

History.

The word is rich with meaning. It implies a factual journey into the past. History has been etched onto clay tablets, written on papyrus scrolls, printed in arcane books or passed through the oral tales of countless generations of Mankind. All of these accounts, whether spoken or written, are taught to be true stories of real events — though the memories of such have long since been blurred by the passage of time.

Often there is precious little hard data to confirm that the events in an old tale actually took place. In fact, much of what is now accepted as truth about ancient history is really just educated guesses made by well-intentioned historians trying to decipher the secrets of the past. Archaeologists can piece together an ancient vase from many pottery shards uncovered in their diggings. Historical scholars also do similar reconstruction. They study fragments of narratives uncovered in ancient scrolls, tablets and books from all over the world. These bits and shards of legendary events are then assembled into a mosaic that is supposed to give us a glimpse of the way things once were.

If, over time, a majority of the scholars studying these reconstructive interpretations of ancient days come to agree on the ideas offered in these narratives, the theories are accepted as fact. There is no way of confirming or denying these interpretations without new eyewitnesses or archaeological evidence. Accepting the annals of history is a leap of faith. History is a chronicle

that we keep in our mind's eye. It is something offered to us by our ancestors to believe in. History gives us comfort that we know who we are, what we have been and the confidence that we understand how our future might unfold.

It is also a warning from the past ... these are the things that Mankind must never forget.

This, of course, begs the question: Why would Mankind wish to forget critical events that helped forge its destiny? Why would we not want to collectively remember everything which made us what we have become? Because quite arrogantly, human beings believe themselves to be the most superior creature that ever walked the Earth. Mankind has grown to assume that all other living creatures exist to only serve our needs in the quest for survival and dominance. And it is from this self-centered ideology that Man continues to fan the flames of his own self-importance.

But sometimes, enlightened people ask themselves in a hushed whisper ... "Where did we really come from?"

Are the things we are told to accept as facts really true? Do we have an origin that has been kept secret from us? What if Man has not always been the most superior creature on Earth? What if Man learned from observing and emulating other beings? And what if one of those creatures was instrumental in setting Man on his quest to rule over everything he sees?

If that were true, wouldn't those memories need to be hidden? Forgotten? Obliterated? What if there was a need to have actual events of the past erased from Man's memories completely? The annals of Mankind's history would need to be cleverly rewritten. Is it possible that the so-called truths revealed in human history books are actually well-constructed fictions manufactured to hide Mankind's actual origins?

What sort of magnificent creature could put such fear into the hearts of all Men that they were obligated to construct fictional narratives about their own past?

Dragons.

It was the Dragons who crawled upon the Earth before the dawn of Man. The Dragons who evolved into countless shapes and sizes.

It was the Dragons who made the ground shake when they walked upon it. And it was the Dragons whose glorious legend has been blanced by the quivering human hand.

The Dragons were Earth's first dominant life form; humans were mere fodder on the food chain.

While Man roamed in small packs, foraging for whatever would fill their empty bellies, the Dragons organized the Earth's first society,

The Dragons were the first to fly, while humans could only watch in wonder from the ground.

And most important of all, the Dragons were the first creatures to ever speak aloud and communicate with each other, through a combination of

evolution and spectacular mysticism. And the Dragons were the first to record language in written form in their long-lost scriptures.

In the beginning, from out of the void, came the first Dragon.

And then another.

And another. Until the lands were scattered with a million shadows from the great beasts.

Each Dragon pursued its own life and happiness as a free creature who roamed the four corners of the world at will. They learned to fend for themselves and each other. Over time, they realized it was their destiny to be good guardians of this paradise called Earth. The Dragons lived well and were never hungry. They dwelled in deep caves, thick forests and lush savannahs.

As the Dragons prospered, there grew within their population a desire to remember all their accomplishments. Over the course of many evolutionary years, the Dragons learned the basic rudiments of speech, writing and language. But it was the magic spell of a Dragon priestess that harnessed the free-floating language spells and encapsulated them in a holy chalice in the great city of Dragon culture. The priestess channeled the magic of language to all Dragonkind. Once harnessed, Dragons recognized that speech was an enormous gift and would be their salvation for eons to come. With language came knowledge. And with speech and language also came the gift of the written word, allowed them to not only memorialize knowledge but to distribute it to each other easily.

Over time it was decided that there was a need for a societal structure that would allow Dragons

to share information and discoveries, settle disagreements peacefully and, most importantly perhaps, bestow upon future generations all the accumulated knowledge of Dragonkind. It was desired that future generations of Dragons would have the skills required to survive all challenges. And so it came to be that one among them emerged as the Dragon who could best guide and lead them toward this goal.

This enlightened Dragon was anointed King Draako. He governed from the noble city that was the fountain of all Dragon culture. He kept peace among all the Dragons, even as their population increased and the dominion of one group splintered into a dozen others.

As King Draako nurtured his society of intelligent scaled creatures, he knew with the passage of time, one day he would pass from the realm of the living. Even though he recognized that he should live for many more centuries, King Draako knew he would have to give strong consideration to the notion of his own death and what would happen after his passing. It was from these contemplations — and perhaps in partnership with the great priestess, though this isn't known for sure -- that his greatest joy and pride came into the world. In the setting of a bright sun, under the cool breeze of the giant evergreens came forth his noble son, known simply as Prince of the Realm.

The Prince carefully observed how his father governed the Golden Age of Dragons and yearned for his opportunity to someday follow in his father's footsteps.

Yet, as seems to happen time and again with all great cultures, a cold wind blew across the Dragons' peaceful existence. A dark seed was planted;

one that quickly sprouted in the hearts and minds of many Dragons. Was a ruler of Dragon-kind really necessary? That seed spread like wildfire among those jealous of Draako's power. Among these Dragons it was said all should be equal with none better than any other.

And though the King himself agreed with that basic philosophy, he knew that in order for so vast a society to sustain itself it needed strong leadership. But alas, that mattered not to those who were jealous or felt threatened by the authority of King Draako. Thus began the strife and conflicts between the many splintered clans. Slowly a tempest began and with it came cataclysmic conflict. The origins of this conflict and the perpetrators of it have long since been lost in the shroud of the Dragons' own history. All that is known from those times is what was recorded in the ancient tales and poems of the early civilizations of Man who observed these events with the viewpoint of the ignorant outsider looking in.

It was Man who had ventured into the lives of the Dragons. The Dragons, preoccupied with their own struggles and difficulties, failed to comprehend the true nature of Men, who they considered barbaric savages. When Mankind was still in its infancy, rough and unrefined, Men looked up to the sky and beheld a greater power than their own — the graceful flying Dragons, soaring in the heavens scarcely paying attention to the emerging culture beneath them. So clever Man, born to deceive and covet, observed the great Dragons from afar waiting for any opportunity to take advantage of the chaos created by the gathering storm of conflict. Perhaps those sly Men knew this strife would offer them a chance to exploit it; maybe they even dreamed that this would allow them to take charge of the riches of the planet.

Those same humans, living in squalor outside the walls of the great Dragon cities, also evolved throughout the years. They developed a rough nomadic hunting culture based on survival and with it the basic concepts of language, though in reality it was merely a system of hoots and hand signs.

Man looked at the dominant Dragons and knew that speech would set him free.

From their humble places they waited and watched the Dragons slowly destroy and dismantle their great civilization, all the traditions and laws the Dragons had cherished. Then, at a critical moment, the Men took action.

Like a thief in the night, one brave Man — his name, if he had one, long since disappeared like so many grains of sand — crept into the great city to steal the holy chalice and with it the Dragons' gift of speech.

In the end, it was that simple but bold act of thievery which tipped the balance of power, initiating a transition from the Age of Dragons to the Age of Man.

Now that the previously ape-like Men could speak and communicate their plans of domination, now that they had stolen the precious gift of language, their cause swept across the planet as they organized into powerful forces of destruction and annihilation. Too late, the feuding Dragon factions realized that men had crossed a threshold of power that threatened the Dragons' assumptions of natural superiority.

This astounding shift in the balance of power between Man and Dragon led to increased

conflict between competing factions and clans within the Royal Court of the priestess Dragons. At the center of all the desperate activity was the question of the security of the Dragons' great city — the cultural center of all Dragonkind's accomplishments. Argument raged over which faction had failed to defend the security of their most sacred secrets. After all, hadn't a human gained entry and stolen the Dragons' most valuable possession? Frenzied, desperate debates took place as to how to best organize themselves against the gathering threat of humankind.

Because King Draako had ruled over a Golden Age of peace and prosperity, cynical dissidents from the feuding hierarchies argued that Draako wasn't strong enough to lead the Dragons into the coming war against the armies of Man. There were increasing challenges to King Draako's leadership and his ability to lead them in the most important struggle in the entire history of Dragonkind.

What happened in these critical years is still considered a great mystery. Even many years after their overwhelming victory, the tales Men tell of the end of King Draako's reign are still spoken in hushed whispers. Some tales say there was a civil war among the Dragons' varying dissident groups. Other tales describe a terrible natural disaster unlike any ever seen before. A combination of typhoons, floods and earthquakes scoured the land of both Man and Dragon and for a time all was silent.

This much is known for certain: The great city — the center of all of Dragon society, law, religion and culture -- was utterly destroyed and King Draako, the greatest Dragon of all time, died.

The aftermath of this great cataclysm led to a time of chaos and uncertainty. Caught in the midst of all this sorrow was the final fate of the King's son. Even to this day it is not known what happened to the one true heir, the Prince of the Realm.

Had he been slain?

Was he kidnapped?

Or did he perish in the great disaster like thousands of others?

All that's known for sure is the Prince was never seen again.

Whatever the actual events were, the demise of King Draako's reign was forgotten, as the few remaining Dragons lost their ability to speak with one another. The cataclysm which destroyed Draako's kingdom scattered the surviving clans to the four corners of the Earth.

No longer civilized and robbed of the ability to speak, the remaining Dragons seemed to become wild creatures. Though still intelligent, the surviving Dragons instead learned to communicate on a limited level through a series of grunts, growls, roars, wordless songs, and other signs and signals. Over many years, the survivors slowly created small fellowships based on common interests. All of this was hidden from the many following generations of Man. "Dragons are savage beasts," the conquering humans said. As time went by, a sort of uneasy co-existence existed between the multitudes of humanity and the small hidden population of the emerging Dragon Clans.

Over the course of years, seething with resent-

ment in their perpetual state of exile, many of the once-dominant Dragons lived only to plunder and create terror. However, other clans were able to retain fragmentary knowledge of the magic, traditions and customs rescued from the chaos of the years after the fall of King Draako. Some clans were even content to quietly contemplate life as they disciplined themselves to never interact with other Dragons or Mankind again. Another group of Dragons struggled to merely survive in regions that were being encroached upon by the increasing civilization of Mankind as humans spread out over all of the world, plundering its wealth and resources.

Many millennia passed, and some humans still told tales of King Draako and his enlightened kingdom. Although humans accepted the idea that Dragons existed in remote places and wilderness, most people lived their entire lives without ever actually seeing a Dragon. And it was also a common belief that Dragons were simply big lumbering beasts of little or no intelligence. They were seen as a plague or pestilence in Man's continued expansion on Earth. Virtually no one believed that Dragons had ever possessed intelligence or the ability to speak, for those were now exclusive human traits.

Now Men consider tales of talking Dragons to be fantastic fables suited for young children to be told around campfires or at bedtime; moral parables of ancient times when brave Men enslaved by Dragons were able to liberate themselves from the bondage of their evil oppressors. These stories told wild tales of a time of great strife when Men were able to make their stand and overcome every savagery the horrible Dragons mounted against them.

But a few of the old tales contained a haunting

prophecy from the fall of Draako's kingdom. They claimed the Prince of the Realm had not died but would return someday to claim his father's throne. He would teach the Dragons to speak again and reunite the clans into one great nation of Dragons, re-establishing Dragon superiority over all of Mankind.

Men who speak this prophecy are severely punished. It is not in Man's nature to allow its own to spread the heinous lie that Mankind may not be God's chosen ones. To most of humanity, these whispers of some kind of prophecy are just foolish talk of the elders; silly myths and legends that are best suited for children and simpletons. Dragons are what they are and nothing more. Why else would it be that the odd time when a Dragon encroaches upon a village or farm, somehow it is always vanquished? That is why Dragons now keep to themselves, remaining in the shadows. From the safe bosom of Man's existence all is as it should be.

Until recently.

It seems that Man's self-perceptions are about to be shattered. Their strong grip on the world may now face its greatest challenge.

Why?

Because what started as a lone whisper in a remote part of the wilderness is gaining strength and momentum. Tales from all corners of the world are feeding the rumors that an inexplicable close encounter has occurred.

A man and a dragon.

Somewhere. Someplace.

Only this time something is horribly wrong.

A Dragon spoke. It uttered words. Human words.

A prophecy only whispered of in back rooms — the mystery of the intelligent, speaking Dragon come forth to claim what's rightfully his — appears to be coming true.

Can it be?

Is it possible after all this time that he lives?

That he didn't perish?

Could it be true that, after such a long wait, the Prince has returned to reclaim his throne and restore the Dragon kingdom long since lost? Wanting to take back all that was stolen from his kind by the humans?

For the ultimate survival of both Man and Dragons, a search must begin to see if there is any truth to these rumors. Both humans and many Dragons have a vested interest in seeing that the hidden legend of the Great Prince stays submerged in darkness, buried away where it can never affect their lives.

And thus begins ... the Quest for the Lost King.