

Sanctum

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Scripture

Rote One - The Beginning of All Things

1. Before things, there was nothing. Before persons, there was nobody. Before here, there was nowhere. All was silent and dark in the Void.

2. Then there was light, and matter, and being. These things issued forth from that which cannot be seen, measured, or known; that which is beyond all reckoning.

3. Yet nothing divided the empty from the full, light from dark, this from that, one from another. Though there was spirit, it could not know itself. Though matter, it could not become any thing. Though there was light in the darkness, it could be known from dark; and all was madness and change.

4. Petra was there, abiding in chaos with his brothers and sisters. Whence they came, and how there was no confusion in their beings, is not known to any except that which lies beyond reckoning.

5. Each took up a mote of matter; a speck of dust, a particle, and went into it. By sacrificing their freedom, and giving themselves up, they brought order from chaos.

6. Of each mote was born a place; this place in which we dwell is called Sanctum, by Petra, the spirit of our land. Petra dwells in the land; if we do well in life, then we shall be taken to his bosom in death.

Rote Two—The Forming of the Land

1. Sanctum sprang to shape from one speck of sand. All that was, was stone; a vast and measureless plain.

2. Petra saw this, and was displeased. He shuddered, and the surface of the land was shattered into sand, and loam, and mountain, and valley.

3. Petra saw this, and it was not enough. He shook, and the waters sprang forth from the foot of the mountain, rushing across the land. The waters ran to cover all things, flooding all that lay low. The waters rose, and threatened to cover all things.

4. Petra did not wish his body to lay beneath an endless sea. He opened himself up, and the great chasm was made. All the waters flowed thence, from the foot of the mountains around, and were swallowed up in the darkness, excepting a few places, where they lay and grew stagnant.

5. And Petra saw that his body was yet dull and without hue. He sang out, and the stones responded. Some became metals, after their kind, and others turned to precious gems. Some made themselves more malleable, others less.

6. Petra saw all this, and was pleased at his form. He wished only that there were others with whom to share it. He decided that it would be so.

Rote Three—The Coming of Life

1. The mind of Petra opened, and the weakest of the spirits from without were given sanctuary in his land. They were clothed by him in bodies; some were made into herbs or trees; other became beasts and insects, each after the desires of their being.

2. To these beings was given the power to make others, after their own kind. Beasts begat other beasts; plants laid to seed. And Petra knew this, and was glad; all things were as they ought to be. Yet there was more to be.

3. After a time, Petra opened his mind further, and greater spirits, clothed as men and women, came into Sanctum,. They arose as fair-skinned youths, dripping from the waters of the land.

4. In later times, these too would lay, one with another, making more after their own kind.

5. These new ones beheld, as we do, that the land is fair; light is brought us by the moons and stars, food is given in the form of herbs, fruits, and meats. The stone of the land itself can be shaped and worked; let all be thankful for these gifts.

6. And the new ones that came unto the land were quiet for a time; they lived with all that had been given them, and were at peace with Petra.

Rote Four—The Breaking of the Peace

1. There were some who lived on the land in that time who had come up from the waters, but who had not accepted the forms that Petra laid upon them.

2. These ones were called the Nephili, and the greatest among them was Sheol. And they cast themselves into new forms, becoming mighty.

3. Sheol took the Nephili from their home, which was upon the mountains, and went down unto the valley. There did he turn to them and make his decrees, saying:

4. "Petra, lord and body of the earth beneath our feet, is dead. His energy was wasted in the shaping of Sanctum, and our coming to this place is proof that he has lost the strength to keep us out. Let us, therefore, go and rule."

5. And the Nephili responded with a great shout, and went to and fro across the land, ordering the people. Yet in every place, after the Nephili had left them, the people went and returned to doing what they had done before.

6. So the Nephili went to their master, and asked him how they might rule, and he responded. Sheol took the one who had asked him, and took up a sharp stone, and tore out his throat.

7. Having learned this, the Nephili went forth and began their reign. For three generations they ruled, until the time of Aaron and Naomi.

Rote Five—Naomi and Aaron

1. Aaron, son of Jephah, lived in the land at that time, and his wife was Naomi, daughter of Lameth. And they saw the pains that the Nephili had visited upon the land, and were angered.

2. They took counsel together, and wondered how they might find the spirit of Petra, and speak with him. Aaron thought that it might be best to go down into the chasms, and seek out the heart of the land. Naomi thought it would be wisest to go to the highest point in the land, so that the eyes of the land would turn towards her.

3. It was decided that each should do as they thought best. They parted in tears, and each carried the hope that they might meet again in love.

4. Aaron went to the heart of the land, and discovered that all the foul spirits, the lost, and the exiled had come before him. And there, in the heart of the land, he learned the wisdom of darkness.

5. Naomi went up to the heights, and felt the power of the airy places, and the spirits thereof; she was transformed, and the spirit of Petra fell upon her, and shone around her.

6. Aaron came up from the depths, and prophesied to the people that they would be freed of the Nephili. And he led them forth into the desert, and placed them into an order of his liking, the tribes.

7. Naomi came down from the heights, and made war on the Nephili.

Rote Six—The Ordering of the Tribes

1. And Aaron shared his leadership with ten chiefs, but kept his children and their wives, and their wives families to himself. Thus, eleven tribes were made.

2. Naomi allowed those who would come unto her to do so. And she immersed them in water, and brought them forth, giving them a new birth, and making of them the servants of Petra, a twelfth tribe.

3. The tribe of Naomi told her of the tribe of Aaron, and of the others, and they set forth and met.

4. Aaron looked on Naomi, and his heart hardened, thinking she would not want him any more; Naomi looked on Aaron, and, because of the power that was in her, saw the evil that had grown in him, and despised him.

5. Yet still did Aaron pledge that they should stand united. That twelve tribes would bear arms to drive out the Nephili into exile and death.

6. So it was done; the Nephili were driven down into the land, and were sealed up in ancient crypts, and many seals were laid upon them, that they might never walk the land anon.

7. But Sheol did escape their grasp, and cursed them, saying:

8. "Those that, as they die, are not taken unto Petra, shall be given unto me. And when enough of them have come, I shall return unto you, and shall ravage the land evermore."

Rote Seven—Aaron's Law

1. Naomi went from the place of the tribes, and Aaron called all of the leaders of the tribes together, saying:

2. "This is the law that I shall give unto you. If any break this law, then let them be stoned."

3. "No one of you shall slay another."

4. "No one of you shall take the property of another."

5. "No one of you will take others to be slaves."

6. "For those who sell themselves as slaves, seven years shall be the term of service."

7. "No one of you shall bear false witness."

8. "Give respect unto the servants of Naomi, for they will know the way of the land."

9. "Give obedience to my servants, for they shall know the way of the people."

10. "Unto each one of you shall be given a seal; wear this about your neck, to close all written works."

11. And the people heard the words of Aaron, and saw that there was wisdom in them. Thus, these laws became the laws of the tribes and of the land.

12. From the crippled, who could do no work, the tribes sent a number unto Aaron, to learn the ways of justice. These learned, and returned unto the tribes, carried in majesty by many slaves. They were called judges.

Rote Eight— Naomi and Petra

1. Naomi flew from the others, and went up onto the highest point. There, she cried out, saying:

2. “Why have you let this be? Thou, oh land, have given unto me great power, and have transformed me. Now I am sacrificed, forsaken and unloved.”

3. And Petra’s voice came from the mountain, saying:

4. “As thou art, so am I. And I am without arms to hold my beloved, without lips to kiss her. And so I shall keep her, even as myself, a being set apart from all others, unaging, undying. She shall not walk among them in quiet; nor shall I.”

5. Naomi knew that it was her that Petra spoke of, and grew bitter, saying:

6. “It is not love that you extend. It is not happiness you give your love. It is only eternity. If I am not to walk again among the people in peace, even as thou, then let there be a reminder to you of this.”

7. Naomi then took the clothes she had worn in her youth, and filled them with flax, fashioning thus the shape of a man. This she hung upon a pole, on the arms of a copper crescent, and said:

8. “Let this body hang here; look well upon it, for you are as it is; a thing, suspended in the sky, that cannot walk, nor see, nor speak. And the love of this thing would be more gentle than your own.”

Rote Nine—Division of Lands

1. One day after the law was given unto the tribes, Aaron spoken to them again, saying:

2. "Let the lands be divided among the tribes, that they might have their places."

3. "The tribe of Aaron shall rule from the plateau at the foot of the mountains, and build for me a city and a palace there; and that place shall be called Tierzantium."

4. "The tribe of Seth shall take their homes in the mountains; they shall tend to the flocks. Let the mountains be named, Thirrum, the lesser, and Tarrum, the greater."

5. The tribes of Ephrus, of Damael, and of Veth, shall go down into the valley of the river; they shall farm. Let the valley be named Maob.

6. The tribes of Boaz and of Lometh will travel the length of the river; they shall trade, and learn crafts."

7. The tribe of Amalech will go to the land around the stagnant waters; let that place be called Godom.

8. The tribes of Jevraim and of Samael will go into the desert; let that place be called Hith-Shulu.

9. The tribe of Eli will go down into the chasm of the waters. Let that place be called Khadur.

10. The tribe of Naomi will be given no place. Let them find rest and peace with whomever shall take them.

Rote Ten—The Descendancy

1. Aaron took two further women to wife, and they bore him sons and daughters. Of these, Schimei was the eldest, and the greatest in wisdom.

2. In the passing of time, Aaron became old, and went unto his death. Yet as he lay dying, he looked about him and asked for Naomi, weeping that she was not with him.

3. Schimei became the ruler of the land, and took taxes of the people, and built roads and docks for their use, and he died. His eldest son, Taphath, was strongest among his children.

4. Taphath became ruler of the land, and took greater taxes of the people. And the tribe of Jevraim revolted against him, and hid in the desert, naming him Tyrant, and they were not brought under rule again. Taphath built granaries and storehouses, and he died. His second son, Baasha, was the cruellest of all his children.

5. Baasha became Tyrant, and oppressed the people. He built monuments and statues, and raised up many of the men of the tribe of Seth, and armed them, and poured the wealth of the land into his coffers. His son, Majel, went out from him and unto the tribe of Naomi; he was washed in water and given the new name, Azael. Baasha was slain by the people of his own tribe; stoned from the rooftops.

6. The sons and daughters of Baasha fought in the palace and poisoned one another, seeking to become Tyrant.

Rote Eleven—Azael

1. Azael went up to the palace at Tierzantum, and spoke with the brothers and sisters of his youth. They would not listen to him, and so he went forth from them, and went up onto Tarrum, to the highest place.

2. And there he cried out for Petra, and beat his fists against the stone of the land. He looked up upon the Man of Straw, and, with bloody hands, called forth with a hoarse voice.

3. Petra heard him, and was not pleased that any one should come unto his sacred place. Thus did he tear away the stone beneath the feet of Azael.

4. Azael fell, and landed far below, and began to die.

5. And Naomi came unto him, and gave him succor, and took him up again to the high places. And together, with one voice, they cried out for mercy, not for themselves, but for the people, who were lost and without wise rule.

6. And Petra heard them, and Azael was taken, and transformed, and the spirit of the land fell upon him.

7. Unto Azael, as unto Naomi, was given the power of flight. Light shone from him, golden in hue. His voice became like unto the crack of a whip; his speed like that of the whirlwind; his strength like the ox.

8. Azael was given the task of judgment; the living and the dead were his to lay his power on, for Naomi was and is too caring.

Rote Twelve—The Word of Azael

1. Azael descended from Tarrum unto Tierzantum.

2. And all who lived in the palace there came forth from that place, and looked unto Azael, who was above them in the heavens.

3. Azael spoke to them in a great voice, saying:

4. "Let the children of Baasha go unto the people, and to the leaders and elders of the tribes, and let those ones choose who will lead them. And when the one who is chosen has died, let their sons and daughters do the same. Let it be thus, evermore; and if any are to break this compact and claim the rulership without the blessing of the tribes, then I shall come unto you again, and shall strike that one and all who follow them, and they shall go unto Sheol, and be tormented until the curse is fulfilled."

5. Azael went then unto the bosom of Petra, with Naomi, so that they might intercede for those who cried out to Petra, and let the prayers of the people be heard.

6. The children of Baasha heard this, and trembled that there was one now who could lay judgment over them.

7. The people, meanwhile, laughed and danced in the streets, that their cries would go unheard no more; and the tribe of Boaz retreated unto their homes, and came forth again with all their wine.

8. The Elders saw that they could have their way in this matter, and prepared demands.

Rote Thirteen—The Demands of the Elders

1. Thus went the children of Baasha unto the elders of the tribes, so the from them a new tyrant might be chosen.

2. The tribe of Seth demanded that they might be able to take their flocks to whatever places were not farmed, as well as to the mountains.

3. The tribes of Ephrus, Damael, and Veth demanded that the granaries and storehouses be put under the command of their tribes.

4. The tribes of Boaz and Lometh demanded that the collectors and counters of taxation be chosen from among their numbers.

5. The tribe of Amalech demanded that unto them should be given a tenth of the taxation of straw, that they might work bricks with the clay of Godom.

6. The tribe of Samael demanded that all the lesser mountains of the desert should be their lands.

7. The tribe of Jervaim threw spears at those who came to speak

8. The tribe of Eli demanded nothing, and gave gifts of bronze to those who came to speak with them.

9. The tribe of Naomi demanded that they be given a place of land within the holding of each tribe, there to build a sacred place, where might be given the birth of waters, and where prayers might be given unto Petra, to Naomi, and to Azael.

10. And Samajin, son of Baasha, agreed to all these things, and became Tyrant.

Rote Fourteen—The Decrees of Samajin

1. When Samajin had taken the palace, he decreed a second code of law, which should be added to the first code given by Aaron.

2. That all the demands of the tribe should become the law, and these new lands should carry on forever.

3. That any who did not carry the seal of their name around the neck were outcast, and were to be stoned. The punishment for the breaking of a law was the destruction of the seal, and the exile of the lawbreaker. If they came among men again, they were to be stoned.

4. That the palace would issue forth a standard measure of coins, issued in gold. These were to be the Drachma, the price of a loaf, the Shekel, price of a weight of olive oil, and the Talent, the price of an ox.

5. That any who were found to falsify this coin or any person's seal, or to wear or keep a seal not their own, would be taken to the palace, where they should be hung upon a pole and a crescent of copper, and tied to it, until they died of lack of food. Thus would Petra be made bitter against them, and cast them away from his bosom.

6. That any one who broke a contract they had sealed, whether for business, for gambling, or for marriage, should be treated as one who had worn a false seal.

7. That contracts with him should be issued to keepers of the law; and that any who fought with them should be treated as if they had worn a false seal.

8. That all taxes would be one-tenth.

Rote Fifteen—The Secret of Veda

1. Veda, first daughter of Baasha, lived in hate of her brother Samajin, and sought to learn secrets of Darkness.

2. She went unto Khadur, and descended therein, and learned what Aaron had learned, and became filled with knowledge.

3. She went to the crypts of the Nephili there, and laid down upon the seals, and spoke with them in dreams, and became evil, and found out the place where Sheol had gone, and went to him.

4. Veda learned all the lore of Sheol, and took up his banner. Yet still she knew fear; despite her power, if she were to rise up against her brother, she would surely be struck down by Azael, the warrior of Petra.

5. Thus did Veda go onto the land, and buy for herself a thousand scrolls, and write upon them the fragments of her knowledge. There did she inscribe the secrets of giving solid form to Darkness, and bringing it into service. There did she name the Nephili, and give the places of their entrapment.

6. And Veda placed these scrolls in many places across the land, knowing that they might be found, and used, and that the reigns of her brother's children would be forever beset with troubles.

7. And Veda then went unto the tribe of Jervaim, and married a warrior there, and bore him sons and daughters, and taught them secrets, and died.

Rote Sixteen—The Children of Jervaim

1. After Samajin was Tyrant, his son Majel was Tyrant, and after Majel, his daughter Salom; and after her, her son Singhamin.

2. Majel was foolish, and spent his time in pursuit of pleasures, and did not see that strange children were born in the tribe of Jervaim. He expanded the palace, and built into it many secret passages and chambers, . He built also many hidden pleasure-palaces; He died, and the secrets of the passages, and of the pleasure palaces, were lost.

3. Salom was wise and forever ready to hear the counsel of the Elders of the tribes, and she saw that many of the tribe of Jervaim had returned in secret to the land, and that they were monstrous of body and of thought. She raised up men and women from all the tribes, calling them the Amar, to hunt the children of Jervaim and to drive them out again. Salom also built many watchtowers across the land, where the Amar might replenish their weapons and their stores.

4. Singhamin was clever and warlike, and he drove the children of the tribe of Jervaim back into the desert. Yet, by that time, the children of Jervaim had bred long among one another, and were no longer men and women. And thus was it decreed, that the tribe of Jervaim was no more a tribe, and that the children of that line might be slain wherever they might be found. Singhamin posted the Amar to vigilance against any who might threaten the land.

Rote Seventeen—The Crypts Ensorcelled

1. It the time of Samajin, awakened by Veda, Sheol walked beneath the land, seeking to set free the Nephili. And Sheol found that the seals which had been laid upon their crypts could be opened only be those without taint of darkness.

2. In anger Sheol bid the darkness tear the crypts from the stone and crush them. And the darkness did as he bid it to, but the crypts were not destroyed. Instead, they were changed in size, appearing now as sealed jars.

3. Sheol did laugh, and went out in the darkness, to that place beneath the land from whence the river springs, under Tierzantum. And he cast the vessels into the water, knowing that they would be borne up onto the land, where they would drift in the river, and might be caught and found.

4. Sheol did then return to the place he had created, to lay himself back to sleep. For Sheol sleeps across the door where souls who are his by claim go to stay in waiting for the end of nights, like a shepherd sleeps across the door of the pen.

5. Yet Sheol did lie crookedly across the door; and since that time some of the spirits of the dead have come forth from that dark door, and walk the earth without flesh.

6. And since that time, some of the vessels of the Nephili have been found, and some have not. And some have been opened, and some have not.

Rote Eighteen—The First of the Jars

1. In the time of the Tyrant Majel, in the mud at the banks of the river, a fisherman, whose name was Zaul, was the first to find a jar containing a Nephili. He took it to his home, and broke the seals upon it.

2. And in a conflagration of smoke and flame, the Nephili Dizael appeared. Dizael fell to her knees, and clutched at her eyes; Zaul stood against his wall, knees weak in fear.

3. In the passing of a few moments, Zaul overcame his fear enough to see that Dizael had no eyes, and bled grievously. And Dizael spoke, saying:

4. "Whatever mighty sorcerer you may be, to have freed me from my prison, know this; that I followed Sheol out of fear only. Because you have freed me, I shall give you any one wish that you name to me, but then I beg that you put me unto death, that Sheol might never lay hand to me again."

5. Zaul knew then that she was one of the Nephili, and a sorcerer among them. Thus did he reply, saying:

6. "My wife stands in the doorway, here. I will lead you to her, and you shall cure her of her afflictions, which have made her barren. Then I shall give unto you what you have asked."

7. And it was as the Nephili and the fisher agreed; and the first son of the fisher's wife was named Rustamin, and he was a hero of might.

Rote Nineteen—The Folly of Majel

1. The Tyrant Majel heard of what had happened to the fisherman Zaul, and desired an increase in fortune and in pleasures as great. Thus did he have all the men of the tribe of Aaron search the waters of Maob with great nets.

2. The men of the tribe of Aaron did find such a vessel, and brought it swiftly to the Tyrant, and presented it.

3. Yet, though he labored greatly, he could not open it. And thus it waited within the walls of the treasury, where he cursed it daily.

4. And when Salom, the daughter of Majel, was of marriageable age, she was taken to see all of the Palace. And when she saw the treasury, her eyes fell firstly upon the jar. Majel told her that it was a thing of sorcery, and that whosoever might open it should have great power.

5. Thus it came that Salom opened the jar containing the second Nephili to be found. And thus came forth the Nephili Daeva, who was their leader in war. Daeva turned and issued a small nod to Salom, and then fell upon her father Majel, and devoured him unto the last morsel.

6. Salom ran from the Palace, and went unto the Elders of the tribes, pleading for their mercy and their counsel. And they counseled her to learn the ways of weapons from a young man that they knew, a hero whose name was Rustamin.

7. And so she went, while at the same time, the Nephili Daeva drove all the people out from the palace, and began to search out his brethren.

Rote Twenty—The Heroes

1. Salom went to Rustamin, and he found her an able pupil. They trained together, and it was not one turning of the moon before she could step the fighting dance with him, step for step.

2. Yet they differed in temper and in tactics. Rustamin was a mighty oak of a man, and stood his ground come whatever may, striding forth to meet his foes tooth to tooth. Salom stayed her distance, and struck forth with darts dipped in the stings of scorpions. And never did any throw the javelin with greater purpose.

3. When they had done with their training, they turned their faces to the palace. On the journey, they were assaulted three times.

4. The first assault came of the children of Jervaim. These were gaunt, and hairy; on all four limbs they came, and with sharpened teeth they bit. Rustamin strode forth, and slew them.

5. The second time, they were met by the forces of darkness; and Rustamin carried Salom on his shoulder, and went through, though he froze and his beard fell off.

6. The third assault, at the very gate of Palace, came from Daeva himself. Rustamin put Salom behind him, and she slipped away. And Daeva came forth, and crushed Rustamin to his knees with his mighty sword.

7. Yet Salom struck Daeva from the side, and killed him with the venom of her javelin; and she became Tyrant and married Rustamin shortly after.

Rote Twenty-One—The Making of the Amar

1. After Salom was made Tyrant, she forbade that the vessels of the Nephili be opened in the land, and raised up a force of men and women. These she named the Amar, and put her husband Rustamin at their head.

2. Salom chose wise men and women from amongst the tribes, and appointed them as Viziers. They gave her council, and she made war on the tribe of Jervaim.

3. And the Amar found that the children of Jervaim had gathered their might for a full generation, and many of both kinds were killed.

4. And the Elders of the tribe of Samael were called forth from the desert, and were questioned concerning the children of Jervaim. And it was found that they had given of their tribe to marry those of Jervaim, and had taken the children of Jervaim to marriage.

5. Salom sent Rustamin and the Amar forth, and they purged the tribe of Samael, and killed those who would keep their ties with Jervaim's children.

6. By the time that this purge had come to an end, Singhamin, the son of Salom, was grown to manhood. Salom, who had had three other children besides, went then down to the tribe of Naomi, and took the second birth, and became Isabeth. And Isabeth joined the Amar, and wed Rustamin again.

7. Singhamin became Tyrant, and sent forth his parents and the Amar, and they slew the children of Jervaim wherever they could be found.

Rote Twenty-Two—The Second Birth

1. Singhamin was made Tyrant, and went down to the tribe of Naomi, and took the second birth, and took as his new name Singhamin. And the Elder of the tribe knew not what to make of this act, and questioned him, saying:

2. "What do you mean by this? We give the second birth as adoption into our tribe. It is not an act for those who simply wish to be washed by others!"

3. Singhamin replied to him, saying:

4. "How greedy you are! It is through water that the people of the land came unto it. Do you think that your tribe is the only tribe that Petra cares for? Here am I, chosen by the tribes to bring order and peace to the land, and you would deny me the consecration of my ancestry?"

5. And the Elder of the tribe of Naomi pondered this, and shared these words with all the tribe. The tribe closed all the doors of their sacred places, and gathered together.

6. In the fullness of time, the tribe of Naomi returned to their sacred places, and did declare that any might do as Singhamin had done, taking the second birth without changing their name. Thus, all of the children of the land could show that they cared for Petra, without becoming one of the tribe of Naomi.

7. Further, it was written thus on all the gates of the sacred places:

8. "For all the people of the land, unto the glory of Petra, and Naomi, and Azael, who have given us all that we have."

Rote Twenty-Three—The Pendarin

1. One of the brothers of the Tyrant Samajin was Pendar. In the time of Samajin, decrees had been laid that the family of Pendar should be the one to shatter the personal seals of oathbreakers, and of those who defied the law.

2. By the time of Singhamin, the Pendarin, who were also of the tribe of Aaron, numbered two hundred and thirty. They made no contracts, and carried, in place of a seal, a chisel of alabaster with which they broke the seals.

3. It came to pass that one of the Pendarin found a sealed jar; the seals were examined, and it was determined that the jar contained a Nephili.

4. The Pendarin took the vessel, and with many of their chisels broke it apart, and the Nephili within it was slain, and did not come forth.

5. Petra saw this, and looked with gladness upon these ones. He sent Azael, therefore, unto them. And unto the chisels of the Pendarin Azael gave power, saying:

6. "If the chisel of a Pendarin touches the seal of one accused, and they are guilty, the seal shall break, and the accused shall fall dead. But if they are innocent, and their accuser gives the accusation in malice, then the seal of the accuser shall break, and the accuser fall dead."

7. So it was, and so it is; let all, even the Amar, fear the justice of the Pendarin.

Rote Twenty-Four—The Cult of the Beast

1. In the early times of Salom, there came up from Maob a man named Bandin. This man wore neither seal nor clothes, and his hair and beard were long; he was filthy and snarled like unto a beast.

2. The Amar came unto him, thinking he was a child of Jervaim; until he spoke to them, saying:

3. "Behold! The foulness of thought has laid it's hand on you, and you move to slay the holy beast! Know this, children; that the habits of man are his folly. Look, see, I am a beast; thou art beasts, likewise. Cast off your folly, run with me!"

4. And the Amar, hearing this, thought that he was mad, and called for the children of Naomi to take him and care for him, as is their way.

5. Yet, as they waited, Bandin spoke on, telling the people that they had come unto the land naked and mewling; likewise they would leave it. And they wore flesh, as beasts did; thus were they beasts.

6. The voice of Bandin brooked no argument; his hoarse crackle ran over the crowd like thunder, and they believed. Bandin told them to do as they bodies bid them. In lust, rut. In anger, strike. In pain, howl; and all things likewise.

7. One of the Amar, believing, struck him in anger. Thus Bandin died. Yet there were those who remained as believers; ye shall find them, naked and mewling, all about the land. Have pity on them.

Rote Twenty-Five—Those Who Walk In Shadow

1. The writ of Veda has not gone awry in purpose. Some few of her manuscripts have been found, and a few put to use. Those who use such things are said to walk in shadow.

2. You shall know a shadow-walker by three signs. First, they carry no light; their eyes are recast for darkness. Second, any who are tainted by darkness fall to their whims; some of them surround themselves with the children of Jervaim. Third, they dwell in secret, and spend much of their time in study.

3. The powers of the shadow-walkers are over darkness, within and without. By exerting their shadowy humour, they may animate shadows to reach forth and do their bidding. They may also exert this humour to control the darkness within others.

4. Those of the shaded ones who have spent years in study can reach beyond the veil of the land, into utter darkness beyond. From thence, they call forth the forms of great beasts to serve them.

5. The Amar hunt those who walk in darkness, and destroy their studies. This they do with fire, the light that cleanses. No imagining nor sorcery of the shaded ones may withstand the cleansing flame.

6. If ever a dark stranger comes unto you with sweet whispers, bring near your flame and test them.

Rote Twenty-Six--The Unmade Beyond

1. Many have gone forth, and some returned, unto the very edge of the desert, far beyond the wanderings of the tribes. There they heard the whispered voices of those who dwell beyond the veil of the land.

2. As they walked beyond into the sand, they saw many wonders. Ten days past the wandering homes of the Samael, they began to find islands of stone amid the sand. Each had it's own strange magic, and kinds of beast and men unknown to the land dwelt there. And from the high places of that part of the land, they said that they could see other lands, spinning far off in the sky.

3. Twenty days out, they faced vast storms of sand and blinding winds. Most turned back.

4. Only one has ever gone beyond these storms, and returned unto the land. This one was Ahmael, of the tribe of Boaz. He returned unto the land, and went down to the tribe of Naomi, and took the second birth. Silence he took as his new name; only once since that time has he spoke, saying:

5. "Beyond the sand is the edge of the land, and the veil of darkness. And in it dwell spirits yet unborn, and spirits cast out. Henceforth, madness shall be my lot."

6. Thus, the word came up from the tribe of Naomi; that danger dwelt in the far desert, and utter darkness lay beyond; any who seek knowledge there are doomed.

Rote Twenty-Seven—The Proverbs of the Tribes

1. Of Aaron: If you wish to gain the attention of another, speak suddenly of what they love. If you wish to gain the love of another, suddenly multiply what they love.

2. Of Seth: The man on high sees all that surrounds; the man below does all that must be done.

3. Of Ephrus: Let no one with clean hands say that they love the land. To love is to lay hands on; this is true of land, of life, and women and men.

4. Of Damael: There are three times; the doing, the watching, and the resting.

5. Of Veth: The strength of a man is written in the lines of his face. The strength of a woman is written in the words of her mouth.

6. Of Boaz: The man pleased tells his family alone; the man slighted tells all that he meets. Thus, if you slight any, expect ill treatment.

7. Of Lometh: If you give the poor a coin, they spend it; if you send them to work, they return with a coin for you.

8. Of Amalech: This can be said of pottery, of houses, and of people; it is not their shape that makes them worthy, but the spaces within.

9. Of Eli: In time, all things become less what they were and more what was made of them. Make; do not be made.

10. Of Samael: That which can be bought has no value. The price of all true things must be paid in blood.

11. Of Naomi: Those who walk with hands clasped stumble less, and never fall.

Rote Twenty-Eight—The Song of Singhamin

1. "Come unto me, daughter of starlight!
I shall take you out of shadow."

2. "At the sight of you I leap;
When I reach you I shall kneel."

3. "I shall hold your head with my left hand;
You shall touch my shoulder with your right hand."

4. "I will bring your skin to the air;
I will lie with you upon the sand."

5. "I shall put my seal into the clay's softness;
Our marriage will be eternal and unshakeable."

6. "Out of us shall come a son;
Into our home we shall take a daughter."

7. "He shall take war to the beasts;
She shall give peace to the people."

8. "Thou, oh daughter of Naomi;
Wed this son of Aaron!"

9. Thus spoke the Tyrant Singhamin unto the woman Esthezad of the tribe of Naomi, who became his wife thereafter.

Tales

Esthezad

Esthezad was a child of Naomi. Her father cared for the mad; her mother spoke at the temple near the palace, in Tierzantum. Since both her parents were converts to the tribe, she had no other family.

Neither of her parents was well paid, and because they wished to found a strong family, they had many children. Thus, for want of coin, Esthezad had no tutor; she went instead to the market, and spoke with the merchants there. When a caravan or a barge arrived, she found the most expansive and outspoken of it's crew, and listened as they related the tale of their journey. She did the same with lone travelers, and with the scouts of the Amar.

Thus, as she grew into womanhood, her store of tales grew. When her brothers and sisters gathered around her, and asked her to tell them a story, she would fill their ears with all the wonders of the land.

Her brothers and sisters told their friends of these marvelous tales, and the day came when there were more children in the market begging for a story than there were merchants to give new stories to Esthezad. So she found a seat at the edge of a fountain, and bid the children gather around her, so that they all could hear.

Unknown to her, the son of the Tyrant Salom was in the market that day. His name was Singhamin, and he came to listen as she began to spin a tale; the first of many she would tell.

Jonabad, the Merchant

“Jonabad the merchant, who is even now trading on the river, told me this story.

Once, as he was with a caravan, and preparing to set out into the desert, the Elder of the tribe of Naomi came to him, and put in his hand a golden ring topped with an alabaster seal. The seal was a picture of a finely-made pitcher, of the kind used by the tribe of Naomi to give the second birth.

Jonabad recognized the ring as the seal of office used by the Elder of the tribe, and asked the Elder what this action meant. The Elder told him that, far into the desert, there was a temple of Naomi, and that a man there had been chosen to take the Eldership. Further, that he, the current Elder, had likely become a leper, and thus must step down from the position with all haste.

Jonabad, who was of the tribe of Lometh, could not understand why he had been given this errand. Yet he was told that it had been seen in the Bazaars and at the dock that he cheated nobody, and was thus trusted.

Thus did simple Jonabad the merchant, child of Lometh, come to carry the seal of Naomi's tribe into Hith-Shulu, the desert. Yet even as he went out, greed overcame him, and he thought to take the ring out of his pouch, and put it on his hand.

And this he did; but even as it slid onto his hand, the desert itself shook, and opened up like a great maw, and Jonabad was swallowed up by the land.”

In the Belly of the Land

“Jonabad found himself in a place of complete darkness, and cast all about himself. He found that his camel had fallen with him, though its neck was broken and it was dead.

Upon the camel were all his needs; a skin of wine, one of water, five loaves of bread, and two torches. And so he took these things, and lit one of the two torches.

Jonabad was greatly surprised to find that he was not alone. All around him, in the darkness, were many jackals. They looked at him calmly, and circled, waiting for his light to go out. The only way that led from his stony prison was a narrow cave, and that was blocked by many of the jackals.

He waved the torch toward those jackals at the cave mouth; they growled and barked at him, and crouched down to leap. So he sat behind his camel, and wept.

In time, his first torch began to burn down, and so he lit the second. Jonabad then flung the first, what remained of it, into the cave that led from the cell of stone in which he rested. There he saw that the cave divided, and went in many directions, and one of those passages seemed to lead upwards.

Jonabad waited further, and began to pray. He cried out to Azael to ask what he had done to deserve this fate; and the torch spat burning pitch onto the finger where he had put the ring. Thus, he dropped down the torch, and pulled the ring from his hand. He lifted it to throw it into the upward cave, in hopes that it at least might survive.”

The Light of the Ring

“As Jonabad lifted the ring and seal of the tribe of Naomi, a bright light came out of it, and Jonabad and the jackals were blinded.

After a short time, the light abated to the brightness of a lamp. Jonabad looked, and saw that all the jackals lay about him in great humility. He restrained himself from cursing them, knowing that they had done only what it was their nature to do.

As Jonabad walked out of the stone cell he had fallen into, the jackals drew back from him in silence and reverence. And as he passed the last jackal, he reached out and touched it, and blessed it for carrying the lesson of Azael to him.

He wandered then, with the ring lighting his path, among the many caves beneath the land, and thought that he heard others moving there as well. After a time of wandering, he came upon a doorway, with a great crowd gathered on the other side. And the span of the frame was blocked in part by a great stone, covered with dust.

Those on the other side begged of him to reach across the frame, and catch them up, one by one, and deliver them out of the place where they were trapped.

Jacobad reached over, and pulled from that place a slender woman, lifting her over the stone. Yet as he did so, the stone shifted, and Jacobad saw that it was the form of a mighty thing that might once have been a man. Thus he knew that he had stolen from Sheol one of his own.”

At the door of Sheol

“Jonabad shrank away, knowing then that he had made an enemy of the greatest of the Nephili. He turned, so that he might begin to run.

And then, a cold hand fell upon him from behind, and the strength ran out of him. He turned, so that he might at least see the face of the one he had angered before he died. Yet he did not see what he had thought.

It was the spirit of the maiden that touched him, and she began then to stroke his shoulder gently. Though Jacobad was a fair man, he was not wise; he surrendered, and sat, resting his head in her lap, as she stroked at his hair. And her hands began to grow warm upon him.

Then, Jacobad heard the barking of a jackal in the cave, and saw it running towards him. He saw that it was the same jackal that he had blessed, and reached out his hand to slap it away.

Yet, even as he reached out, he saw that his hand was pale and thin. He turned, and saw that the ghostly maiden was nearly solid; and he knew then that she had been stealing the life out of him. Only the jackal had saved him from his death.

So, he caught up the maiden, and threw her back past the door of Sheol. As she flew beyond it, he felt all his strength return to him.

Jacobad turned then to the jackal, and bid it to lead him out onto the land; this it did, and he delivered the ring. He blessed the jackal a thousand times; and it follows him still.”

The Notice of Singhamin

After Esthezad had finished this tale, she saw that many men and women, as well as the children, had gathered around. They clamored that she tell them another tale, but she said that she must return to her home to clean out the washing basins, and to make what preparations she could for the next day.

The people who stood around said then that she must return the next day, and they collected together a purse of gold, so that she would remember.

And one young man, a handsome youth in simple clothes, who carried himself with vast confidence, asked if he might help her with the chores. Esthezad was surprised; she had always thought that she was ugly, yet this youth was clearly asking if he might try to court her.

So it was that Esthezad took unto her home, without knowing, the son of the Tyrant, whose name was Singhamin.

And when she asked him who he was, he said that he was a poet. Further, he said that he had no name; he did not know his parents, and had not taken a name for himself.

Estherzad thought that this mean that he was an orphan, and one of strange manners. But that was not what Singhamin meant at all. That night, Singhamin spoke with the parents of Esthezad, and they guessed at who he was, but kept silent. Yet, because they were curious to see what might occur, they told Esthezad to go and speak again, and that they blessed the courtship.

The Second Tale

Esthezad came to the market on the second day, and took the same seat as on the day before. The crowd returned to her, and Singhamin was among them, though he kept himself hidden.

“Since I have already told you of one of the expeditions of Jonabad the merchant, I can hardly stop there. You see, Jonabad has gone out on seven expeditions in all, and on each he has met with adventure. Yet only two of these adventures are for the ears of children; if you wish to hear the others, you must have me tell them another place.

On his second expedition, Jonabad hoped to discover a gemstone mine out in the desert, beyond the lands of the tribe of Samael. This would, without question, bring him great wealth.

Thus he joined a caravan that was bound for the farthest reaches of Samael's tribal lands. Once there, he told the others that he wanted to seek out further fortune beyond. Thus, he took his camel and set out, seeing that the jackal he had befriended followed at some distance.

Seven days he went out into the desert, and then he saw above him a mighty shadow. It was in the shape of a vast bird; and he knew from what the tribesmen of Samael had told him that this was the Rocathan, the greatest bird that ever was. And Jonabad hastened to get down from his camel, so that he could hide beneath it.

As he dismounted, the bird swooped, catching him up.”

Rocathan

“The Rocathan dropped Jonabad into a vast nest, and departed. There were many eggs within, each the height of a man. In his hunger, Jonabad thought that he might break open one of these eggs, and feast. Then one of the eggs began to shift.

Jonabad cast about himself, and found that there were many freshly-slain camels and desert creatures lying about. He realized that these morsels, as well as himself, were meant as food for the fledglings that were about to hatch. So he took up the bitten-off leg of a camel, and prepared to fight and die, praying into his beard.

The first fledgling broke free of its shell, and immediately felt about itself. Finding the other eggs, it broke them open with its beak. Jonabad was unsure if the creature was setting its brethren free or murdering them, so he stayed back.

Finished, the fledgling turned towards him. Since he had been shaken so violently, Jonabad was left with no weapon but the leg; thus, he struck at the young bird with it. The leg was caught and quickly devoured.

This continued for a time, with Jonabad lifting any animal or portion he could lift, and flinging it into the mouth of the beast. It became more joyous and frantic, until finally it knocked Jonabad from the Eyre in its wild flailing.

Jonabad tumbled end over end down rocks until he was bleeding, battered, and half dead.

He fell into a stupor”

At the Foot of the Crag

“Jonabad awoke to feel his face being licked. He opened his eyes and found his friend, the jackal. He also saw his camel nearby, with many small jackal-nips on its hind end. It seemed that the jackal had found him, and brought the camel along. He laughed, and slowly, painfully, rose to his feet, using a haunch he had meant to feed the young Rocathan as a crutch.

As he mounted the camel, he saw that the haunch had, imbedded in it, many clear gemstones. He looked to the crag and saw that near the top of it, not ten cubits below the nest, was a great outcropping of gems.

Laughing, Jonabad scolded himself for his folly, picked the gems out of the meat, and turned towards home.”

Esthezad finished her story, and prepared to go home. She was met by the Amar, who took her under guard, and took her up to the palace. There, she was taken to the throne room of the Tyrant, which sat empty.

She was seated in chains, on the most comfortable of seats. All around, the Amar and the servants erected poles, until she sat in a loose-framed wooden cage. Then, wide scarlet veils were thrown over the cage, so that it was a box, through the sides of which one still might glimpse the shapes of things outside.

Some persons entered the room, and arranged themselves upon the dais. Esthezad heard one of them murmuring to another; then a man's voice rang out.

An Tyrannical Dictate

Esthezad was bid to tell another story, and if it did not please, then she would surely die before the moon rose again. Since she had not given of the money from the market to the tax collectors, she would pay, either with a story or with her life, to the Tyrant.

Esthezad began her tale.

“Once, in a household of the desert, the leader of a family ruled cruelly. He also boasted constantly of his virility, and mocked those around him.

As this man went about this he saw that one of his sons had taken to drawing out the plants and animals of Hith-Shulu, and describing all that they did. The boy had a set of scrolls. The boy held these in girlish fashion, between two fingers, and at the ends of the wrapping posts only.

The father was repelled by the sight of this, and thought that his son might grow to become one of those men who is taken in bed by other men. He could not stand this thought, and thus took the boy from his scrolls, and put him to harder labors, hoping this would cure him of his affectations.

Indeed, the boy seemed to take a more virile stance at labor, and only returned to his strange posturing when handling the scrolls. The boy spoke of the beauty of the desert and the writing he had done with such poetic fancy that the father tore his beard in anger.

How It Ended

“The father put him to harder labor, and that too seemed to work; the boy grew muscular and began to make advances towards women.

But then, one night, the father saw that he had taken up a scroll again, and held it in that same way. Rushing in, the father gripped the paper firmly, and tore it apart, as the boy watched in horror.

The father then fell dead. This was because the paper was made from the needles of a poisonous herb. It was the intention of the boy to create a poem in the Antithetic style, and to create poetic contrast by setting down in ink the beauty of the desert on one of it's most deadly herbs.

The family all heard this tale, and they began to understand wisdom. It is wise to question a thing cautiously before destroying it.”

Esthezad finished this story, and the man on the other side of the veils broke into laughter; he tore down the veils with one hand. Then Esthezad saw that he was Rustamin, master of the Amar, and that the Tyrant Salom was with him, upon the throne. Rustamin spoke.

“Child, my son Singhamin speaks of you constantly, but he is not brave enough to ask our permission to court you fully. We knew that the only way to help him would be to match him with one who had courage, like you. So, if you will court him, we will bless it.”

Wisdom

Adolescence

“Tonight? No? Why Not? Oh..... Lucky. I wish my mother was among the Amar. Then I'd get trained in weapons too. As it is, my father just keeps pushing me. As if carpet-weaving brings excitement. Just because he does it, doesn't mean I have to.

Well then, what do you do tomorrow? Yes, yes, we all wake up, prepare and break our fast. And I know that we both have two turns of the moon before we stop taking our lessons in script from that old coot. I mean after that.

By Petra, can't you be just a little late going home? I know your father always catches you when you lie, but you don't have to. No, really, just tell him 'I went for a walk with Omar, and we stopped for a while in the orchard. Then I walked home.' It'll be true.

Listen girl, do you want to be my intended or not? If we don't consummate soon, it won't be worth it to me. Already, the others give me trouble. Omar the impotent, they say; I can't live under it for long. No, we can't just pretend that we did. The others will ask enough questions that they'll know.

When I have to stand on my own, and it won't be long, the other men must hear that I am capable of getting all the needs of a man without wasting money. And you must look unblemished, I know.

Yes! A perfect idea! Let's do it; if we have a tablet of Intent, your virtue and my virility will both be without question.....
...Shall we celebrate early?"

Adoption

“There is no shame in it, Ramajin. I am your third wife, and no children have yet been made. It may be that a curse has been laid on you, but what of it?”

When one goes to marry, does not one of those in the marriage change their tribe, and be adopted into a new one? It is thus, just as surely as the children of Naomi use the second birth to take new members.

If we leave before moonset, we could be within Tierzantium by the time it rises again. Then, we could go to the houses of Aaron’s tribe, and read what has been written on their walls. Those who cannot afford the children they have, and wish to see them well regardless, often give notice there, in the waxen plaques of those walls.

Then, dearest Ramajin, we could go from one posting to another, until we find the perfect child.

Of course you must come as well! How am I to know all those tiny things that will make a good son for you? And how are those who birthed him to be reassured by us, if you do not come?

Enough of your moaning. You are a merchant, not a warrior. Even if you could find this sorceress, what would you fight her with?

No. It is NOT the blood of the parents that makes the child. It is the love and the wisdom that is shown them. If you treat the boy as a replacement child, then that is all that your relation to them shall be. Holding back your inheritance for an heir will only poison the child we take in.”

Agriculture

“My new son! Welcome to the tribe of Ephrus. Now, sit; it is time you began to learn the ways of the farmer, and of the land.

The soil of the land is of varied quality. Only scrub grows in Hith-Shulu; nothing grows in Godom, Khadur, or Tierzantum. It is on the slopes of Tarrum and Thirrum, and in Maob, that the farmer thrives. Down the slopes of the valley, nearer to the river, is greatly fertile land, where any plant may be made to grow.

Crops are watered by rain alone; all farmland is uphill of the water sources. It rains in Maob when the moon is down, once every two or three nights, as well as on more irregular occasions.

We farmers raise crops sufficient to feed ourselves, our families, and perhaps twenty other persons each, but only half the farmers of the land grow food crops. We, as you have no doubt seen, raise olives, the most blessed plant.

Many of the farmers on the edge of Maob practice a rotation of crops, allowing the herdsmen of the Tribe of Seth to use them while fallow. The farmer and sons tend the fields; the women of a farm tend to the household and the animals.

Most farms are almost completely self-sufficient, even to the extent of making their own tools. We do need to trade for metals, pottery, bricks, and luxury goods, however.”

Animals and Insects

“Yes, teacher, I can recite the names and uses of the animals. Okay; ready?”

Man’s animals are Camels, Cats, Dogs, Goats, Sheep, and Oxen. Camels are used for riding and load-bearing. Dogs and cats are used to patrol against intruders and vermin; goats and sheep are herded by the tribe of Seth for their wool, milk, and meat. Oxen are used in Maob as plow animals.

Foxes, Hares, Hyenas, Jackals, Mice, Leopards, and Scorpions are all wild. Hares are hunted for their meat; the others are avoided or killed according to their threat.

Doves, Hawks, Vultures, Ravens, and Owls all live in the air above the land. Doves are caged and bred; the rest are ignored or killed, as possible.

Trout, Catfish, and Carp are the most commonly noted of the fish of the land; all live in the river. Godom’s waters contain no life. All three are gathered with net and with fishing-spear.

Ants, Bees, Fleas, Locusts, and Spiders all can be found as well. Ant colonies form mounds; if unwatched, these mounds can reach the height of a man. Bee farming is problematic, but the results are worth the effort and the stings. Locusts are a great threat to all of Maob, sometimes wiping out years of crops. Spiders are ignored except when they are poisonous.”

Architecture

“To the left. MY LEFT, idiot. Look, see the plumb line? That line must run, when it has stopped swinging, directly down the corner of this beam. Then we will know that the beam is straight.

Forty houses like this I’ve built, and I’ll not be spoken to by you in this way. Step back here, and look.

Four beams, straight up and down. Then, since this will be the front, two running backward away from us, on the tops. Then, we’ll lay thinner beams from one of those trusses to the other.

After that, the lintels for the doors and the frames for the windows must be built, which I will do. At the same time, the rest of you will lay those bricks with mortar, pausing only to insert the frames as they fit.

Then, we seal all the joints with clay, brick a railing around the rooftop, and go to work sealing the roof and making it solid enough to walk over.

Easy. You should come down with me sometime to Tierzantum. Now that’s real work! There’s no more space on that rocky plateau, so we reinforce the houses that are already there, and build more on top of them. Then, of course, we build ramps, stairs, and walkways from one roof to the next.

Once, we tried to build a set of houses up to four layers. Three was easy; they do three down there all the time. But four; well, it stood for a while. Poor folks.”

Astronomy

“There are thousands of stars in the sky, but only two of them are of import to us today. But before we speak of that, let us speak of the moon.

See how the moon sits. It takes up fully one-tenth of the sky, and its light provides all things to us. Be attentive, now. The moon is like unto a great mirror. From it, we received the brightest light and the first share of heat. If covered away from it long enough, plants die.

Many ask, if the moon is like a mirror, then what does it reflect? Nobody knows a proper reply, but this much can be said; whatever the ultimate source, it sits beneath the land, and shines across the edges of it. Have you never noticed that the moon is bright as it travels near to the horizon, and a shadow is cast over it when it comes overhead? That shadow is no less than the shadow of the land itself, and by marking the way that the shadow lays upon the moon, we measure its turnings.

Now, the moon is setting. Look there. That blue star, low to the horizon, is never crossed by the moon, and is one of the brightest in all the heavens. It is the North Star; Unmoving and unchanging, it marks us. With it at your right hand, you go down the river into Khadur. With it at your left, you go up onto the mountains. With it behind you, you go into Godom.

And that star, there, is the star of your birth. At the moment you entered the world, it lay directly behind the center of the moon.”

Childhood

“Look out the window, Ramajin. No, keep the shutters closed; he’ll stop if he sees you looking on.

See, he’s made for himself a little javelin. And it’s straight as any could expect. Wouldn’t it be good if he were to learn carpentry? You’ve always wanted to have a carpenter of our tribe to take on the barge with you; those farmers are always complaining about their roofs, their shutters, you say.

He’s of an age now that he’s due to start taking lessons. So many parents send their children to tutors that teach nothing of import. Astronomy, Numerology, and all of that nonsense.

There’s a tutor just up the shore from here who has a small class; only seven. If we took little Sammein to him, he’d surely make it eight. And he teaches practicalities; weights, measures, the flow of trade, the number-script.

Yes, his aim is very good. What do you mean, the Academy? I’ll not have Sammein becoming an Amar. He’d have to live in Tierzantium until he was a full man, and come home only for two days each turning of the moon.

I thought you wanted a son who would inherit from you; who would make your family greater within the tribe. Shall we go and ask your mother? She’s just out in back, with the sheep.

We will not allow him to be tested. Those warriors are cruel, heartless. No, he’ll take lessons, and then practice them with you, and help the family.”

Cleanliness

“You’ve been outside, girl, playing in the dirt again. Don’t think I don’t see the dirt on you! Go to the back, and dip yourself a basin of clean water. Clean hands at the table, as you know very well, and when you take your bath tonight, you’ll scrub. Once you’ve washed, come back out here.

Where have you been? Omar! Omar is a good-for-nothing braggart, and a child of Lometh besides. You’re a child of Naomi; court your men within the tribe.

Intent! Merciful Petra, you can’t be serious.....”

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN, you’ve consummated your Intent? Well, when Omar fails to bring you the tablet of Intent, and he will fail to do so, you’ll carry the bonds of his flesh to whatever man you can find to take you, unless you cleanse it from you.

You’ll not be eating tonight; you will fast for a full turn of the moon, and drink nothing but water.

And, of course, you’ll not come to the Temple tonight. You know the Temple law; no woman giving the blood of fertility, nor anyone who has lain with another that day, nor any who has touched the blood of another.

If Omar comes with the tablet? I’ll consent. You’ve forced it over me. But for now, you’ll fast. Burn incense, and pull the smoke over you. It helps.

I’ll be back shortly; I need to tell your mother about this.”

Clothing

“Of course, sirrah, we have many fine items of clothing. Entire chests of it, indeed! And all of it solid; you may take my word, as a merchant of the tribe of Lometh.

Now, as you surely know, there are two colors that are easily attained with wool; gray and dun. The scarlet tone is done often, of course, but it is not as cheap. And the many other colors that one might see in the Tyrant’s court are so difficult to make that only the that court can afford them. Linen can be made white or blue; it doesn’t dye well.

For yourself, sirrah, we have all the basics; loincloth, pants, sash, vest, and turban wrap. We do carry a line of pants that don’t balloon out quite so far sir, or a kind that ties up to the knees. You’d hardly want to buy new clothes just to run them through field-mud.

Of course, sirrah, most farm houses do make their own basics. But for feasts and special occasions, a scarlet sash is always the very backbone of formality.

For women? Yes, of course. The tight top, longer and thicker sashes, and veils of fine, thin fabric. Only the clothiers of Tierzantium can make them so transparent.

No, sirrah, I didn’t mean to impugn your respectability. Of course, a full chador and thick veil will suit your daughter well.

A very discerning eye, sirrah! Those items are of the finest quality; very durable.

Now, shall we discuss the payment?

Commerce

Record for day 12, month ten,
Thirteenth year of the reign of Banadin

Left docks at moonrise; profit yesterday was mediocre. Traveled three docks downriver, arrived at Khadur and set up at the bazaar there. Tomorrow we turn back towards home, and after that, towards Tierzantium and better bazaars. Must speak with Jimman about the leaks in the barge.

More honey for the throat; shouting over that din is killing me. Never mind the haggling; nobody there wants to give up their coin, so it's all straight barter.

One of the merchants of Lometh got caught yesterday using false weights. The Amar beat him bloody, and threw him into that great chasm. Ugly, but it bodes well for tomorrow; nobody will want to trade with his kinsmen, leaving more for me and mine.

The tax keepers keep a tight eye here, too; I always seem to forget that. Every time one of the miners brings up a shipment of something worth looking at it, the best tenth is gone before I even get over to it.

This trip is almost done, though. One trip back to Tierzantium, and the family will review my work. Hopefully, it'll measure up, or I'll be slinging camel-bags all the way to Godom and back for Petra knows how many moon-turnings."

Cosmetics

“Look at you! How many men do you think will pull out their money for a chance at laying down with you? Scrub that off. Here, use this cloth.

First, now, let's comb out your hair; only married women wear it pulled back like that. You're not bought, dear, you're for sale. For the night, anyway.

There. Now, we'll pull back the front, back to your ears, and pin it up. Of course it's not as pretty as your hair-clasp. If you look too expensive, the men won't even stop to think about it.

Next, the eyes. Rub a little olive oil on each eyelid, and sprinkle on the tiniest pinch of this. Wonderful, isn't it? Crushed garnet-stones, and cheap; that glitter on the eyelids is marvelous. Now, take this stick of Kohl, and use it to line here and here. Not too much!

Now, the lips. Use this paste on them, let it dry a bit, and we'll wipe it off. It dyes the lips for a night.

While we're waiting for that to dry, perfume. Lovely bottle, isn't it? Alabaster; it used to be my mother's. Before she ran me out of the house for disgracing her; now it's mine. Smell that? Cinnamon essence, and a few other things.

Now, tighten up that top, leave the cloak behind, and wear veils, thin ones. The idea is to hint at something that nobody can really do. It's called mystery, and mystique.”

Daily Life

“Good morning! Up, out of bed. Or would you prefer that the chores were divided without you?”

....Thought not. Very good, then, into the common room. All right, ladies, the men are up already, and washing. I’ve set out their water, so they can discuss the field-work while we make food. How shall we divide the chores today?”

Of course, Beth, you and your daughters can carry the water today. Don’t forget to leave a measure at the gate for travelers. I know we lose pitchers that way, but the family hospitality can’t be questioned.

I and Salim will grind the wheat, bake the bread, and carry it to the men for their midday meal.

Alemi, you can take the young ones to their tutors, and care for the Beth’s baby while they learn.

Good Alemi, you may be my first daughter, but that does not make you wise. All you, my daughters and grand-daughters, will follow my instruction. My hair is white, my back is crooked, but does that ever keep me from the work of the family?”

That leaves only you two, Shua and Marin; take your daughters and tend to the sheep.

At moonset, we’ll gather here again, as usual, and discuss the night meal. Also, we must make further clothes and wraps in the next turn of the moon, the men are showing ragged patches. Shua, Marin, look well on measuring out the wool of the sheep today.”

Death

“In the name of Petra, creator and sustainer.
In the name of Naomi, the compassionate.
In the name of Azael, the just.

We gather here to commend the spirit of Nammen. We have curled him, even as he was curled in the womb, so that his spirit might know that his transformation is nigh.

We have placed him in this basket, with a flask of water in his right hand and a loaf in his right; though these shall not provide for the needs of his spirit, the act of placing them with him shall, as it reminds us that even spirits have needs.

We shall bury him with his face to the North Star, so that his spirit shall know the directions when it rises out of his body.

We shall plant a fruit-bearing tree over his body, so that the flesh will not go to waste; nor shall it be food for wild animals. Also, we do this so that he might provide for us in death, and shall not be weighted by knowing that he can no longer give unto us.

At this time, the friends and tribesmen of Nammen shall come forth, and speak out their reasoning as to why Nammen should be judged as worthy by Azael. Then, the body shall be put unto the soil.

After the body is buried, I and two others of my tribe shall be at the temple, where we shall pray unto Azael for the good judgment of this spirit.”

Disease

“Jacobad, How long has I been your friend? Yes, since we were tutored. But I must tell you something.

I know that you have no desire to become married, nor to live with your family. That is why you moved to Tierzantium; I understand, it's why I came here too. But recently, your habits have begun to alarm even me.

You find the work of that numerologist fantastic, of course. We all did. But he's a leper now; if you eat with him, you risk leprosy yourself.

Further, of course you pay your women. As do I, and most of the other young scholars. But you must know that the alley where you look for them has two qualities. The first, you know very well; they're cheap. The second is that many of them have boils and other unsavory things.

Lastly, look at how you scratch, and how you keep your rooms. Shuttered, with worn and sweaty clothes all about. It isn't an itch, Jacobad, it's fleas.

Now, let's get rid of this rubbish, and get you cleaner. Then, I'll take you onto the city, and show you where to find women who don't have such problems.

Uhhh..... Jacobad? Have you seen your back recently? The skin there is, well, let me open the window and have a better look.

BY SHEOL! No, Jacobad, stay away. And forget what I said; it won't make any difference.....

.....Stay away. I don't know you anymore, leper.

Distance and Direction

“Hush, children. Your parents give me coin, food, and other such, that I might teach you the ways of things. Do you think that they should be pleased if I told them you wasted this time in idle chatter?”

Very good. Listen, now, and hear the measure of the land.

There are four directions. The blue star marks north. Put it behind you, and you face south. With it on your left, you face east. With it on your right, you face west.

There are three measures of length. The cubit is the distance from the elbow to the fingertip of Aaron, the first Tyrant. The stride is three cubits in length. The span is one hundred strides, and is the width of the river as it flows out of the pool at its base. In one day, you may traverse perhaps seventy spans on foot.

Tierzantum is forty spans across, sixty spans in length. The foot of the mountains is east twenty spans from the edge of the city. The river begins at the opposite edge of the city, and is six hundred and twenty spans in length before it falls into Khadur. The river runs westward, though it does waver from side to side.

Godom is directly to the south of center of the river, and is perhaps two hundred spans away, across the desert.

All the rest is sand, and desert. No one has ever given measures to the desert.”

Families

“I, Hiram, Elder of the tribe of Lometh, do hereby call you to silence. We have much to discuss.

Firstly; in Maob, two houses and two families of our tribe have been emptied by leprosy. Those unfortunates have been given places in the leper's section of the city; alms will be sent so that they may live without hunger or thirst for what time remains to them; the cost shall be one-fiftieth of this year's tribal profits. Their houses are being cleansed, even now, by the children of Naomi.

Second, the children of Jervaim have, in their cunning, learned to attack our caravans as they travel to the mines of the desert and unto Godom. We shall open the tribal stores, and arm the merchants; further, because they see it as an opportunity, the Amar have offered to dispatch three of their number with each caravan, who must be fed and watered out of the profits. Shall we accept?

Third, the family of Goam has fallen into disarray since his death. The only child of that family who acts in an upright fashion is Ramajin, his fifth son. I should say that Ramajin become the new head of the family, but he has only one child. Ramajin is open to adopt if need be, but he will only adopt infants, so it will be some time, if he is given the mantle of leadership, before that family would resume it's great standing in the tribal courts.

Those are the matters for our attendance this season. Let us resolve them quickly, so that you, as the leaders of your families, may return to work.”

Food and Eating

“Alemi, Beth, Salim, Shua, Marin. We need to change our plans for tomorrow’s meals. Rujav has just returned from the dock with news.

It seems that Micav has finished his training; he has a full moon-turn to rest and to see his family before the Amar call him to arms on his first piece of work. So he’s coming home tomorrow; we need to prepare a feast. The men are already discussing what gifts we can afford to give him.

Beth, you’ll measure out the grain for us; we’ll need at least twenty-five loaves to feed just the men; one each for the midday meal, one each for the night meal, and a few extra, to say nothing of feeding ourselves.

Shua, make sure that the cheese you’ve been making is really ready. We need to know. Marin, go to the docks in the morning, right at moonrise. Buy more wine, olives, spiced dip for the bread. And both of you, we need to slaughter a lamb tonight as well; it has to be fully bled before Micav arrives, and the blood should be cleaned away. He won’t want to smell blood; now that he’s done his training, he’ll end up armed and angry, looking for the source, before we can even tell him that it’s a lamb.

Alemi, I know that it’s a great sacrifice to ask, but I know that your husband and you keep a pot of honey for special occasions. What could be more special than the homecoming of the eldest of your nephews? Thank you.

Salim, you’ll help bake tomorrow; tonight we have to clean the oven. We can’t have ashes in our Micav’s bread.

Godom

“Look, momma, the Boaz man sold me a brass bowl. I traded him all those bricks I made yesterday and the day before. He’s gonna need another camel.

Now, when I hafta scoop the water off the clay in my clay-hole, I can fill this bowl with it, too. If it stays in the light, he said, the water goes out faster. Maybe I can make two or three times as much salt with this as with my pot.

I know, momma, since dada went missing, we’ve been poor. But I’m getting real good at making bricks; and now I can make salt faster, and we do good enough to keep us fed, right?

Don’t you worry ‘bout getting me to no tutor. I don’t want ta be with the other boys, anyhow. They all keep talking like dada ran off to the city with that other woman.

He didn’t, right? Right. So, I want him to be proud of me when he comes back. He made that big pad for drying bricks on, and my clay-hole is big enough now that we could both stand in it, him and me.

Momma, don’t cry. So what if the heads of the families think we’re no good? I’ll show them! I’m gonna grow up real fast, and make better bricks than them, and more salt. And we’ll get enough money to buy a tar-pit too.

We’ll do so good that all those cousins of mine, who don’t have no money either, will come and work for us. Then the tribe’ll notice you and me, momma, and they’ll wish they treated us better.

Government

“Listen well, Ramajin. As the new head of your family, there are new lessons you must learn.

The current Tyrant is Banadin, son of Leah. Leah was daughter to Singhamin, and Tyrant in her turn.

Banadin is a foul-tempered man, prone to drink. Yet in office, he is capable and strong. He takes the advice of the tribal Elders, ponders it, and acts. His principal flaw as Tyrant is that when he does make a bad choice, which is rare, he will not retract that choice. The most recent such bad decision was to set a few of the Amar to seek out the works of Veda, and destroy them. The Amar who were sent have not returned; dark rumors are afoot.

The Elders of the tribes are as they always were; old men and women, bent on insuring that their tribe will gain greater station against the others during their stay as Elder.

Banadin also keeps a council of Viziers; each of these is to keep open offices, and meet with anyone who brings to them business of importance. The matters which have Viziers attached to them are: Taxation, the City, Seals, Coin, and the Temples of Petra.

Banadin's popularity with the tribe of Naomi is very poor; the fact that he has set a Vizier to make sure that they do not expand their temples does not sit well with them. Banadin sees the tribe as an expansionist group bent on adopting a majority of his citizens into their ranks.

Now, Ramajin, can you remember all that?”

Hith-Shulu

“Ruth, dearest wife, come up on this stone, and hear what I say to you. You are a daughter of Boaz, that is true. But more to the point, you are a daughter of the city. And as my wife, and a child of Samael, you must change if you are to live.

See the sands; so far do they stretch out that there seems no end to them. Yet even there, in the barren plain, live many things. Even there, there is much to see.

We shall live there, as the tribe of Samael has done since the day of Aaron. We shall travel the oases, and carry water to the gemstone mines.

Yes, you shall see those crags, and the caverns within, and how we pull out from them the finest of jewels. Perhaps, if our family wishes, we shall even turn our hands to the task.

If not, then we shall travel the sands, gathering water, trading with the tribes of Boaz and Lometh, and fighting with the children of Jervaim.

Indeed, they still dwell out in the sands; you will learn how to take up sword against them. You will learn how to shield yourself from heat, how to find water in the sand, and how to prepare for and survive the sandstorm.

There are no shortage of trials awaiting you; if, as my father hopes, you prove your wisdom to my family, then we will grow great. If not, then we shall go beyond the wandering-tracks, there to map out the sorcerous places, and find profit in them.”

Khadur

“So, little man. You think that you could live here, and could make a sword better than this. Come along.

I said COME! I will show you how little you know. Look down. Take a good look; long way down, isn't it? See that crane? Look at the rope on it; it could hold up twenty men. Sometimes it does. The basket on the end is solid, too. Get in.

Let's go down. Watch what I do with my arms. Those are signs; they tell the men who work the winch what to do. And leave those coins alone. Of course we drop coins in the basket when we use it; what do you think the winch-men live on, you fool?

See those hollows? We pulled enough stone out of there for twenty granaries. Next moon-turning, the tribe will decide what to do with the space. It might get used for an all-tribe mine, or we might build a home there for a family that has grown too great for it's home. Like mine, maybe.

Here we are! Hand me that rope; I need to pull us onto my front ledge. Don't tie onto those! They're chimneys. Good. Let's go inside.

Of course it's civilized. Don't be an ass. Just because we build into the side of a chasm doesn't mean we live poorly. And yes, it's big; all the descendants of my father live here. Come through here.

This is my room. I sleep over there. And this, good fellow, is my furnace; there are my tools, and here is some iron ore. Make that better sword of yours, won't you?"

Maob

“Come, little princesses. Your grandfather, Elder of the tribe of Ephrus, has paid me well to take you onto the river and teach you the ways of the river-valley.

As you can see plainly, we are on the south bank of the river, and facing the north bank. Let me oar us out a little further. There.

The tribe of Ephrus, your tribe, has its lands along the south bank. It is the richest of the three farming tribes. The other two tribes, Damael and Veth, have their lands on the north bank. Damael's lands run toward Khadur; Veth's lands run toward the Tierzantium. They are divided by that line of stone pillars, there. See them?

Perhaps because of wind, or because Godom is to the south, or for whatever other reason, the soil of the south bank is richer for a greater distance; thus there is more land. And because there is only one tribe to rule it, your tribe is very wealthy.

Of course, your tribe will grow richer still in the generations to come. All along the south bank are small marshes, and concealed in their midst, little woods and valleys. It is said that the Tyrant Majel, when he lived, built a few of his pleasure-palaces in those very places. Your tribe, though rich, does not have the numbers to farm all of that land, or even to tame it. That is why there are watchtowers in the fields of some farms; because they are near wild land.

Now, we will get nearer the shore, and discuss fields.”

Measures and Weights

“You haven’t done this part of the merchant’s work before, have you, Khalid? Well, every merchant who sells valuable goods, which is about one for each barge, has an assistant that does nothing but measure and carry. With those shoulders of yours, I’m surprised Sulijan hasn’t set you to it before.

Now, these are the three kinds of coin. This is a Drachma. You’ve seen lots of these, I know. A drachma buys a loaf of bread. Two buys a clay pitcher. Ten buys a hookah. Thirty drachmas buys you a shekel. A shekel buys ten measures of olive oil, not a ‘man’s weight’. Two buys a bolt of linen. Five buys you a talent. This is a talent. Heavy; solid gold. With ten of these, you could have someone build you a house.

These are for oil, water, and such. This little pitcher is one measure. That big pot is twenty measures. And the barrel over there is a full hundred measures.

These are the scales. Now, many merchants use lead balls to measure weight, but we like to impress the customer, so we use the real measure. Coins.

Like coins, five shekels makes a talent. But don’t use drachmas; they’re made of brass, not gold. Unlike coins, there’s an even bigger measure than talents. Ten talents makes a gill. Remember that. Ten talents is one gill.

I weigh one hundred and ninety-eight gill. You probably weigh two hundred and fifty. See? Easy.”

Medicine

“NEXT!

All right, and what's wrong with you? Sore throat, hmm, sounds raspy. Here; honey and soothing herbs. Take it after each meal, and for Petra's sake, don't shout quite so much at your booth. Pay the attendant outside.

NEXT!

Yes? Well, out with it, man, what's wrong with you? Dear man, you haven't been cursed, don't be foolish. It's quite common. It is, however, rather difficult to cure. Are you entirely sure that it's not your wife who's barren? Oh, I see. Three wives. Yes, well, this treatment is the first in line to try. It's quite costly, though. Very well; drink a twentieth of a measure each night after your meal; lie with your wives. In the meantime, drink less wine, leave the hookah alone, and... ..BY PETRA!

Put him down at once; on the table. What did this to him? A thief. No, you idiot, what weapon? Dagger. Right, could be worse. Hand me that basin. You should have brought me there; moving the injured is unwise.

Dump this out, bring clean water. And you, man, what's your name? Ramajin. Well, man, you're about to earn that jar of remedy for free. Wash carefully, scrub off completely.

I don't care if you know nothing about it. I need someone to hold onto things in there while I stitch. First, though, we need to wash it out, and stop the bleeding.

You and you, hold him down.”

Metalwork

“What the matter, merchant, don’t you know how to work iron? Here, let a real man show you.

First, fire the furnace. You have to have a small furnace, with good thick walls. It can’t have a normal door, either, you need to have one that’s closed up with a stone wheel, rolled in front.

There. Nice and warm, and it’ll get much hotter before we’re done. You might want to take that vest and turban off, unless you like fainting from heat. See? The tribe of Eli wears very little, not because we’re savages, but because it’s that or collapse.

Good, it hot enough to start. See this? A stone paddle, ad that cup in the middle of the paddle end, there, is what we melt it in. This square thing is a grille. Fit it over the cup. Now, we put the ore on top of the grille. The iron melts out of the other stuff, and falls into the cup.

It’s the same way with other metals, but they don’t need as much heat. Now, after it melts, you can either pour it into a sheet, and hammer it into shape. Or, you can pour it into a mold, and let it cool.

If you’re making something that has to be really hard, like a sword, you put it in a mold, and then heat it just until it’s red, hammer it down, cool it off, and do it over and over until it’s hard enough, and thin enough, to work. That’s what the tongs are for.

Now, the fire’ll go out if we don’t air it up. These are bellows, and that’s what they’re for.”

Minerals and Gems

“Yes, teacher, I can recite the lesson of the stones too. Do I have to? Yes, sir.

Construction materials of the land include hewn stone, bricks, and mortar. Hewn stone is usually limestone, which is quarried at the edges of Khadur; it is soft naturally, but hardens after exposure to air. Bricks are made of clay, which is found most richly in Godom. The clay is wetted, mixed with straw, shaped, and sun-dried. Mortar is normally pitch, dug from the tar pits at Godom.

Metals are mined in Khadur, scraped from the sides of the chasm. Gold is scarce, and is sold to the palace to be minted. Silver is used for jewelry and luxuries. Tin is used to make household wares. Copper is smelted with Tin to make bronze, the founding metal of weapons and armor.

Alabaster is found in deposits along Maob and within Khadur; it is a white mineral, relatively easy to carve and polish. Shipments of it are also sold to the Palace to make personal seals. Amber is found in soil deposits in Maob; it is used as a gemstone.

Sulfur is found in Godom, and is used for an enormous variety of purposes. Salt is made by drying the waters of Godom, and is used as a flavoring, a food preservative, and for many other purposes.

Flint can be found anywhere, and is used with other stones to produce sparks and, thereby, fire.

Other gems are mined in Hith-Shulu.

Told you I could recite it. And you didn't believe me.”

Music

“Vassamin, you play that Sitar like you want to make people cry. Nobody wants that. Rutzel, get your tambourine. Now, we’re going to play ‘The Wedding Dance of Singhamin’. You know it?”

Now, think! When people walk past us as we play the streets, or when they think about someone to make music at their weddings and feasts, what do they want?

They want something that will make them spring along, like young men and women. They want the air filled with a sound that will make them dance, that will make them look at each other and smile. They want music that will give them permission to act like children, or lust after each like animals. And that’s what we try to give them.

The drum gives the song a pulse. People move to the drum. So we keep it fast and crazy. The tambourine player puts glitter on the sound of the drum, and wear tight clothes with bells so she can dance out front, and make the people look. Men lust at Rutzel; women envy. Both pay.

And the sitar weaves into that sound. The drum moves the people, the sitar moves the song. The drumbeat changes five times in this song; from starting to chorus, then back, then out again and back again. The tambourine helps the drum, that’s all. But if you listen to the sitar, you know where you are in the song; it has the most complicated music. If there’s a singer, no sitar. If no singer, then a sitar. So the instrument must sing, not whine.

Now, get ready. Join in on the fourth beat.”

Numerology

“Numerology. Bah. It’s a load of rubbish, I tell you. They spend hours debating how much of what humour you must put forth to accomplish a task.

If you want to accomplish tasks, I would say, then put down that stupid quill, stopper up your ink, and come along. But they would say, what do you Amar know about it, as if we were mindless brutes.

Simple fact is, numerology is where old fools go when they get too strange for normal life. They didn’t ever go anywhere or do anything, so why should I listen to them?

I went to see one once, when I was young and silly. Do you know what he told me? He said that there was not enough light in me. So I asked if I should go out and bask under the moon, or what.

He says, no, no. He tells me to go and practice caring and love; if I know the heart of my fellows, then I shall be able to learn more easily the truth of their actions.

What stupidity. If I want to know the truth of someone’s actions, then I ask them. If what they say makes no sense, then I ask again, with something sharp near their throat. They tell me, then.

Why would you go to one? Advice on your personal tabulation? What in the name of Petra is that, and of what use could it be to you? Remember, you’re a warrior first, not a merchant. If you want to check if your measure of blood is greater than before, go get a basin, and I’ll check for you.”

Plants and Herbs

“The lesson of the plants, as codified by the scholars of Tierzantium.

The grains of the land are Flax, Barley, and Wheat. Flax is woven into linen. Barley is made into beer, and occasionally into flour for barley-cakes, which is travel food. Wheat is the main source of flour for breads.

The common vegetables are Gourds, Lentils, and Onions. Gourds are used to make castor-oil, and are occasionally scraped hollow, treated, and used as canteens or bottles. Lentils are used for soup, some breads, and many other food purposes. Onions are used for food in many different ways.

Normal herbs and spices are Anise, Cinnamon, Garlic, Mint, Mustard, and Spikenard. The number of uses these are put to is beyond counting.

The fruits of the land are Almonds, Apples, Figs, Grapes, and Pomegranates. All are eaten.

The woods of the land other than fruit-woods are Cedar, Cypress, and Acacia, each of which has its own qualities.

Also worth noting are Reeds, Olives, Soapwort, and Wormwood. Reeds are cut, flattened, pounded into sheets, and dried as paper. Olives are used to make oil, used for lamps and other purposes. Soapwort roots are burned and mixed with fat to make soap. Wormwood is used to make Absinthe, a mystical liquor.”

Poetry

“There are three main forms of poetry. You, aspiring scholars, would do well to master them. If for no other reason than to impress your listeners, poetry is one of the scholar’s keynotes.

The highest form of poetry is the Rubiyat. In this form, the poem is divided into verses. Each verse has four lines, and a consistent meter. The last words of the first line, second line, and fourth line, must rhyme. The last word of the third line must not, though the word used to end the third line must be one that evokes an image that is the true center of that verse.

The middle form is called the Antithet. This is the form of the famous Song of Singhamin. In it, the poem is divided into couplets. The lines do not rhyme. The point of this form is to have each couplet represent a single thought, and yet have as much contrast between the two lines as possible, without losing coherency. The contrast should be especially notable when the last words of each line are regarded.

The lowest form is Choralism. In this form, the poem is one verse, six or eight lines in length. The second and fourth, and sometime even sixth, lines are made nearly identical, changing only in tense. The first line, third line, sometimes fifth line, and last two lines, represent ideas which are tightly tied to the repeating thought. This form is widely used in religious circles.”

Pottery

“Young man, you think you can learn the potter’s art just by standing there and watching? There is much more to this work than you can think.

The clay must be found, and bought. Buying bad clay will yield a faulty vessel, no matter the skill of the workman. Then, the clay must be wetted, divided, pounded, over and over until it is ready.

Then, to me and my wheel. Two pieces, the wheel has. The pivot, which I has thrust into the ground, and the spin, which is what you can see. The spin has a smooth peg that sits in the pivot. Then, I turn it with my feet. Practice; days of practice are needed to make it spin so evenly.

I spin the clay up, down, and it obeys me in all things. But if I falter, quiver, even look up, while my hands are on the clay, then it will be a ruin. Back to wetting and dividing.

And if I spin it well, and it does not collapse when I lift it from the wheel, then it must survive the furnace. It must be hardened and dried, before it loses any of it’s shape.

After it has been fired, it must be rubbed down smooth. For that, I use grit from Khadur, a little sand, and a rubbing-stone. Once made smooth, it is polished with resin, and dried in the moonlight for two days, so that it will have gloss, and not feel rough.

Then, after all that work, I still need to convince fools like you that the vessel has more value than a clod of dirt.”

Pregnancy and Birth

“What will you name the little one? Well, boy’s names end with min, bad, or jin, most of the time. If they don’t people who never met him might think he’s a girl.

And you should have a name ready, just in case it is a girl. I know that you feel it’s a boy, but sometimes these feelings are amiss.

You have started on the swaddling cloths, and such, haven’t you? No, dear, don’t ever use the same ones for a second child. It’s bad luck; means they’ll grow up always envious of their elder siblings.

I’d love to help you on the loom. We could make your swaddling cloths, and, if we have time, we could even start work on the first real clothes. They always have to be light, since babies have such sensitive skin.

Two more moon-turns, then the trial on the birthing-chair. You have bought something for the pains, haven’t you? Good Petra, girl, just because it’s your second doesn’t mean it isn’t going to hurt so much.

Remember when you birthed Amali? Do you really want that again? Of course your husband wants you to be clean of all influences during the birth; all husbands do. They say that because they’ve never had a child. If they tried to take that pain, they’d whimper for a year.

No, I’ll find you something that isn’t obvious. Then the poor man won’t even have to know. It isn’t as if he’ll stay to watch; men almost never do.”

Sex

“Nahum, sit and be silent. I’ve seen you looking at me when we’re on the training yard.

I asked you to be silent. You’ve never been away from your family for more than a few nights at a time, have you?

Thought not. So, let me guess. The abiding belief your family gave you tells you that lust only has a place between husband and wife, and those men who can’t hold to one woman should pay for their pleasures. Yes.

Well, let me tell you something. They tell you that to keep their money safe. Yes, their money.

Men and women lie together, and children are produced. No person of virtue deals with unwanted children swiftly; adoption takes time, and hurts horribly.

And the families don’t want any of their relations to learn how to have pleasure without children, so they don’t tell you it’s even possible.

So, since the families control all the money, and are obliged to help other members of their own family, they want to be certain that you marry once, have babies, and increase the family money. If you learn that lust can be exercised without children, you’re more likely to lose family money than make it.

But, my man, you are a warrior now, which means that after your parting-gifts from your family, you don’t have to worry about that rubbish any more.

See?

Now, take off your pants.”

Sorcery

“Ten drops of quicksilver on the stylus. Then, we paint a vulture on your wrist, like this. There. Now, we burn the quicksilver in with this brand.

Look for yourself! This is how the book says to do it. It's never been wrong yet; as long as we follow the instructions right out of the book, and have it present at all our workings, we can't go wrong.

Burn in the quicksilver, read the chant, and you'll be able to fly until moonset. We'll work the power to move unseen on you too.

Then, you can slip right by those houses, and steal a baby for us.

Don't start moralizing now. We haven't done all this, been branded outcast, and thrown our seals into Khadur so that we could stop. The book is very clear; each page contains one working, and anytime a page is added, a new working will appear on it, as long as the page is made from the flesh of a child, and the book is bathed in blood for a full turning of the moon.

You didn't really think that once we got better at it, we could give up the book, did you? All sorcery is dependant on written workings or ritual sacrifice. If you want to stop, then leave the book with me. Or, we can go find another set of written workings, unless you want to build an altar to darkness and pick up a dagger.

That's what I thought. Now, do you want me to reheat the brand, or shall we get some more quicksilver for me?

Tarrum and Thirrum

“What are you doing here? This is my grazing land. You may well be my tribesman, but that doesn’t mean you can take your sheep wherever you wish.

Look, idiot, this is how it is. From the edge of the city, to the face of the cliffs, all that grows belongs to the tribe of Seth. The family of the Elder, whomever they may be at any time, gets the flat expanse between the foot of Thirrum, the lesser mountain, and the city. The remainder is divided between the families; each family has it’s own house complex, wells, and herds. The lands of the families are divided up by markers.

The marker over there that you walked right past, bringing your herd with you, marks the entry to my family pastures. My family has set me to graze these sheep here; if you want to set yours out, you pay.

Oh, is that so? Well, since your sheep have already eaten the grass of my family, you’ll pay for it regardless; if you don’t, your family will get called up in tribal court for dishonoring the pacts of the tribe.

Hey, it’s not much to you, but unless I’m wrong, your grandmother is Hannaret. Now, when the Elder dies, she’s nicely set to take over, unless her family is made to look foolish. Do you want to be the person she takes her fabled anger to tonight?

...Thought not. Hand over the coin, kid.”

Tierzantum

“There lies the city. Benjam, my son, remember while we walk in it that you are a pure-born son of Samael. Your manner will seem as strange to them as theirs to you.

The people of the city cluster together like ants; even their home begin to look like a colony now, rising to a heap, with the palace there, perched over the place where the river falls from it's caves into the valley.

In the city, life is not so simple as in the desert. They have water in abundance, and all the grain in land is taxed unto them. They do not make things of use, as the people of Godom and of Khadur.

Instead, some of them take things which have some value and increase it; others organize this and that. Others take wisdom, and write it into scrolls. And still others go unto the refiners, organizers, and wise ones, and do for them the work of the hands.

If ever one of them went into the sand, they would have their choice before them; change or die. Yet because they do not do their own work, they have gathered much knowledge. There we shall find you a woman who knows the arts of lettering and numbering; the kind who can give good advice and tell our craftsmen things that they did not know before; perhaps even the secret of jewel-cutting.

Once we have found such a woman, my son, you must woo her, and bring her into the sands. And once she is there, you must teach her the ways of the desert even as she teaches us the ways of the city.”

Time and Seasons

“When the moon is up, that is called day. When it is down, that is called night. Each day, it has a little different shape; this is the process of turning. When the moon is directly overhead, it has no light; this is the end of a moon-turning, and beginning of another; a moon-turning is between 24 and 32 days in length.

Twelve turnings make one year. These turnings are divided up; 3 for breeding of animals, 3 for rain, 3 for heat, and 3 for wind. Each group of three turnings is called a season, and they are named according to the event that suits them best.

During one year, there are four sacred times; one for each season. The day of waters is the middle day of the middle turning of the season of rain. It is the day that the first people rose up. The night of burning is the middle of the season of heat; it was on that night when we made war upon the Nephili. The day of breath is the center of the windy season; that is the day the land was created. The night of blood is the center of the breeding season; it was the night on which the first child was born upon the land.

The life is measured in years. Until two years old, a baby. Then, until twelve, a child. Then, until fifteen, a youth. After that, you are a man, or a woman, as the case may be.”

Weapons and Armor

“You’re to be numbered among the Amar, eh? Then, sit down. Let me tell you about the tools of your new work.

Well equipped warriors wear bronze breastplates, bronze helmets, greaves on their shins, and heavy cloaks. The breastplate covers the front only, and affords significant protection against such strikes. The helmet is opened-faced, with cheekguards. The greaves cover the front of the shin, from the top of the knee to the top of the foot. The cloak is made of thick wool, and acts as both protection, and as a blanket when traveling.

Warriors also carry shields; most are oval in shape and the size of a man’s chest.

The common sword is the sickle sword; this is the primary weapon of the well-fitted warrior.

There are three main ranged weapons. The javelin is a light pole with a pointed tip; some have back-pointed barbs as well. The sling is a long leather thong with a pocket in the center. A rock is placed in the pocket, both end are held, and the sling is spun. Once speed has been reached, one end of the thong is released, and the rock flies out. Thirdly, the bow is a difficult weapon, prone to breaking of shaft and of string. However, when working, the bow has the greatest range and killing power of the three.

Any man who takes training as an Amar would be wise to look over these items, and choose from among them. Then, practice until your fingers bleed.”

Worship

“Welcome to all of you. Peace, in the name of Naomi. Please, all kneel for our opening prayer.

AZAEEL! See that we have come before you. Bring your hand among us, move upon us, and let us feel what it is we have done that might bring your wrath. Whisper over us what we must do to make peace with you again.

NAOMI! See that we have sweated; that we have worked. Come among us, and give us rest. Go unto those who lay in the courtyard; those who have touched blood, and those who have bled, and bring healing to their spirits and their bodies.

PETRA! All thanks be unto you. We praise you that we live; we ask that you give us again tomorrow the succor which you have given us for so long.

SHEOL! Enemy of the land, we curse you and your name. May you always go hungry; may your portion be empty. For we shall go unto all the land, and cleanse your followers from it; we shall heal the spirits which your devisings have broken.

ALL PEOPLE! Know that the land lives, that Petra gives the bread to you. Know that Naomi shall heal you, Azael shall judge you, and if you do not give worship unto the land, then Sheol shall claim you, and you shall go unto everlasting thirst and hunger in his service.

All rise. Now, the crescent shall be writ on those whose names have been given to our seers; those who have given perfect service these last few days.

Writing

“My students, though you may never learn to read or write, you must at least be able to tell which kind of writing it is that you are looking at, and what it’s written on, or you will look foolish.

There are three systems of writing in the land. The old pictograph system uses stylized pictographs for each word in the language. The codified sound system uses thirty-one simple, common pictographs from the old system, each of which represents a specific sound; there are no vowels. The new numeric system is for mathematical and tabulation purposes only, and is composed of numbers and mathematical symbols.

Writing is done on sheets of reed-paper, on wax tablets, painted as decoration, and embroidered into the hems of clothing. Books take the forms of scrolls and of codices. Most are hand-written, though inked-block printing has been used, and the idea of racked inked blocks to be used repeatedly is being tried in several places.

Most of the people can write crudely in the sound system; only scribes and tax collectors use the numeric and pictographic systems.

Since families live under the same roof, one of the older men of the family takes on the responsibility of teaching the children their letters, and taking care of whatever passes for the family library. Wealthy families often hire a combination librarian and tutor, such as myself, for this purpose.”

Numbers

The Purpose of this Script

My Gracious Tyrant Singhamin;

I send you this, the work of my life. As a Numerologist, I have made extensive observation on the nature of people, their true nature as spirits, and the ways that they exert their power as a spirit through their bodies.

The first axiom of all that I have learned in my life is this: All persons are spirits, clad in flesh. The spirit, when it enters and fulfills the nature of the flesh, is wont to divide itself. The divisions that it makes are called souls; every person has five souls.

This is not a new realization; indeed, it is known to everyone. Yet many people constantly act as if this was a proof that all persons are identical in being, and all the differences between them are due to the differing kinds of bodies they wear. This is not so; the body is no more than Raiment to the spirit, and will change it's nature and abilities according to the power and composition of the souls that dwell within it.

I shall endeavor to give details to all the functions and uses of each type of soul, both natural and unnatural, both within the flesh and as a spirit. So many of the Numerologists of Tierzantium have worked to make this script complete that it to name them would fill as much paper as the knowledge itself; this is the way of the land, and the prime authority of it's workings outside Scripture.

Even so, I shall not give my own name; let none take the glory for what has been devised and set forth here.

The Unequal Division of Souls

The first soul is the Katha soul; it is that portion of your being which thinks, guides, and directs. It resides behind the forehead, and all the other souls give it service.

The second soul is the Bani soul, which dwells in the liver. The Bani soul is filthy; it draws all foulness to itself. By doing so, it cleanses the body of these things.

The third soul is the Vekkem soul; the seat of its power is the heart. Yet the Vekkem soul pulsates within all the blood of the body. It is from the Vekkem soul that the body gains its motive powers.

The fourth soul is the Hodam or Gidam soul, which slumbers in the groin, awakening only when it is stirred. It is the Hodam or Gidam soul which gives the body the powers of healing and of sex. The Hodam soul is the male soul of the groin; the Gidam is the female, and unto each is given varied powers.

The fifth soul, the Akmel soul, does not dwell in any place. It enters and leaves the body through the eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth and skin. It is through the virtues of the Akmel soul that one learns all that is around them.

Any person can learn, simply by paying attention, that many persons do not have souls distributed in balance. Some are lacking one soul; and though the other souls can make up for some of that lost function, it cannot all be recovered. Others have additional souls of one type or another; they often have impressive and useful powers, but always, some bad thing comes along with the good.

Measuring the Strength of the Souls

Some souls are strong, where others are weak. When a Numerologist wishes to understand a person's souls, they must take measure of that person's souls.

Souls cannot be measured in any quantity that speaks of the flesh; a soul cannot be held in vessel, weighted on a scale, or measured with a knotted cord. Yet their strengths can be found out by seeing how powerfully they can act, each in their own fashion.

We shall speak of souls being measured in whispers. We have chosen this measure, because it matches well with the actions of a soul. A weak soul can only barely be noticed when everything else leaves room for it. A great soul makes it's own room, and overwhelms others with it's power.

The scale of measurement has been set as being from one to five. A soul with a power of one whisper is a very weak thing, where a soul with a power of five whispers inspires awe.

It is most common to have one soul of each type. It is most common for a given soul to have a power of three whispers. Yet it is very difficult to discover anywhere a person who has one soul of each type, and all of them at a power of three whispers.

