

NARRATIVE  DECLARATION



ROTGRIND

A WORLD
IN DECAY



PRIMER

COSMOLOGY

I hate gods.

Yes, gods exist and they perform manifested miracles across the surface of our world, but I hate them nonetheless. Deific powers, while integral to the continuation of Tyne, are also so highly elevated above concerns for us that it makes them impossible for me to muster even an iota of respect for—especially the pretenders of the so-called First House pantheon.

Still, putting my personal judgments aside, I have compiled this report of recorded interviews, found notes, and personal observations to provide illumination on the cosmology that governs our existence. I am sure it is but one of countless reports you've received in your tenure as Minister Perpetuum, but I hope my account of Tyne's cosmology provides some new insight into our world's place in the cosmos.

-Archivist Pavvnach

ON THE PLANES

Existence, specifically our mortal context within it, occurs on the Material Realm. We are a planet, orbiting a star, with a smaller moon that orbits us. There are other stars, and likely other planets and other moons, that float out in the vastness of space. Citizens of our Freehold monitor these distant locations as best we can, though I daresay that the observatories of distant Zeskoran are far more apt at such analysis.

Beyond this concept of the Material Realm are the other layers of existence, or planes as they've been termed by scholars, that overlay our own dimension.

The Fundamental Battlefield is perhaps the most well known of these other planes of existence. It is a vast place of myriad terrain that stretches on for infinity, and yet is still somehow bordered by four beings of unfathomable power. Roiling entities that could be equally described as senseless idiots as they could unimaginably intelligent deific beings dwell at the four respective corners—or what can best be understood as corners—of the Battlefield.

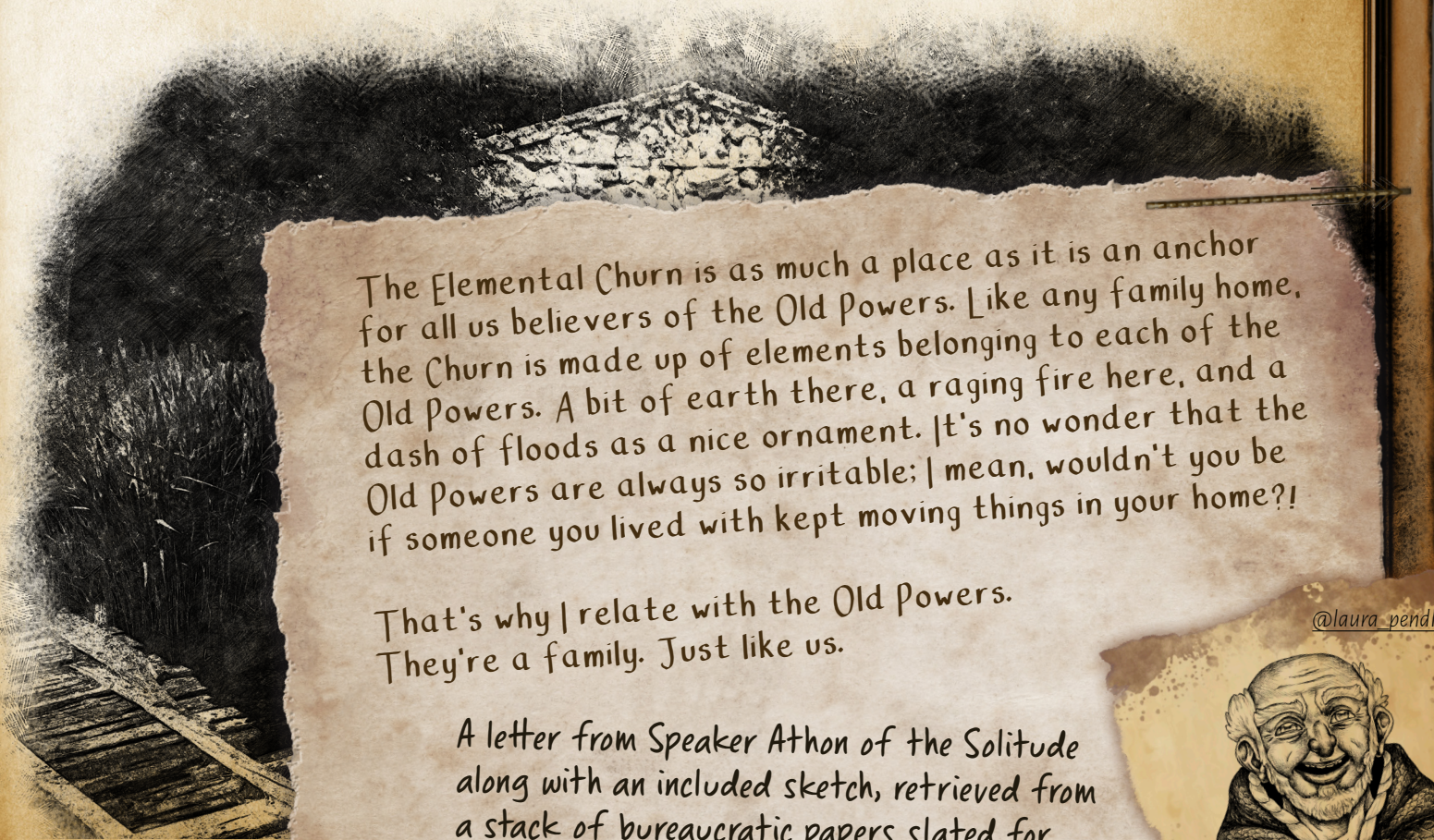
Each of these entities represents a vague concept of spiritual alignment, running the gamut of chaos, good, law, and order. These endpoints of deific power and the entities that surge forth from them are known as the Fundamentals.

Adherents of the Old Powers believe that the Elemental Churn is a combination of four elements—air, earth, fire, and water—that roil against one another in a constantly evolving primordial land.

Elementals of varying shapes and types take form in this maelstrom of a realm, with four in particular having all the aspects of deities. The so-called Old Powers could just as easily be exceptionally old and powerful elemental beings as they could be cosmically eternal forces like the Fundamental powers. If the Fundamental Battlefield represents the spirit of the Material Realm, then the Elemental Churn is its physical form. The elements present within this place seep through planar boundaries and form the physical realm we hold so dear.

Next, we come to the Crucible of Creation. Few understand the Crucible, as it is far more abstract than the Fundamental Battlefield of the roiling Elemental Churn. At its most basic level, the Crucible is little more than a seesaw of cosmic forces. On one end of the spectrum lies the blistering light of pure creation, while the opposite end of the Crucible contains a deep void of pure entropy. The landscape at the metaphysical center of this plane is a verdant landscape home to the creatures we know as fey. The misnomers of dark and light fey arise from those fey who dwell in regions at the Crucible closer to the respective end of the spectrum.

Between the Material Realm and the Crucible of Creation lies the ghostly transitive realm known as the Betwixt. Here reside incorporeal creatures, beings of pure shadow, and the occasional fey who has somehow failed to fully cross into the Material Realm. This dark mirror of our realm acts as a filter of sorts for soul matter, and it is also the prison for countless beings who've been disconnected from the cycle of life and death. Few interact with this realm directly, for its very nature often prevents such meddling, though some talented spellcasters have managed to pierce this veil and enter the Betwixt to various nebulous fates.



The Elemental Churn is as much a place as it is an anchor for all us believers of the Old Powers. Like any family home, the Churn is made up of elements belonging to each of the Old Powers. A bit of earth there, a raging fire here, and a dash of floods as a nice ornament. It's no wonder that the Old Powers are always so irritable; I mean, wouldn't you be if someone you lived with kept moving things in your home?!

That's why I relate with the Old Powers.
They're a family. Just like us.

A letter from Speaker Athon of the Solitude along with an included sketch, retrieved from a stack of bureaucratic papers slated for burning in the Rook's Pilaster. - P.

@laura_pendl



THE PATH OF SOULS

It's impossible to tell where the concept of the mortal soul began, but for thoroughness I will start at what I've surmised to be its most likely inception. This is to say that I've come to a theory on where mortality as we know it begins. From this point I will go on to detail the path a soul follows and what makes us who we are and how it interacts with the planes of existence I have already explained.

As the warfare between the aspects of the four Fundamental powers rages on, the essence of their proxies breaks down and seeps through reality. This essence is recorded by most religions as *atma*: an intangible substance that represents the basic soulstuff of creation. A destroyed Fundamental's *atma* bleeds into the adjoining plane of existence that we know as the Crucible of Creation, where the brilliant energies of positive creation at the Crucible's outermost end snatch the *atma* and pull it in. In a way, this collection of *atma* acts as fuel for the Crucible's cosmic design of creating existence.

In some cases, the cleansed Fundamental *atma* is simply passed on through the churning power in the Crucible and spat out onto the Material Realm as a new soul, attracted out from the Crucible by the birth of a new mortal shell. In other instances, small fragments of *atma* from the Elemental Churn pollute the mixture, tampering with the Fundamental *atma* and then seeping into the same soul—such mixtures often entering specific ancestries with strong elemental and/or Fundamental affiliations.

There's some theological debate regarding the timing of souls. Specifically, what decides the appearance of a soul: is it the birth of a mortal being or does the sending of a forged soul force a birth. The exact timing on this may differ between religions and specific sects, but it's clear that souls are built within the Crucible of Creation using the *atma* harvested from the Fundamental Battlefield and sometimes the Elemental Churn. These souls then imbue mortals on our world with desires and drive.

A mortal lives their life and then dies—sponsorship is a strange exception to this, which I'll tackle separately.

Following death, the soul of a mortal leaks through the Material Realm, into the Betwixt and then into the Crucible of Creation where it is consumed at the Crucible's entropic end. This process is the reverse of what created the soul, and the soul is rendered down into pure *atma*. Though in many cases this *atma* is the same as what was used to craft the soul, sometimes the type of *atma* is changed by the actions of the mortal who bore the soul. In this way, a living being created from *atma* primarily aligned to the Perfection might lead a life of darkness and pain, converting the baseline *atma* into something more akin to that of the *atma* used by the Malice.

Rendered *atma* returns to its realm of origin, intrinsically drawn towards the power it is most aligned to. Thus, through influencing the lives of mortals, can powers like the Fundamentals and Old Powers reconfigure *atma* to add to their own stockpiles. The more *atma* a power possesses, the more building blocks of creation at their disposal to unleash powerful manifestations into their ongoing struggles. As those struggles continue, more *atma* is shed and more souls are charged in the Crucible of Creation and sent to the Material Realm.

The most simple explanation of the path of souls, is that our existence is little more than a step in a cosmic furnace that turns *atma* into souls which are then destroyed and rendered back into *atma*. The struggles of the Material Realm act as an opposite to the struggles on the Fundamental Battlefield, where the Fundamentals shed the *atma* used in their manifestations which in turn powers the creation of mortal souls. Meanwhile, the death of mortals sheds our souls which is rendered into *atma* which in turn fuels the struggle of the Fundamental Battlefield.



A thought.

Atma is a concept that we mortals barely understand, but some powerful spellcasters and brilliant minds have made attempts at tampering with it. Should someone be able to change the flow of atma through this process of creation, they could literally control the building blocks of reality. While I know our nation abhors the religious, perhaps an arcane or scientific method could be developed to interact with this quintessential element of our existence. Such innovations could reshape reality and it would be best if we were at the forefront of such endeavors, despite its association with the hated divine.

-Archivist Pavvnach

INVOLVEMENT OF DEITIES

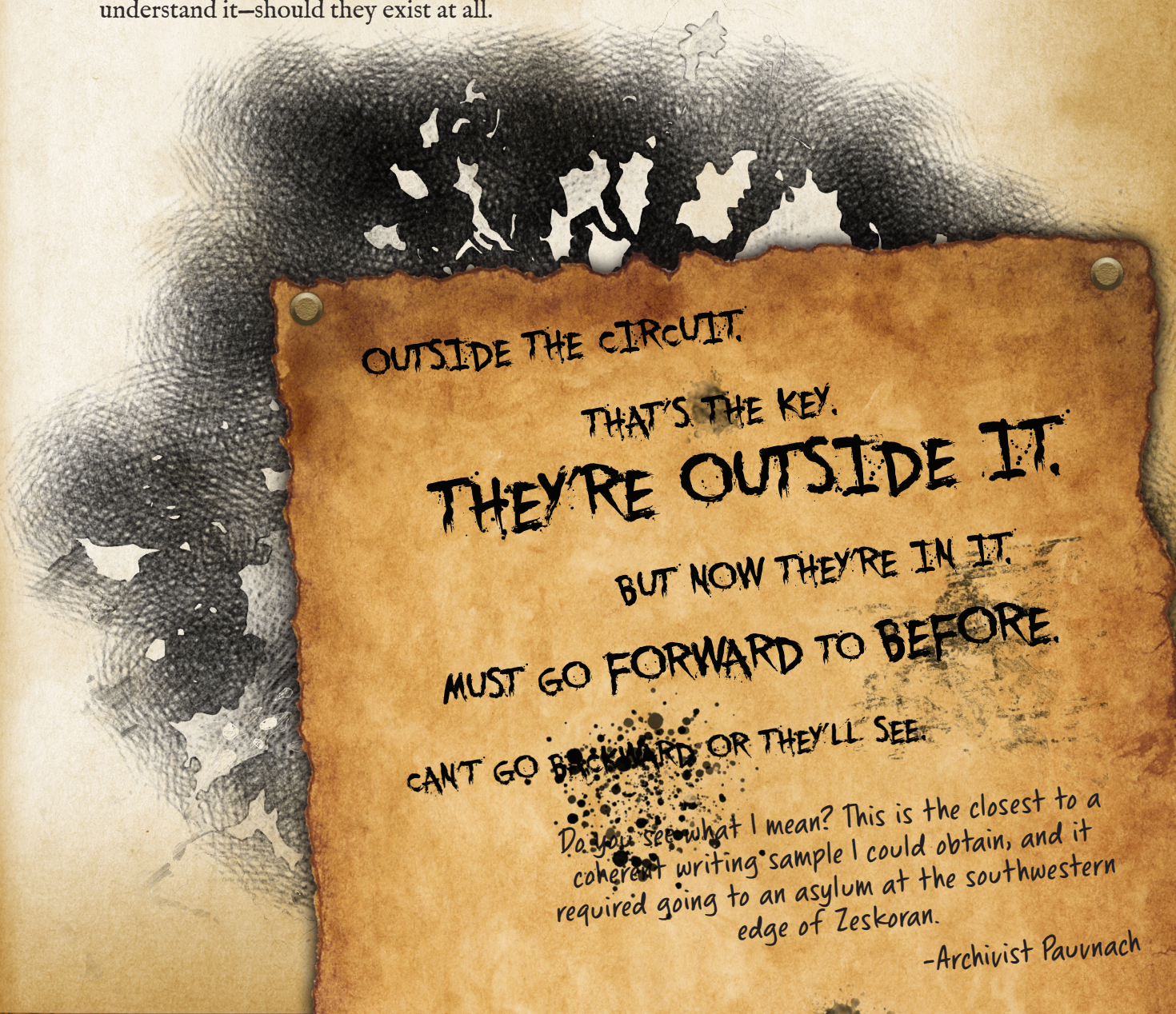
It's impossible to discuss our existence without understanding, or trying to understand, the role of the deific beings that exist within it. Deities interceded regularly with the concept of the soul, the Mortal Realm and our very world of Tyne. Understanding their motives can be simple at first glance, though the actions of these beings continue to confound and upset expectations.

The Fundamentals are idiotic and simple entities that push forth their metaphysical ideological beliefs as part of their endless struggle against one another. Imagine that you had a perfectly balanced game, and that four players of equal skill were battling to determine a victor, but everytime someone had the upper hand, that upper hand would change the rules in the favor of the other three players. That is the state of the Fundamentals and their aptly titled Battlefield. The presence of mortals and the ability of our souls to convert atma from one coded type to another means that our world inevitably affects that of the Battlefield and prevents one power from holding dominance for too long.

The mercurial elemental Old Powers use their atma for far less obvious purposes. At some point ages past, it's assumed that the Old Powers sacrificed much of their stored atma to create the Material Realm. In this, they quite literally turned the essence of creation into the building blocks of material elements that compose Tyne and other worlds. Why they did this remains a great cosmic mystery, but it was upon this primordial Material Realm that the Crucible of Creation began the process of depositing souls which could change the role of atma and thus removed the assumedly stagnant nature of the cosmos that existed before.

I would prefer to avoid the role of the First House in this document, but for completeness' sake I shall discuss them. The deities of the First House exist outside of the cycle of life and death, instead receiving their power from the veneration of mortals who exist on Tyne, caring little for souls after they depart their bodies. These mortals-turned-deities are believed to reside on the Rosewound, the vast gemlike second moon strangely visible only from on the distant land of Pridoma. Though they don't directly interact with the flow of souls or the planes beyond our own, it's important to recognize that the Rosewound first appeared as the heroes who would become the First House enacted their great conquests. As these wars continued, the Rosewound grew larger and larger in the sky, and some believe that the heroes ascended to combat this threat and prevent it from absorbing all of Tyne. It's impossible to know the truth of this, though our own Freehold has clear beliefs on the cost of these mortal deities and what their hubris has done to our world.

There is nothing concrete I can posit in this document about the beings we've come only to call the Entities. These deities seemingly exist outside of the cycle of creation and souls as we understand it—should they exist at all.



OUTSIDE THE CIRCUIT.

THAT'S THE KEY.

THEY'RE OUTSIDE IT.

BUT NOW THEY'RE IN IT.

MUST GO FORWARD TO BEFORE.

CANT GO BACKWARD OR THEY'LL SEE.

Do you see what I mean? This is the closest to a coherent writing sample I could obtain, and it required going to an asylum at the southwestern edge of Zeskoran.

-Archivist Pavvnach

My archivists tracked down this letter.
See other notes about Barnes.

- P.



@SaltyJub

Today marks the beginning of my journey into the heart of the continent of Amari, where a unique and mysterious religion has taken root. Upon my arrival, I was greeted by a group of locals who call themselves the "Conserve." They are devout followers of this religion that apparently has no god or deity but is seemingly born out of belief. The belief does have its figures, but isn't necessarily worshiped like the Old Powers are.

From my initial observations, the Conserve's primary focus is on the preservation of the soul. They believe that the soul should not be taken away to an afterlife by some deity but instead be conserved on the world of Tyne, where it can continue to serve a larger purpose. The most striking feature of this faith is the crystal preservation they practice, which is seen as a high honor and something truly special. Those who are chosen by the faith have crystalline growths on their bodies, which are carefully nurtured by the Conserve to prevent them from turning. Into what my guests would not say, but I did see the fear in their eyes.

As I delved deeper, I have come to learn that the Conserve is headed by High Conserve Kerdenand, who is believed to have undergone the crystal preservation himself. His body is a mixture of crystalline and metal parts, which are etched with arcane runes to help him function magically. I find this aspect of the religion particularly fascinating, as it seems to blur the line between magic and science.

Overall, my initial encounters with the Conserve have left me intrigued, and I am eager to continue my research. I hope to learn more about the history of this religion, its beliefs, and its practices, and perhaps uncover some of the mysteries that surround it.

Lorn Barnes, Wizard Extraordinaire

ROLE OF THE ROT

As a final, more recent addition to this report, I am compiling additional notes regarding the malign essence known as the Rot. Though this threat seems more poised to our neighbors on Pridoma, reports of increased Rot presence in the jungles east of our mountain fastnesses has expedited investigation into the Rot and its role.

The most concrete research into the spiritual implications of the Rot I found through a church-declared heretic of the Bishop of the First House. I met them in the Inheritor Lands while traveling there under a false identity. We conversed in a portside tavern, where I exchanged a rather generous amount of gold for an hour of their time. I have transcribed a highlight from the conversation as follows:

ARCHIVIST PAUVNAUCH: So what do you know about the Rot and its impact on the soul?

NAME REDACTED: It's like a consuming cancer. It feeds on the raw soul... atma as I would guess you call it, and then grows off that consumption. The watery black mold and the tumorous masses are the physical growth from the consumption of the soul.

AP: So, the Rot consumes souls and grows off that consumption?

XX: Simple, but yes. The wider clergy of the First House refuses to acknowledge it, but even a small bit of Rot dilutes your soul. It means when you die, not all of your soul is making the journey into the afterlife that it should be.

AP: But if that's the case, wouldn't that mean that destroying the Rot growths would set that atma free and back into the cycle?

XX: That's the real fucked up thing about it, the growths don't store the soulstuff. Sure, the Rot grows by consuming your soul, but it's not storing it when it does so.

AP: Apologies, I don't follow. How can it be growing and not using that substance? Is it converting the atma in such a way that it is removed from the cycle of creation?

XX: **audible sigh followed by a full minute of drinking their (third) beverage.** No no no, not like that. You can't just get rid of soulstuff. What I'm saying is that when the Rot

consumes some of an afflicted person's soul, it grows. But that consumption isn't using the soul to grow. It's more like... the soul is sent somewhere else and in exchange the Rot grows on its target. Like a weird reward for sending the soulstuff to wherever place it's actually sent to.

AP: So, you're saying that the Rot is moving atma somewhere... else from itself?

XX: I told you: real fucked up. That's why I'm an apostate now. I figured this whole thing out, and when I tried to get the church to document and look into it, I had armored knights at my door and inquisitors chasing me all the way from Outset to here.

AP: Most unfortunate that your research was stopped. Still, did you manage to find out where the atma was going?

XX: **another long drink from their next drink.** Not even close. Besides, where the soulstuff going is the lesser of the two questions to be asking.

AP: What's the more important question?

XX: Who, or what, needs that amount of soulstuff? What are they going to use it for, or what are they using it for already?

AP: That's two questions.

XX: I was never that good at math. But one number problem I do have is that my cup is empty. How about another round on you?

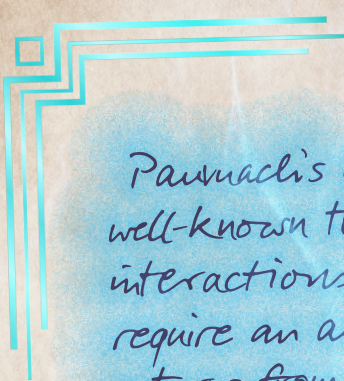
Given my contact's mostly reputable nature, I am inclined to fund further investigations into this potential interaction between atma and the Rot. Though we lack divine resources in our nation, there are groups in other parts of the world who we could subtly fund to take on the burden and risk themselves. I believe that only by understanding the role of the Rot in our cosmology can we truly understand a means of defeating it.

Though it is beyond my remit, I believe the increasing threat of the Rot poses both a direct and existential threat to this nation. As the eastern jungles fall further to the Rot, we find our current incendiary tactics might no longer avail us. Meanwhile, should the Rot be somehow funneling atma to some unknown force, we need to better understand what is happening. Any being with the ability to funnel atma in the way the Rot does would likely have insight in how to use the atma for purposes that could well be incomprehensible to us.

I don't shy away from saying, the thought of what the Rot is doing to our world on a spiritual level has kept me up for many nights these past months.

It is with my utmost care that I submit this document for your review. Should you wish to contact me for further consultation or information, I remain perpetually your servant.

-Archivist Pavnach of the Bastion Freehold



Pavnach's cosmological findings are astute and already well-known to me. However, his recent discoveries on the interactions of the Rot are most concerning. I shall require an audience with the Archivist as soon as he returns from his latest mission. Arrange it for me. Until then, the work should be accelerated and we should pull our advance forces from the eastern reaches. Let the Rot chew itself on the jungles for a while longer while we complete the next phase.

-Minister Perpetuum



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Our goal is to build out a fully realized world that you can invest yourself in, as well as run your own tabletop RPG games with.

Over the coming months, we'll be releasing a bevy of custom rules content for Pathfinder 2nd Edition, though the rules can easily be adapted for other game systems as necessary. We're looking at releasing bespoke new rules and mechanics, as well as expansions to existing rules like: new monsters, new spells, unique items, backgrounds, ancestries, and so much more!

As the Rogrind campaign continues and we release more and more content, the focus will be on the city of Outset and the macro-level elements of the setting (continents, nations, pantheons, cosmology, etc.). Our plan is to gauge the reaction and adjust the type of content being released as time goes on, and based on feedback from our audience. All of this bespoke content, as well as regular releases for content used on the show, is going to be provided for you to use in your own games!

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