

SUMMARY / SYNOPSIS

Codex of Vodem

Long ago the world of Vodem was teeming with magic, however in an unprecedented turn of events an otherwise ordinary sorceress became the conduit for the abundant arcane energy that the world was brimming with. Soon enough she went mad; voices clawed at her mind, visions fueled her paranoia, and eventually she snapped. By harnessing the raw arcane energy, she had at her disposal she conquered everything in her path. Turmoil and strife were all that she left in her wake. Anybody noble or foolish enough to stand against her was ruthlessly dispatched. Her raw arcane prowess made her unstoppable. She would eventually gain the moniker, *The Matriarch of Sin*, and her reign over Vodem was cruel and merciless. Rumor has it even the Old Gods of Vodem were incapable of defeating her, whether it was a refusal to cooperate among each other or that the Matriarch of Sin was too powerful is unknown.

As time went on the Matriarch grew more paranoid, and as a result even more twisted and wicked. Many rebellions failed against her which only culminated in those living under her tyranny bearing harsher conditions. With each rebellion extinguished two more ignited as the embers of hope itself was never suffocated. A small coalition consisting of four brave warriors, later to be known as, *Toa*, established contact with the Greater Gods of Vodem - also known as the *Masked Gods*. The apex of divinity - the Masked Gods were responsible for the four divine elements that constitute the world: Life & Death and

Motion & Entropy. Unbeknownst to the Toa, the Masked Gods were in constant conflict with one another, until the God of Life combined them into two bodies, and now they must come into a full agreeance before taking any action. Despite the overwhelming odds the Toa were able to strike a deal with the Masked Gods. Thusly the Toa formed the *Brotherhood of the Mask* and were bestowed with the divine masks themselves. With the masks in their arsenal, they clashed with the Matriarch of Sin in one final effort to free Vodem from her grasp.

The battle between the Toa and Matriarch was fierce, and it raged on for days. The Toa and a few brave souls that fought with them under the banner of the Brotherhood of the Mask were outnumbered greatly by the legion of sycophants and slaves that fought for the Matriarch. Ultimately the Toa and the Brotherhood prevailed, but it was not without incident. Before her death the Matriarch had one final trick up her sleeve. Her penultimate act was to siphon all the magic from the world and for it to die alongside her. As her corpse fell to the floor so did the era of wizards, warlocks and witches.

To the best of their capabilities the Toa attempted to use their masks to undo what the Matriarch had done. Their nearly fruitless effort failed to restore magic as it once was, but the Toa did manage to pave the path forward for the following generations to come. The results of their attempted arcane restoration resulted in the manifestation of hundreds if not thousands

of new masks scattering throughout the world; some with shared magical properties, but often or not most with their own unique ability. Another curious oddity that started after the Matriarch's downfall was that most sentient races on Vodem acquired some sort of minute intrinsic magical ability that each member has. While in no way game changing, there's still lies a shred of hope for magic to return once again to the world.

In current times, the Brotherhood of the Mask has become a powerhouse paramilitary religion with devout followers. They preach sermons telling the tales of the great and noble Toa who slayed the Matriarch and saved the world; all while simultaneously persecuting followers of the Old Gods, whom they deem unworthy of worship. The Brotherhood also offers a bounty for any masks one may come across. Those who dare defy the Brotherhood and harness the power of a mask for themselves will find themselves deemed an outlaw and be hunted by the formidable paladins that serve under the Brotherhood. Those captured by the paladins if not killed may find themselves in the frigid prison complex, *Perdition*. Aside from persecuting other religions and hunting stray masks the Brotherhood is also sworn to protect the *Aetherites*: Nobles descended from the mighty Toa who live a lavish life high above on the floating island of *Paradise*. Gluttonous, hedonistic, and selfish as they may be, the Brotherhood has still sworn to protect the Aetherites and bend their knees to their whims. The Aetherites are funded by taxed gold by kingdoms that ally with the Brotherhood; presumably if the denizens knew they were funding those who deem them as lower lifeforms civil unrest would be certain.

In other events around Vodem a mysterious cult has been growing in numbers; interestingly enough, they have not yet piqued the interest of the Brotherhood. The *Cult of the Claw* remains as an enigma, and those who look too far into them end up vanishing. In the Crescent Desert the kingdom of Azeem is recovering after an attempted coup by the Grand Vizier. During the conflict it's rumored that the Sun Goddess fell in battle and left a scar on the world itself. On the high seas, the mighty Surge Riders from Storm Coast City have reports that many different pirate fleets are vying for power on the Pirate Island, *Rumhaven*. It can be presumed that competition is tight due to the mysterious fog surrounding the rest of the world. The seas which were once open and free have now been shrouded in danger, trapping those who lived by the sea like rats. Nobody knows what lies beyond the veil of fog that engulfs the world now, but those foolish enough to venture forth never return.