

Greetings:

My name is Alexander Storm. Depending on the manner of consociate you aspire to surround yourself with, you may have caught whispers of my name. I write to you now under the direst of circumstances; a tale whose very existence demands telling. I shall be brief and concise with the confidence your interests will be piqued sufficiently to mandate you delve further into the manuscript that sits completed before me.

A short time ago, a small contingent of handpicked individuals, each unique of their own accord, along with myself and a few of my regulars, embarked on a quest that culminated in an epic battle between good and evil. Allow me to lay some foundation so that context may be illuminated. Eons ago, in the Nile Valley, Egyptian priests versed in the murkier waters of magic, drafted upon a reed-pressed papyrus a compendium commonly referred to as The Book of Gates. This document contained spells, which once invoked, cast open portals through the twelve hours of the night. A literal, metaphysical passageway that spirals directly to an open door into the underworld. Now let me stop you as you scoff and before you drop this letter to your desk, I pray you entertain my words a moment longer. Uninvited intrusions of a skeptical nature are by no means acceptable to myself, and in turn I would in no way presume to plague your precious time with banter of demons and darkness. That is, of course, unless the veracity of the mind-bending tale could be attested to of my own accord. A narrative that speaks to the shredding of the accursed papyrus into twelve fragments and the subsequent scattering of the vestiges about the globe. Secreted in the recesses of historically noteworthy archaeological settings, the only guide to their sanctum sanctorum being a wretched stanza of riddles.

These apocalyptic riddles, having resurfaced, guided the footpaths of both my esteemed brethren and I, as well as a duo of nefarious demons, Moloch and Naamah. Moloch, a regal knight of Hell, snaked side-by-side with the seductive succubus Naamah, tempting the fates of man, seemingly always a step ahead of my band of neophyte heroes. Our journey circumnavigated the globe and commanded us to the resplendent ancient ruins of Egypt, China, South America, Jordan and Cambodia to name a few. Chasing down the veiled keys, crafted with such ingenuity as to rival the ancient Sumer riddle, we sparred with all manner of demon and denizen. The legions of Moloch and Naamah oft ahead and to the rear, always the wolves at the door, dead set on freeing the Mephistophelian forces of Hell. Eluding our demonic counterparts frequently proved trifle as compared to the eldritch Sabaoth guarding the archaic fragments concealed by the passing of time in their haunted sepulchers. A parry of wits ensued on every level, and my odd-fellow assemblage of talent quickly assimilated to the task. It would be a dereliction of intent should I not demand a halt to your mind reeling absorption of my words, and bring to light the ultimate competence of my chosen auxiliary convocation. My *team*, if you will, was comprised of a master researcher accompanied by her inseparable valiant modern-day knight, a technological guru, a failed priest turned exorcist and his fledgling love, a budding psychic superpower, and a rugged homicide detective in respite as a prosthetist treasure hunter. Together we hugged the outer edges of our sanity and raced towards the final conflict in the darkest battle of our time. I fear I must pause now, having proffered to much insight perhaps, quelling my ultimate intent to do no more than dangle the prize above your thirsting mind. My purpose was to simply entice your appetite for the final course and I pray I have accomplished the same.

I would be remiss in my duties if I were not to mention my amanuensis, Anthony DiPaolo, whose tireless efforts during our lengthy sessions marked by the malodorousness of oak laden bourbon, infused with a swirling mist of Turkish enthused smoke, yielded the exciting, and more importantly, cohesive accounting I offer to you for publication. In furtherance of the scribe's recognition, I must also communicate to you certain concerns, seemingly trivial in nature, which he has laboriously stressed must be present in any correspondence to prospective publishing houses. To that end, *The Dragon Storm: Gates*, as we have coined it, is comprised of 192,486 masterfully crafted words. It is the alpha venture of what I anticipate will be a series of works. Mr. DiPaolo, having aspired to become one of my closest confidants, is now privy to a seemingly endless trough of fodder to which he gorges himself on vivaciously any chance he gets. If my estimates are not inaccurate, an event which rarely occurs, I would surmise he is nearing the *milieu* of our second collaboration. I can also safely inform you that we have outlined no fewer than thirteen of my journeys into the supernatural abyss. My proficient litterateur, being no stranger to capitalist endeavors, felt it poignant to mention the merchandising and marketability of our stories and characters; as well as the notion that his writing style could translate into visual media quite effortlessly. To that visual end, and seemingly having escaped my associate's litany of reminders, I would like to note that we have not only commissioned the talents of an illustrator to further enhance the reader's experience, but have also constructed a web of internet-based vehicles linked to the text.

Wishing to inhabit no more of your time on introductions, I shall take my leave with the confidence that, at the very least, curiosity tugs upon your synapses, begging you to delve further into our tale. I thank you for your time and considerations, and I look forward to the opportunity, should it

present itself, to supply your capable hands with the full manuscript.
Until such time I remain ...

In Sincere Appreciation,

Alexander Storm

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P.S. Due to my extensive travels abroad, please be so kind as to address
all communications to:

Anthony DiPaolo
1130 N Broadway, Suite 220, Massapequa, NY 11758
(516) 927-8040
ADiPaolo@TheDragonStorm.com