

## LAURA WALSH - PROSE SAMPLE

The following article is an excerpt from the fictional "History of the Seleucarian Empire, Part III" from the MUD Achaea: Dreams of Divine Lands. I wrote approximately half the material (including this piece) and edited the full document prior to release. The history can be found in full here: <https://www.achaea.com/history/fall-of-seleucar/>

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### Deluge, by Thoris of Besulem

*[Editor's Note: The dreamseer Thoris of Besulem was better known to his contemporaries as an early advisor to Emperor Polymedes, though by that time the practise of keeping dream clerics at court was upheld more out of custom than any desire for advice on the part of the monarchy. Less than a decade into the young emperor's reign, however, Thoris departed the imperial city and spent the remainder of his life in seclusion. It is theorised that he received prophetic dreams of the impending fall of the empire; other scholars assert that any perceptive individual could see that Seleucar was hurtling along a declining slope, and that Thoris was merely being pragmatic in removing himself from court. The following excerpt from his memoirs, however, is no prophecy, but a record of a waking dream journey undertaken many years following the fall of the empire.]*

Beside me upon the peak stood a man robed in shadows, facing north with a grim expression. The mountain range wound for miles into the distance, the plains of Kyndos spread to the west, shining Soliath at its heart, the Murmisian Isles to the east. The village of my own birth lay upon that broad tableau, and I trembled as his gaze passed over it. Then he uttered words that departed my memory as quickly as they entered, though I do recall that at that moment I felt the chilling grip of pure and utter terror. Lightning filled the air around us, and the mountain rumbled beneath his feet. A bolt arced through the sky, striking the nearest peak to the north, and as my eyes took on the sharp vision of an eagle, I saw the barest hint of a fracture begin its fateful journey down the jagged slopes, spreading like poison through a man's veins. The mountains would fall, but not for days.

I kept my vigil long after the man's presence faded, leaving me alone atop the mountain. There I looked past what bars waking eyes from seeing, beyond soil and rock and into the blackened depths of the mountains. And in the foetid pits crawled scores of savage monsters, all manner of creations warped and twisted by magics beyond imagining. For

hundreds of years they had waited, abandoned by their masters, seething with hatred and growing stronger. Their time drew near.

The sounds of battle echoed throughout the dreamscape, and I could hear every scream from my mountain peak, the anguished cries of men, women, and children, as the dwindling flame of the once-noble dynasty was extinguished. Cygnusina, I beseech you for understanding! For I could not bear to turn my eyes back toward Seleucar, where my heart knew the sky burned with divine justice... instead my gaze was fixed to the north, where that infinitesimally small fracture had begun to widen.

Like the great gaping maw of a leviathan the earth rumbled and opened, the mighty Vashnar peaks falling like felled trees to each side of the terrible chasm. As though Aeon had cast a spell over my visions, I watched as a small village was slowly darkened beneath the shadow of a toppling mountain; all within perished instantly as it lodged upon the plains. A bittersweet smile crossed my lips then, for I knew that they were the lucky ones - they would not know the horrors that were to come.

Out of the bowels of the earth came forth the abominable creatures, guided by some foul power toward defeated Seleucar. Slowly they began to fill the mountains as a basin fills with water, threatening to spill over and ravage all in their wake. The land groaned and could not bear this foul presence, tearing in a thousand ways before shattering like glass before my eyes as the oceans began their raging protest. Massive waves built upon the seas and rolled toward the breaking mountains, unhindered, with no land to slow their progress. Islands sank forever into the depths and tall mountains were humbled beneath the encroaching waves... and one continent became two.

A new figure joined me upon the mount, robed and silent, and I knew him to be the Logos, Almighty Sarapis. Then he spread his arm wide; it seemed the continents moved further apart with the gesture, and a thick haze crept over the turbulent waters that separated them. His gaze fixed with sadness upon the remains of the broken empire, shedding tears for what had once been a beacon of hope for all mortalkind. Those tears fell to the sea and turned to hard rock, becoming islands, forever to stand as a memorial of the eight hundred years of mighty Seleucar.