

THE DEVIL'S NOCTUARY

Being

The First Song of Qayin



THE
DEVIL'S NOCTUARY

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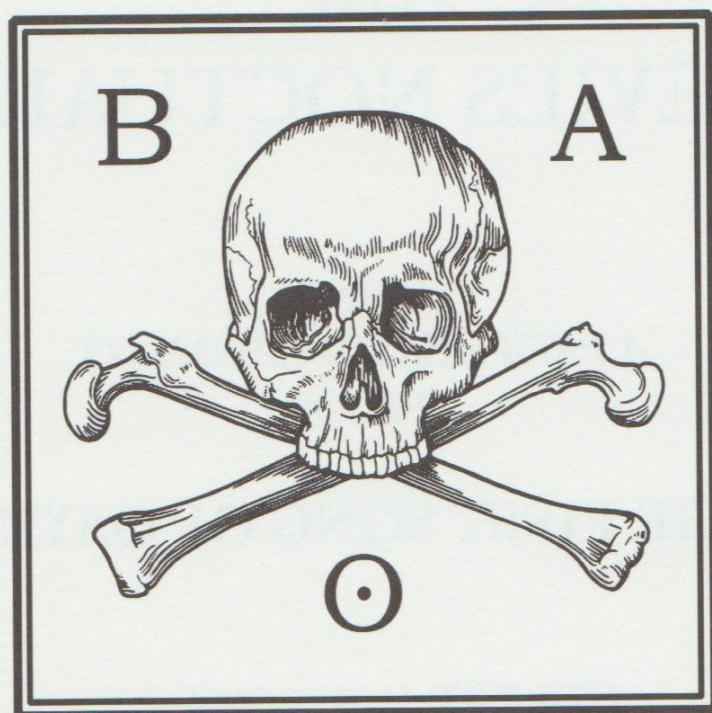
THE FIRST SONG OF QAYIN

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GAVIN W. SEMPLE*

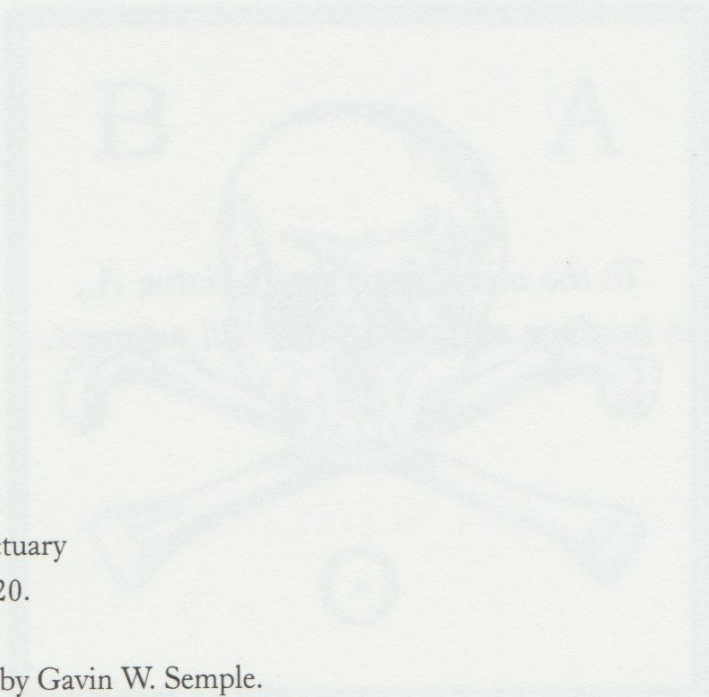
XXVII Era Dr.



ATRAMENTOUS PRESS



*To the memory of the Initiator, A.,
in homage and gratitude—till we meet...*



The Devil's Noctuary
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INTROIT

There is a certain moment, in a certain place,
When this tale may be read by a lover, to a lover.

If you cannot find that moment, read on as you will—
And if the Devil's song be not heard...

Who shall know?

The skilful conceal their designs.

PRELUDE

ONE by one they have all gone away; the cities are still and quiet, and here in the forest below the valley the old house is silent, moon's light spilling over dusty floors; labyrinth of staircases, corridors echoing—endless, empty, expectant; shuttered rooms long-abandoned, hung with faded pictures, shadows bleed from their half-closed doors.

And where among them lies the sleeper, keeping her soft vigil through the years of this longest night? Her fingers rest upon the book; take it, does she stir? *Hush now!*—do not wake her, for she dreams us, and the wind in the trees outside where the lich-birds roost, branches rap-rapping at our window.

So much is lost now—we are the last;
You and I, here we sit, together.

Close the door.

Light the lamp.

Open the book.

Remember...

THE ALLEGORY

I

TRACE the cobwebbed fractures in the mirror before you—a speaking glass that no reflection of futurity foretells; for this is the way that lies winding into darkness, through the midnights and wildnesses of the desolate heart; a rubicon, a division that none shall surpass—like Time’s river it passes, is gone without returning, and its arising shall be the *down-going* of all.

Now here is Qayin, the true enemy of man, setting his snares and baiting his traps; a hunter carrying off the Sun and Moon, with his glittering blade and burlap sack. Here nimble fingers go a-weaving his meshes, casting his lines that lure the unwary; a saboteur, shape-shifter, he flees like a shadow—with obsidian eyes surveys the hunting-grounds of Earth. Proud and rebellious in his insidious glory, he is alive and he is dead; invisible to those that have no eyes for him—*he reigns*.

Here is Qayin, the jester at the graveside; a motley mask that jibes at yawning sepulchres—giving no ear to the mutterings from those sombre vaults, he turns his nose from the exhalations of the tombs. A charmer, enchanter, pouring his intoxicated songs (*For he has many...*) into the ears of dreamers, settling his glad coins upon each unseeing eye; stealthy as a hand raised to rattle at rusty latches—dreadful as a mocking cry in the silent watches of the night; an ancient serpent weighing down the chests of sleepers—a suffocating breath to all guttering lights.

Qayin, the usurper, the up-setter; raising his cruel idols amid the ruin of temples, his vile icons upon the rood-beams of

once-holy courts. His catechism?—a litany of deceit whispered above the clamour of common-places and their hollow truths; an equivocal voice raised like a dagger's edge—against itself alone. Bestriding the straight and the devious tracks, he draws up all paths *beyond* their limits, deviating all unto his own design; a treacherous road is he to those that would follow, calling upon himself all trespass as his righteousness, all transgression as his profligate virtue.

His is the laughter of the Pious Apostate that rings out in the charnel-houses of belief.



II

A STORY I heard from the madman who used to stand in chains, crying for alms at the old city gate, who told how once, in the youth of his spirit, it was Qayin's pleasure to go out from the land of the unquiet dead—to return into his accustomed country and seek again his own dominion, called 'the Heart of All Worlds', for it could swiftly be reached from every place, in the space of a heart-beat, by a single footstep—yet it remained infinitely remote from all; and 'the Place of No Shadows', for it is shadow itself—and light enough.

It was on the day when season shudders against season—turning back and turning onwards, wheel against wheel—that Qayin awoke from his long repose to new-greening leaves and the birdsong of morning, though the sounds of night's revelries echoed still in his head—the dice scattered, cups all a-clatter, cries and turmoil—and the sour leavings of wine upon his tongue could not mask the tang of blood beneath. Rising, rubbing dreams from his eyes, he clad himself in beggar's garb, slung his short-sword from his shoulder and his few possessions in a bag at his belt, set his iron-shod staff against the road and walked a full day away from the town where he was known as an oath-breaker and a poet, where many a-one had he pleased—and where he had taught the people nothing if not to guard themselves against him and his craft.

Crossing the borderland he roved southwards through fields of ripe corn, the noonday sun reddening his hair, now and then turning his eye (*Upon whose colour no two could agree...*) towards a distant hill. Upon the road his haggard state aroused the pity of a fellow traveller, a wealthy merchant. Qayin had no use for pity, but he snatched up the golden coin cast at his feet.

On and through the gathering dusk he fared, bare feet scuffling up the fallen leaves, until his path drew him to a lonely and decayed chapel within a small graveyard atop the hill, warded at its corners by four great yews and hedged about with blackthorns and briars. Clambering over the broken gate, his shadow lengthening before him, he made his way to a standing stone that rose from the earth to half a man's height at the north-eastern corner of the chapel. There he sank down exhausted against the stone and leaned his forked staff, surveying the fields beyond the hedge as the sun's strength ebbed into the horizon far below, and the blackbird's twilight angelus pealed out in the brittle air.

It was the place appointed.

Soon he heard furtive movement nearby, and a sharp, sour scent upon the air betokened the presence of his familiar, the red hound, lurking in the dark beneath the hedgerow, greeting him with a wink and a sly smile. (*For one must act and one must witness, saith he...*) There he sat, and there he waited, as the chill top of night approached.

Dark it was, and moonless—bitter cold. Snow began to fall. After a time Qayin stood and, shivering, yawned and stretched his weary limbs; laying his hand gently upon the old stone he muttered unto it a charm of saining—a handful of crushed yew berries served as libation—then took up his sword and upon the stone began to whet its blade (*...a dagger to slay the deadliest of prey*), humming quietly as he worked. With each stroke of steel upon stone the rhythms of night arose in the rustlings of leaves, stirrings of unseen beasts; a thousand shy voices that whispered together, upon the chill wings of the wind gathering, sinister colloquy of night. High above the bell-tower the rusting weathercock groaned.

From the shadows beyond the chapel a stooping figure hobbled into view. Its aged face—etched with decrepitude and strangely familiar—lay all but invisible beneath a tattered, hooded cloak; the reek of necrosis hung upon him, and musty earth clung to the shovel which he bore. Qayin looked up from his work, and warily the two regarded one another until, at length, the stranger raised a bony hand and beckoned. Sheathing the dagger at his side, Qayin approached the other as if to pass, but the lifted shovel quickly barred his way. Then the sexton's rasping voice broke the spell of silence, and he spoke in challenge against Qayin:

Who cometh unto this threshold?—in the name of the Word, speak!
A Brother and a blind man.

A brother!—of what?
Of Art.

I know thee not. Who bade thee come here?
An angel in exile—ancient child that waxes not in wisdom.

O Wanderer, how came thee into this way?
By the hooks and the crooks, by the yea and the nay, by crooked stone stile and by gate's narrow strait; where sun never shone, where cock never crew, where feet never trod, where wind never blew; between the midnight and the dawn, the temple and the gate—thus came I unto this hallowed place.

Of thine own free will?
There is no other.

And in what light?

The light of fourteen stars, thrice-thirteen moons, two suns.

What seek thee here?

An end to this weariness; I seek the liberty of my self—imagination in freedom.

What's the tender of thine Oath?

Pressing his coin into the sexton's outstretched hand, Qayin knocked thrice his staff upon the ground, bowed silently and mockingly at the old man's feet. The gravedigger stood impassive, but his eyes glittered as in his palm he weighed the coin. 'Yonder lies the acre that is prepared for thee...' he muttered, gesturing towards a breach in the hedge, and the barren, hoary field beyond. Then he shuffled away, bidding Qayin to follow in his steps—but halted abruptly beneath a massive and sombre yew that reigned alone in the midst of that charnel-ground. In its darkling bower a single headstone mutely stood, its legend effaced by weather and by years; a freshly opened grave lay before it, while all around a shamble of mouldering bones was strewn.

Said the sexton, 'Retrace thy steps, pilgrim, for here is only Death! Fearest thou death?—who art already dead, and yet hast never become? O Qayin, thou chancer! From what proud height didst thou plummet—to sound the depths of the human abyss? How many lives hast thou lived to find thyself here, at last, for the first time—*again?* Come ye as prophet, once more a new Arcanum to decree?—O thou whose fate is nowhere limned, save upon the vast ocean's shifting hide! So now; turn back!—turn back if thou wouldst; pass onward if thou wilt! Yet, first bide a while and share a toast with him who has spent too long a day among pious folk—and *fouler* corpses...'

The old one took out a horn cup and a bottle, filled the one from the other, raised the cup in salutation and drained it at a draught. He handed both to Qayin, who did likewise. And so they continued, till the bottle ran dry.

‘My day is not yet done...’ said the bonesman, guiding his charge to the edge of that grave. Reaching down into the earth, he withdrew a dirt-rimed skull, two long-bones and arrayed them upon the snow. Said Qayin, ‘Canst tell whose plot this is...?’ (*The ancient murmured, ‘It is ever thine’*) ‘...and whose crown?’ The sexton straightened, taller now than Qayin, and grinned: ‘Dost thou pale at this sight?—but perhaps the night is cold, in truth, *I* cannot tell...’

Then Qayin began to listen, for he seemed to hear a whispering among the trees (*Back to skin, back to skin...*), shifting voices borne upon the winds’ sudden rising—and then a sound as of rushing waters *beneath his very feet*. Without warning, a stinking, ragged cere-cloth was thrown about his head, strong hands seized him fast, and he was cast headlong towards that gruesome hole.

In the strength of his fear Qayin vaulted blindly—somersaulting over the grave; and as he flew the pit beneath him roiled and roared and poured dark blood upon the land, staining the snow, blossoming like a necrous rose. Among the bones his leap ended—but at his touch they shrieked their alarm, and the chittering shadows crawled closer still (*...back to bone, back to bone...*). Tearing off the hoodwink that blinded him as he gained his feet, Qayin looked back at his adversary across the scarlet-welling torrent that divided them, and spat.

But the sexton he flourished Qayin’s coin before him, then flung it down into the bloody mire and cried: ‘Thy coinage is

surely counterfeit!—yet I shall have the toll decreed, therefore—*here renounce thy name!* Transgressing the limit of thy flesh, thou shalt become the very bridge of Mystery; unfettered, unlettered shalt make thy way, by the Sword and the Forge, by Skull, Cross and Key—unnamed and unnameable into the round, throughout the body of thy metamorphoses! But hold!—could it be?—that the ale so freely taken was in truth a *poison-draught*? Then—fool! —thy mortal course is almost run; seven steps only shalt thou take, seven steps by which to traverse thy journey's extent—and the tolling of midnight's bell shall be the measure of its final span. *Know ye the Mystery of Betrayal!* None go from me in want of care, and *none* return to crow their tale—ever true am I to the Word of my covenant: *Hele, conceal and never reveal!* Now go, and fare thee well—O Qayin that once was, and may again become—here is no place for thou *and I...*'

And the bonesward, laughing, he turned from his work; with a sweep of his cloak gathered up the leering wraiths that thronged the shadows, and dissolved into night—while the outcast stood shivering at the threshold of his winter, in the stillest hour, nameless and alone. From the distant tower midnight's first knell rang out, and the exile—he went forth.

Into the fields of Time.



THE ARCANUM

BEING

THE MYSTERY
OF
THE SWORD
AND THE FORGE

I

OF HIS SALUTATION AND SOLILOQUY

WHAT saw thee, O deceiver, in that bleak land 'neath unbounded night—that markless way where no light guides but all in azure starlight hides? Swift he bent and swift he rived an endless furrow in the whited field—his grave-caul cast upon the snow, before the stars, 'pon which to kneel. Bell, dagger, drum and cord he arrayed before him—his hand in blessing passed over these, took up the cord, and, so doing, spoke thus his prayer of sanctuary:

Upon the Path of the Eight-bladed Wheel go I,
From the Midnight to the Midnight,
In the Shadow of none but my Self—
As Exile eternal, Fugitive and Wanderer
Until I pass once more beyond the Fire.

(Here he tied a knot upon the cord, and poured his life's first breath upon it:)

Entering within the Sanctuary of the primal Initiator ✠—First-born
of Witch-blood,
Inceptor of Our noble Lineage,
Father and Companion of all who in the Circle stand;

(Tying the second knot, he poured his dying breath upon it:)

Entering within the Sanctuary of eternal Sabbat-tide ✠—
Within the soft-whispered lore of Our Edenic Conclave,
The concealèd Book of the Cunning Heart;

(Tying the last knot, he breathed the air of this very moment upon it:)

Entering within the Sanctuary of the Initiated Body of Our
Tradition ✕—

The Companie of all Blessèd and Wise,
All Treacherous and True,
Known and unknown,
Seen and unseen
Go I.

About his waist he bound the knotted cord, declaring:

By the Colbran Sword and the Graal of Venom ambrosial
May the adamantine Voidness of I be realized;
O thou Knower unknowing, thou Mover unmoving
Wherein is neither inhibition nor attachment,
identity nor otherness;
Neither cruelty nor compassion, singularity nor disunity;
Who art the Empty Quarter without name or nature—Thou
primal, self-existent Inceptor of my Will!
May I walk ever in liberty and equipoise
Throughout the pleasure-grounds and
charnel-fields of Earth,
Transgressor of every circumstance and limitation—
The perfected Vessel of the Dragon's Seed:
And the Intent of the Crooked Path radiate
Throughout the compass of Causality,
Leading all Companions upon the Path of Great Return—
Luring all existent unto the Flame in which we burn.

So saying, the emissary paused awhile, his breath chasing misty arabesques upon the night. Then, to those who had once chanced upon this Way—and by it gone into liberty—he spoke softly in soliloquy, recalling the generations of his soul:

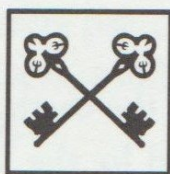
Born am I of mortal womb,
Yet blessèd with the Mark and Signs
Of a true Son of Zathara's side—
Twice-born Child of the Silence and the Void
That suckled at the Dragon's fang:
Know me, O my kindred, as

DR'KU-RUBAH-IKCCAYA

With Mind, Tongue and Hand
I make salutation and offering
In the sight of the Elder Gods,
The Eternal Watchers at the Four Ways of the World,
And the Old Ones of our immaculate Blood-line:
Clad am I in the Eight Winds of Heaven,
Shod am I with the earth of the Honey'd Isle;
Wealth and possessions have I none but
The Word, Deed and Intent of the Crooked Path
Aligned in perpetual deviation
By the Steps of my going-forth.
The Ciphers of my transcendence I conceal
Within the silent Grammarie of Flesh:
Red Dragon and Black Dragon twine upon me,
The Hand and the Eye are upon me;
The Fire descending from the Serpent's Tongue,
The Crown of Seven Stars is upon me!

I come as She who has passed through the Pyre—
The Fire of the Elder Gods is within me;
I come as He who has received the Password—
The Breath of the Elder Gods is within me.

First-born am I upon the Double-Way,
Twice two-faced Chancer
At the Cross'd Roads of all living and Dead.
I have flown upon the wings of the Night-plum'd
Carrion Bird;
I have coursed upon crimson'd claws of the wild
Cunning Hound;
I have coiled as the Red Snake
And run as the Black Boar
To reach this place at the End of All Flesh;
This Circle of the Art that heeds no Name—
Here I offer myself to the Forge of old Qayin!



II

THE SECRET FORM (GENERATION AND DOXOLOGY)

NOW, the sojourner he turned his gaze up into the fathomless sky, black mirror of his fate, smoke-wreathed and diademed where the bones of his fallen selves, ground out in the Heavens' mill, were strewn as silvery dust; caught as within a great hour-glass, they turned without rest, whirled without motion, three times three upon three. For high above the horizon of the south he beheld his emanation, a colossal form limned in seven bright stars: crucified by their lights as upon a gibbet it hung—pinioned, scourged and flayed; torn between the horses of the stellar winds, wracked upon starry wheels.

And it seemed to his eyes that seven spectral horsemen came riding out of that giant's wounded heart, harrying the night winds before them, masked as seven beasts and armed. Each bore upon its brow a jewellèd crown—each crown was a Star, and each Star a Seal. And they hastened to reclaim their thrones upon Earth, for the pilgrim he beckoned unto them.

The Signs he 'graved upon the earth, seven furrows opened to the seed of the Stars—and uttered he the Words of their calling, by the Seven Seals and their secret Names. There among the warding effigies stood he, within the cryptic concourse of his ancestry, the Heptalpha of his Zodiac, and spake:

O Seven Kings at the Tomb of mine Ancestor,
Witness my thought, my word and my deed;
Again we are met, as One to go forth—
From this Point, my way to the Forge be decreed!

Then-....., the eighth and most ancient Watcher of all, appeared unto his sight—carapace gleaming, spangled with another light and marked with a pale cross—in its net slung between the pillars of the Heavens. And from its lair in the nook of the sky-beams, the hidden place between three realms and three times, that old beast crept down and began to weave—its thread was then the weft, his spell was now the warp, writhing symmetries of another flesh spun in the web and the word—as before him the Tree of Death-in-Life, pure semblance of his Antecessor, slowly raised itself in majesty once more upon the Earth:

*Hu! Azha-Qayin! I bless Thee and I hail Thee—
Thou four-handed Lord of the Grave-mound and Forge!
Old One!—the bloodied Bone-Tree of Death Thou art,
As the great Cross-gallows 'pon the Hill of the Dead
Thou o'ershadoweth all the world's horizon!
Thy flesh, 'tis woven from the sentient silence of the Void,
Arrayed with flayed skins of mortal kind
And their meagre gods,
With the beauteous pelts of every bird and beast that lives;
Thy boughs full laden with sombre fruits—
The louring skulls of Sorcerers past;
Thy roots scourging the cavern-tombs of
Knowing Ones yet unmade—
Wherein the Corpse-child's echoing laughter
betides the moment of its wakening.
For Thy face it is a fire-blackened skull,
Death Mask of the Void and the Midnight Sun—
Cloven by the Lightning Bolt—
Whose sightless gaze none may endure;
Enhaloed by the emerald lustre of the Peacock's Eye,*

Lambent mirror of the Flame that is Thine eternal Nature.
From the Rose of Thine Heart coil forth four Briar-paths
To crown all Nature and compass the Earth—
Flow down four Edenic Rivers of Blood,
Inundating the barren corpse-fields of Belief;
Thy Phallus leaps as the Flame of the Forge
Where mettle of mortal substance is formed,
And yet all Being, annihilated, dissolves;
Above the horizon Thy left hand tolls the Passing Bell,
As Thy right hand wields the fiery Sword;
Below, Thy left hand grips the threefold Scourge of Stars,
Thy right sounds the Death-watch drum.

*Hail to Thee, our Master Qayin—
This place be hallowed in Thy Name!
Before Thee I bow upon the good earth that made me;
I adore Thee, who art the pure Flame that has raised me!*



III

OF HIS OFFERING TO THE FORGE

HIS SIGHT was loosed, and swifter than the Ice-bird's darting flight he ascended among the branches of the Tree—while yet in that very moment he descended amidst its nethermost roots, vision winging throughout the zeniths and nadirs; and he cried unto the spirits of the Great Companie, whose voices howled through the caverns of his bones, the catacombs of memory and fate:

Hail, hail ye Wychèd Folk of past, present, future and every time between!—

All ye Cunning Ones of the eternal dominions of
Sorcery and Craft,

All upon whose head and heel the hand of Initiation has
been placed—

Hear me now, and in this Arcanum hear ye the echo of
our single tongue!

Four strokes made he upon the bell to hallow the Crossroads of his
Fate; four knells the Interstice to cleave—and thus his offering dedicate:

O Azha-Qayin!—As I now stand within the Crucible of Light
That is Thy true domain of Power,
Thou dwellest in the clear insight of sorcerous mind
Unto the singularity of contemplation aligned:
As Wisdom that severs the limitless hydra-heads of Believing—
As Vision that cleaves the ever-turning skins of Seeming—
In this Arcanum we are of one taste,
One breath, one touch.
Therefore, as Initiator do I place my hands

At the head and the heel of the Existent;
With my left hand I seize the starry Crown
Of Heaven's Great Wheel;
With my right hand I reach to the deepest Abyss below the worlds;
Morning Star and Evening Star
Quicken beneath my touch,
Fox-star and Dog-star
I beckon to my embrace;
I grasp the shadowy cloak of Yesterday,
And the crimson veil of Tomorrow—
The Noontide's height and the Down-going of the Sun.
Initiate and Clay-born, Saint and Heretic,
Sage and Fool
I gather alike,
All that is conceived of Nature and Mind I hold—
The unbounded horizon of Existence:
From the Alpha to the Omega,
From the First-born to the Last-to-die,
From the infinite Voidness of Time-before-Time
To *now*!

Like a thunderclap his hands he brought together, and of an instant all things, all perceiving became as one fragile moment that glittered and spun, a flicker of moth-wings between his hands—pristine, irreducible—and was gone.

Turned he his hands and pressed them back-to-back as the Tree of Flesh it began to burn—tiny flames licked along its branches, sparks of azure blue crackled among its leaves; and the Tree of Bone it began to blaze, while the wind rose high to feed the flames:

All that lies between these hands
I claim for Thee, O Qayin—
Ensorcelled as the Sentient Wheel, totality of this 'I':
All that lies between these hands I offer to Thy Flame—
This All-Existent Truth I cast to the vortex of the Lie!

Upon the breath of these words such a torrent of draconic fire erupted that the Tree it roared in a vast conflagration, consuming itself (*for the poison gripped him fiercely now*); ONE he was with the fire. As the ninth stroke of midnight rang out he beat upon his drum and began to dance, madly *backwards* through the heart of the fire, and as he leaped he laughed—and sang his joy and his terror unto the Spirit of the Forge.



IV

THE HAMMER'S SONG

LET the flame wax strong 'til the blaze leap high
From this offering I have made;
For I bid Thee now, O Tubalo—
Set thine Hand to forge the Blade!
Let the bellows-breath of the Ancient Winds
Blow hard upon the fire,
And raze to ash the myriad worlds
That writhe within the Pyre!

'Neath clay-born flesh and clay-bound mind
The Iron Bone lay concealed,
Yet now 'midst the conflagration of all
The seed of the Sword is revealed!
As the mote breeds the Nail, and the Nail flashes red,
Illusion's divider is born; for this Blade of Black Iron
Doth outshine the White Sun,
That out from Qayin's furnace is drawn!

And now on the Anvil the Hammer sings loud,
Held firm by the hand of the Lord;
Struck as the death-knell of night's darkest heart,
To prove and temper the Sword;
Quenched in the Chalice of Liliya's sweet Blood
That girds the Circle about,
Slaked in the Scarlet Ocean's full flood—
Yet its Fire will never go out!
*Born of the One Star in Hearth and in Heart
Is the Fire that will never go out!*

V
OF HIS SACRIFICE

ARISING 'midst that primordial inferno, he watched his own mortal flesh and bones dissolve as though in a molten sea—and there before his startled eyes a flame-wreathed sword the renegade son escried, gripped in the hands of the progenitor of his kind—and he received it, saying:

Given from Thine own hand in Cunning, O Azha-Qayin,
Thy Colbran Blade;
This Dragon's fang that opens the all-saying Mouth
of Oracular Void;
Reaching forth this hand in Pleasure I embrace the
refulgent Flame
Of this starry Plough that turns red earth
To open the Double-Way of Going-forth,
And of Great Return.
Here uniting hand and hand upon the Ever-turning Blade,
As upon the Circle's Heart,
I bind and offer the twain deviations of the Crooked Path:
O Zathara, O Qayin, all-puissant King and Queen!
Ye are Emptiness and Ecstasy,
Eternal Pleasure, Cunning Means!

Strike true, Ye powers of the Elder Gods—
Transpierce this heart of I!
Let the Iconostasis of Emptiness sunder and ignite
As swift as silk cast upon the burning Blade!

So spake he, and, bereft of hope or fear, deep into him he drove the blade—for the hunter and the quarry were now become as one and he knew *no difference*. He cut from the skin and into the flesh; he cut from the flesh and into the nerve; he cut from the nerve and into the bone; he cut from the bone and into the marrow—into the heart and into the whole. And the drum of his heart beat out its paeon as he raised it high on the point of the Sword, all-offering unto the Star of his emergence. Joyfully his blood leapt out, four rivers that flowed to the quarters of limitless Time as he threw off his womb-born coil; where flesh had been now blazed the measureless Sword of stainless light, inundating the midnight skies—sweeping unto every Aeon and Aethyr.

And above him the Stars faltered in their courses and like broken birds were *cast down*; no speck of light remained upon the black, black vault of Heaven's dome—but alone the mighty Dragon-star, imperishable watch-fire of aeons incalculable, blazed its portent upon the face of illimitable Night. Then its solitary, unwinking eye *spewed forth* in fulguration—and coupled with the fount of flames that raged throughout the Circle; below him Earth shuddered and groaned in its agony as the final knell tolled out. Seven times that inferno rolled, all-consuming, to the edges of the world and seven times returned—until at last the frost began to retreat, unveiling once more the naked land.

In the climax of his vision was his prophecy fulfilled, the ancient covenant renewed—from his own lips came the voice of his one true love, that whispered unto him:

VI

HIS TRANSLATION AND EPIPHANY

PRIMORDIUM of the Wheel of Eight Blades am I, True
Midnight's endless knell am I—
The Shadow of all living and dead
Is mine own;
As Watcher in silence,
Indweller of Voidness—
The perfect stillness at the Heart of all
Am I.

Mine emanation is the secret Light of the Wise;
In the lightning-flash 'twixt Hand and Hand I abide,
As within the continuity of the Great Bloodline;
In the body of Initiatrix-Initiator I hide—
Protector and Watcher,
Companion and Lover
Of all who in the ancient Circle stand,
Am I.

Eternal Sabbat-tide am I—
In the echo of my silence is heard the
soft-whispered Word
Of the Sacred and Most Excellent Lore;
Mine incarnation is the ever-changing form
of the Round Dance—
The motions of mind, tongue and quill
In the service of the Proud Art
Am I.

Hidden Book of Mystery am I—
Scribed in the living flesh of all Blessèd and Wise—
The Treacherous and True;
The Cipher that marks the hooks and crooks
Of the devious Dragon Road am I,
Leading all Wayfarers, Outcasts and Exiles
To their birth-place and their burial-ground
In this Place that is not a place,
On this Day that is not a day:
May all who walk the wychèd Path of Return
Attain their destination—
So shall this Blessing forever be!

Arising into the body of his resurrection, child unbegotten, he seized the flickering light from the embers of the pyre and with it set a final seal upon his brow, gilding its radiance. And he answered:

Behold, O Beloved—the First-flesh of Witchblood,
Born of the Fire that is kindled from dead ashes:
Ancient witness of First Dawn.

From out this place of sacred Tryst and Treachery
I turn, and turn my step again;
To wander, bourneless—the masked Heresiarch
Guizing throughout all the manifold worlds
Of the once-born, the Forgotten,
The Immortal and the Dead.
Upon this Crooked Way may the great bell of Heaven
Resound with my silence,
And the ringing laughter of the Pious Apostate
Be the sole offering of my prayer:

*Let there be no altar I shall not upturn,
No holy book I shall not burn!
For I am the Sword and I am the Flame—
The Flesh and the Bone of Azha-Qayin!*

Then Qayin pressed his hands upon the soft, warm earth beneath him, and he gazed slowly about, from horizon to horizon, at the new-greening land of his kingdom. In a world become the vast mirror of his ecstasy he heard the bright larksong that heralds the dawning, and he *smiled* into his own light.



THUS did Qayin himself *himself* on that day bury; did heap up worthy offerings and symbols upon his altar-tomb, wherewith to blind and bind the faithful—and did seal its vault with a massive stone upon which these words were graven. So none should know or understand—that the tomb of Qayin lieth *empty*.

And many a devious way he trod, and many a-one did he pleasure, as many a pact did he make and break through deaths and births without measure.

Before the day of his final death (*say the Wise*)—when his bones were divided, concealed and adored in the abodes of his descendants—a refuge in the wilderness Qayin established. Some tell of a paradaisal garden, some of a fortress citadel—while others believe it yet broods, dominion of dreaming solitude, silent and still, where the earth meets the sky, where the midnight meets the dawn.

Who shall rove to find it?—and who of those return?

VII

THE EPISTLE TO HIS BELIEVERS

THE MADMAN paused and wiped away the tears as they flowed down from his eyes; alone we stood amid the tumult of the city crowd—for him they had long since ceased to see. Again the wizened hand reached out and seized the coin I gave. Then, his laughter gone, he began to rage and shook the chains that weighed his haggard frame—he raised his face to the reddening sky and he aloud began to cry:

Turn, turn, O seasons of my heart,
Reel through the Circle's endless round;
Where is the Sign that should still the Great Wheel?
The Word ever sought...was it *ne'er* to be found?

Long years have ye its first Letter besought
Through the leaves of arcana no scholar would dare;
In the cracks of thine own skull, the tracks of the birds:
Turn round—and behold!—for the Cipher is *there*!

Now thy mirror of mortal majesty lies crack'd;
The coin spins, dice scatter—what choice then remains
Between love and strife in this insensate world
Of usury, cruelty, dishonour and pain?

Yet hearken!—the prophecy of elder Blood
Mutters deep within the living flesh of thee!
When the call goes forth from the Thorn-ring'd Heath
Shall Qayin's children return its antiphony?

And shall the giant limbs of thine Antecessor
From bondage unfold to ensorcel the Earth?
O ye unrealised Gods!—sons and daughters of sorrow—
Soon come, *soon come* the hour of thy birth!

For *their* day has flown—the proud effigies of old
Have sunk with the sun, and shall *never* arise;
While long, long a night have ye bided in hunger,
Thy jewell'd Truth near lost 'neath a midden of lies!

Lo'! the Black Sun ignites in the daystar's abode—
Let his tapestries of Shadow begin to unfurl!—
Illumines a dreamer cast up on the sands;
A clownish sage, drowned as he swam for the Pearl.

O knew ye the Moth that stalked in the hive—
A funeral masque hid behind his fair brow?
Dusky wings dusting sweet somnolent song;
Whence came he, what found he—and where lies he now?

And I?—witness and ward stand here day after day
To point the way out through the wide open gate;
But the guards there are armed—they cannot be bought,
And day after day *none* have I seen escape!

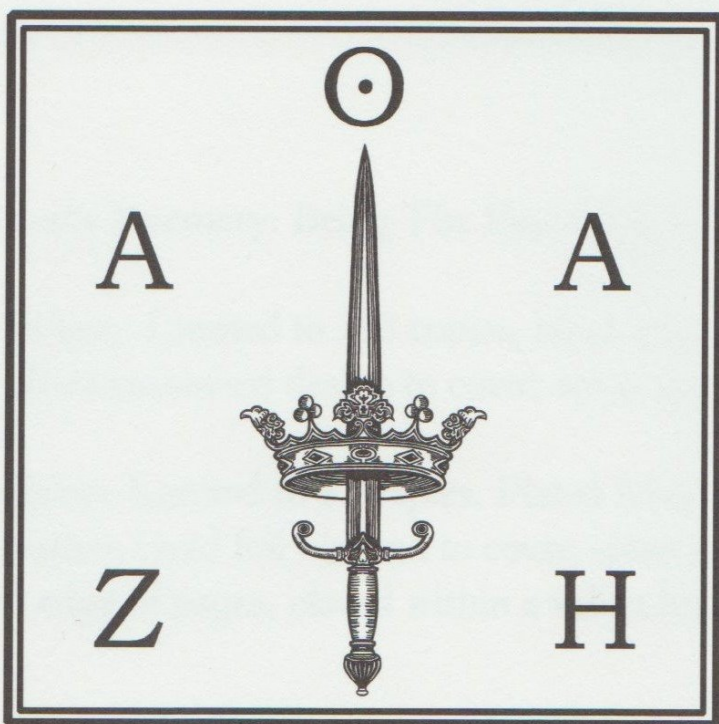
WITH solemn air he regarded his iron fetters, sighed wearily and passed a hand across his face; but then he fixed me with a steady gaze:

Now my riddles, my sorrows, my sufferance are done,
And with silence
The First Song of Qayin—
Is *begun*...

THE OLD ONE pressed a finger to his lips, as in my hands he placed a small and antique book; he whispered, '*Take this Key now—hele it well; pass it on, but never tell...*'

At once he turned, and wildly he plunged headlong into the seething city crowd—though I reached to stay him, who slipped through my fingers like sand. A cry went up, the sentinels began to run and were swift upon him; cut down beneath their flailing swords and fists he fell—and the mob closed in, till I saw his worn and gentle face no more.

And grasping his book I passed unchallenged through the gate, out of the land of the unquiet dead—upon the twilit road to my accustomed country.



The Devil's Noctuary: Being The First Song of Qayin.

Standard edition: Limited to 333 copies, black buckram cover with silver embossed design to cover, spine and rear.

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