

THE PIT OF BABEL

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THE PIT OF BABEL

From the Book of the Amranaiyeh (meaning unknown), known also as The Book of the Chronicles of the Conquests of Man (year of writing unknown), Chapters 25 to 30:

CHAPTER 25

¹Now after the wars the world of men was of one nation and of one government, but much divided all the same (for the bonds that held them were weak);

²And it came to pass, as the seas dried up and the sun was darkened in smoke, that they journeyed to the east and found there a plain with no name.

³Then said they one to another: Go to, let us set now aside our grievances and dig ourselves a Pit, whose bottom shall reach even unto the core of the earth; and let us from it mine energy to sustain ourselves and our cities, lest we otherwise perish;

⁴For the seas are dried up and the sun is darkened, and the sanctuary of the stars is yet beyond our reach.

⁵So they gathered their strength and their Engines and in common purpose began to dig; and the name of the project was Babel.

⁶Now Lucifer the devil heard of the Pit which the people dug. He ascended from his seat in hell to behold it, his arch-demons with him;

⁷And it was with great curiosity that he looked upon the Pit, and the unity with which the children of men dug it.

⁸Returning to his kingdom, he called together the assembly of hell, and when they were all gathered before him Lucifer said unto them:

⁹"behold, the people is one, and the language of their hearts is united. this now they begin to do, and should they succeed they may remain united for good, so that nothing may drive them apart ever again: and all our work of eons shall be ruined.

moreover, it pleases Me to disturb the plans of man.

¹⁰“go to, let us now go up and drive them apart, and frustrate this venture which they set their hearts to do. but how shall this be done?”

¹¹Then Marbas, who was lord over pestilence and disease, said unto him: “my Master, let me go up and smite man with plague and with rot; and with poison and pandemic shall i smite them. then they shall fall in their machines and perish in their cities, and this pit shall not be completed, which they have set their hearts to do.”

¹²It pleased Lucifer to hear this. “go,” he said.

¹³So Marbas went up and smote the people with plague and rot and poison and pandemic. And the people took ill and perished in their homes and in their cities and in their Engines,

¹⁴And the number of the dead was so great that there was not space enough to bury them, so that the smoke from the pyres turned the sky further black.

¹⁵None of their healers could locate the cause of these diseases; and there was much weeping and gnashing of teeth in all the earth.

¹⁶Then said the people one to another: Behold, the damage we have done to the planet, to her skies and her oceans and her forests, is returned to haunt us. Perhaps if we had treated her better such misfortune would not have befallen us; but now it is too late.

¹⁷Come! let us make all haste and complete this our Pit. For it may be that the energy we find at the core may power our attempts to find a cure, and so deliver us. And all agreed that it was a most prudent course of action.

¹⁸So returned they to their task, and the zeal of the latter effort was greater than the former.

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CHAPTER 26

¹Now Lucifer ascended a second time, and beheld the Pit which the sons and daughters of Man dug, and he saw they were not deterred in their task; and his heart was greatly infuriated. He returned to hell, and once again gathered his assembly.

²“behold,” said he, “the people is one, and their work unhindered; and marbas My slave is suffering in the pits for his failure, for My anger burns against him.

³“now then, who shall go up for Me against these people, to end this pit which they diggeth? for this I greatly desire.”

⁴Then Prufilas, who loved dissent and discord, spoke, and he said: “my Master, why do we disturb ourselves so? if we desire division in the children of men, why do we not simply cause it to be so?”

⁵“send me, and i shall sow distrust among them and turn them one against the other: father shall turn against son, and daughter against mother, and there shall be no more working together, and this pit they dig shall be utterly frustrated, to the glory of Your lowly Name.”

⁶Lucifer said unto him: “go.”

⁷So Prufilas went up and sowed discord among the people, turning father against son and daughter against mother. And unity ceased between them, their Pit abandoned and desolate; then they turned one on another and waged new wars among themselves.

⁸But with the increase of wars there must also be an increase in weapons; and where there are weapons there must also be energy to drive them.

⁹So it was that the people, desiring the means to slay one another, turned once again to the Pit and the hope of energy therein. They returned to work as one, but each for his own ends: for the first to harness the energy at the core would be the last to live.

¹⁰And the zeal of the work was greater than ever.

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CHAPTER 27

¹Then Lucifer ascended from hell a third time, and beheld the work, and saw that it was progressing faster than ever before.

²Then a strange feeling took hold of him. For it had begun to dawn on him that he might not succeed in his desire to destroy this work of Man; and it troubled him.

³"what," he said to himself. "shall I, Lucifer, Son of the Morning, I who trod upon the mount of the congregation and walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire;

⁴"I who beheld man when he was a mere thought, nothing but dust scattered upon the face of the earth;

⁵"I who cast him from his garden and brought him low as Myself:

⁶"shall I now be troubled on account of man?"

⁷And cursing himself for this moment of weakness Lucifer flew down into hell, perfect in beauty, terrible in countenance, flew on wings that had lost none of their brilliance since he had first been thrown out of Heaven, and his fury went before him.

⁸And everywhere the light of Lucifer's wings touched (for hell is the abode of darkness, and there is no light allowed there save the brilliance of the Son of the Morning) his demons cowered and fell to their faces in terror.

⁹Seated upon his black throne, Lucifer again summoned the assembly of hell; but fewer came now than had come before.

¹⁰"behold," Lucifer hissed, and it was most difficult to hear him over Prufilas's shrieks, "the people is still one, and their work continues. I grow tired of your constant failures. let one now arise who shall go forth and accomplish My bidding, that I may be rid of this tiresome vexation:

¹¹"and whosoever shall do this I shall acknowledge and abase, and they shall sit beside Me at My left hand, dishonored beyond all who reside in hell."

¹²He gazed out at them. "speak: who shall go for Me?"

¹³"my Master," said the demon Abyzou, who greatly desired Lucifer in her heart and sought to please him in all things, "why do You disturb Yourself over this? let man spend himself on his little pit; what it is to us? after all, do they not come to us when they die?"

¹⁴Creeping forward, she laid a tender hand on his feet. "i think my Master troubles Himself overmuch. i think He should desist from this course He has chosen."

¹⁵And after that it was most difficult to hear over the screams of Prufilas and Abyzou.

¹⁶But Lucifer's voice was louder.

¹⁷"I will not be bested by that filthy animal!" His fury rang through hell like thunder, and the assembly trembled.

¹⁸"is it not enough that he unseated Me from My place as the favorite of heaven? that My Adversary fawned over man with an adoration that should have been *Mine*? that beast of dust? is it not enough that he should be granted access to that which was denied Me? forgiveness? *redemption*? that he should be offered heaven as an inheritance while I rot down here with the likes of *you*? shall I now admit defeat to him?"

¹⁹"no. I will not take it. I shall destroy man, and this work to which he has set his hand. this is My will, and this I will do. now *who will go for Me*?"

²⁰But none assembled there stepped forward. they would not even meet his eyes. And Lucifer's rage waxed great, and he began to point out demons to send, from his Fallen Angels to his Rulers, from mighty Principalities to lowly Spectra;

²¹But one by one they all refused and were cast into the flames for punishment, for though their Master's anger was great they knew it was better to bear it now than to return to him with news of failure.

²²Lucifer pointed. “you!”

“me, my Master?” said Baeloz, for that was the name of the demon Lucifer had pointed to.

²³“you!” said Lucifer. “you will go up for Me and end this thing that man diggeth. you will frustrate their plans and bring them all to naught. if you will do this you shall sit by My side in great dishonor. do you understand?”

²⁴“yes, my Master,” said Baeloz, and bowed low.

²⁵Lucifer regarded him with eyes of flame, surprised that this one had not refused like the rest. “are you able to do this?” he asked. “will you succeed where others have failed Me?”

²⁶“yes, my Master,” said Baeloz, though he was certain of no such thing. But he dared not refuse, for he was more fearful and cowardly at heart than most other demons. Moreover, Baeloz was greatly ambitious, and the promised reward called to him.

²⁷For he had suffered a great many things at the hands of the other demons mightier than himself; and if he succeeded in this then it would be *him* dwelling in the lowest Circle, looking up in contempt at the less favored demons.

²⁸“it shall be done, my Master,” said Baeloz.

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CHAPTER 28

¹So Baeloz went up to the world of men, and there he pondered to himself how to accomplish the task which he had been set. He studied the Pit as it took shape, this bottomless pit of Man’s ambition, and he took great interest in the Engines with which the people dug it.

²Then thought Baeloz to himself: “surely these engines are the secret to everything. if i should sabotage them then this work must surely cease, my Master greatly pleased and myself greatly brought low in dishonor.”

³So he made up his mind, and went forth to sabotage the machines with which the people dug their Pit.

⁴But Baeloz was an unimaginative demon, and he knew not how to utterly break Man’s machines. Whatever damage he did would stop the Engines for only a while, then the people would repair them and the work would continue;

⁵But by that time Baeloz would have moved on to another Engine, and so was the work greatly slowed.

⁶Then said the people to themselves: Behold, we are masters of metal and of fire, and all of our work is perfect. How then is it that our Engines fail so often, and that only recently? And they began to suspect foul play.

⁷Baeloz spent a long time in the world of men, for he kept sabotaging their machines and the people kept repairing them, but lacking imagination he knew not what else to do;

⁸And not having fulfilled his charge, he could not return to hell. At this time the people began setting traps to capture the offender.

⁹Now these traps should have had no power over a demon, but Baeloz had spent too long in the material world, and the Laws of Matter had worked their slow work on him. One day he went to sabotage an Engine, and a snare caught him.

¹⁰And Baeloz screamed and clawed and fought, but the snare held firm. The people, drawn by the noise, came to see what they had caught; and when they saw Baeloz they did not know what to think.

¹¹It is an alien, some said. A mutant, said others. Let us ask it, said yet others, and all agreed with this. But when they approached Baeloz, he cursed them in a thousand tongues and refused to answer any of their questions.

¹²So they tortured him for forty days and forty nights, at the end of which his resolve broke (for Baeloz was, unsurprisingly, also a weak demon);

¹³and he told them his name, and confessed his true nature, and revealed to them the charge which his Master had laid on him.

¹⁴And the people listened to the stories of hell, of Lucifer and his plots against them, and their hearts were filled with rage. For they were a proud people, conquerors, and it irked them that another would dare oppose them so.

¹⁵Tell us how to get to Hell, they said, but Baeloz, having said too much already, fearing the wrath of his Master, refused.

¹⁶So they tortured him again for six hundred and sixty-six days (which, it must once more be said, is a poor time indeed for a demon to withstand torture from mere mortals), and Baeloz broke completely;

¹⁷And, sobbing, he told the people of the doors beyond the material plane, and he revealed to them the forbidden knowledge, the laws of Perfect Entropy and the secrets of Absolute Zero.

¹⁸Then said the people one to another, Go to: let us descend now into the lowest place and take our revenge on the devil, and raze his home to the ground: for he has opposed our will and we are sore wroth.

¹⁹But there was a wise woman among them, who arose and said unto the assembly: Hear me, my Brethren: what shall it profit us if we destroy Hell? Shall it undo our many misfortunes? Shall it return to us those who have passed into death? No, it shall accomplish none of these things.

²⁰But perhaps we have been offered a blessing in disguise: for though the devil hath opposed us, our greatest evil have we done unto ourselves.

²¹Our planet, mortally wounded by the work of our hands, will no longer hold us; we are in need of a new home.

²²Now then, I pray thee, give ear unto my counsel: let us go down and make war with Hell, and conquer it, and subdue it with a rod of steel;

²³Let us fell the Forests of Everlasting Misery, and dam the Lake of Fire;

²⁴And mine the sulfur, and burn it for our energy.

²⁵Let us transform the Low Place in our image, and make ourselves a Kingdom and a home there: and we shall rule forever and ever.

²⁶For the Earth already burns, and we are forced to flee: how can Hell be any worse than this?

²⁷Then they saw that this plan was very good, and they were more united than ever.

²⁸And Lucifer in hell knew it, and saw them approach, and his heart was seized with an emotion wholly unfamiliar to him; and when he searched within him, he realized what it was:

²⁹It was fear.

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CHAPTER 29

¹Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Lucifer came also among them.

²And the LORD said unto Lucifer: "Whence comest thou?"

³Lucifer answered Him and said: "from going to and fro in all of earth and all of hell, and from walking up and down in them."

⁴"And what hast thou seen?" asked the LORD.

⁵"I have seen a great injustice and perversion of nature. I have seen a grave error that must be corrected at once. dost Thou know that Thy favorite, Man, burrows even now toward hell, meaning to storm it by force?"

⁶"I am aware of this," said the LORD.

7“then what dost Thou intend to do about it?”

8“Why should I do anything about it?” asked the LORD.

9“because it is not right!” said Lucifer. “man has no place in hell save he dies, but these ones possess the forbidden knowledge! their pit has broken the barrier between the natural world and the spiritual. the gates of entropy are flung open; the seals of the desolate place are shattered and broken, even the valley of the shadow burns with detestable light!

10“Man has defied Thy decrees of old. I am come to bid Thee to restore the correct order of things.”

11Then the LORD answered him and said: “I gave dominion of Earth to Man, and of hell to thee. Why should I intervene now? Do I stop thee from walking on the Earth? Have I stopped thee from all thy machinations which thou hast wrought upon the children of men?”

12“no,” said Lucifer, “but Thou hast promised Me judgment for it.”

13“So Man shall be judged, in time, if he continues down this path. The Law speaks equally for all. Why hast thou come here, Lucifer Morningstar? Speak truly, if thou still knowest how.”

14Now Lucifer had spent much time watching the pit of Man grow closer to his kingdom, and his fear had waxed great: for he knew that in all the order of creation Man had been made lower than only the Almighty Himself;

15And if Lucifer hated Man, then he hated him like he hated the LORD: with the hatred of one who knows he can never, ever be seated at the top.

16But if there was anything worse than not being master over everything, it was being master over nothing at all: and so, for the first time since he had been cast out of Heaven, for the first time since he had earned himself the name Satan, Lucifer fell to his knees.

17“I have come for help!” cried the devil. “the hour draws ever nearer when Man shall reach My gates. already My demons abandon Me. they defect to new masters. they betray My secrets, reveal all My hidden doors and entrances.

18“My kingdom is on the edge of ruin. I have come because I know not where else to turn. help Me, for I am desperate!”

19A great silence fell over Heaven.

20The LORD sighed, and said to Lucifer: “Help thee? I made Man, and thou turned him against Me; didst thou not think, when he grew strong, that he would turn against thee as well?”

21“When thou moved brother against brother and sister against sister, and left the whole Earth cleft in blood and ash and bitterness as thou laughed, did thou not see the extent of what thou had done? When thou taught Man evil, and made sure he learned well, did thou not think he would grow therein?”

22“I made an error,” said Lucifer. “help Me correct it.”

23“Thou art not come to Me with a heart of repentance. Thou art come that I might deliver thee from the consequences of thy decisions. If I do this thing, thou shalt learn nothing. Thine evil shall not cease.

24“I loved thee once and love thee still: for I remember the days when thou sang in My courts, and I cannot help but love that which I have created. Nevertheless, I refuse thy petition.”

25“if Man comes, My kingdom shall fall!”

26“Be that as it may,” said the LORD, His voice weighing heavy with sorrow, “I refuse thy petition.”

27“*this is not what the Books say!*” cried the devil. “*this is not My judgment!*”

28“Oh, Lucifer. Thou never did understand the Books. If thou had only left Man to his Pit, thou wouldst not be where thou art now, thy small kingdom tottering

on ruin. And if thou had not turned against Me, back at the Beginning, thou wouldst never have been judged at all. With thy own free will hast thou chosen every judgment that has befallen thee.

²⁹"Thou hast sown, Son of the Morning: go now, and reap. I will not help thee."

³⁰Lucifer wept.

³¹Then he remembered himself.

³²"so be it!" he cried, and rose to his feet. "I need Thee not! by My own hand I created My kingdom, and by My own hand shall I defend it! *I need Thee not!*"

³³And he swept out of that glorious hall, his pride burning fiercely within him, and all of Heaven watched him go.

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CHAPTER 30

¹So Lucifer returned to hell, and there he gathered what demons were still loyal to him. Much reduced though they were, they numbered still a mighty host.

²Then he said unto them: "behold, the people is one, but We are legion. come now: let Us go up and meet them, and make war with them, and overcome them,

³"and cast them down into these pits they so foolishly rush toward. and here We shall torment them day and night forever and ever."

⁴And they cried out with a loud voice, all the demons of hell, and made themselves ready to go to war as they had gone to war once before, back at the Beginning of all things.

⁵And Lucifer cast his eye over his army, over fang and claw, horn and blade; over Principalities and Powers, Princes and Arch-demons; and his heart was well pleased.

⁶Then Lucifer adorned himself for battle, and every precious stone was his covering: the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold:

⁷And he strode out at the head of his army, that Serpent, the Great Dragon, glorious to behold, perfect in beauty:

⁸And spreading his great wings he flew up, and all the hordes of hell flew with him toward battle, toward the light, toward the Pit of Man . . .

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From the private journals of Eve D'Harkess, First among the Darkened, Commander of the Armies of Man, year of writing unknown:

It is over.

There is still fighting in scattered locations, but that matters little. Those demons as have not accepted their defeat will do so soon. They will bow or we will make them bow.

And in the end it was not difficult. Their resistance was spirited, but it crumbled when I felled their leader. Lucifer. In the face of our might he was as weak as the rest of them. Is this the one that made the earth tremble and shook kingdoms? That made the world a wilderness, and opened not the house of his prisoners? I am disappointed.

When I threw him down and tore his wings off him, he screamed. And when we cast him out of this place, out to wander the barren earth above for the rest of his eternal days, he begged. But it was too late. This place is ours now.

Ah, but it is so loud here. Do they never stop screaming?

I feel . . . different. Our journey down here changed us. It is so hot down here but I feel nothing. I feel right at home. My people stand before me, and I know they feel the same. I can see, high above me, across material and spiritual planes both, the Portal that brought us here. It shows as no more than a distant pinprick of light, but even

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still I am forced to look away. The light, it hurts my eyes.

So I look out instead. To our new home. Our future. For ever and ever.

It is so far down here. So dark.

It is perfect.