

Part 1

In the times when the sky had no name and the earth had never heard words, the waters mingled in the boundless ocean. Veirit, the Lord of Fresh Waters, met Kelrat, the Mother of Sea Currents. And the primordial ocean bestowed upon the world:

Love — Ismarett,

Silence — Surnetis,

Guardian of the Gates — Vaelora,

The Moon — Selinor,

Decay — Miratha,

Destruction — Ashkara,

And Keeper of Fates — Tiros.

But the young gods, with their noise, began to annoy their parents, and Veirit planned to kill his children. The gods, sensing their father's intentions, turned in fear to Ashkar. He gathered oaths of loyalty from his brothers and sisters, and filling a cup with water from the bottom of the sea abyss, went to drink the poison with his father. After drinking to the last drop, Veirit sank into the abyss of eternal sleep.

Ashkar took his father's throne, gained unparalleled wisdom and power, and subdued the currents, settling in the depths of freshwater darkness.

Kelrat, however, was accused of inaction. Insulted, she desired the demise of all gods and gave birth to monsters, serpents, and dragons. She placed her firstborn, Tiros, who held the Tablets of Fate, at their head.

Then the children came again to Ashkar seeking help. But he set a condition:

If they won, he would gain supreme power over the gods; his word would determine destinies, and his will would be unquestionable. Remembering the oath sworn at their father's death, they agreed.

Testing Ashkar's power, the gods granted him a net and the Seven Winds. Ashkar called down lightning, raised monstrous storms and floods, and rode into battle against Kelrat in a chariot drawn by four terrifying horses with razor-sharp teeth. He cast the net, trapped winds in her mouth, and struck her heart with an arrow.

He tore her body into pieces. From one half, Ashkar created the sky and the Celestial Sanctuary; from the other half, he made the earth; from her head, he raised a great mountain; rivers flowed from her eyes; hills rose from her chest; and her tail became a barrier for the waters so they would not flood the land. The gods recognized Ashkar as their

king. Tiros was captured, his arteries severed, and from the clay mixed with his blood, Ashkar created humans — to serve the gods and bear their yoke.

Ashkar's tyranny lasted centuries. With each drop of blood spilled for order, seeds of fear grew in mortal hearts. Observing this, the gods were outraged.

Ismarett, the gift of love born from the union of the primordial gods, could not accept her brother's cold dominion. Her heart longed for the breath of the world and mortals born of blood. Hearing the torment of human souls, seeing that their paths led only to suffering, she resolved to intervene in destiny.

She ventured into the realm of the dead. At the gates of the Underworld, she demanded the gatekeeper Vaelora to open them, threatening to break the doors and release the dead to feast on the living.

The gatekeeper said he would report her visit to her sister, Surnetis. Frightened, Surnetis ordered the gates to be opened. Passing through the seven gates of the Underworld, Ismarett lost parts of her garments, and appeared before Surnetis naked. Enraged, Surnetis commanded Miratha to confine Ismarett in a palace and afflict her with sixty plagues.

After forty days, Ismarett visited Surnetis and proposed releasing her sister if she brought, in exchange, her mortal beloved, Darion, to the Underworld. Ismarett agreed. Her body was placed on a golden throne and sprinkled with living water. Then, Surnetis released the captive goddess, taking her beloved's soul in exchange.

Ismarett passed again through the seven gates, restoring her garments. Grieving the loss of love, she resolved to break the gates and release the Silent Ones.

— Such was the tale of ancient days. Yet Ismarett's actions still bear consequences: the cracked gates of the Underworld released the Silent Ones and the dead, who thirst for the living. The monsters, once Kelrat's army, roamed the mortal world seeking destruction and torment. Since that moment, both worlds descended into chaos, every step on earth became a trial, and the darkness, once unleashed, knew no rest.

Part 2

When the sun first weakened and the earth cooled under the breath of the dead, humanity suffered greatly. Peaceful cities fell one by one, fields grew over with ash and bone, roads filled with wandering corpses. The gods remained silent. The world was lost.

Then the Ashen King rose above the clans. He gathered scattered settlements under his banner, claiming that on the day of the great darkness, the gods had chosen him as their vessel, and only through him would their light touch the world. Exhausted, the people gave him their faith.

To secure his power, the Ashen King forged a secret pact with priests who had discovered the path to ancient seals, where imprisoned spirits slept beneath stone slabs. The priests opened them, and from the darkness emerged the force that fueled the king's armies: fire

unyielding to wind, and iron unbroken by blood. In exchange for this power, they demanded an oath: the Ashen King's bloodline would never end, for a curse flowed through their veins.

Curses know no bounds. Along with the power in the heart of each royal offspring, unyielding darkness grew. Children were born with eyes glowing like embers, whispers of the dead on their lips. Each heir lived shorter than the last, and with each generation, the blood curse grew heavier.

People whispered that the gods had abandoned them completely. Even the priests who once empowered the king shrugged, for the seals, once touched, could not be closed.

As the King approached the sunset of his life, he saw that the kingdom he had united relied not on faith, but on the fear hidden deep within. His children died in blood and delirium, his people began to rebel, and the dead came ever more frequently from the fields. Then the Ashen King realized the oath sworn to the priests did not save his house, but bound his bloodline to the abyss.

On the night his last son died, the King climbed the summit of his black stone palace and ordered the heir's body burned in an unquenchable flame. From the ashes arose not a man, but a nameless monster of smoke and bone. The people understood: the Ashen King's bloodline was doomed, not to rule, but to eternal curse.

Thus tragedy became legacy: all who bore his blood were born closer to the dead than the living.

When the Ashen dynasty ended, the world did not fall into chaos. On the contrary — the priests rose. They preserved knowledge of the seals, the darkness bound beneath stone slabs, and the unquenchable fire that kept the dead from severing their bonds completely.

They proclaimed that the king fell not because the gods turned away, but because his blood had corrupted their will. The people accepted this as truth, and temples filled faster than ever. Humanity once again believed the gods had not abandoned them — only rejected the cursed lineage.

The priests established new laws. They taught: "No more royal blood — only holy blood, flowing through sacrifices to the gods." They divided responsibilities: some guarded the fire and led warriors against the dead, others comforted families burying children, and others interpreted omens. Each temple became part of a single whole, a shield over the people.

At first, their power was invisible. People brought offerings themselves, out of fear and hope. The hungry shared their last, believing tomorrow the gods would give more. Warriors bowed to priests, fearing their iron would break without blessing. Even city rulers became shadows.

Over time, faith split into cults.

The Cult of Fire taught that Ashkar held death in check, that every city fire was an eye watching the darkness.

The Cult of Bones exalted Ismarett, claiming every bone of the dead was her letter to the living.

The Cult of Silence promised peace, and many weary souls sought them, hoping darkness was not an enemy, but a solace.

Yet disputes among the cults never ceased. The people only believed the priests reflected different faces of truth.

Thus began the Age of Priests. People lived in faith. Temples towered over cities, every path leading to an altar.

But the stronger the priests consolidated order, the tighter the chains around people's necks grew. The fire that once fueled the Ashen King's army now burned in temples, consuming sacrifices. Iron, once forged into swords, was kept deep in temple vaults, rising only with priestly blessing. Even the seals, long opened, did not vanish, sustaining the altars.

Over time, people could no longer distinguish where prayer ended and obligation began. Everything was in the hands of the priests — fire, bread, life, and death. They spoke for the gods, and none dared to doubt.

At the head stood the Saint — the one who declared the fall of the Ashen King. His face never changed with the years, a sign of chosenness. He did not die, did not age, and his word was always final.

Thus the Age of Priests became an era of worship and submission. Only later did the world learn that the priests did not keep chains for salvation, but for themselves — and the tighter the knots grew, the stronger their ruler became.