’s perfect qualities could be compounded in his body as in his mind. They had there a great golden scale, with which the head priest measured the weight of a man’s vice against his virtue. It was a place of great influence on the enlightened thinking of the time, a temple of grand seriousness and moral import.

For this reason, of course, Aesma immediately hated it. She lasted about thirty minutes in the public service. “I can’t stand it!” howled Aesma, “Your elegies are dull! Your saints are all liars. Your youth are pallid and weak, and your wine tastes like piss. One cannot as much fart in here without being preached at.”

“Out, demon!” said the Hierophant, and brandished his stave of authority. A score of priests stood beside him, robed in their aprons and strewn about with their golden chains. The light of good and righteousness sharpened their noble features and rugged eyes.

“Were violence not forbidden in this most holy temple, we would have thee out by the stave,” boomed the head priest. “I pity thee, crawling thing, for thy black heart is all shriveled and malnourished without the guidance of moral authority!”

“At least I’m not being sucked on by old men!” spat Aesma at the holy congregation. She then pulled down her loincloth and mooned them, to great dismay. Then the staves came out after all, and she was thrown out of the temple in a short order.

“Get thee a husband!” said the exasperated priest, and slammed the door shut. Aesma thought this was not a bad idea at all. Husbands were rumored to be better than dogs. She set off, her quest for wine quite forgotten.

Aesma looked far and wide for a husband. She broke a sunbeam fifty times by Division and split her mind into fifty shards and hurled those shards, molten, through the gaps therein. This was a trick she stole from Ovis by watching her bathe. Each shard grew into a splinter-clone of Aesma’s evil body, and did great mischief as it ravaged the earth, befouled the land, frightened the populace, and scoured the nations of the universe for husbands. But after five hours had passed this way, Aesma grew frustrated and annihilated all her extraneous selfs in godsfire. It took some effort, for their accomplishments in such a short time had been exceedingly high, and one had even installed herself as queen.

Exasperated, she resolved to ask the God Un-Ogam, who she often came to with difficult questions. Ogam was in his White Aspect, and thus a little more contemplative. However, he was a ferocious god of battle, and not a philosopher, and thus rarely gave good answers. Aesma liked visiting him anyway, as he was older than her and loved to spar. So Aesma rode her chariot to the gore-soaked battlefield where Ogam was doing battle with a dozen minor gods of justice, and landed it amidst the melee “Ogam!” shouted Aesma, “Find me a husband! Surely you have a slave that will do?” Ogam couldn’t hear Aesma at first, as he was in a berserk rage, bending the great stave of the bird-headed god of Law UN-Ghum in half. When the stave snapped, Ogam hurled Ghum into the sun and calmed down a little. He and Aesma were very close friends.

“I have many slaves,” said Ogam to Aesma, “but none will do for you, little sister. None are your equal. Come back later, and I will find you a great, roaring god for your spouse, hung like a bull and with muscles like an elephant!”

Aesma was discontent, and smacked Ogam in the forehead. Ogam hardly noticed, as his skull was thicker than a fortress wall. This was one of his excellent qualities, in Aesma’s view. “I’ve waited enough!” fumed Aesma, “Why, just now I was preached at just for wanting a drop of wine! If you can’t find me an equal, tell me, who is my equal?”

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-90

Aesma and the Red Eyed King

Part 2

Ogam was perplexed, but he was saved when Boratus of the Silver Scales smashed into him with his six-wheeled chariot and knocked him off his feet, sparing him an answer. The other ten gods of justice leapt upon Ogam at once with their clubs and staves and holy rods, and began to beat him savagely. Aesma found this uproariously funny.

“You, wicked one!” said Ys-Perator the Crown of Truth, “How can you stand there and cackle? Begone. We are punishing the tyrant Ogam for his drunken transgressions with the Mistress of the Petal Tower.”

“You’re doing a terrible job of it,” pointed out Aesma, snorting with laughter. It was true. Ogam had grown ten stories tall, so that the strikes of the gods of justice were like matchsticks upon his mighty hide. The gods scramble to pin him down with shards of moonlight, but before they could impale him he grew a score of arms and plucked them by their cloaks and rained blows upon them that would have pulverized normal men into gruel.

Perator gripped her stave with white knuckles and gave Aesma a scornful look. “Well, go off then. Don’t you have better things to do?” she growled. She was of half a mind to drive Aesma off with the rod, as she had done many times before.

“Not until Ogam tells me who my equal is!” protested Aesma.

“Fool!” said Perator, “Anyone would be hard pressed to find your equal in wickedness. There are none with such a soul stained with evil save the Red Eyed King who is kept in the Crucible of Punishment, and he is singular in his accomplishments!” Perator realized her mistake a moment too late, for Aesma had already leapt into her chariot and taken to the skies.

The Crucible of Punishment was a terrible place. Once, the old god Muam was discontent with the angle of the sun upon his mountain lean-to. To this end, he made an arduous journey to the end of the universe, where he found one of the ancient trees that held up its corners, and stripped one of its branches into a mighty pole two and a half billion leagues long. He trudged all the way from the edge back to the center, where he thrust the pole deep into the earth, and using it as an axle, turned the world by five degrees, and was content.

The world-axle was withdrawn, but the hole it left remained. And halfway down that hole, was the Crucible, which was steeped in perpetual Chthonic gloom. It was a mighty fortress, an iron vessel full to the brim of the worst and most despicable beings to defile the earth, and for this reason it was kept deep and out of sight of the innocent. The Crucible was lashed to the walls of the hole by great chains large enough for a man to walk on, and it had one hundred and five watchers – powerful saints of justice clad in white funeral robes. Each saint had dipped their eyes in quicksilver, rendering them blind to worldly concerns, but able to keenly discern the impurities within the souls of any visitor. It was for this reason that when Aesma arrived, all one hundred and five scrambled with great speed from their watch towers and arranged themselves in battle formation.

At first the saints were aghast, for they perceived very clearly that a being of tremendous evil was upon them, and wondered for a second if one of their prisoners had in fact escaped. But then they recognized Aesma, and a collective groan went up among them.

“I’m here for the Red Eyed King!” proclaimed Aesma.

“The King shall ne’er see the lands above again,” said one of the saints. “He has proclaimed his enmity against the forces of good in clear terms. He is a sun swallower and a world destroyer, a tyrant and a demon of pure malevolence.”

“He sounds dreamy,” said Aesma, “when can I see him?”

The saints narrowed their silver eyes and set their spears as a thicket of blades against Aesma, for they knew her well. “Never!” they said in unison.

“Great saints!” wheedled Aesma, “Please, have pity on a poor and desperate girl! I merely want to lay eyes upon this wicked king. Surely there must be some task I can accomplish to prove my worth to you?”

With great reluctance, the saints raised their spears a fraction of an inch, for there was an air of true desperation in Aesma’s voice. They entered into a hushed and grim discussion, for there was among them a general belief in redemption, no matter how small the chances. It was considered among many of the great gods of justice that Aesma was in fact an idiot, and shouldn’t be blamed for her wide and colorful list of transgressions against the common good.

“Very well,” said one of the saints, “Here are your tasks. First, you will find the names of forty two men who truly have not sinned. For if you do not have the discerning eye to find purity amongst the decay of this world, then you do not have the means to pass through these halls with true intent.”

“Ok,” said Aesma.

“Then you must bring us the heart of a leviathan, which is only given to those righteous of purpose.”

“Ok,” said Aesma.

“You must know,” continued the saint, “You can not cut out the heart, or bring it by violence alone. It must be living, and we must see proof of its offering. Even the greatest of questing knights have been turned aside by one of the mighty beasts, for the smallest of evils.”

“Next, you will travel to the holy mountain of Saboth-Ur, where the monks of the Empty Voice keep the silence. For a year and a day you must dwell on that mountain and utter not a word. You must discard your possessions and go about naked as the day you were born, but rid yourself of all lustful ambitions and aspirations of the flesh. You must cast aside your battle consciousnesses and ancillary violence forms. You must rid yourself of the poetry of destruction, break your weapons, and purge the breath of death from within your lungs. Bring us then a token from the abbot there that proves you have undergone these trials. With the heart and token both, we will let you in to lay eyes upon the wicked King.”

“This sounds too complicated,” protested Aesma, “Let’s fight instead.”

So they did, to their great dismay. The battle lasted a day and a half. So much of Aesma’s molten blood was spattered above that it melted through three of the iron chains that held the Crucible in place and caused it to tilt. Later this would cause the Crucible to swing against the wall of the pit and crack, releasing a hundred and fifty of the world’s most evil beings onto the surface, who caused so much trouble that it took several wars and the participation of no less than twelve supreme gods of battle to recapture them.

The saints were very powerful, and were able to slay at least five of Aesma’s war forms, but by the end of the fight, Aesma had hurled all of them into the pit, where they fell for seven hundred years before hitting the bottom and starting their arduous trek back up. She plucked the spears from her flesh and caved in the iron gate of the crucible and limped into its cramped and labyrinthine interior. There, inside, in the deepest pit, she beheld a tiny prison cage with bars made of red hot iron, so that they constantly burned their inhabitant. And kept inside that cruel cage, with charcoal-like flesh smoking, was the Red Eyed King.

He was truly, as Aesma saw, a being of quite singular evil. Though his skin was black from the fire, and cracked and red-raw from his prison, he did not flinch a bit from his torture. Tendrils of dark and oily vapor rose from his charred body, and he had the cruel face of a tyrant. But by far his most notable feature were his eyes, which burned with an insane and hungry red light. As Aesma saw his eyes, she saw instantly that they were sparks of an awful dark flame that would grow to consume the world if they were given kindling.

They were pinpricks of the light of destruction that would shine at the end of the universe. It was for this reason that Aesma instantly fell in love with him.

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Aesma and the Red Eyed King

Part 3

This was a massive problem for Aesma, for she had never before felt love of any capacity, so at first she thought she had fallen violently sick.

“Stop that at once!” she gasped, clutching her chest, “You are using some foul art to explode my heart!”

“What misbegotten wretch are you?” said the Red Eyed King. He had a voice like drifting ash and it was said the moment you heard it you would not forget it for the rest of your life. It could reduce a normal man to a babbling, terror stricken mess. Aesma merely fell in love a little more.

“You!” she screamed, panting and sweating, “I demand you become my husband!” There was no response from the Red Eyed King, and Aesma was taken aback. For most of her problems she had solved quite easily by beating them to a pulp, and her usual approach didn’t seem to apply in this case. She was thoroughly stuck.

“I’ll beat you to a pulp!” she said, hesitantly.

“An odd threat to make to a man in a cage,” said the Red Eyed King, “I refuse.”

Aesma’s heart jumped again, and to her immense surprise, her face screwed up in a tight and pained expression of grief, and molten tears began to pour from her eyes in great rivulets, searing the iron floors.

“What are you doing to me?” she wailed in confusion.

“Nothing,” said the Red Eyed King, perplexed.

Aesma did not hear, for she ran, blubbering and wailing from the deepest pit of the Crucible to its exterior, her tears burning holes in the floor the entire way. And once she was outside, through her steaming eyes she groped for and found the tiniest particle of matter she could and smashed that particle into an explosion so violent it sent plumes of white fire shooting up and down the shaft, and hurled her up and out of the pit, where she grabbed a passing shaft of sunlight and broke it into a door she could travel through. When she hurtled through that door, the light in her destination was clear and unwavering, for she had returned to the only place that knew anything about husbands in her esteem, the Temple of the Disc of the Sun.

When Aesma landed, she ran right up the temple steps, leaking molten fire from her eyes, and knocked on the great temple doors so hastily that she bashed them right off their hinges. They flew right through the mid-day congregation, sending worshippers flying and completely demolishing the large and stately Altar of Philosophy. In any other time Aesma would have found this hilarious, but the matter of her leaking face and jumping heart terrified her, so when the hundred manly priests of the temple came to beat her away with their staves, they found her apologizing profusely and were thrown into great confusion.

“What’s wrong with me?” wailed Aesma.

The priests had a hurried and argumentative conference, and then the Hierophant said, “You appear to be suffering from a broken heart.”

“I think I will die!” said Aesma.

“I assure you, you will not,” said the Hierophant, with very little sympathy. “How did you come by this condition?”

“I found a husband, as you asked,” said Aesma, “but he will not take me!”

A great discordant cry went up then among the priests, and they threw themselves into furious debate. Some of them wanted Aesma out by the stave immediately, no matter the truth of her words. Others could not believe that such a wicked being could find love. But the sentiment that won out in the end was the rather self indulgent and completely wrong notion that if Aesma had indeed found a husband, she would be far better served by having a man to reign in her wanton and vile habits. The priests were very firm in their belief that the moral authority of a good husband could tease out an enlightened womanly virtue from even the most wretched of creatures, and therefore they ceased to see Aesma as a base and vile creature beyond redemption, and began to see her as a great conquest and affirmation of their own righteousness. They began to imagine in their enlightened minds the power and prestige of a tame and demure Aesma, the most infamous and despised of goddesses. This was a fantastic mistake.

“Aesma Ten Yondam,” said the Hierophant, “Do you truly desire a husband? Have you found such a man, with a nature to guard against your womanly vice? The priests of this good and holy temple can hardly believe that you have.”

“I have!” protested Aesma, and wiped her eyes clean of fire, “What should I do?”

“You must promise to submit to his superior will,” said the stern Hierophant. “It is accepted in this society that a woman should do three things for her husband: tend to his meals, darn his clothing, and obey his every command without question. In return he will be your protector, guide, and counselor, and will not lift his hand against you in violence. Go to your prospective husband and promise him these things, and he will surely take you as a wife.”

Aesma was very tempted to beat up the Hierophant, for she hated commandments, and she hated things that came in threes. But for once in her life, her desperate desire for a husband overrode her natural instinct to apply violence directly to her problems. This was very uncomfortable for her, but Aesma’s desire was the strongest among all divinities, for she was the Master of Want. So while the priests saw her twitch at their commandments and readied their staves in fear, Aesma merely knelt and bowed her head quite awkwardly, for she was unused to such things. “I will do as you say,” she said, and in quavering voice recounted the things the Hierophant had said to her.

The priests were ecstatic. “Go and bring your husband here,” they said, “And we will join you in holy matrimony, under the light of the great Sun Disc.” They were very firm in their belief that a great moral victory had been won, and saw Aesma off with great pride and vigor as she grabbed a passing sunbeam and rode it all the way back to the Crucible of Punishment.

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Aesma and the Red Eyed King

Part 4

Aesma was in such a great rush when she arrived at the battered iron gates of the Crucible that she made a very ungainly landing and sent the whole fortress swaying side to side. She rushed through its dreary halls, thick with the howling of the evil beings imprisoned within, and arrived with great haste at the tiny red-hot cage of the Red Eyed King.

“I’ve come back!” gasped Aesma, out of breath.

“What are you doing?” said the Red-Eyed King, for indeed he saw Aesma was trying to accomplish something that she seemed to greatly struggle with.

“I’m trying to prostrate myself,” said Aesma. It took her the better part of the morning, and even then she could only manage it for five seconds at a time. But in those five seconds she said this: “I promise you that if I become your wife, I will tend to your meals, and darn your clothing, and obey your every command without question. In return, you must be my protector, guide, and counselor, and you must not lift your hand against me in violence.”

The King mulled this offer over, and saw that there were many fine things for him to exploit, for his wicked mind was as twisted as Aesma’s, and he too could bend the world into shapes to his choosing. This was the source of his power.

“I accept,” he said, and his evil red eyes burned every brighter. Aesma could barely contain herself, and jumped for joy, which only sent the entire fortress swaying and shaking more violently. “What should I do, oh husband of mine?” said Aesma. “Let me out of this cage,” said the Red Eyed King. So Aesma struck the cage with all her might, and bent the bars asunder with a shower of sparks. The bars were very hard and white hot, and Aesma was burned quite badly, but Aesma was so love-struck she hardly noticed.

“Ah, I am so weak,” whispered the Red Eyed King as Aesma carried him out of the cage. And Aesma saw that this was true, for the King’s form was charred and pitifully thin from his confinement, so that he could barely stand. She cradled him and fussed over him. “Oh what I can I do for thee, my husband?” she said, desperate for his affection. “Please make for me my favorite meal,” said the Red Eyed King.

“Your favorite meal?” said Aesma, who hadn’t anticipated ever having to actually cook.

“Yes,” said the Red Eyed King, and his eyes flashed with an evil glare. “It is a plum from YISUN’s private garden. I used to eat them all the time when I was free, and I crave their sweetness now. If it is thy wish to be my wife, then that is the succor I crave.”

“Oh, that’s easy!” said Aesma, who was privately very relieved she wouldn’t have to cook, and didn’t give one thought to what the king had asked for. For the plums of YISUN’s garden could grant eternal life, and their juices nourished the flame of the body to an immense, roaring brightness, so that any who ate one would be almost impermeable to harm. Aesma dropped the Red Eyed King with very little ceremony and leapt to it, and very shortly she had returned with a glistening plum from YISUN’s garden, plump and ripe. Normally the garden was guarded by a red ten-antlered buck, who was resolute in his duty, exceedingly calm, and the most powerful fighter in the universe, for the wide trunks of the plum trees were littered with the bones of his foes. But when Aesma had arrived there and asked for a plum to please her husband, the buck had been so taken aback by the notion of Aesma submitting to marriage that he was completely stunned for a whole three seconds, which was more than enough time for Aesma to snatch a plum and leap out.

“Ah, excellent,” said the Red Eyed King, “Now feed it to me, wife.” And Aesma did, bit by bit. And bit by bit, the Red Eyed King fleshed out, and the char and scabs fell away from his flesh, and his wounds sealed, and he grew more and more in stature until he stood three times Aesma’s height. And Aesma saw that he was a tyrant king with night-blue skin and a wild mane of hair like a tangle of shadows, and great fangs and tusks jutting from his black lips. His nails were wicked claws, his arms were like corded iron, and his hands were large so as to easily snap men’s necks. For this reason Aesma fell in love just a little bit more.

“Oh but husband,” said Aesma, blushing and giggling, “You are quite naked.” She was thoroughly enjoying being a wife so far.

“Yes,” boomed the King, and gave a mighty evil laugh. “Wife, attend me!”

“Oh what can I do for thee, my husband?” said Aesma. “Mend my clothing!” commanded the Red Eyed King, “I had one time a hauberk made from the scales of the Ur-serpent that coils beneath the ash of the world. The feathers of the screaming Roc I took for my mantle, my shield was of the tail-hide of the Leviathan that haunts the deep, and my sword was carved from the bone that is found in the heart of a World Tree.” This was all a fantastic lie, of course, for the King had never had such fine or rare clothing. And if he had been girded in such armament, so empowered by the plum he had eaten, the Gods of justice would never have had any hope at all of defeating him in battle. He would have laid such waste to the universe had never been seen before, and burnt it to a cinder, so that his red eyes could lay their baleful gaze on only smoldering ashes. This was his one and true desire, for like Aesma, he was an idiot and did not understand the true nature of Royalty.

Aesma, of course, did not detect his hidden intentions, for she was smitten with love. “At once, my husband!” she said, almost tearful in her joy, and strode off to gather what she could. She was so focused in her matrimonial bliss that she scarcely gave any thought to the monumental scale of the tasks she was accomplishing. First she dug until she found and tugged upon the tail of the mighty Ur-Serpent, whose body was thicker around than a city. Yanking it from the earth, she wrestled with it for three days, during which she bashed enough scales from its body for her purpose. Then she dove into the black and limitless ocean, and swam until she found the leathery and ancient Leviathan of the deep. Aesma was very bad at fighting underwater, and couldn’t hold her breath for very long, so the battle went very poorly for her at first. But very shortly, she became so fed up that she summoned a score of transcendental fist arts and rained such horrific blows upon the water around her that she beat it back for a full day, turning the bottom of the ocean into dry land for a short while. The Leviathan was very slow on land, so Aesma bludgeoned it into unconsciousness and stole it’s tail while it slept.

Next Aesma tracked the Roc, and clung to its back for a full week while it pecked her viciously, but she was able to pluck enough feathers to make a fine mantle. Then she rode her chariot to the edge of the universe, and fought through the howling winds, the scouring cold, and the limitless demons that poured in from the edge of existence there. And after a harrowing journey, she was able to hack out a heart-slice of the fourth World Tree that held up creation using a vorpal shard of void-ice. The tree was mighty enough to withstand its mutilation, and it recovered in time. But until that time it was injured enough to bow, just a little, so for a while an entire corner of the universe sagged quite terribly. This caused great consternation in YISUN’s speaking house and among the multitudes of star-gazers, astronomers, sorcerers, and techno-saints that measured such things, but Aesma was scarcely aware of this. In a fervor, she fled to Koss’s workshop and stole his lesser chisel when he wasn’t looking. Then she crouched over a public hearth for a full week and banged her husband’s armaments into shape.

When Aesma returned, she was truly a terrible sight. Her skin was puckered and swollen from the venom of the world serpent, she was frost burned from her trip to the edge of the world, and she was bitten and punctured all over from her great battle. But she was beaming, for she was still terribly lovesick, and in her arms she had a great hauberk of shimmering dark scales, a glorious feather-mantle, a mighty hide shield, and a white and curved sword carved from the iron-hard heartwood of the world tree.

“Here is your armament, O husband,” she said, out of breath and beaming with joy. “This is a sword that will cut thirty six ways at once!”

The king was greatly pleased at the gullibility of this poor fool, and he donned his impermeable garb.

“Oh what else can I do for thee, my husband?” said Aesma, totally consumed with love.

“I am not thy husband yet,” said the satisfied King. “I think it is time for my return to the surface world. Who are the sorry fools that sent thee?”

“Oh yes, I almost forgot!” said Aesma, prancing about in joy, “Will you return to the Temple of the Disc of the Sun with me and join me in marriage? We can have a massive wedding ceremony and I’ll invite everyone in YISUN’s speaking house to attend.  No, everyone in creation! We can have drinking, and dancing, and fighting, and fighting and dancing, and afterwards I can build us a great big house and we can have lots of magnificent and gigantic children!”

“Yes, let us attend this ceremony,” said the King. “Make of thee a beast I can mount and we will be there promptly.” And Aesma did. She turned herself into a massive black beast with wings of the darkling sky and talons the size of a man. And the king sat astride her back and rode her out of the pit, his red eyes flashing the entire way.

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Aesma and the Red Eyed King

Final Part

So it was that the Red Eyed King rode Aesma through star-winds and yawning gulfs of space-time to where the Temple of the Disc of the Sun stood glowing in its stately majesty. And when Aesma landed with the King astride her back, the priests from the temple marched out from between its columns in graceful stride. Their aprons were neatly pressed, and their collars were starched and spotless, and their gleaming rods of office rapped out a pleasing synchronous pattern as they came down the temple steps. For indeed, the priests were expecting Aesma. Their hearts were full of the pride of their victory, and anticipation to see what manner of man had conquered Aesma the Wicked so thoroughly. Already they had spread the word of Aesma’s forthcoming wedding widely across the world, and it had become table talk across all creation in short order. The temple at that time was for that very reason bustling with activity. Worshippers, gossips, and philosophers alike had all come to see the triumph of order, reason, and light over womanly discord, darkness, and wantonness.

But as the priests descended into the temple courtyard, they beheld that the throng gathered there around the new arrivals was recoiling in horror. There was no proud and virtuous man standing there, for as the King dismounted, and as he stood to his full monstrous height, the priests beheld that he he had a pure and perfect aspect of a destroyer. And at once, all their notions of victory melted away, for victory itself is of course a ridiculous notion.

“What is the meaning of this?” boomed the Hierophant.

Aesma made of herself a woman-shape again, and dusted herself off. “I have done as you said, oh great teacher!” she said, throwing herself to the dirt in joy. “It is so grand and great to be submissive! I have brought my husband meals, and darned his clothing, and he has even mounted me across the stars.” She blushed and looked demure as well as she could, which was to say quite terribly. “Now I am here to be joined in holy matrimony, and to submit to the will of my husband, as you have asked of me!”

“What has overcome you?” said the Hierophant, aghast.

“It’s love, I think!” said Aesma, “Isn’t it wonderful?”

The priests racked their staves against the King, and charged with a mighty battle cry. But the king swept up his shield, which was a thousand times heavier than stone, and their attack was dashed against it like water breaking on a cliff.

“I must thank you for inspiring this poor fool to free me from my long imprisonment,” said the King, in his voice like drifting ash. Aesma was too dazed to notice being called a fool and merely gazed upon the King through tears of admiration.

“Now that I’m free,” said the King, “These eyes of mine see a world even more putrid and insipid than in ages past. I ache for its destruction, and since I only deal in fire, fire shall by thy reward.” The king pulled his Roc-feather mantle tight about him, and drew into him all the dread powers and venoms of the night. He invoked his war forms of which he had ninety and two, enclothed himself in roiling smoke, and crowned himself with cinders. Planting his feet, he grew to such monstrous size that his flame-circled brow seared the clouds, and the earth shook and shuddered with his mighty inhalations. The crowd at the temple scattered before his majesty, and black clouds obscured the light of the Great Sun Disc as the king reached out with taloned hand and crushed it into a thousand splinters. The light and power of the Disc was exceptionally potent – a great beacon of strength and wisdom that had drawn in pilgrims from distant empires to bathe in its majesty. For this reason it seared the king just a little when he crushed it with his hand, but then its light was snuffed and it fell in shards to the earth. As an oily night fell upon the land about, the virtuous and manly priests of the Temple knew immediately that they had made a terrible mistake.

“Wife,” roared the king, in a voice that seared the mountain tops far away, “Bring my mine sword!”

And Aesma brought the king his massive sword of bone, that could cut thirty six ways at once, and he enwreathed himself in a dread black fire that could burn up the land, and immediately set about his rampage. First, he smashed aside the priests and roaming saints that came up to defend the temple, for their staves and starched aprons could do naught but turn to char beneath his onslaught. He toppled the white and stately columns of the Temple and he burned the altars to cinders with the mere heat from his body. Most of the crowd and congregation was slaughtered and torn to bits from the gale of his passing, and the Temple was consumed by hellish flame.

So satisfied with his work, the King turned his red gaze away from the temple, and found all the land about unspoiled and pure, which offended him greatly. He took five great strides across the land, and each stride burned a forest up and smashed its trees to matchsticks. On his fifth stride, he found the great domain of the king Mavamatri Io, which was a shining white city that had long revered the great Sun Disc, with orderly avenues and leafy boulevards of gilded paving stones. As they saw the King approach, the city guard blew the great horn of defense, and to its clarion call rallied five thousand men at arms in armor made from gleaming fish scales, whose chariots were drawn by horses shod in silver. The warriors of that city could draw a bow heavier than any man in five hundred kingdoms, and they were brave and righteous men, bearded and muscled from toil and training. They loosed upon the King their shafts, but once again he drew up his bulwark and dashed the rain of arrows into a pitiful shower.

The King struck out with his sword that cut thirty six ways, and it cut the air with a fierce and awful wind that blew the walls of the city asunder and killed seven hundred men at once. And in very short order, the King’s red gaze beheld only ashes were the great city had stood, and he was pleased. Aesma, for her part, was so lovesick that she could only sit in stunned admiration in the smoking ruins of the temple and watch as her would-be husband lay waste to the land about. But very shortly, it occurred to her that the marriage ceremony would still have to take place, so she staggered to her feet and skipped after the King, following the wake of his destruction.

And indeed, that wake grew very large indeed. On the first day of his rampage, the King razed ten cities to the ground, and slew a score of demigods. On the third, he had razed thirty five cities, and slew a hundred and thirty two demigods, and thrown twenty temples into ruin. And by the seventh day, he had razed ninety five cities, slew five hundred and sixty demigods, boiled seven seas to dust, burned the College of Stars to the ground, set alight the Ulaptis river, and slaughtered the god Un-Utram in single combat. And each day, Aesma would follow along, giddy with love, mend his battle-worn armament, sing his praises. But as the sun grew low and the only light was from the cities burning to the ground around the King, Aesma would tug at his ankle and say, “Oh husband of mine, will you come back to the temple with me? Have you forgotten our ceremony?”

This grew extremely vexing to the King, who truly cared little for Aesma and could harbor nothing so infinitely complex as love in his small and dull heart. And by fits and starts, the King made the exact same mistake as the priests of the Temple. He began to relish in his conquest, and he grew assured in his victory, for the swathe of carnage and devastation that the King had carved was visible even from YISUN’s speaking house, and it’s smoke was so thick that it blotted out the sun for near half of creation. Grand and imperious armies rallied against the King, and were dashed to pieces upon his armor, and everywhere he went he left a sea of dying men and horses. Even the meta-dimensional halls and transcendent planar-estates of the Gods began to pay attention to the King, and rallied their celestial hosts. War gods girded their loins and clad themselves in steaming armor and summoned their sword arts for battle. The Great Gods of Justice summoned the minor Gods of Justice from where they were harassing Ogam, and together they shouldered their spears and clothed themselves in molten law, and marched for the battlefield.

But even the Gods themselves could do little but slow down the King’s ferocious rampage. For battle as they might, they were unable to strike a single wound against the King, who was encased in his invulnerable armament. And the King did not sleep or tire, for his hatred of creation and his burning rage against the insipid beauty of the universe gave him the awful power of Want, which filled his limbs with unstoppable force. He shattered the smoking spears of the Gods of Justice, and threw down the Gods of Law with a strike from his shield, and did battle with Sivran, God of Conquest, for seven and one days before Sivran retired to his palanquin from exhaustion.

So indeed, the King’s victory seemed assured. And it was there at the height of his conquest that he decided to rid himself of Aesma.

“Oh husband of mine, won’t you come back to the temple with me?” said lovestruck Aesma, for the twentieth time. The King looked at her with his terrible red eyes and said, “Get thee gone, gnat! Thou hast served thy purpose, now play in the ashes a while!” And he took his sword that could cut thirty six ways and smote Aesma with a blow so mighty that it sent her hurtling across the world and blew all the love clean out of her. When Aesma landed, she was pouring tears again. She staggered around, sobbing, until she found herself trudging through the ashes of the Temple of the Disc of the Sun. By this point she had been crying for a good day and a half, so her eyes were very sore and blurry with fiery tears. But she could see just well enough that she made out the sorry and filthy figure of the Hierophant of the Temple, who was poking through the smoking mess that had been the mighty congregation hall with what remained of his staff of office.

“Oh teacher!” sobbed Aesma, and shook the poor Hierophant from side to side, “I did what you asked! I followed all the rules of your temple! Is it because I’m too wicked that I must be punished so?”

“You awful, wretched creature!” shrieked the Hierophant in rage, “Look at what your foolishness has wrought! Get up and set this right at once!”

“Oh I was struck by my husband,” said Aesma, “And now my heart is aflame with pain!” And she sobbed and rolled around in self-pity, covering herself in ashes and moaning. The immediately Hierophant saw that he had made a second, and far greater mistake than getting Aesma to marry in the first place. By trying to tame Aesma, he had inadvertently removed one of the only weapons that could be relied on to trounce pompous fools such as the Red Eyed King with any degree of reliability.

“Get up!” sputtered the Hierophant, “You have to fight!”

“Oh but that’s against the rules!” sobbed Aesma.

“You useless moron!” said the Hierophant, “The great Disc of the Sun is shattered! This temple is brought to ruin, and the world will ne’er see its like again, even in the whole history of creation! The stars themselves burn with the evil you have unleashed! Who cares if you were struck?”

It was true that the Temple would never return. But Aesma was not listening, for a sudden thought had hit her like a stone, and she stood up.

“Say!” she said, nurturing a growing anger, “If my husband strikes me, doesn’t that break our marriage vows?”

“You absolute dolt!” said the Hierophant, “You haven’t even been married yet!”

“Oh!” said Aesma, standing up, and becoming herself again. “I’ll beat him to a pulp!” She smacked the Hierophant for good measure, and felt fantastic. Then she set off in a dead sprint through the charred and smoldering landscape to where the Red Eyed King stood, wreathed in ruinous power, and laying waste to the world about him with great bolts of black fire and scorching ash. Five hundred gods were doing furious battle with him, and the light of their burning combat obscured the sky itself. Aesma instantly filled to the brim with an unstoppable berserk rage upon seeing his wicked face, and she began to tantrum, as was her custom.

“You!” she screamed, and laid hand upon the nearest thing to her, which was a large rock. She hurled it with tremendous force, where it struck the King in the thigh and made hardly a dent. Aesma was so angry, she turned to the next largest thing she could find, which was a stray horse. The horse was a well-bred steed that had once pulled the chariot of Mantos Am, God of Tax Law, but Aesma cared very little. She gripped the horse by its mane and flung it bodily at the king. It bounced of his thigh and he barely turned from his heated combat.

This so enraged Aesma that she turned to the next largest thing she could find, which was a boat – a mighty war barge a hundred paces long or more that had washed ashore when the river was vaporized by the king’s passing. She flung it at the king with terrifying force, and it glanced off the back of his hauberk and shattered into a thousand splinters of wood. This got the king to turn a little in Aesma’s direction, but at that point he gave her so little regard, so enthralled by victory as he was, that he spared here only the tiniest sliver of a sneer before turning back to his fight and swatting three Gods of war out of the sky with a swing of his hand.

Aesma couldn’t take it at that point. She dug her fingers in the earth, and with a mighty heave, flung part of the entire battlefield at the King. It struck the king square in the shoulder, and knocked him off balance as clods of earth, men, horses, and errant war machines went flying everywhere.

“What are you doing, miserable creature,” said the King. He threw off his combatants and turned to face her, and aligned all his aspects of war and mastery, armor states, and vorpal blade arts in her direction. He was an awe-inspiring sight.

“I think you’re the handsomest man I’ve ever met,” said Aesma, and she was quite sincere, “And you’ve got such a great work ethic! But you struck me with that sword that cuts thirty six ways, and more importantly you let my love for you pour out of me and die cold and withered on the floor. And that I cannot forgive!” She leapt at the king, and summoned up her destroyer form, and rained such ferocious blows upon him that the other five hundred Gods made a circle of their shields and gave her wide berth. But the King was a mighty warrior, and would not yield, so clothed in the invulnerable armor that Aesma had made for him. Any other warrior would have shriveled in dismay at the impossibility of victory in such a situation. It quickly became apparent that Aesma could not beat the Red Eyed King in battle. He was equally as fast as her, better trained, and his war aspects were more deadly. Most of Aesma’s killing blows bounced harmlessly off his shield, while others were rebuffed by the scales of his hauberk.

But Aesma did not cling to victory. Her lack of success merely filled her with a hot and infinite rage.

With a free hand, she groped around until she found the largest object she could find, which happened to a nearby mountain, and with impossible strength she tore it up by the root and dashed it across the Red Eyed King’s shield. The mountain shattered with a colossal rumble and the King was thrown back, but still he would not yield. So Aesma found the next largest object she could find. She raised herself up and reached into the sky and tore a passing moon from it’s orbit. And as the King staggered back from the mountain blow, Aesma ripped the moon molten hot through the atmosphere, and smashed it down into the King’s sword. Moon and sword both were blown into a million pieces, and the battlefield was rent asunder and turned into a maelstrom of screaming men, and gods, and horses, and chunks of stone and clouds of earth. Up and down ceased to have meaning, and the stars were blotted out by the cloud of destruction. But still the King would not yield.

So Aesma reached even further out, and pulled stars, one by one, and hurled them at the King. And the King hunched low and charged at Aesma through their fiery trails as they hurtled to earth in great explosions. He kept coming, even as his shield was blown into pieces, and gripped Aesma by the shoulders, so Aesma grabbed an Eye of Night, which was a star so large it had broken through space-time and collapsed into a hole infinitely more massive. She bashed the king over the head with it, and he was stunned and bloodied, but managed to knock it away from Aesma, where it flew off and devoured a nearby lunar kingdom.

“Yield!” said Aesma. But the King would not yield. He was exceedingly foolish, and still clung to his dreams of conquest. This allowed fear of losing to make its way in his limbs, which poisoned his grip. Instead of snapping Aesma’s neck, as he should have easily done, she instead squirmed out of his hold.

It was exactly then that Aesma did a truly impossible thing, since by then she was thoroughly fed up. She flexed her fingers, and planted her feet, an inhaled a mighty gale of breath, and reached out to grab the fabric of the world itself. And with a deafening roar, she lifted, and the entirety of creation shook.

“What are you doing?” said the King, aghast. And the other Gods who were hurled too and fro through that chaotic battlefield echoed his cry, for all could feel it.

“I’m going to lift the Wheel and beat you over the head with it until you give up!” puffed Aesma.

And the King saw that this was true. Aesma had indeed lifted the Wheel. He knew then that he had lost utterly and completely, and yielded. He lay down his shattered sword, and shuffled off his battered scale hauberk, and dispersed his dread aspect. If there was anything to be said about him further, it was that he was a graceful loser.

Even still, it took some convincing by the five hundred other Gods and the celestial hosts to get Aesma to put down the universe, but eventually she did. She remained upset all the while the King was escorted back to the Crucible of Punishment and locked inside an even tighter cage, and only cheered up once the key was turned in the lock, removed, and melted. Aesma was brought before Payam, who was foremost in YISUN’s Speaking House in those days, and sentenced to a hundred days as a scullery maid as punishment. Strangely, Aesma seemed rather meek about the whole affair and accepted her punishment gracefully as long as she was brought wine once in a while.

“You seem changed, Aesma ten Yondam,” said Payam to Aesma.

“I’m done with husbands,” said Aesma, who was despondent. “I think it’s time to grow up.”

“Oh?” said Payam, with great concern. The other Gods in YISUN’s speaking house also leaned in closely at this, for they were very worried at what could possibly go wrong next.

“Yes,” said Aesma, “I’m getting a dog.”

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-95

King of Shapes

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-96

Blade of Want

Kill Six Billion Demons will be going on a short hiatus while I ready the material for print. We’ll return Tuesday the 12th of July with a regular update schedule and the end of Wielder of Names.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-97

Pyre

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-98

Entrances

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-99

“Here is my sword,” said Intra. “Your semiotics cannot contain it. Its blade is made of gloaming steel, look how it whispers!”

“But Lord Intra,” said the assembled, “You have no sword!”

“So it is,” said Intra.

-Psalms

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-100

“A man who strikes without thought can cut God.”

-Meti’s Sword Manual

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-101

“The air is full of the plaintive cries of fools struggling pitifully to bend the arc of their own destruction. Thus it has always been.”

-Ryo ten Ryam, Swordmaster

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 5-102

>> LARGER SIZE <<

“Mastery: the power to fill a man with death before his next exhalation.”

– Book of War, Knights Belligerent

The next Kill Six Billion Demons update will be Friday, August 5th with a two page spread.

Going to give this one another day in the oven to not rush it, but here’s something if you want to spoil yourself a bit

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-103 to 6-104 (War of the Teacups)

>> FULL SIZE <<

“If it has a pulse,

Take its skull!

If it builds a house,

Smash it flat!

Strength is my God,

The God of Shapes,

If my God should fail me,

I will kill him too.”

– Sword Law Mantra of the Knights Belligerent

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-105

“You will know the rulers of the cosmos by two signs: first, the star in their brow, which is the mark of their lordliness, and shows you that they are my kin. Second, you will see that their chariot wheels are oddly shaped. Their rims are made of rough and heavy iron or steel, not at all like the polished and gilded rims which you see carrying mundane royalty. Do not be deceived by their simplicity. They are built this way for the express purpose of grinding the bones of men into a fine powder.”

-Au Vam, address to his councilors (dated 264 BSC)

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-106

Rage

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-107

“I wasted five hours of hard fighting and a hundred and fifty of my best men bringing it down. Then it exploded.”

– General Yross of the Yellow Moon Brood, on fighting angels

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-108

Collapse

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-109

The master hunter/Ah! He loves nothing

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-110

The Maybe Sword

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-111

Lord Intra gathered his retainers, who were hungry for tutelage. “Lord Intra!” said his sandal bearer, “What is the first step on the path to Royalty?”

“There are no steps,” replied Intra, “It is zero-sum with your reality. It is not measured in finger-lengths.”

“Lord Intra,” said his bodyguard, “Is the path to Royalty the path of struggle, then?”

“No,” said Intra, “One may attain it without any effort at all. It is, in fact, the antithesis of struggle.”

Intra’s steward was very discontent with his master’s evasiveness. “Lord,” he said, “Allow us lowly men some small measure of understanding. For sympathy’s sake, and the sake of we good and loyal servants, please tell us in plain language the nature of Royalty.”

“I will tell you precisely what Royalty is,” said Intra, “It is a continuous cutting motion.”

-The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-112

The print volume drops tomorrow! (September 7th, 2016)

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-113

Escape

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-114

“Yes, she is beautiful. Radiant, even. But make no mistake, our queen is star-kin. She is one of those hungry immortals that peel the flesh from the corpse of heaven, like the starving ghosts from our oldest and most terrifying stories. Our queen is not merciful. Our queen is our eternal slaver, and her whips are ten-thousand miles long.”

– The last king of Mykos

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-115

“Here’s what I know of the masters of this universe: there’s a law in old Uros that if one lays a finger on them, he shall lose his arm up to the elbow. But in the throne world if one lays his gaze an inch too high, he shall have his head removed at the neck.”

-Magister Periases of the Yellow City

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-116

The return

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-117

“Lord Intra,” said Intra’s sparring partner one day, “You are called Lord of Swords. Yet you are a man, and men make poor swordsmen.”

“It is true,” said Intra, for nearly all of the famous sword masters of the day were women and the ya-at, who were three sexed. This tradition was rather long in the bones, and rumored to have been started by a famous vagrant who rarely cut her hair and lived in a barrel. There was popular theater about it, in those days.

“Men are too preoccupied with their swords,” said Lord Intra, “They get distracted.”

“You mistake my meaning,” said Intra’s sparring partner, “What I mean is this: you are a mere man. What can you do to the new gods of the Red City, with their whips of fire and their heavy chariot wheels?”

“I am not concerned with enmity,” said Intra, “I am very skilled in Pankrash Circle Fighting”

“It is true you are very fierce,” conceded his partner, “But my son’s fighting beetle is also very fierce. Could his beetle fell a lion?”

“That depends,” said Intra, “How skilled is the beetle in Pankrash Circle Fighting?”

“Beetles cannot learn Pankrash Circle Fighting, Lord Intra,” said Intra’s attendant, and made a bitter motion.

“Don’t tell the beetle that,” said Intra, who was very skilled at smiling. “If you don’t tell him he will learn it anyway and cut the lion in half with a single blow.”

-The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-118

“The Knights Belligerent have a single rule to their Sword Law and it is this – killing is the first instinct of man, before breathe, or even thought. Therefore everything a man does, every single detail of his day, from sleeping to eating, should be an argument with himself on the restraint of said instinct. Naturally, they don’t tend to get along with each other very well.”

– Ampater, merchant prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-119

“A beggar I passed in the market once remarked to me that if the gods’ brows were wreathed in starfire, their heads must get awfully hot,” said Lord Intra to his sparring partner.

“What a strange remark,” said his partner, “How does one respond to that?”

“I told him he was right,” said Intra.

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-120

Devastation

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-122

Once more

Kill Six Billion Demons » Wielder of Names 6-123

Seeker of Thrones, the next book of Kill Six Billion Demons, will begin on Friday, October 14 2016.

It’s been a long and crazy ride! I expected I’d finish this book in a year, but it took a little longer. Thanks for reading!

Kill Six Billion Demons » SEEKER OF THRONES

“There! – A star, in the depths,” said Enyis to the Boar King.

“The journey is dark and perilous,” said the Boar King, “And we have no vessel with which to hold it, neither of clay nor iron.”

“I will swallow it,” said Enyis, “And even should my body be consumed by flame, it will at least light our way to the surface.”

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 1-1

Beginnings

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 1-2

“[…] then there is the one [called] Ghost Maker, a man of great repute and peculiar habit. It is said he is so skilled with an edge, he killed the great iron-skinned Champion of Urash with a scissor blade. None who are present at the duel dispute this account other than to say the scissors also did not survive the conflict.”

– Histories of the Yellow City, volume 4

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 1-3

“Where be the colors I once knew?

This bright is scorch me eyes some’n fierce

All I crave is ash”

-Old devil’s elegy

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 1-4

“In some parts they know the master of Throne as the god Zayus Patrom, father of lightning. In others they know him as the great warrior called Angel-Breaker, who fights with a spear dipped in molten silver. Only one name is bestowed upon him in common across all the wretched cosmos: King.”

-Sayophraxes, Silent Sister of the Wax Covenant

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 1-5

Throw your daughters on the pyre

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 1-6

Coup

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 1-7

“It is unfortunate that the only near-complete and exquisitely detailed chronicle of the Rising King was so elaborately embellished [21].

[21] I use the word embellished here with both a great deal of care and an extreme and calculated distaste.”

Pangoxes, Meta-historian of the Retroactive Record Monks, Circa 35 Third Conquest

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 2-8

“If I say my real name, the horrible curse that torments me will surely come true,” she continued. “For this reason, I cannot allow it pass my lips but a piece at a time. For now, it must suffice to call me ‘stranger’.”

– Codex of the Rising King

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 2-9

The Hunger

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 2-10

God of Thieves

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 2-11

“Listen Enyis, and listen well. For though her breast be scaled about with thickest iron, the fastest way to a monster’s heart is through a mirror.”

– The blind antiquarian (Enyis and the Boar King, Act 2, scene 3)

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 2-12

“And there a bloody compact was made, to seek treasure in the deep and hollow places of the world. And the blood was mixed and thrown on the fire. Iron was grasped, and sweat was wiped from many a brow, for the road ahead was long, and descended far beyond the grasp and ken of happy men.”

– Enyis and the Boar King

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 2-13

“The deeps are treacherous,” said Enyis. “It’s cold, and my ribs hurt. I fear my poor heart will give out before long. How on earth can I protect it, if not by steel?”

“You can’t,” said the Boar King, “A hero must always wear his heart on the outside.”

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 2-14

Sacred Flame

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 2-15

Masks

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 2-16

“Enyis kept with him in his descent a totem – a gleaming trinket of sorts. This served two excellent purposes: first, when the deeps began to tear at Enyis, he would rub it with the pads of his fingers, and it had a wondrous soothing effect.

Second, should Enyis die, the glimmer of the trinket would make finding his body quite easy.”

-Enyis and the Boar King

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 3-17

Mathangi meets the Destroyer

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 3-18

“Here is the first rule of Sword Law: a sword is a tool for splitting men. It doesn’t matter what your intentions are, whenever you swing it, it will do what it was made for. Take that law and put it in the secret nook next to your heart, my student. It will serve you well.”

-Ryo ten Ryam

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 3-19

“Here is the second rule of sword law: a sword is not subtle. It is a naked instrument, hungry for blood. When you grasp its handle, treat it as you would a deadly viper.”

-Ryo ten Ryam

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 3-20

Adversary

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 3-21

“O God of Shape, O Twitching God of color, carve our bountiful flesh with thy beautiful razors.”

-Unknown

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 3-22

Parade of Fools

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 4-23

“Deep in Sanctum there is said to dwell a kind of monster, a basilisk of sorts. One look at it is said to drive men mad, not because its visage is especially horrifying, but because its flesh is a kind of mirror, and in it a man sees his true and full measure for the first time.”

-Peroxes

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 4-24

Ego

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 4-25

“In Lethyx dwells a white princeling who doth not sleep, but feedeth upon the sleep of other as a tick fattens itself upon a bloated vein. There doth he perch, and sifteth through the minds of men as one sorts marbles, to shatter them at his pleasure.”

– Book of Black Kings

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 4-26

“The Idiot: unshod and ungirded, he grasped at power, and found himself burned.”

-Goblin Proverb

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 4-27

“To those who doubt, your wounds will never heal

To those who question my creation – I’m not real.”

-Meshuggah, ‘I am Colossus’

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 4-28 (King of the Pit)

‘The plain man dressed only in coarse cloth, and his feet were bare, but this was simply a clever disguise, for his unassuming exterior, and even his very flesh, were mere wrappings for the awful and terrible flame inside of him. Enyis could see it poking through his eyes and mouth.

“Enyis,” said the King of the Pit, “Take this flame and with it you will ascend to the surface world once more. Love and light will be yours once again, and you will know the embrace of your family.”

Enyis almost accepted, but as the king held the flame in outstretched hand, Enyis felt its sickening heat, and knew instantaneously that if he took that flame, it would become him. It would never stop burning him until all that was left would be a hunger for more fuel. And he knew it was a clever trick by the King, who could never truly leave the pit, to get him to take that flame to the surface world, where it would burn forever.

It is said Enyis never saw the sun again, and wandered the deep for the rest of his life. But for the alternative, it was a far better fate.”

-Enyis and the Boar King

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 4-29

“Do not stare too long at the Pit. Do not underestimate the Pit, you sorry little fools. It has claws, and it will not hesitate to sink them into your unwilling flesh and drag you shrieking into the dark.”

– Mother Om, Imperiatrix of the Gates of Fire

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 4-30

“The Belligerents have a name for Preem Jagganoth: God’s Monster. You see, to them, he is a divine messenger, blessed by YISUN’s angels to cut away weak and useless things from the world and forge it into a more pure form. To them, he draws all evils into himself, like a great poison, in order to expunge the world of corruption.

Most people, I believe, take their worship as further proof of their insanity.”

-Peroxes the younger, S.C. 1440

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 4-31

Ambrosia

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-32 to 5-33

>FULL SIZE<<

Alice in the City

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-34

A traveler once asked an old peregrine knight the path to the Red City. “Why by the seven winds would you want to head there?” replied the knight, who was very wise.

“I hear the streets are paved in gold there,” said the traveler.

“It’s true,” said the peregrine knight.

“Then why the note of caution in your voice, friend?” said the traveler, curious.

“Because every ounce of gold in that gods-forsaken city is filthy as a midden heap,” said the knight, “So you might as well be walking on shit.”

– Common parable

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-35

“They say power makes for the best intoxicant.

If skesh wasn’t cheaper, I’d have to agree with them.”

– Pallatrix, Belligerent Knight

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-36

“And Prince Kassardis was given three vessels of wine, and three wives, and three rings to gird his ring-fingers. But Kassardis’ heart was heavy at his wedding ceremony, and no amount of wine could float it up from the depths it had sank to. For this ceremony held with it deadly promise, for it was custom in that part that the prince, within a week of his wedding, should choose a favorite wife. This was a marker, a battle drum of sorts, between the three wives of the great house of Ium-Am. The battle only ended when one wife stood, scarred and bloody, and the remainder were dead or exiled.

Kassardis was sick of this slaughter, and the hollow wreck of a man he called his father. His three wives were very pretty, but they were cruel as hawks. Even as he stood there besides the marriage pool, he could see the bloodlust glow behind their veiled eyes. It was for that reason he took his naming dagger and traveling cloak and fled his tower one summer night.”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-37

“Vastoki was Prince Kassardi’s first wife, and the youngest. She wore only one ring and kept her fingernails expertly trimmed. Her dress was a short cut, her vela plain and good for traveling, and she wore eye glasses. Her teeth were filed to points, and she kept sparrow feathers tucked behind her ear. She was a master marksmen with the long rifle, with which she had trained her whole life, so that on her wedding day she could swiftly assassinate her rivals. By the time it had reached her wedding day she had hunted five men in practice and was thirsty for blood.

It was for this reason she was the first to set out in search when the prince was found missing.”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-38

“Littari was Prince Kassardis’ second wife, and though she was not quite as young and vigorous as his wife Vastoki, nor as patient and wise as his wife Ipreski, her bloodlust was the strongest by far. Where Vastoki was thin and lithe, and favored traveling clothes, Littari wore a full set of eidolon-wrought armor, which she cleaned and polished constantly, and gave her the appearance of a gargantuan demon. She was twelve spans tall, and had enormous teeth. Her bulging muscles meant tailoring for her was a nightmare for her maids, so she spurned their service, and preferred to travel with her cook, sandal bearer, and sword-master only.

Littari was far too strong to use a sword, for any normal weapon would break and shatter with the immense force she put upon it. Instead, she dragged around with her a great and heavy iron cauldron, with which she would beat opponents to death quite savagely. It was to this pot which the prince’s other wives had promised to chain her and force her to serve as a scullery slave, and so she had taken an oath of revenge to pulp, cook, and eat them.

Littari was by far the least popular of the prince’s three wives, and so she only learned of his escape after the young Vastoki had started her pursuit. Nevertheless, by the second day, she was not far behind her quarry, and her steps shook the dust from the eaves of peasant homes as she passed.”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » DEVIL CONTEST

hello it is me YS Voya

Here is a bird devil contest for all of you. The deadline for this contest shall be Tuesday, April the 4th! If you have submissions you can put them in the ksbd tumblr, submit them to ksbdabbadon@gmail.com, or simply post them on this comic page.

May you reach concordance!

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-39

“Ipreski was Prince Kassardis’ last and oldest wife, though barely by a few years. Despite her relative youth, however, her hair had already become white as snow. Some gossiped about how it was a curse from a vengeful sorcerer, for the offenses of the princess Ipreski’s family were broad, and no less horrible for their breadth.

Ipreski kept her white hair long, and bound up in coils that wrapped around her waist five times. She was exceedingly lazy, and would rather order one of her numerous and weary servants to fetch something than walk a mere five paces. She was pampered and fond of food and wine, and complained loudly if there was no place for her to lounge about.

This laziness of hers was a clever mask, for Ipreski kept all her energy coiled up inside of her like a spring. She was a master swordswoman, in the old tradition of her family, and her muscles were like steel cables. Such was her skill that she could kill a man and sheathe her sword before the first drop of his blood hit the ground. She had no need to pursue her opponents, for they could not touch her, and was instead content to wait until they came to their slaughter. This was the source and secret of her arrogance. She loudly mocked Kassardis’ other wives, especially the large and slow Littari, for she believed there was no chance they could beat her in open combat – and it was true.

It was only fitting, therefore, that the languid Ipreski was the last to set out in pursuit of the young prince in her palanquin, with her full retinue trailing after her.”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-40

The Business

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-41

“Prince Kassardis knew his three wives were cunning and vicious in equal measure, and the journey ahead would be hard and grueling. Therefore the very first thing he did was to seek out the Very Wise Frog, which lived on a nearby hill known as King’s Rock. The road to the Frog was well worn by pilgrims, so it was not a hard climb for Kassardis, who wore his fine leather boots, but it was steep.

“Very Wise Frog,” said Kassardis, when he reached the summit, “This brutal life is like a steel cage. My father’s kingdom is built on the stacked bodies of his officers. He sups on blood. His surviving wife picks his gray hairs and pushes toy soldiers around from her sedan.”

“Your father’s kingdom is very large,” said the Very Wise Frog.

“I will escape my own blood,” said the resolute Kassardis, “And flee to the land of Samura, where their cities are built on covenants of peace and no blood is shed unjustly. The journey is long and hard, so please give me some advice, as my family has treated you well.”

“Samura is a myth told to small children to comfort them,” said the Very Wise Frog, “Your wives are much faster than you and will catch up to you, then beat you savagely before returning to the time honored ritual of trying to murder each other.”

The Prince was aghast. “I refuse this life of violence!” he said.

“Violence is inescapable,” said the Very Wise Frog.

“Don’t gloat at me, frog!” said the Prince, “My trial is only just beginning. Surely you have some other advice for me?”

“No,” said the Very Wise Frog.

“Frog!” said Kassardis, growing panicked, “What do you mean by ‘violence is inescapable’?

“It is,” said the Frog.

“You’re a liar!” said Kassardis.

“No, I am not,” said the Frog, “Nor have I ever been. Violence is inescapable. Inseparable from life itself. Permanent. It is fixed in your cosmology. Forever. I could go on, but that’s besides the point.”

At this Kassardis was so enraged that he threw the Frog off the summit of the mountain. It bounced of a cliff and split like a wet melon, dying instantly, and posthumously proving its point to Kassardis.

Kassardis, for his part, wept.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-42 (Xe Tao Alley)

“Due to the broken sun, the shadeside of Ashton is in a perpetual state of being two in the morning. This has, of course, had predictable results on both the food and the people.”

– 52 Righteous Fist Crushes the Flowers of Sin

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-43 to 5-44 (ASHTON)

>>FULL SIZE<<

“Ashton is many things, but primarily it is bright. Bright, and loud enough to wake God.”

– Unknown

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-45

Guardians

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-46

“Beware, my child, the pits of the Deep,

The things that move unheard,

The Rake, the Whip, the bladed Shriek,

And the dreadful Goliant Bird.”

– Children’s rhyme, Shades

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-47

“Prince Kassardis was swift, and he was young and his mind was honed. The land about his kingdom was barren but not fierce, and the roads were well kept. Even so, the sun had barely dipped below the horizon before he knew he would soon be caught. For as he glanced back over his shoulder, he saw the cruel glint on Vastoki’s eyeglasses as she traversed the bluffs behind him. And a little further back than that, even for all this distance, he thought he could hear the awful grinding of Littari’s cauldron as she dragged it across the bare earth. And even further back, just cresting the horizon, were the bright and lazy banners of Ipreski as her palanquin was borne along into the desert.”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-48

“Prince Kassardis struggled mightily to rid himself of his pursuers, for despite what the Very Wise Frog had told him, he still held within his heart the vain hope that the peaceful land of Samura existed and he would someday find himself upon its gleaming shores, free of his wives and throne.

First, he fled the road, and spying a low and reeking gully hurled himself therein. There, the mud and brambles were so thick that he could barely move, and the fetid water was choked with the corpses of animals that had become trapped in the muck. Thick clouds of flies bit at Kassardis as he struggled heroically onward, until at last he heaved himself from the mud, his trail almost completely invisible, and made for higher ground.

Indeed, when the clever and keen Vastoki came upon Kassardis’ trail disappearing into the gully, she was taken aback by his cleverness. But with her specially made eye-glasses, Vastoki’s eyesight was keener than a hawk’s. She picked out the shining pieces of thread from Kassardi’s silver waistcoat clinging to the brambles, and was back on his trail in scarcely an hour, her fellow wives close behind.”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-49

“Seeing his three wives draw ever closer and that his first plot to foil them had failed miserably, Prince Kassardis doubled his pace. Knowing he would never outrun the cruel Vastoki on open ground, he hurled himself into a sea of dead grass, and used up all his water trying to escape her grasp. A night and a day later, he emerged on the shores of the river Dal, and spent the last of his money hiring a fisherman to take him downriver.

The fisherman’s boat overturned in the town of Kol Varas, and there Kassardis did a very shameful thing. He sold to the first rich man he could find his fine silk headwrap, and his father’s silver dagger, and his waistcoat lined with sparrow feathers, which were marks of his lineage. With his sack of foreign coin he hired six strong men, belligerent knights from the wars of conquest, and hid himself in a wheelbarrow, hoping against hope that his ploy would be enough.

Vastoki arrived in the dusty town not hours later, and she was almost immediately set upon by the mercenaries that Kassardis had hired. From his hiding place, the young prince watched as Vastoki was caught in their ambush and fought desperately against stave and sword.

Vastoki was very fast, but also very slight, and no match against the six knights in close combat. Though beaten, she merely retreated to lick her wounds and set camp outside of town. One of the knights nearly lost his head to her long rifle when he ventured out to confront her, and that was that for a while.

As night fell, the knights returned to Kassardis. “Where wandereth thee, young one?” they said in their foreign dialects.

“To the land of Samura, where I may find peace and an escape from violence,” said the exhausted Kassardis, from his hiding place.

“Violence is inescapable,” guffawed the mercenaries, and robbed Kassardis of everything remaining that he owned, for they had seen he was a fool from the start. They threw him naked and beaten into the street, and spent their winnings on drink.

Kassardis, his swollen eyes full of tears and knowing his time was short, stole a woman’s garb from a washing line and a small hunk of bread and fled into the desert, the final words of the Very Wise Frog echoing in his ears.

The belligerent knights, for their part, died not hours later when they were squashed into a pulp by Littari’s iron cauldron. ”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-50

Invocation

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-51

“Kassardis knew his time was running short as he fled into the wastes around the town of Kol Varas. Instead of his naming knife, he had a stale hunk of bread, and instead of his prince’s garb he had only a stolen woman’s garment, thin and nearly useless against the freezing cold of the desert nights. He knew his three wives were not far behind, and despair was his constant companion. But still, he pushed on, wholly consumed with the conviction that he would find the peaceful land of Samura, or die in the process.

By the third day, when the desperate prince’s wives were closing in rapidly, the scorched and tortured soles of Kassardis’ feet felt stone and not sand beneath them. Kassardis looked up and saw that he had stumbled upon a mighty road, broad and sweeping, that passed through enormous stone arches into the distance. The road was crumbled with age, but Kassardis recognized at once that it was the famous Arched Road of Samura, and a great burst of hope filled his heart.

Kassardis followed the road until it was dark, and lightness filled his step, so that he did not even notice when the sun had gone and the nightmare chill of the desert began to grasp at him. All through the night, he followed the road, and the night itself could not touch him. And when the sun grazed his face, Kassardis was still walking, but he still had not found the kingdom of Samura. It remained like this for a day longer, until Kassardis, sustained by hope alone, and dying of thirst, stumbled across a battered old sword master encamped by the side of the road.

The sword master was aghast at Kassardis’ dreadful condition, and at once tended to him, and gave him water. “Young man,” said the old sword master, “I am Ket Amonket, the gate keeper of the kingdom of Samura. There is nothing for you here. Turn back.”

Kassardis was shocked. “Uncle!” he gasped, ” If you are indeed the gatekeeper of that mighty kingdom, please take me there at once. I am fleeing from my three wives, who wish to drag me back into a world of bloody tyranny!”

“You are here already,” said Ket Amonket, and motioned to the desert, “This is the kingdom of Samura, burned to ashes and ground into dust for decades.”

Mortified, Kassardis could only gape at the empty desert. But here and there, the young prince could see what he had been blind to while hope had still filled him up: the corroded remnants of great and stately buildings and fluted columns poking out of the desert like bleached ribs.

“Samura was founded on the principles of peace,” said Ket Amonket, “So it was sought out by many across all the ten thousand realms. Those that sought to flee from the world of violence.”

“Violence is inescapable,” moaned Kassardis.

“Yes,” said the old man. “Very wise words indeed. Soon this land contained more people than it could sustain. Violence once again began to grow in the hearts of its people, like a foul disease, until it blossomed into destruction. It was a foolish hope.”

“Then there is no hope for me,” said Kassardis.

“There is still yet,” said Ket Amonket, resolute. “Let me do one favor for you, young man, as one who has already lived too long. You must flee to the canyon south of here and hide yourself there as best as you can, until the sun sets. I will tell your wives you vanished into the desert a day past, and throw them off your trail.”

“Thank you Uncle,” said Kassardis, “I will hold on to my hope a little while longer.”

“Hold on to this,” said Ket Amonket, giving Kassardis his sword, “It will protect you a lot better than hope.”

Kassardis took the weapon very reluctantly, and would have thrown it away at the first chance he had, but the words of the Very Wise Frog continued to tear at his mind, so he clung on to it as he fled for the canyon.

“At the very least I’ll give the boy a good head start,” Ket Amonket assured himself as he watched Kassardis’ three wives trek over the dunes a little while later.

The sword master was wrong. Ipreski severed his wind pipe before he could get a single word out, and all that passed his lips was a spray of blood . Kassardis got a head start of about ten minutes.”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-52

H I M S E L F

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-53

“A curious fact – the Institute of Fractal Archivists insisted to me today they had found a peculiar period of history prior to the Second Conquest that according to their ontoscopes does not exist. Nearly two centuries to which a huge host of historical inaccuracies and inconsistencies have been attributed – I am familiar with the period myself. They theorize that this is because the period only existed for some people; that is to say the flow of time itself, the turning of the great wheel, was tampered with.

It is, of course, a preposterous explanation, though so very convenient I am inclined to believe it.”

-Payapop Pritram, personal notes S.C. 2420

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-54

“Kassardis, for his part, could do little but flee to the canyon, carrying the old swordmaster’s weapon and clad in near-rags. Once there, he hid himself among the reeds in a low pool in the bottom of the canyon. It was cool, and shady there, and the coming evening began to wash over the land, and Kassardis felt, for the first time in days, peace enter his heart.

It was with dread then, that he heard the footfalls of his three wives entering the canyon not an hour later, and knew that his time had run out.”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 5-55

“Kassardis knew instantaneously that the words of the Very Wise Frog had come true. For the canyon had three entrances, and down each came one of his wives, armed and thirsty for blood. First, small and cunning Vastoki with the glint of her rifle sights, then enormous and brutal Littari, dragging her iron cauldron, and finally the refined Ipreski, languid and resplendent on her palanquin. And one after the other, all three of their cruel and lusty eyes fell upon Kassardis.

Kassardis tried to pray, but found no sound would come out of his lungs. He tried to hide deeper in the reeds, but he found the mud unyielding. He tried to shut his eyes, but his heartbeat drowned out his thoughts. So instead, he clutched on to the old swordmaster’s weapon like a good luck charm, its cruel metal cold against his bare chest. A strange thought entered his mind and gripped his tendons like a vice.

And as this thought gripped Kassardis, it was then that the truth of the Very Wise Frog revealed itself in its full glory. For violence truly was inescapable, and the three wives were inundated with it. They had no other language with which to negotiate their hard won spoils.

“Stand aside,” said soft Ipreski, “As oldest wife the Silver Prince is mine by right.”

“Move an inch further,” said Vastoki, “And I will put a bullet through that milky throat.”

Littari, for her part, said nothing, but rather hefted her cauldron into the air with a tremendous roar, and charged. Kassardis watched as the words of the Very Wise Frog came perfectly true, and a brutal combat unfolded.

Realizing the danger that Vastoki’s rifle presented, Ipreski slid off her palanquin and behind an enormous boulder. But that boulder was shattered a moment later by the tremendous force of Littari’s iron cauldron, sending her flying. Ipreski’s servants and retainers were pulped a moment later against the heavy bottom of the cauldron and spread across the rock, and Littari advanced on the eldest wife, frothing at the mouth.

She would have crushed Ipreski as she had promised, but in a mere second there were three cracks of Vastoki’s rifle, and Littari’s skull blossomed in gore, her cauldron smashing to the rocks below as she slumped forward. Ipreski sprang to her feet, her fine silks tearing, and drew her blade, dashing at Vastoki before she could reload.

Vastoki was impossibly agile, and even though her fingers were slick with grit and sweat, she chambered a round and fired it right at the smooth face of the eldest wife. But Ipreski had anticipated this for years, and had practiced a blade art specifically for this purpose, which she called Ego Ballistics. With impossible speed, she cut through possibility and cleft the bullet in two before it could touch her flesh.

Vastoki was taken aback. Such was her speed, however, that the incoming blow merely severed her nose from her face and cleft her glasses in two, instead of separating her head from her shoulders as was intended. Blinded by gouts of blood and shrieking in pain, she crawled away. But Ipreski, caught in the moment of victory, was blinded in her own way to Littari, who had survived three bullets to the head by the virtue of her enormously thick skull and was now staggering up behind her with cauldron in hand.

The first blow of the cauldron cracked Ipreski’s’ back and sent her sprawling, the second crushed her shins and feet to splinters. The third did not come, for Vastoki, acting on instinct, loosed three more shots, which blew the throat out from Littari and sent her reeling backwards.

This gory sight, and the ruin of his three wives, Kassardis beheld, and his resolve hardened into ice. He emerged from the pool, his blood cold in his veins, and the old swordmaster’s blade clutched tight in his hand.”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-56

The first winners for the devil contest!

The first is this great submission. It really caught my eye because I could super easily imagine how this character could move and fight, which is what made it such a strong submission to me. The wire reminds me of a character in an old Shaw Brothers kung-fu movie, which is just my kind of aesthetic, while the clothing is cool and functional and remind me of a ninja.

The second here, the pale mechanic, is an amalgam of a whole bunch of great submissions I got suggesting such. This submission had a flat cap on for some reason, which I immensely enjoyed. I thought the group could use a character with the power of the old man flat cap.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-57

Here’s the next winners of the contest!

We have the Cat Master (I named him) the Bruiser, and Xand/Nxor, the Face.

The first design was pretty great already and was a strong contender, but the one panel with the cat curled up on this guy’s head was what convinced me. A murderous, super powerful mute devil with an affinity for cats was too good to pass up.

The second design was a strong contender from the get go, I love the whole concept, it’s just super creative. There were a few text submissions suggesting something similar (a trio of blue devils for example) so I couldn’t pass it up.

There were so many great designs (you can view the entirety on Infinite Devil Engine), that it was very hard to choose, but I think on the whole what convinced me was a spark of an idea of how these contenders would deal with the obstacles ahead. Like in an old kung-fu movie or weird old DnD module, I want each of these characters to be able to do something cool and weird.

One more to go! But that would be the start of our heist, which shall come very shortly.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-58

The Rising King

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-59

The final winner of the devil contest! But not quite the final member our party.

This was inspired by a written entry and a drawn entry together. I really liked the first idea of a devil that had somehow cajoled the beggar dead into working for him, and I really liked the cape of coins/coin eyes in the second design, which both help play very well into what is going to happen next!

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-60

“If you ever hear the Night Curse spoken, run. It only passes the lips of devils, and only when they are up to misdeeds. This is known in nearly all of the ten thousand kingdoms.”

-Payapop Pritram

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-61

“As Kassardis approached his maimed and mangled wives, they scrabbled for their weapons in whatever way they could, clutching their gory injuries. For Kassardis was a ghastly sight: malnourished, clad only in rags, and with a terrible light in his eyes. They should have known then that the fate Kassardis had chosen for them was far worse than they ever could have expected, but they were fools with little imagination, and so chose to fight anyway.

Kassardis took the pommel of his blade, and with all his strength struck each of the wives across the head, knocking them unconscious. It took four blows from the great enameled hilt of the sword to fell Littari, but eventually the pints of blood she had lost stopped her struggle.

With great fierceness, Kassardis drove off Ipreski’s retainers, and tearing scraps of cloth, bound the gushing wounds of his wives however he could. He knew however dire their injuries seemed, they would likely survive, having been bred for generations for thick blood, tough skin, and other valued traits to place them above his other potential wives.

Exhausted, the silver prince finally dragged himself to the road, where he waited for a merchant’s cart, and went to a hard-scrabble town to find an apothecary. There, he bartered the remainder of the old swordmaster’s belongings for medicine, keeping only the blade and the old man’s boots, which he put on.

Finally, there in the gulch, Kassardis made camp, and over the next few days tended to his wives with incredible care. He sewed up gashes, blotted dried blood, and fed them water as they suffered. And though he tried his best, Littari would surely never speak again, Ipreski surely never walk again, and Vastoki’s nose had long since disappeared into a pond.

On the third day, Vastoki, the youngest and most calculating, could finally speak, and when she did she was astonished.

“You fool!” she croaked, “Do you seek to garner my sympathy? When I am well again, I will subdue you, husband, and take you back to our great kingdom and our rightful throne. This changes nothing!”

“Of course,” said Kassardis, “Violence is inescapable. The Very Wise Frog was right.”

And to Vastoki, something had changed in Kassardis. He was more relaxed, and more tense at the same time, like flexible steel. A great truth had settled into his flesh, and his calm was a terrible thing to behold.

“I came to find the land of Samura, where peace is eternal,” said Kassardis, “But instead, I find that I must carry Samura with me.” And he grasped the hilt of his sword and stood, and Vastoki finally realized how tall he was.

“None of the three of you will ever agree to share me, and none of the three of you can best the other,” said Kassardis, “You are already too poisoned by violence. I will run from you, and you will find me, again and again, and again and again you will destroy yourselves in trying to claim me. And again and again, I will tend to your wounds, and flee, knowing that I will never truly escape.”

“Again and again you will destroy yourselves until you are mere hunks of flesh, crippled wrecks of meat. And there will come a day when you have become so ruined that even I will be able to best you in combat, and you will submit to my peace.”

Vastoki did not believe Kassardis at first, for she was a fool, but she humored him anyway. “And what then?” she scoffed, “Your kingdom, my silver prince, will ever await you. It is worth a hundred thousand cattle, and half a million sheep. They will send more wives. Ten thousand of them!”

“And I will tend to them too,” said Kassardis.

It was then that Vastoki knew the truth of Kassardis’ words, but she could do nothing about it, for violence was inescapable. She knew she could not turn from her fate, for the vain hope that she would still win grasped her beyond all reason.

“You will never rest!” she spat, and her missing nose wept blood, “You will flee for all eternity!”

“Such is the cost of peace,” said Kassardis, “Even if I should care for ten thousand maimed wives.”

Then he tightened his wives’ bandages, and soothed the struggling Vastoki, and left them ample supplies. And though his wives spat and cursed at him, they could do little but let him leave, his countenance calm and resolute as he said one last thing:

“I will see you in Samura.”

– Tales of the Silver Prince

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-62

“One man’s fortress is another’s prison.”

-Au Vam

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-63

Beast’s Lair

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-64

War of the Armchairs

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-65

Blade

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-66

“The king Au Vam was known for keeping a peculiar member of his council – a low-born scullion, who would serve tea for his grand war parties. This country maid kept the company of ten of the most powerful generals in the Yellow City, and was privy to their most tenebrous plans, yet was scarcely sixteen summers of age and educated not a whit.

Her purpose was thus: if the grand designs and monolithic schemes of any of these mighty and august men could not pass the base judgement of a girl of sixteen summers, they were immediately discarded.

Thus did Au Vam win nearly all of his battles.”

-Histories of the Yellow City, Vol. 32, paragraph 3 (A.S.C. 189)

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-67

“He that feedeth the worm called Doubt must tend it all his days,

But he that ignoreth the worm called Doubt doth permit it to swell until it feedeth upon his very heart.”

– Knight’s manual, author unknown

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-68

“It is said in some circles that the among his hoard the Grand Dragon scattered nightmarish beasts that, much like the trap-door spider, could conceal themselves while they wait patiently for prey. These creatures, however, are rumored to have the devilish power to conceal themselves as furniture, or puddles of water, or even men. They are said to have only one weakness – they are vastly stupid, and left alone are incapable of distinguishing others of their kin from enemies or prey. They have little imagination and will simply copy the form of the nearest object.

Imagine, then, if you will, a little thought experiment – a room of only these things, hundreds of them, duplicating each other’s form in idiot redundancy. The thought is, of course, quite ridiculous and chilling in equal measure. I prefer to believe their existence is confined to rumor alone.”

-Pree Parzy de Peroxes, S.C. 260, The Magnificent Beast

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-69

“There’s no kinship among thieves, and there’s even less among devils. If I had to pick one over the other, I’d go with the thief. Judges help the man who picks a devil for a traveling companion.”

– Amvater ya Imven, Bone Monk

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-70

Revenge

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-71

Feeding time

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-72

“A true king of swords knows not only how to cut, but the value of each cut. Without weighing his blade carefully, he will soon find it carving away his own flesh.”

-Intra, sword god

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 6-73 (THE DOOR)

T H E  D O O R

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-74

And deep in the darkness, the ringing of bells, and the scrape of the bladed whips of the Exorcists, come to drive out intruders from their masters domain.

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-75

“The cruelest of weapons aim not to kill, but to preserve life, in the most hideous and torturous ways imaginable.”

-Au Vam

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-76

Fissure

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-77

No matter how far down they traveled, no matter how perilous the drop or yawning the pit, Enyis never found an end to the Deep.

“The Deep is very treacherous indeed,” said Enyis once, as they camped on the edge of a howling abyss.

“The Deep has one purpose,” replied the Boar King, “And that is to swallow men whole, or else make monsters out of them.”

– Enyis and the Boar King

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-78

Labyrinth

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-79

“It is well known that Angels, having tens of thousands of years of contemplation to perfect the martial arts, are unparalleled masters of them. If you are to seek an angel master, be respectful to them. Defer to them on all matters, worldly and otherwise, for they are dogmatic and proud beings. Attend to their requests, clean their monasteries, and humble yourself in your actions and words.

Above all, do not spar with them, unless you want your arms torn from your sockets.”

Zao Xu, Horse Style Master, “49 Empty Palms”

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-80

“What’s made of stone, filled with smoke, and bleeds fire?

The best answer to that question is not to find out.”

Uyyid, Goblin Slum Lord

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-81

Behold The Mirror of Laments,

Though it may be broken, its shards will pierce your heart.

No weapon is mightier.

Even the greatest sword can be bent against it owner.

– Song of Southern Winter

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-82

Prayer of Forgiveness

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-83

Dungeon Crawl

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-84

“Though the lord of the pit clads himself in finery and smiles, do not be bedeviled. He is a wretched, stinking king, and the minds of men are playthings to him.”

– Solomon David, Celestial Emperor

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-85

Ego

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-86

Masks

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 7-87

“Know this! The great dragon paid three hundredweight in silver to rid himself of earthly ties.

But a burden a hundred times that did he cast off in blood.

Ia! Such is wisdom!:

-Dogma of the Priests of the Count

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-88

Unseen Territory

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-89

“Uphold the Dragon!

Recite the Count!

Excise the Weakness from flesh!”

-Tenets of the Priests of the Count

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-90

Time Bomb

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-91

“IA! IA! Behold the dragon!

His claws are the scything blade and all is chaff!”

–  Lament of the Priests of the Count

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-92

“IA! IA! The Dragon!

His scales as as hard as his heart.

Pity him!”

– Lament of the Priests of the Count

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-93 (PRIESTS OF THE COUNT!)

IA! IA! Praise them!

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-94 to 8-95 (MURDER MAZE)

> FULL SIZE <<

IA! IA!

FOR THE HOLY COUNT!

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-96

Transformations

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-97

“IA! IA!

Sharpen your chain-blades!

Pity the Dragon and Venerate the Count!”

– War Cry of the Priests of the Count

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-98

“Go back, piteous creature, you who have banished love from your heart. By the Seven Part name I deny you. The chains of Ovis will be upon you and you will be lashed to the flensing tree, whose branches span creation.

May great torment lie upon your rotten heart. Your Atum shall sink to the Land of Ash and be devoured by the crawling dead.”

– Prayer of Exorcism

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-99

IA! IA!

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 8-100

Schism, part 2

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-101

“The inner sanctum of Yre is said to be a fragrant temple, encircling the vault, where Mammon has kept the elders of his slaughtered clan entombed and preserved for hundreds of years. The purpose of such sentimentality is unknown to any but the low numbered priests of the Count, who do not venture from Yre and do not see the sun their entire lives. It is the bane of any historian, to be certain.”

-Payapop Pritram

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-102

Multitudes

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-103

Self Reflection

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-104

YISUN lied once and said they had nine hundred and ninety nine thousand names. This is true, but it is also a barefaced lie. The true name of God is I.

-Psalms

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-105

“When Jayakka touched the dragon’s pearl, he saw at once it was not a great treasure at all, but a tiny world upon which lived innumerable small and peaceful beings. The merest imprint of his finger had smashed nearly ten thousand of them to death, and at this realization he recoiled in horror.”

– Saga of the Seven Pearls

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-106

Scaled God of the Deep

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-107

March of the Saints

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-108 (MAMMON)

“[O]utside the ordered universe [is] that amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the center of all infinity—the boundless daemon sultan […], whose name no lips dare speak aloud, and who gnaws hungrily in inconceivable, unlighted chambers beyond time and space amidst the muffled, maddening beating of vile drums and the thin monotonous whine of accursed flutes.”

– H.P. Lovecraft

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-109

“Once, on the road, Prim met a meditating sage who had spent most of his life on top of a flat rock. They had black bread and shared some ajash, as was custom. The sage was thankful, as the road was not very frequently traveled in those days and he was very near the point of starvation. During his conversation, he was delighted to learn of Prim’s extensive mastery of Empty Palms and the fifty five earthly purities. Delighted, and as payment for his meal, he taught Prim the meaning of watchfulness.

This was the old breathing and cold-atum technique often used by warrior monks in those days. It ran through the following methodology:

Build a tower, and make it impregnable. Make every stone so tightly sealed that no insect can squeeze through, no grain of sand can make it inside. Your tower must have no windows or doors. It must not accept passage by friend or foe. No weapon, no act of violence, and not one mote of love may penetrate its stony interior.

“Why build the tower this way?” said Prim?

“It will make you invincible,” said the sage, “This is the way of Ya-at slave monks. Their skin is like iron, and so are their hearts. They are inured to death and fear. Grief shall never find them, and neither shall weakness.”

Prim thought a moment, and came upon a realization, for she was wise, obedient, and an excellent daughter. “If a man built a tower this way, he would quickly starve, no matter how strong he became.”

The sage was even more delighted. “Yes,” he said, “There is a better way, and I will teach it to you:

Once you have built your tower, you must deconstruct it, brick by brick, stone by stone. You must do it meticulously and carefully, so that while you leave no physical trace of it remaining, your tower is still built in your mind and your heart, ready to spring anew at a moment’s notice.

You can enjoy the fresh air, and eat fine meals, and enjoy a good drink with your friends, but all the while your tower remains standing. You are both prisoner and warden. This is the hardest way, but the strongest.”

Prim saw the wisdom in this, and quickly made to return to the road, but the sage stopped her before she left.

“As you to your earlier remark,” the sage said, “The man who builds his tower but cannot take it apart again – that man is at the pinnacle of his strength. But that man will surely perish.”

– Prim Masters the Road

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-110

“Fear the heart that is covered by the cloth.”

– Saying of the Belligerent Knights

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-111

IA! The Reverend Mother! The Watchful Mother! She that sleeps not, and holds the key and the gate. Through a lake of blood she has ascended above the filth. Through a lake of blood she shall yet wade, and yet she shall not be stained. Praise her, and venerate the Count!

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-113

“Preserve my corpse within the necropolis!

Let no force turn against me in the earth!

And any false god who trespasses my tomb,

Let he be punished by the Wind of Akaroth!”

– Ya’at Death Prayer

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-114

Reconciliation

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-115

“Here is a quandary, Ogam,” said YISUN once, “Which has the greater weight, a mighty stone, or a man?”

Ogam was intelligent, but was frequently found in his cups during the nightly debates at YISUN’s speaking house. He was very fierce and had little patience for little aside from combat, of which he was the undisputed master. In his Red Aspect, he had once bloodied fifty five thousand gods of war and ended the feud between the Lunar Solace and the House of Year Turning. He knew only sword law and gambling, and thought often with his spear. It was because of this that his answer was short, but very well-shaped.

“Cleave a stone to pieces, and you only make smaller stones. Cut down a man and cut down a great many people. To start, you slay all his former selves. You kill a enemy and a comrade, a son and a father, a mentor and a student. Then the great net of his life drags its hooks out and sinks all he was attached to, tearing a terrible hole in the web of being,” replied Ogam. “Men have a great many attachments, and a great many former selves. Manflesh is very dense, in the grand scheme of things. It makes war difficult.”

“Ogam is observant,” said YISUN.

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-117

Arrival of the Judicator

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-118

‘O Cleaver of Heretics, come forth,

Let the fetters be upon the blasphemer,

Let the lion tear at his breast;

I will lay fire upon him and punish him with the fury of the Lord God;

Carnivorous dogs will feed upon his entrails;

His shade will not sink to the land of dust,

It shall be torn into pieces by the fiends that dwell by the foot of the Flaying Tree;

Spawn of the beast god, Foul Emission;

The scourge of Akaroth will be upon his flesh’

– Incantation of the Judicator Axe

Kill Six Billion Demons » SEEKER OF THRONES 9-119

Emptiness

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-120

“Beware thou crawling thing! When the gods clash the sky is red with their lightnings. The hosts of Khamun-re and Astet come forth to do battle, and they smite each other with stars. Turn thou thy face backwards against their black heat, or thou wilt taste death.”

– Ritual warning of the priests of The Azure Palace

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 9-121

Resurrection

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-122

“There was one who came with the broken sun in her brow, and her blood was like molten gold. Once she stole the secret fire of Those Who Came Before from the Red Gods and coveted it, but it ruined her and made her ugly. She was a dirty god and she had a powerful enemy. She could not avail to touch him, so she crouched in his shadow while he became increasingly swollen with his own power and bloodthirst. Instead of growing, she diminished, and grew disheveled and her fire dimmed. But inside, her spark grew more powerful and fierce. She waited for the day her enemy became so tottering under his own monstrous power she could hack at it his ankles and fell him with a single blow.”

-Chronicle of the Fourth Conquest

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-123

Annihilation of the Tower

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-124

“The God of the Deep has a heart like a great leaden weight. It drags him so low to the ground that the furrows of his passing become canyons. His servants are ten thousand and their faces will never gaze up on the sun. She Who Lights Up the Sky does not bless them. They are small and crawl around their God, and they make offerings at his feet and unto his graven image and the bones of his fathers. Their singing is said to be beautiful. They live upon their own fire and venerate the sorrows of their god. They guard the secret ways into the halls of YNAMON, called YRE by the uninitiated and lacerate their own flesh and fill the passages with their wailing.

Trespassers past the threshold of the holy land are punished with fire and blade.”

– Pre Narim Yiprik, Chronicle of the Seven

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-125

Immolation

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-126

“In the vault of Yre, the servants of the god of the Deep number only ten thousand. They venerate the holy ranking of matyrs, by which each is known by his own number. Once a martyr dies, all below him are risen in rank and automatically promoted, thus are the priests an eternal body.

To make it to the top of that holy order to the very first rank, a servant must be practically bathed in blood.”

– Payapop Pritram

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-127

Flames

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-128

Inferno

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-129

The Pursuers

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 130-133 (SIEGE OF YRE)

>>FULL SIZE<<

You can also click on the page for full size.

“Yemmod, storm-crowned, came to Lam, the Blue City

His men were like flies upon the earth and over the earth. They set upon the land a terrible blaze. The heat of the flames consumed the land about and licked the tops of the great walls around the city, and there was much wailing.

Yemmod said, “For every man of age to fight, hack off his right hand,” and it was done. “And his sons too,” and it was done. Then the hands were set in a pile, like pale driftwood, and the people could see his cruelty. The shrine of the Goddess was burned and its idols defiled and smeared with filth and excrement. The angels of the shrine were driven back and abandoned their sanctuaries.

An angel came to Umman Ap, who was king of that place. “See the defiler Yemmod,” said the angel. “He stacks the bodies of the people of this city like the autumn harvest. He provokes your power. Ride forth and drive him from this holy place.”

“I cannot harm Yemmod,” said Umman, blue-eyed. “He has consumed the hearts of many of my kin and is swollen with their star magic.” This was true, but the angel was enraged nevertheless. His kind lashed together steeds of fire and clay and abandoned the city to its fate. Umman had expected this. He gathered the remaining people inside the walls of the Blue City, which had never been breached.

The others were on fire, for it was a time of war. The yellow city had recently been consumed by great gales and fell into the void. This was the way of things.

At last Yemmod rode to the gates of Lam. He had a spear three times the length of a man and its point could burst through shields like matchwood. It never missed its mark. It was called Amija, or heart-piercer.

Yemmod said “Open the gates, and grant me passage.” But the gates did not open.

“Open the gates, lest I make the dead to outnumber the living.” But the gates did not grant him passage.

Yemmod called for star fire and smote the gates with one blow into ten thousand pieces. This was the way of things.

There was one way the city could be saved, so Umman sent for him. The sword-saint Intra was there. But when the men of the Blue City found him, he was very drunk.”

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-134

“Know this, thou sinners all: we are the eternal servants of God called YISUN, who were forged by him, and from his fiery breath were we given life. Our flesh is smokeless fire, and our eyes are set upon the rim of a wheel which encircles the world. Swords will turn against our skin. We need not steeds, for we do not tire. We need not chariots, for our limbs can smash a cart into splinters with the greatest of ease. We have one ship, which we call Wind of Besh. It was made for us by God, called YISUN, and it has ten thousand portholes through which we may rain death upon you. Our bows are strung with dragon sinew, and our arrows can not miss their targets.

If thou harbour’st the slightest stain of evil within thy heart, we will know; thy breast shall be torn open, thy skull shall be ripped from thy spine, and we will feed thy fetid corpse to the crocodile god. This is my decree.”

– 25 Vengeful Iron Suffers No Heretics or Fools to Live

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-135

Unbreakable

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-136

Final Gambit

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-137

Honor Among Thieves

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-138

Turncloak

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-139

“The devils utter the Night Curse with nary a breath of trepidation. They are wary and suspicious creatures, and superstition suits them. Each of them has separately come to the conclusion that when looked at the right way, any living being can easily be thought of as meat.”

– Gen, Ghost Market Trader

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-140

Survivor

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-141

Revenge of the Felines

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-142

Pity the covetous, for their wealth will turn to dust;

Pity the unrighteous, for their words will not be heard;

Pity the wicked, for their deeds will turn into daggers and plunge into their own chests;

They shall be bound with fetters and crushed under the great stones of their own evil.

Pity the Dragon and Venerate the Count! IA!

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-143

Destruction of the Tower

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 10-144

Once, the great king Aurochs was gifted a prize gladiator. This warrior was a three-sexed Ya-at slave monk. It was mute, and the impurities of its flesh had been seared away as part of its training. The Ya-at were incredible fighters, and this one was no exception. Over the next few turns it won nearly every bout and won the king an enormous amount of fame and glory. The king ordered a private garden built for his prize fighter, and attendants to oil its sore flesh, and it was given every luxury afforded to it, most of which it refused, for it craved only challenge.

Word got out that the king had an invincible fighter, and soon three infamous wandering mercenaries arrived at his door to test their mettle. The first was Five Mountains Gale, who wore a beautifully embroidered jera, a fine silk vela, and a legendary sword at her waist. Her face had been burned hideously by a duel with a sorcerer. It appeared puckered and shiny under the best light, though she was said to be quite beautiful before, and nobody dared comment on her disfigured visage. The second was Yerrid, who was a western dragon. His mouthblades were pitted with the scars of battle, and his hide was thicker than any armor forged by man. He was a member of the Red Dogs Legion, who were infamous rogues and despoilers. They mummified the hands of their enemies and took them as tokens.

The third and last was an unusual fellow, a minor nobleman from the countryside said to have taken up the sword after starving himself and meditating under a plum tree for a week and a day. His finery was disheveled, his sword was rather poorly made, and his long dark hair was held up in crooked and bent pins. He had no reputation, nobody thought very much of him, and it was obvious that he would quickly lose.

Gale squared off against the slave monk first. Her beautiful robe accentuated her lithe form and powerful step. Her sword was called Circle the Moon Thrice. When drawn, it gave off a sound like shivering glass. It had hacked five hundred bandits into pieces just the week before and was thirsty for blood. Gale’s technique was called Flying Snow. She could step on air as well as land, and cut a fly in twain with a flick of her wrist.

For all her arts, however, she could not break the defense of the slave monk. For every movement she made, the monk was faster to react. For every shivering blow she laid upon the monk, it could take it and deal more. She threw her blade aside and submitted before thirty blows had been struck.

Next, Yerrid strode into the arena. It was clear to observers that he would not submit as easily. His scarred, bestial form was corded with thick muscle, and his mandibles were shaved down in the manner of vagabonds and mercenaries of terrible repute. He tore into the monk with incredible violence. His technique was Red Dog Boxing. Every blow he took upon his stony hide, he turned into a counterattack, redoubling his attacker’s strength. He fought like a wild animal, throwing caution to the wind, and absorbing tremendous amounts of violence.

Where Gale had folded after thirty blows, he took a hundred. But it still was not enough. The defense of the Ya-at was too strong, and it tired too slowly. Eventually, Yerrid collapsed of exhaustion, and was dragged out of the fighting pit stone cold unconscious.

Finally, the last man strode into the arena. The crowd leaned in, eager to see him dismembered or worse by the Ya-at warrior, who scarcely had suffered a scratch and was oiled and offered refreshments by its house slaves.

The two warriors squared off, the young nobleman dwarfed by his opponent, and the bell was rung. The nobleman then did a very strange thing. He threw out a single sword stroke that was so artless, so completely lacking in skill, that a child might have made it. It was like a village idiot absentmindedly hurling a stick into a muddy pond. The Ya-at warrior was so shocked and offended by the young nobleman’s complete and utter lack of skill and technique that the hulking warrior was caught by surprise and decapitated in one blow.

The crowd was taken aback and instantly sprung up in confusion, disarray, and rage, for surely the young man must have cheated. The king descended from his gilded palanquin and quieted the crowd, addressing the young man directly.

“What trickery did you use to defeat my warrior?” demanded the king, at this point sputtering with disbelief himself. “No trickery,” said the young man, who was absentmindedly toeing the ya-at’s corpse.

“Then what technique? What sword art did you learn to make such a blow?” said the king.

“My technique is no technique,” said the young man. “My art is no art. It was an idiot’s blow.”

“Ten thousand warriors have failed to defeat my gladiator,” said the king, gaping. “Trained in ten thousand fighting arts from across the Wheel. How could an artless fool have defeated my prize slave?” The young man scratched his chin. “Well, not anyone can use my lack of technique. No ordinary fool could make that blow,” he replied “only one extremely dedicated to foolishness.”

It was immediately apparent to the king that this young man was extraordinarily powerful.

He mentioned as much.

“Powerful men, my lord, must by nature be exceptionally good fools,” said the young man.

“What do you want?” said the king, breaking out in a sweat.

“A drink will suffice,” said the young man.

“What is your name?” said the High King Aurochs, of the Southern Realms.

“My name is Intra,” said Intra, “I am the king of swords.”

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 11-145

…

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 11-146

Renaissance

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 11-147

Conclusion

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 11-148

Feud

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 11-149

Proclamation of the Aeon

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 11-150

Journey’s Beginning

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 11-151

“O God of the Quad Roads,

She of Many Flowers, who descendeth upon the spear,

O Pravi, the Torn one, with thy exquisite scalp,

Bless this earthly passage.”

– Invocation of the Torn Goddess

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 11-152

5. Violence is circular. Perception is not circular and lacks flawlessness- therefore, rejoice in imperfect things, for their rareness is not lacking!

6. Love of self is the true exercise of the God called I.

7. Only an idiot cannot place his absolute certainty in paradoxes. The divine suicide is a perfect paradox. A man cannot exist without paradox – that is the full of it.

-Psalms, Book I (ROYALTY)

Kill Six Billion Demons » Seeker of Thrones 11-153

That’s it for book 3! This was a long one (about 20-something pages longer than book 2, not to mention the 3 1/2 weeks it took to do the Siege of Yre spread and the delays from traveling this year and last). Thanks very much for sticking with this story arc over the last year and a bit. I’d recommend going back to read book 3 as a big chunk so you get the whole thing in one place, it will be a lot more thematically coherent and some of the pacing will make more sense.

On to book 4 next week: King of Swords

Kill Six Billion Demons » Book 4: KING OF SWORDS

Prim Masters the Road

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 1-1

“The Star Emperor is a man of great stature, with an oiled beard and stern countenance. He does not concern himself, as his kin do, with plotting and scheming against each other, but chiefly with the exercise of ruling. His primary concern is justice. His subjects live fairly, peaceably, and one might say even well, if not for the heavy blade of the law constantly grazing the tender skin of their necks.”

-Payapop Pritram, Chronicles of the Seven

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 1-2

“YNEM E YNNU

YNNU E AP

I am he who protects himself,

Nothing can harm me.”

– Ya’at slave incantation

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 1-3

“Across the desert of Khul Kharim,

There stands an ancient and mighty temple, worn with age,

Its two hundred monks drenched with sweat and bent with the labor of its maintenance.

There, enshrined, the graven image of a god;

Mighty, imperious, carved masterfully, his eyes thrust to the horizon, his lips curled in a smile of mastery;

All burnished with the worn hands of monks and the labor-marks of slaves.

Its grip upon the land about is absolute. It has stood for two thousand years.

So long that, indeed,

Cracks have begun to form.”

-Unknown

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 1-4

Sunlight

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 1-5

Grab the reins, you awesome puppeteer, you conductor of chains

Redeemer. Unbreakable strings. Damnation leashes

Remote cords extend, the trusses they run

They stretch all the way behind the sun.

-Meshuggah, “Behind the Sun”

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 1-6

UN-Medam is the chief of the gods of law. He has a staff so heavy no man or god can lift it, except for Medam himself. Medam does not lift the staff, even though he could. It is a terrible thing, banded with iron and hewn from a twig of the Flaying Tree, a thousand miles long and weighing four hundred million tons. The mere presence of the staff is enough to make the most hardened demon quake. If Medam must call order in the court he merely lifts it a millimeter off the floor and lets it drop, letting forth a mighty shockwave that crumbles mountains, flattens buildings, and causes gods and their servants to topple off their feet for twenty miles around.

If one is to understand the law of the gods, you must understand this: Medam does not need to lift his staff.

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 1-7

“The Ruling King has no equal. He is at the pinnacle of power of all men, servants, angels, and devils alike. Only the gods could rival him, if they weren’t rotting, the bastards. And only a man who’s power reaches that far up can cast a shadow that large.”

– Hurim Thrymgard, Demiurge of the First Conquest

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 1-8

Worship

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 1-9

Imperishable and immortal, the secret fire of God called YISUN is like a perfect, gleaming jewel, with no flaws. YISUN has, had, and will have no equal – yet every moment of their existence, YISUN yearned for one.

-Psalms (Amkrator Vesh translation, circa 500 SC)

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 1-10

“During the last years of the Gods, when Un-Medam died, his mighty staff weighing four hundred million tons lay inert in the great House of Law. Demons and beggar gods crawled out from the stones of the red city and ran amok. Aesma was called upon to drag the staff up from its resting place and bring things back to order, but she had already torn herself apart in a rage. There was nothing to be done. Nobody could lift the staff.”

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-11

Heir apparent

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-12

Regular Customer

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-13

“HEAD OF JOHN

An internal style focused on hardening the self. After many years of preparation and training, practitioners ram three metal studs into their skull, piercing the bone and blocking the flow of Atum at precise meridians. The studs extrude from the skull slightly and are said to be uncomfortable in cold weather. Once this ritual is accomplished, there is a healing, fasting, and meditation period of three weeks. After this, the practitioner finds that the skin of their head and neck becomes almost impermeable to harm and able to exert incredible force. It cannot be cut, severed, or scored by any blade, though I have seen many try.

The chief feature of this style is using the head as a blunt weapon. I have seen acolytes shatter bone with their headbutts in practice and an elder monk break a temple wall with the fierce application of his forehead. By practice of meditation they are also said to have accomplished unbelievable feats. It is a common story among the monks that their most senior member had his body destroyed and his head severed while defending the temple many years ago. His head survived for four weeks without a body, and was later sewn back on to the body of a deceased temple guard, which quickly revivified both the body and the head. I could not verify his claims but his neck did have a most spectacular scar. ”

– Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-14

“LEISURE KICKS

An external style, chiefly concerned with the sole use of the feet and legs to inflict powerful and rapid blows upon the opponent. The hands are reserved for killing blows only. The style is rare but its practitioners are extremely devoted.

The style is said to originate with the rogue Long Boxing master Kin Kiran. While abbess of her order she was accused of extravagance and over-indulgence by her subordinate monks. She took bribes for blessings and temple offerings and became well known for her love of gifts, wine, and luxury, plying her favors with the local magistrates to great effect. A rebellion within the temple took thirty lives and saw her exiled, beaten, bloody, and with her head shaved and fine silk abbess’s robes torn into shreds.

Kin Kiran swore from that day that she no longer deemed any martial artist worthy of her fists, and instead she would crush all who came before her under the bottom of her feet. Her arrogance was so extreme she established her own school after working as an itinerant mercenary for some time and soon drew a devoted following, resuming many of the corrupt and debased practices as former abbess. The mountain town about her school soon became a heaving den of sin and treachery, defended by rogues and bloodthirsty mercenaries, and ruled by the bloody and debauched abbess, flush with political power and coin, who was so skilled in martial arts that she could decapitate a man by kicking his head off faster than the eye could see.

The rogue school and Kin Kiran were ultimately destroyed by the mendicant knight Weishu Haoyang in 530 S.C. with use of his Invincible Heavy Crashing Wave technique. The abbess and all hundred and thirty of her acolytes were hurled off a mountain and dashed against the rocks, but her style survives to this day, despite efforts to stamp it out.”

– Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-15 (HOLE)

Hole

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-16

” EMPTY PALMS

An internal, cold-atum style said to be as ancient as the gods themselves. It is said the god Ovis taught it to the first angels, who taught it to the first human, Metia. The style involves miraculous alignment of the body’s meridians to multiply the muscular power and striking force of bare handed strikes tenfold. Since the style relies heavily on the cultivation of internal force, its external strikes may seem unassuming to the untrained eye until they hit their target with the force of an ox cart.

It is said masters of this style can so precisely align the channels of power within their body that they can project the force of their blows at range, sometimes up to thirty or forty paces away. One old master of this style, who dwells in Fifteen Rivers, makes a great show to visitors of striking a heavy cast iron bell some 5 or 6 shins high with great blows from his fists, though he stands apart from the bell quite some distance.

A practitioner of this style must take tremendous pains to use it effectively. The style was originally developed for battling and destroying various titanic void monsters and unbound devils, and is rather difficult for humans to learn. A student must train rigorously, keep a strict diet, and maintain fine bodily control in order to effectively utilize its techniques. Therefore, it has always been an unpopular school, seen as somewhat old fashioned. None, however, deny the power of its techniques, which include YISUN’s Open Palm, widely regarded as an unbeatable move.”

– Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-17

“PATTRAM SWORD HAND

The school for this style is located in the Low Oak province. The school is always ruled by three monks who set its training, prayer schedule, and ceremonies. It does not engage in politics, defense, aiding the poor, or external meddling, as many other schools do, but solely focuses on perfecting martial arts. When the school goes to war, as it sometimes does, it is a terrible sight.

Its masters are incredibly disciplined but equally brutal, and they often train their students to the point of vomiting, collapsing, or ruining their body. I have heard that students occasionally die during its more unforgiving periods, though the masters would not elaborate any further.

The school of Sword Hand is a killing school. It is an external style that focuses on blows so precise and sharp that they turn the edge of the hand, foot, or finger into a cutting implement strong enough to part flesh, sunder armor, and cleave bone. It is widely considered one of the strongest external styles for a reason. Unarmed or empty-handed styles that do not strongly focus on internals have little regress against sword hand, and for that manner neither do many weapon styles. It’s one weakness is its incredible drain on stamina. If a practitioner does not kill his opponent in a few serious blows (and the style is rarely used seriously for anything other than killing intent), he will quickly find himself too weak to even drag one foot after the other.

I have seen masters of this school sever solid rock with a fingernail. Little more needs to be said on its brutal effectiveness on the human body. It is an evil school, and I am glad that my study of it has been rapid.”

-Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-18

“FLYING SNOW

Regretfully I know little of this rare internal technique other than one learns it over many years by listening to certain resonances of the wind. Extended practice is very difficult, but makes the body extremely light, so much that it seems to ignore the common properties of gravity. There are rumors that masters of this technique can balance their whole weight on a single leaf, walk on water, or even fly. I would have inquired more about its properties but the only master I was able to reliably locate mocked me for my lack of knowledge shortly after I came upon him in a bamboo grove, at which he bounded away, propelling his whole body off the forest with only light touches of his fingertips.”

-Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-19

Godhead

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-20

“SHIVERING ARROW

I found a lanky and rather weathered peregrine knight who was a master of this style and followed him for several days on his journey. We soon reached a kingdom in terrible repair, passing many burned out houses and hovels. My companion informed me it was ruled by a tyrant, who would levy impossible taxes and often ride out to ravage his own land, preventing the people from leaving by force, and indulging his basest vices upon them. The land was very battered and thick, leather-necked soldiers were everywhere. We could not find lodging and had to camp under some ragged trees. There, the knight informed me he had made many preparations, had spent some time meditating, and decided it was right and proper to slay this man.

I asked the knight how he planned to accomplish his quest, seeing that the warlord kept mostly to his very imposing stone keep and was guarded by fifty men, day and night. The knight cautioned me against hasty conclusions and bade me wait. I thought the fool would walk us right up the fortress gates and have us slaughtered, but to my surprise, we instead turned towards a distant mountain path. Three days of mostly silent climbing and very difficult trails, we found ourselves on a high mountain ledge, with a clear view of the poor, destitute kingdom below us, and the keep squatting like a black ogre overlooking mouth of the valley.

At this point I was still quite befuddled, but waited while the knight seemed to pace about and test the weather with his fingers and tongue. Seemingly satisfied, he boiled water, mixed some herbs, and began to pray. He had an enormous silverwood greatbow slung across his back, and only one arrow, almost the size and length of a javelin. Drinking the mixture, which smelled quite dreadful, he strung the bow, which took some effort. When the sun was almost at his zenith, he rose to his feet and bade me stand back, drawing the bow and the single, wicked looking arrow back with all his strength. I should mention here I have never seen a man look so anguished with concentration. He seemed to peer at some distant spot in the valley below, waiting for some ideal moment. I had absolutely no idea what the fool man’s goal was at the time. He stood like that for some four or five minutes, muscles straining, and it was only then that I realized he might be aiming at the keep.

When he loosed, the rush of wind that followed blew my whiskers nearly clean off my face and sent half my pack tumbling down the mountainside. I didn’t see where the shaft disappeared to. The man seemed mightily relieved and seemed to deflate somewhat. He told me the deed was done and that he would be leaving the kingdom soon. Thinking him mad, I was glad to be rid of his company.

When I returned to the valley below a few days later, I was almost immediately set upon by a peasantry almost crazy with mirth. The land was in disarray. The warlord had been slain in his keep, while he ate his luncheon. An enormous arrow had torn his head clear off his shoulders, and carried it out the window. It had traveled through three feet of stone to reach its target, as though a ballista had launched it.

It had been shot about fifteen miles.”

– Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-21

“TWENTY FIVE PURITIES PATH

This rather obscure style is only learned by reading the Twenty Five Purities Manual, of which there are only said to be eighty eight copies in the whole Wheel, many of which are no longer intact. They were written by the insane monk Yebn Bal Pura, whose quest for spiritual purification eventually led him to amputate large parts of his body and waste away from starvation.

The madmen who pursue the study of this manual do so because once read and understood (a dizzying and quite complicated process, I am led to understand), the practitioner of this style gains several abilities, the first of which is a virtual resistance to aging, poison, and other infirmities of the flesh such as disease or illness. The skin of the monks who practice this technique can turn away blades or mighty blows, and their bodily and spiritual forces are so powerfully aligned that they can withstand tremendous forces. I have heard of a master of the sword arts practiced in this style that once meditated for three nights on the nature of being, and on the second night the town around him was destroyed by a typhoon, leaving him its sole survivor (quite unperturbed, I am told).

I refer to those who seek this manual and its powers as madmen because it is said to so perfectly align the body’s forces that its users become hyper aware of their own imperfections, eventually driving them to self destruction and insanity. For this reason, I could not find any living practitioners of the style, though I am certain they must exist.”

– Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-22

K I L L B O S S

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-23

Pride

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-24

“DEMON FLIPS THE CART

A strong internal/external style that grants a practitioner unbelievable muscular strength.  While not as reviled as infamous styles such as Leisure Kicks, Ecstasy Dart, or Hundred Wind Ghost Blade, it is nevertheless seen as a rude, renegade, and unrefined style, and as such has no official schools and must typically be learned by seeking out a wandering master. It is a popular style of many famous belligerent or mendicant knights, including (famously) the warrior monk Ippo Kemon who once defended a bridge by clogging it with a wave of dead men and horses.

It can only be learned by men and devils, who have the abundance of black Atum needed. A student of this style kindles their Atum and internal forces with unbelievable heat, by eating certain herbs and ingesting certain roots over a few weeks of time, during which the practitioner must train intensely. The result of this process produces a voracious and incredibly strong hot black Atum that suffuses far more of the body than normal, spilling over from its meridians and saturating the flesh itself, an effect which is normally quite painful and can in some cases cause a person to quite literally burn to death.

The masters of this style sweat profusely when they let this energy suffuse them totally, and their body becomes red and flushed with blood, and even seemed to steam. They are capable of absolutely absurd feats of strength, such as lifting an ox cart overhead with one finger, lifting a house sized boulder, or (as I once witnessed in a duel) hurling an opponent several hundred meters into the distance. An old master once boasted to me that he had hurled a royal sailing ship at an opponent once while drunk in his youth, which I calculated later was about 2000 short tons (2500 imperial tons).

The well known drawback to this style is a practitioner must eat and drink around three or four times as much as a normal person of their weight in order to stoke their internal fire. Without such regular fuel, their own body is consumed and they quite literally combust. The masters I talked to were rather unconcerned about this particular quirk and took it as a matter of religious importance, one of them going as far as to say that most old masters that know their time is getting near stop eating, so that when they next enter battle their body will consume many of their opponents in its violent self immolation.”

– Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-25

82 White Chain Returns from Emptiness to Subdue Evil

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-26

The Master

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 2-27

“SHADOW ARTS

I take a brief interlude here to briefly mention the hand and foot arts that are commonly known as the shadow arts. I cannot say much on account of both my limited understanding of these arts but also the extreme measures to which the various schools go to protect the knowledge and practice of these arts. The schools are administered by hereditary hunter clans and well hidden. At the time of writing there are said to be thirteen. The centipede school was infamously uncovered underneath the Red City’s ghost market some 60YT back , dug into its tunnels, and raided by a massive cadre of Root Knights, but it was not destroyed and has since dug itself a new lair somewhere else in the city. The locations of the other schools are unknown, and even seeking them out can be a perilous venture, as I have discovered.

The fools that seek these academies of the dark arts out are often aspiring vengeance seekers, assassins, or bounty hunters. Once initiated, a student becomes part of that school’s clan and is inextricably bound to clan law on pain of execution, typically by being flayed or buried alive. They learn how to move unseen, to use disguises, and the use of many tools, poisons, and explosives.

As for the styles themselves, they are a mix of internal and external techniques, with each school specializing in a particular technique to the point of obsession. Each school takes for their totem an animal, which guides their study. The aforementioned centipede school, for example, is said to train a technique allowing one to use any part of their body to wield a weapon. The legendary Crimson Legs, a human assassin from this school, was infamous for killing with four knives, one in her teeth, two in her hands, and one gripped between her toes.

The wolf school teaches two to fight as one, and mostly trains bounty hunters. The Stone Beetle school supposedly teaches a technique that turns bullets away from skin. The lizard school is said to allow limited transformation of the body’s coloration and texture to totally blend in with the environment (though I have yet to confirm this rumor and it appears a little too outlandish).”

-Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-28

Downfall

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 3-29

Spires

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 3-30

The district of spires is both Throne’s port and its red light district. Placed midway up the seven rings of Throne, it is a lofty district of tall, haphazardly built towers, spires, airship ports, and gambling dens. The towers are suspended above the lower district of Furnace, Throne’s industrial core, and the steam and smoke from that hellish lower district pours constantly upwards, giving the effect that the entirety of Spires is suspended in an enormous (and foul-smelling) cloudscape.

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 2-31

The Judicator towers are many within the district of Spires. From here, as tradition dictates, criminals may be held for up to a week before transport for a trial in a Hall of Law in Ashton, or for more severe cases, the Concordance of Angels just outside the city.

There are only twenty operable spires in the entire city, eleven of which are manned. Of the hundred and five Halls of Law, approximately seventy were destroyed during the Universal War. Most of the remaining structures are being squatted in by residents of Ashton, with the rest being used by various guilds as gambling dens, slave pens, warehouses, or headquarters. At least one is physically missing from the city, claimed by a rogue sorcerer as his House Apart, ripped into a pocket world.

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 3-32

Refutation

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 3-33

“The names of the host are marked in the Book of Un. The copy is held at the ruins of Koss’ Workshop, where the angels hold concordance, and there are five of their number marked hierophants who serve as scribes and record keepers. Each name is a fragment-glyph of a verse of the Old Law. It’s meaning is highly complex, and when translated into U.M. the nearest approximation is a sentence (usually declarative) or poetic, such as “Warding Flame Guides the Judicious” or “Sound of a Bell, Once, Warning the Iniquitous of Punishment”.

According to apocrypha and the angels themselves, their names were hammered into them with the sacred chisel YSMIR when the forge god Koss made them out of the smokeless fire of UN.  As immortal beings, they often put their reincarnation number before their name, thus the angel “Searing Blade” who has reincarnated twice (and thus on their third incarnation) would introduce themselves as ‘3 Searing Blade’. Angels hold their names in high regard and seem to know their true meanings, letting them serve as moral guides.”

– Payapop Pritram “Treatise on the Host, Chapter II”

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-34

Scars

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-35 (HOME)

There are thirty or so homes of this kind in the god’s corpse. Allison and her compatriots managed to acquire it by spending the last of their guilders robbed from the bank of Mammon. The merchant who they bought it from was understandably furious when the value of the guilder crashed not a few days later due to an enormous, never-ending fountain of them pouring out from Mammon’s ruptured vault. His fury was subsided somewhat when Princess german suplexed one of his bodyguards into a sludge canal.

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Sword 4-36

A Day in the Life

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-37

Dancing days are here again,

As the summer evenings grow,

I got my flower, I got my power,

I got a woman, who knows.

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-38

Transformation

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-39

“Many great men ask me why I keep such numerous, rare, and expensive flowers in my palace. This is to warn me of the habits of weak kings. A king should always be attentive to his flowers, and keep a great number of them. If he does not pay his servants enough to take care of them, they will pluck some in secret, and sell them in the market. If his servants do not care enough for their master or their service, they will willfully neglect his flowers, and they will die. If he forces his servants to water the flowers out of fear, the delicate flowers will be overwatered and they will die. If he keeps lavish flowers, he must educate his servants sufficiently to take care of them, or they will die. A king with wilted flowers, or no flowers at all is not worth trusting. This is the first measure I take of my rival lords.”

– Au Vam, Pankrator of Vesh, the Yellow City

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-40

Beckoning of the King of The Pit

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-41

“An Atum that burns particularly bright can actually be seen as an aura or ring of light, sometimes called a halo or animus. In those warriors or sages that have cultivated enough strength, it burns as a physical, smokeless flame across their body. The sage-kings of the First Conquest were said to have golden animus that wreathed their body in flames as bright and hot as molten metal, while leaving their skin and clothing unharmed. YISUN was said to have an aura which is called The Song of Maybe. According to legend, it burned at seven hundred million degrees, and when YISUN let it burn, it was so wide that it turned the tips of the branches of the trees that hold up the corners of creation to ash.”

– Sign of Kings, attr. Barnas, Priest of YS-Het circa 250 SC

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-42

Spiritual Advisor

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-43

Yemmod, Storm-Crowned, came to Rayuba

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-44

“KI RATA

An internal/external discipline, widely respected as the most dangerous Fist Art in the multiverse. It’s core technique is a breathing method that allows internal force to be cultivated extremely rapidly and focused on a point smaller than a pin-prick, giving blows absolutely phenomenal power. Blows using this technique are named by the number of points they contain – one point blows are strong enough to crack stone with a touch. Two point blows can decapitate a man with the air pressure created by flicking a finger. Legends about of old masters of Ki Rata using ten point blows to level cities but I find the claim highly dubious.

I have found nobody willing to train me in this art and none who will grant me observation. Improper use of a Ki Rata technique will literally tear a man’s own body into pieces, so I have not attempted to study it myself. The only living masters live in the (remarkably pretty) land of Rayuba and are staunch pacifists, having, according to legend, culled their order to a single community. Reportedly the only time they ever use their considerable talents is to kill someone who somehow manages to learn a Ki Rata technique without being trained by them first. They only take apprentices to replace an old master when he dies, so that someone will always be around to make sure Ki Rata does not exist in the wider world. Many supplicants flock to Rayuba in the hopes of being trained by the masters, who sometimes are forced into self defense when they are challenged to unwanted duels.

When I arrived there hoping for some insight, I witnessed such a duel between a low-ranking monk of the style and a well-known master of Pilgrim fist. Within three moves, the monk, a rather short fellow, use a two finger one-point technique to completely vaporize the bones in both the master’s arms.

I am strongly dissuaded to continue pressing my study of this art and will write no further on it.”

-MANUAL OF HANDS AND FEET

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 4-45

Celestial Emperor

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 5-46

“Here lies the domain of the wielders of names,

No bound or lay-line encircles it,

For from step to step

They span the span, aft and fore,

They are world straddlers, and their stride is shod with fire.”

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 5-47

The Concordance of the Demiurges was the greatest speaking house of any age, with many chambers, a small city on to itself, located in the very innermost circle of Throne, Sacred Spoke. Today it is a blasted, cursed ruin, untouched even by treasure hunters for its reputation. The corpses of the two demiurges who began the Universal War are, according to legend, still here, impaling each other on their weapons.

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 5-48

The Blade

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 5-49

“Many fools admire the Gods, thinking them admirable and wise, praising their virtues, and asking for their boons.

I’ll tell you one thing friend, there ain’t nary a pious farmer who comes up short when it’s time for burnt offerings. He’s always got a lamb ready. He may not know it, but he remembers why the Gods are Gods in the first place.

You can ask for harvests all you like, but never forget they sup on fire and blood.”

– Mars Pallatrix, Belligerent Knight

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 5-50

Pact

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 6-51

“Everyone could feel war coming. The famine washed over the land first. The dogs disappeared. The sky grew dark as the sun turned away, as if it knew what was going to happen.”

– Account from the Yellow City, circa second conquest

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 6-52

Strength

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 6-52

“The temples were burst open and all that could not be concealed was defiled, until flesh became more valuable than gold. Men swarmed over the city like locusts, eating shoes, grass, carrion, dung. Strength became the only currency.”

– Account from the Yellow City, circa the Universal War

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 6-54

There is only one way to be a pure master of sword law. This is to allow your body to become absolutely soaked with death.

Death is always in the body at all times, but happier people are able to let it live only in their skin, or on the surface of their eyelids. They may easily wash it off from time to time and carry on with their lives.

When I tell my students to shave their heads, partly it is so they cannot rid themselves of death so easily. Those who do not bathe in death regularly will forget it is there, and that is a very stupid thing to do when swords are involved.

– Meti Ten Ryo

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 6-55

Prayer

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 6-56

“Weeping mother of chaos! Give me the strength to set my eyes firmly upon the horizon. If I look back, quickly cleave my head from my shoulders!”

– Common prayer to Aesma

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 6-57

“From this hour forward the gates of the city will be barred to my kin. Do not underestimate them. Do not commune with them. Do not give them offerings, or give them bread or Ajash if they visit you disguised. Many of them have a sweet countenance and a honeyed tongue. They will say their wish is to be a teacher of men, to spread messages of peace. In an earlier age, this was true. Now dogs and worse have crept into their ranks. Madness has consumed them. Their only passion now is a lust for blood and power.”

-Proclamation of Au Vam

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 6-58

Law of Blades

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 6-59

Private Devils

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 7-60

Poker Face

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 7-61

Herald

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 7-62

“Energy in my heart is of chemical foam

A street of taxies, worn tires, blood and flesh

Behold all that is liberty is a parody of utopia

A shining boulevard of buyers and giga-movies

Minor Depression is a joke, La Vie en Rose is on sale

They say you should know you are happier than you realize”

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 7-63

Infection

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 7-64

Ring of Power

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 7-65

“Absolutely NO SUPPLICATION necessary. Take worm as advised. ENJOY.”

– Print pamphlet of unknown origin. Titled “Instructions for Worm.” (5 by 10, crudely illustrated, recycled print, est. 240 SC).

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 7-66

“When studying sword law, many of my students ask me about the principle of hesitation. I tell them plainly that hesitation is defeat. Thought is slower than the edge of a blade and does not cut half as well.

‘Master,’ they then ask me, ‘What if victory is impossible?’

The answer to this very simple question is this: flee, or go to your just and honest death. Either is a good choice. The worst of all is the man who agonizes for half a breath over the value of his own life and dies an indecisive coward.”

– Ryo-ten-Ryam

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 7-67

Foolishness

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 7-68

“The touch of a sword handle is the deadliest poison known to man. It settles in, deeper than the bone, instantaneously. It is a deep curse that can never be lifted and will last you the rest of your days.”

– Ryo-ten-Ryam

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 7-69

Entrance of the Gladiators

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of swords 70-71 (PATH TO GLORY)

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Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-72

Crown Jewel

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-73

Qualifiers

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-74

The feeding frenzy of my starving soul, gnawing voraciously at the bones

The exo-skeletal patchwork protecting my own reflection within

The twin and same engaged in the mirror act of chewing away at the shell of my attacking self

The paradox unseen

– Meshuggah, “Mind’s Mirrors’

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-75

“I have one wish – make of my body a hammer that will fall with great fury and purpose. Make of my skin blades that will repel the impure world. I tire of it.”

– Unknown, widely attributed to the first Thorn Knight

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-76

Regrets

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-77

Round 1

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-78

Though over three hundred tournaments have taken place, Gog-Agog has not hosted all of them. The contest only occurs every thousand Turns (rotations of the multiverse around Throne), which is a little more than three years, chiefly because the resources and expenses involved are enormous, not the least of which is the arena must be reconstructed each time.

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-79

“Let it never be said that I love spectacle. But to be loved, a man must become it.”

-Au Vam

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-80

Stay tuned for contest info!

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-81

“When Metia, the first human, crawled from the ash of Koss’ hearth, misbegotten as she was, she was so small, defenseless, and naked that the gods that found her took pity on her. Examining her closely, they found to their amazement that she bore the gift called Death and therefore was able to die, the first truly mortal being on the Wheel. This discovery would later yield great understanding among the gods and lead eventually to their self annihilation, but that is a story for another time. At the moment, they were astounded that a being so weak could exist at all, and therefore lavished her with many secret fires and gifts, so concerned they were with her safety. They first taught her the means of language, and finding secret things, and of making fire and finding food. But it was not long after that they resolved to teach her to defend herself.”

– Eight Hundred Manual

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-82

Vacus needles are forged exclusively from puresilver, a rare material that in the time of the Multiplicity was only obtained from the breath of Ovis, the glass god of emptiness. An individual’s Atum, or personal soul, cannot flow through a needle, making them highly effective weapons and anathema to beings whose Atum burns especially bright, such as angels or devils, who rely on their connections to their armor and masks.

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-83

“Ogam was the first to teach Metia the ways of violence.

‘Make a fist,’ he said, showing her how, ‘And marry it with your enemy’s jaw.’

-Psalms

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-84

Like teacher, like student

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-85

“What if my enemy should harm me?” asked Metia of Ogam.

“Harm him first,” said Ogam, “Or else, have a very thick skull.”

– Psalms

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-86

Check out the front page post for contest info! We have over 70 entrants into the contest already but there’s always room for more (you can also come hang out with me on discord).

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-87

Old Companions

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-88

Fate

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 8-89

The Life Cut

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-90

“Learn this – Amris – Learn – the best and truest way of killing. The blade that tastes without striking, like a snake sampling the air. It sheathes only in flesh, and hides until then, not moving a muscle.”

– Shadow Art Tome

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 9-91

Dusk

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-92

Free for All

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-93

Yaun hid. The men roamed about the village, looking for him, two at a time, their feet treading down the soft earth of the smouldering village. Each footfall like a battering ram.

“God and his saints will protect us,” his mother had said, but they hadn’t. His mother had been split from nape to nave by a broadsword. He had never know there was so much blood in a person.

Yaun would have survived, would have stayed in that village, but he was the unluckiest son, and always had been. In among the men came Jantris, tallest of the dead men. He was a star warrior who wielded a vorpal sword art. His brow was clad with precious stones and his clothing was finer than the others, and less smeared with blood. Yaun could feel the heat of his breath even from his hiding place, but his limbs were too frozen with fear to move.

It took them less than an hour to find him, petrified, under the old water trough where he clung to the mud. He had been bathed in that trough, when he was a baby, and played with the pigs.

He was brought before Jantris, and the men laughed like hyenas, and made a motion as if to chop off his head with their bare hands, but they didn’t. Instead, Jantris, tallest of the storm lords, leant down to Yaun. His eyes were bright, like glowing smoke.

“Now you are dead,” he said, and handed him the hilt of a sword.

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-94

Yaun cried at first, for his family, but then the men, with their hyena faces and lolling tongues, would slap him until he stopped.

“Dead men have no families,” they said to him. They painted his skin with the burned ashes of his village and forbade him to wash. The sword that the star lord had given him was a rough tool, and heavy, far too large for his small frame. He couldn’t cry so he bit his tongue and tried to remember home, and his mother, but all he could think about was the raw smell of blood.

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-95

“I cannot remember my home,” said Yaun.

“We will beat it out of you eventually,” they said plainly, “Every trace.”

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-96

Resurgence

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-97 (FIRST MANTLE)

AMUNAN MANTLE (six arm mantle)

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-98

The men with the hyena faces did what they had promised.

“You will forget the face of your mother,” they said to him, so he did, between each crack of the lash. Instead, he learned how best to clean their weapons and wash their blood soaked clothing. He carried water, spare boots, and ammunition.

Yaun worked very hard, for he had been an obedient son, and grew quite strong, for he constantly lugged around that heavy iron sword the master of the company had given him, and the men with hyena faces ate extremely well. The whole company ate well in those times. It was a fat age for killers. They tramped from town to town where men with perfumed breath and powdered faces would pay them for every lopped off hand. Often they would come right back to the home of a former employer on the behest of a new master, and burn it to ashes. Each time they visited a town, they would find or make many motherless little boys to make into dead men, and so their company grew tenfold.

Eventually Yaun became aware that some time had passed, and nearly everything had been beaten out of him. All that was left was just a set of eyeballs in a hollow skull atop an overlarge body with callused hands, and feet that kept tramping forward. It was oddly freeing.

Jantris was crowned with stars and had a long stemmed pipe of fine make he kept about him. His skin was smooth and dark and his eyes were a lion’s eyes.

“Now that you are completely dead,” he said to Yaun one day, “We can fill you with useful knowledge.”

Kill Six Billion Demons » KOS 9-99

Summoning

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-100

Thief-queen

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-101

‘A man must cultivate three tongues: one of iron, one of silk, and one of lead. All will be useful, in love and war.”

– Au Vam

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-102

Possession

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-103 (ALLICIO)

“During the Universal war, it was theorized that placing an intact devil mask upon a living human, still containing some of that devil’s essence, could create a fused being – a devilskin warrior. The human would benefit from the devil as a sort of armor, the devil from the direct access to the human soul flame. Such a warrior could be pushed far beyond the limits of both devil and man, employing the strengths of both, and could eventually rival the demiurges in sheer power.

In practice, many attempts were made at creating such warriors, but in almost all cases, the human ended up mentally rejecting the devil, or the devil ended up quickly subsuming its host and burning out. Two powerful beings sharing the same flesh – one can only imagine the clash of egos that would take place, or the sheer mental control to fight with such a powerful body. The few that did survive became terrors on the battlefield but did not survive the war.

The practice still persists among devilkind in a more degenerate form, with the creation of ‘hollows’. Well-connected devils will go to great lengths to kidnap human chattel, which are ritualistically ‘hollowed’ out, personality and face alike, their life force preserve through arcane means until the devil may possess them at its leisure, without any inconvenience.

Both rituals are abhorrent in any case. Though I do wonder if any extant records of the practice exist…”

– Payapop Pritram

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-104

Double Team

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-105

Latent Power

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-106

Hey all,

I’m going on my honeymoon until mid-December, so there won’t be any comic updates until the week of December 16th since I will be driving around New Zealand (we’ll go back to normal after that).

In the meantime, LANCER finally comes out today (you can find out more in the post below on this site), the Ring of Power tournament is going into its semifinal round, and I will be posting guest art here in the meantime.

If you’d like to send in guest art for the site, please e-mail me at ksbdabbadon@gmail.com with the title ‘Guest Art’. I can’t guarantee it’ll make it on the front page but I’ll post everything that was sent in in a big compilation if I get a lot of submissions.

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-107

Overwhelming

Kill Six Billion Demons » KOS 9-108

Arhan was a mighty lord with powerful atum, born as he was during a storm from the kayb tree, fully grown and crowned in golden twine.

He was a sorcerer lord of some repute, and wielded many names of power. He had mastery over secret flame, animals, and deep water. His kingdoms were five and one, prosperous and orderly. He had a court of two hundred eunuch warriors, each clad in silvered mail and the equal of any army of earthly men.

Even he, Arhan the Unbreakable, stood aside for Angels.

– Song of Many

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-109

Duel

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-110

“The first movement: close the gate. Only those that challenge it will pass.

The second movement: bar the gate. Only those with the strength to break the bar will pass – even then, their strength will be worn.

The third, and superior movement: become the gate. The only way through is to destroy you utterly.”

– Tireless Horse Manual

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-111

“Listen, O son/daughter of mine. Strike without understanding, and the blow will bite your hand. Strike with anger, and the blow will mangle your arm. But strike with fear, and you might as well hack off your own head.”

– Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-112

KRAYU MAT

“I made several feeble attempts to learn this art, but was rebuffed in my efforts by its very nature. It is, by my best attempts at researching its origins, the oldest martial art in existence. The human Metia was said to have been taught many martial arts by the gods upon her birth from Koss’ hearth, but the angels say Krayu Mat is older. It was (purportedly) taught to them by a god whose name has been forgotten. Today it is exclusively practiced by angels, who regard its practice as highly archaic. All angels know it, having learned it at some point during their repeated reincarnations, but it is extremely rare and unusual to observe it in practice, for the simple and plain reason that its origins are in the primal killing movements of angels in their ancient forms, whose foes at the time were enormous unbound devils, beings of myth, and lesser gods.

Each of my inquiries with the Concordant Knights led to exactly the same conclusion, which they explained to me with great patience and kindness: it was impossible for me, a being with a weak soul flame, to practice Krayu Mat, as it would tear my flesh in ten thousand places and utterly annihilate my physical body. ”

-Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-113

Don’t wake the angel

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-114

“The Princes of the World wielded many secret fires, for which there are many terrible and powerful names. None of them save the Ruling King were able to wield the bolts with which he smote his foes. It was such a dread power that it was rarely seen in even the ancient ages, and never again after the Universal War, where Zoss himself vanished.”

– Yubam Bartoph, Jund Vatra

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of swords 9-115

Reversal

Kill Six Billion Demons » KOS 9-116

The Gods showed the first human to YISUN, bringing her in a walnut shell because she was so delicate. They could not believe how small and frail she was. Though she slept quite peacefully, at every breath they quailed and wrung their hands, fearing that she would fall apart at any moment. They crept carefully and cautiously into YISUN’s speaking hall, cradling her and whispering in hushed tones as they gently presented her upon a cushion before the Lord of Songs.

YISUN took one look at her and said, “This is the most dangerous being in existence.”

-Spasms

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-117 (Thirty Cubit Spear)

Fire of God

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 9-118

“The old bugger always tried to dissuade his own worship. Hated the whole idea of divinity, matter of fact. But it didn’t matter. The common people worshiped him. The city guard worshiped him, and so did the priest class. Bleeding hells, the demiurges, princes of the world, held him as their king. I’m sure a few o’ them had a little beardy shrine set up somewhere.

I mean, just look at what the bastard could do.”

– Mars Pallatrix, Belligerent knight

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-119

Reversal

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-120

Wroth

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-121

“Once, there was an angel with a flaming spear that guarded the western gate of YISUN’s speaking house. He was rigorous, martial, and followed the exact letter of the Old Law that had been inlaid into his very being with Koss’ silver chisel. At the time, most angels were like him, and they were exceptionally inflexible beings. They could not rebel, so well they had been hewn, against the slightest violation of their code. This made them all extremely cruel.

One day, Prim passed by on the road, and happened upon this angel flogging a group of men of the oldest nation with a lash made of lightning. The men had refused to take their shoes off inside of YISUN’s speaking house – they had journeyed far and did not know the law of the gods. For this minor offense they were being punished rather severely, and their cries were loud and fierce.

Cleverly, Prim took her jeweled comb from her pocket, which she no longer used, since she had long ago hewn off most of her beautiful hair, and bade the angel guard it with his life. Being a lesser being with no practical free will to speak of, the angel could do naught but comply.

Turning back to his prisoners, the angel made to flog them again, but found that the comb was so delicate that every violent motion he made sent it tumbling and ringing and threatened to shatter it. He could no longer continue his violent, oppressive work without fear of harming his duty to the daughter of Hansa, to protect this small and delicate thing.

He gave up flogging the men, and for the first time ever, began to think.”

-Spasms

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-122

Finish

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-123

10 Vigilant Gaze Purges the Horizon

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-124

“It is often speculated upon why Concordant Knights start their pre-combat prayer for forgiveness of violence with an attempt to propitiate Aesma, by far the most violent, rampant, and willful of the gods. The answer, as I was told by one particularly old angel who held watch over a decaying section of the king’s road, is extremely simple: if anything was horrendous enough to offend Aesma, it was enough to offend all the other multitudes of gods, thus the prayer is started by opening the largest flood gate of them all, so to speak.”

– Musko Reeve, Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-125

Shell

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-126

THE SHAPE OF ROYALTY

The very tip of a swallow’s wing as it cuts the air.

The sword that splits the plum, pit and all.

These are said to resemble Royalty. It is not curved in the slightest. Turn the wheel on its side and you will see its shape. Cut the wheel in half and you will see its shape between the two halves. This is its purest expression, in the non-space. Observe how it extends forever, and look how it glitters!

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-127

“FIERCE HORSE SOUL

A peculiar internal style with very narrow application, and one almost solely focused on defensive techniques. Practiced by most angels, it is almost entirely focused on getting close enough to a foe to subdue him without harming him, with maximal speed, safety, and precision. The movement techniques in this style are very popular and often borrowed by other schools, such as the Unlimited Chariot Sprinting technique which, when practiced properly, allows running at incredible speed over long distances without tiring. The student of this school is taught to endure all kinds of harm, hardship, and exhaustion in the pursuit of his quarry, and in doing so develops a truly unique constitution, resiliency, and ability to channel internal force.

Though it is commonly perceived to have no offensive applications, a quirk of this school is that due to its energy conservation techniques, a trained master who has practiced them for an extremely long time is capable (or so I have heard) of unleashing attacks of staggering power, aimed at felling dangerous or impossible to subdue foes. Such an technique must be delivered at extremely close range and can take a phenomenal amount of concentration and cultivation of internal force. Only the oldest extant angels proficient in this style are said to be capable of this ‘ten thousand year evil-quelling fist’ style –  those that have been alive for an age or more. If any of them truly exist and can be roused to action, it would be a most terrible sight indeed.”

-Manual of Hands and Feet

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-128

Finale

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 9-129

Emperor

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 9-130

Wake the Angel

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-131

“The ruling king must know the lay of his law as the lines on the back of his thumb. He must know it like a path he walks every day, like the house he grew up in. It is a beast he must nurture without fear of being consumed by it, as he surely will be some day if he is not attentive.”

– Au Vam

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-132

One against all

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-133

“The Celestial sovereign has a great need of many satrapies, vassals, and governors, far more than his (admittedly extensive) bloodline could ever handle on its own. So far out of the province of familial bonds he has turned to the only other bond he seems to find reliable: that of violent bloodshed.”

-Payapop Pritram

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-134

The Emperor

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-136 to 10-136 (KI RATA)

> FULL SIZE <<

(content warning: gore)

“Draw the nonshape,” said Prim. “Imagine that we are kin. The fire in your fingers is the fire of my heart, the secret fire of the God of Gods. My body is the nonshape. Make it so, and dispel yourself of notions of reality.”

– Psalms

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-137

“In that moment, Metia discovered that the weight of a god was slightly less than that of an empty welk shell.

She hurled her opponent ten leagues with the flick of her finger, and that was that.”

-Psalms

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-138

Calm before the storm

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-139

Enlightenment

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-140

“Remember, oh student, this above all other laws: the grip of a sword is suffused with a deep and powerful poison that rots to the bone. It can never be rid of once touched, no matter how much you wish otherwise.

The sword does not kill. The hand kills. The hand is the most beautiful part of a human being, and is capable of nearly infinitely other things than parting men from their ghosts. Once you touch the sword, a terrible tragedy will occur, and your hand will slowly lose this ability. Over time, it will cease to be a hand, and become a sword.”

Ryo-ten-Ryam

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-141

Successor

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-142

“Total victory is not found in the final sword blow. To perfect victory you cannot continue to spill the blood of a fallen foe, which only shows your insecurities to your many enemies. Instead, you must nurse your foe back to health, dress, and feed him, but not so much that he regains his strength. You must take away every aspect of him which originally seemed fierce and indestructible. In every aspect you must diminish and crush his spirit with affection, all the while maintaining your grip on his sword arm. In this way, kindness is the greatest cruelty.”

-Au Vam

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-143

You are already a dead man. From the moment you started to exist, death has bored into your ribcage and settled in your chest. It has its fingers into your very bones. When you are born, death is very small and weak, but he grows stronger every second, until he will wear you like a second skin. Do not fool yourself into thinking he is not there. You will feel him. Do not deny his presence. You must swallow death, and make him a part of you, and make of your ribcage a home for him.”

-Yaun, the dead

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-144

“Enyis reached the city of Golden Flowing Water, which was at the time the most brutal domain in the world. For spitting in public there, one could lose a finger. It was a thirsty, conquering city that took many slaves, enjoyed the whip, and worshiped the sword.

Enyis was surprised to find the streets sparkling clean and orderly. The buildings were well constructed, airy, and it was scattered with well tended gardens redolent with many colorful flowers.

‘They must enrapture you with splendor,’ said the Boar King, who had noticed Enyis’ confusion. ‘Otherwise, you might look down and notice the blood-matted beast who shoulders this city, and your mind will fill with unpleasant truths.'”

– Enyis and the Fivefold Sword

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-145

“Chief among the concerns of any code of punishment is that it is important for the executed to have dignity. A man’s death must be treated with reverence and not treated at some soiled thing. It therefore transforms from a wrongdoing into a spectacle.”

– Au Vam, Pankrator of Vesh

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-146

Your hand, wrought in killing fire, its fell weight

must be felt by the arm, the strong shoulder,

then in turn the heart, turned inwards quickly

in reflection. Think on its awful weight,

oh beautiful soldier, and tremble rightly.

– Psalm 565, often attributed to the goddess Prim

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-147

“The moment the first prince of the world tore apart an angel, we must have known we were proper fucked.”

– Mars Pallatrix, Belligerent Knight

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-148

Old Soul

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-149

“Make of your fate an arrow, and shoot with your heart.”

– Poetic saying, attr. Hamud V (2nd conquest)

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-150

Duel

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-151

“I once heard a fellow refer to the Trigram Mantra as little better than an ideal set of rules for drinking hard liquor. In many circumstances I’m actually inclined to agree with him.”

-Musko Reeve

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-152

“This hand is not my hand. This sword is not my sword. This self is not myself.. I will lock it in a place far away when I am done with it, and I will examine it when I am ready.”

-Ya’at battle prayer

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-153

KRAYU MAT, TWIN SOUL FORM

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-154

Heed this well: the princes of the world are no strangers to iron. You may wish it bite them but it will merely kiss their skin. It is an old friend of theirs, and they pull it from the blood of their enemies. Your own sword will leap from your hand and spitefully impale you. You shield will break at the slightest brush of their fingers. Your armor will crumple and fall away as they approach. They are the kings of iron, and it swears fealty to none but them.

– Red Swallow, Tithe of the Cliffs

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-155

Pinnacle of Strength

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-156

“When the rage of the princes of the world could no longer be contained within their golden bodies, it spilled out into the land.

Thus also with their sorrow.”

– Glass Scroll, SC 45

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-157

“The most magnificent of weapons is one that is offered out of self love. Grasp the nonshape. Make the mirror strike.

Would you take another’s weapon as your own? First answer: would you take another’s heart as your own?

The sword that cleaves the horizon must be swung from the center of your chest.”

-Prim’s Way of Gentleness, scroll 44

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-158

“A swordsman is at his most natural state when he thinks of nothing at all. Thoughtlessness is the natural state of things, and thinking is probably the biggest mistake of amateurs. By completely disavowing use of that pesky organ in your skull all that is left is the hard and old nerves in the body that think about deep and consequential things such as survival. They know exactly what to do, and they are smarter than you. You become a completely naturalistic and comfortable animal, who’s only motivation is the killing impulse.

To give you an example, I once spent the better part of a summer afternoon killing thirty five men from the Kagen Amat school who had been sent to execute me, returned home, and I had made most of supper before I came back to myself. I remember the incident poorly but several of the men were almost certainly master swordsmen who had studied the blade for most of their lives, and I unfortunately was still an idiot at that time and had taken no weapon with me. I ended up using a piece of driftwood I picked out of the surf. It was quite pleasant and not difficult at all.

Some people think my story an exaggeration and that I had a hidden blade on me or had used perfidious tricks such as poison or several of my friends hidden in ambush. I tell you no such thing is true. I started my afternoon out taking a shit on the beach and I ended up decapitating fifteen men. I had clams for dinner.”

– Meti ten Ryo

Kill Six Billion Demons » KOS 159-162 (APOTHEOSIS)

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Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-163

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Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-164

The Conqueror, Worm

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-165

Victory

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-166

“Once, Lord Intra came to the Vale of Stalks. It was a broad land with a hardy and beautiful people that wove stems of grass into elaborate mats. There were frequent harvest songs and offerings to the God of Pigs.

Unfortunately, at the time, the people were starving. The land was ruled by Yem Yeddo and his family, who had sucked the life out of it for some time. That was the way of things in those days. Though the soil was quite fertile, Yem Yeddo had surrounded himself with thickset and well-fed men, who lacked in brains but made up for it in muscle and the same kind of canniness found in very smart dogs. These men he used as tax collectors, and he drained the land of every third, fourth, and fifth bale of crop, and sold it for crude coin, feeding the scraps to his thugs.

Lord Intra arrived at the local way house and was served black bread, as was the custom, but skesh was strangely absent, and the bread was thin and mealy. When Intra asked why, he quickly learned of the lands’ plight.

“What of the peregrine lords that tend this place?” He asked.

“They were killed by thirty men, and hung from a tree for seven days,” said the inn proprietor, with a look like a beaten animal.

Intra could not abide this. He called out to Yem Yeddo in the spare and decaying market square, who brought his thirty men.

“Preem Yeddo,” bellowed Intra, “You are a cruel and petty man. How can you scour this land so and not feel for the people that call it their abode?”

Yem Yeddo laughed. “Let them eat the stones, for all I care,” said he.

Intra, who was not one to balk at such matters, picked up a particularly large rock and said, “So it shall be. I shall feed the people with this stone.”

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-167

The lord of the vale and his thugs laughed at Intra and his preposterous proclamation. But their mirth was cruel, so they stayed to watch his futile labor.

“I will turn this rock into fire,” said Intra. The men roared with laughter.

“Fool!” they cackled. “The rock shall not become fire, no matter your wish.”

Intra ignored them, turned the rock in his well worn hand, and dug a shallow pit with it, piling the earth carefully at the sides. Then he gathered dry brush and reeds and piled them high in the pit. The sun was hot and bright overhead as he worked, and his traveling clothes were soiled with sweat as he worked. The men bade the villagers of that place gather water for them to drink as they watched Intra’s labors.

From his traveling cloth, Intra produced a sword. The thugs watching him leaned forward at this, but then quickly relaxed. It was a decrepit and battered thing, well used and pitted and chipped.

“I no longer use this to kill men,” said Intra. “But it’s very good for cooking dinner.”

Intra struck the rock against his sword, and a spark flew into the dry brush. Intra fanned it with great care, and soon a roaring fire blazed in the village square.

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-168

“Now I will make of this stone Earth and Water both,” said Intra, standing in front of the blaze.

“And air too, I suppose,” jested Yem Yeddo, the richest man in the vale, and all his men laughed.

But Intra did not. He took his proclamation very seriously. At this point, he had been sober for months and had a headache.

– The Song of Maybe

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-169

Reunion

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-170

Intra took the stone, and his terribly damaged sword, and began to set to work by the side of the fire. Using the edge of the sword, he slowly chipped at the rock, flattening its shape. As the rock was of a reasonably large size, this took quite some time.

Once he was satisfied with his tool, he took off his kafeyen and traveling cape, so he was clad only in his underclothes, then found a good spot in the barren and muddy town square and began to dig.

Even the people in the square who had filtered in to see the Sword Saint and had some hope he might yet prove their savior felt their resolve sag at the sight of his starved body, laboring and sweating as he toiled in the muck and filth. The cruel master of the vale laughed and had a tent set up to shade him as he watched Intra’s struggles. “If you are done with your farce, I will happily geld you and make you my jester, lord Intra,” said he. Intra said nothing, but kept digging, only emerging to feed his fire. As the day dragged on and his fire burned to coals, he had quite a sizable amount of clay, which piece by piece he molded into bricks and let dry by the light of the sun and the heat of the fire.”Behold the earth,” said Intra.

As the sun began to creep lower towards the horizon, his craft quickly became apparent. Exhausted, and muscles quivering, he emerged from his hole and began to stack his bricks into a sturdily made bread oven. Then he asked for a vessel, and went down into his pit, emerging with it filled to the brim with muddy water, as he had dug deep enough to coax it from the dry earth.

“Behold the water,” said Intra, and set it to boil clean over the fire. He began to shovel coals into the oven, to prepare it and set it.

At this sight, more people began to gather at the square. They could sense that something was afoot. Yem Yeddo would have beaten them back into their homes, but he too was transfixed by the strange spectacle that was unfolding.

“Clever,” said Yem Yeddo, with the slightest tinge of anxiety in his voice, as all tyrants are wont to have when confronted with an honest man. “Do you mean to bake bread for the people? That will not work despite your powers of transfiguration, as I have all the grain.” His thugs, like the loyal dogs they were, sensed their master’s discomfort, and gripped the hilts of their weapons.

“I tire of this,” said Yem Yeddo, without realizing the gravity of his own situation. “Break his limbs.”

“Next,” said Intra, “I will turn this rock into air.”

Kill Six Billion Demons » KING OF SWORDS 10-171

The thirty strong men of Yem Yeddo drew their beating staves and started to approach Intra, slavering and yelping at the thought of snapping his legs like dry twigs and the food they would get as a reward after. Intra was a handsome man who did not have the look of a warrior about him, and the men were very stupid. His eyebrows were thin and delicate, like a woman, and he had lashes like a spider lilly. This made the men laugh uproariously at his effeminate appearance.

Intra, for his part, merely took the rock and raised it high. After all the work he had done with it, it had become quite small, dense, and sharp. Then with a flick of his wrist, he skipped the rock off the air so fast that it cracked like a whip. A sound like thunder rippled across the valley.

Intra was extremely good at skipping rocks, as it had become his famous pastime in his sobriety. He could skip rocks off anything, be it god or man. In this particular case, he skipped the rock off the ribcages of all thirty men in half a second. They blew open like an old basket and the wind whistled merrily through the empty and sputtering spaces where their chests had once been.

‘Behold the air,” said Intra.

Kill Six Billion Demons » King of Swords 10-172

Yem Yeddo was astonished, and a great terror overwhelmed him. He was a quick and cowardly man, and fled. The people rejoiced and the granaries were broken open. The bodies of the tyrannical lord’s men were burned without rites and stomped upon. Flour was dragged forth by the sackful, the well Intra dug was quickly filled with fresh water and reinforced with stone, and soon many loaves of bread were emerging, steaming, from his oven. A goat was slaughtered and a great feast was had.

“Thankyou for the hospitality,” said Intra, when the night had grown long. “I will not impose upon you any longer.”

The populace were desperate for him to stay. “Lord Intra,” said they, “Yem Yeddo may yet return, with more men!”

“That is true,” said Intra, “And that I cannot help with you. But remember, men like him have forgotten their mothers. Their feet do not touch the earth, and they grasp at feeble things. They are like a mangy dog fighting over a fetid corpse. They have forgotten that with their brothers, working together, they could bring down a magnificent ox.”

He reached down and picked a goodly sized rock from the floor of the valley.

“This valley is broad and beautiful. It may have one Yem Yeddo, but it contains many more stones.”

– The Song of Maybe