

# Worlds of Light



PREQUEL



## THE PURGE

J.W. Elliot



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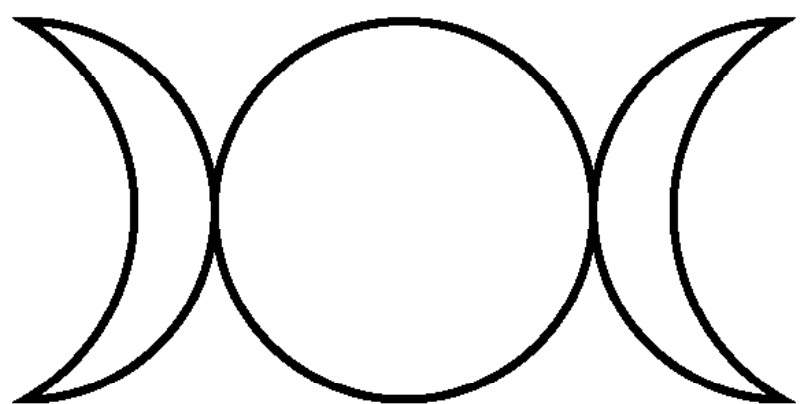
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**To those who give  
everything**





“THE TEMPLE IS BURNING!”

The cry rang through the tranquil halls of the library.

Jerome jerked his head up. He'd become so absorbed in the delicate script and beautiful words of the book he hadn't noticed the smell of burning wood floating in through the open window that now mingled with the rich aroma of ink, paper, and leather.

Chairs scuffed against the wooden floor, and robes rustled as scholars scrambled to the narrow windows overlooking the great courtyard where the white sundial stabbed into the sky. A red beam of light smashed into the library, shattering the golden stained-glass window and slamming into the long rows of leather-bound volumes. Books and wooden shelves exploded into a rolling inferno. Exclamations of dismay erupted as the glass tinkled to the floor and the roar of flames growled to a crescendo.

Jerome leaped to his feet, snatching up the little volume he had been studying as the scholars of the Light scrambled to escape the hungry flames. Dhara rushed into the library past the fleeing scholars with her long black hair flying out behind her. Her robe billowed in ragged tatters. Soot streaked her face. Even in disarray with her face tight with terror, she was still as beautiful as she had been the first day he had met her nearly twenty years before.

“They’re killing the Chosen,” she gasped. She brushed away the

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hair that clung to her sweating brow.

“Who?”

“The Transcendents,” she said.

Jerome cursed. The Keepers of the Light, who called themselves the Transcendents, arrogantly assumed they knew better how to worship the Light. They had become evermore aggressive and hostile to any who opposed them, but he couldn’t believe they would do this.

“Why?” he asked. “What happened?”

Dhara grabbed his hand and pulled him toward the door. “Ross killed a priest. He killed Arell.”

“What?” Jerome gaped at her.

Ross was probably the most powerful of the Chosen, the scholars who studied the Light. He was next in line to become a Keeper of the Light—priests that governed the Chosen and directed their work. The Keepers were selected from the most powerful, most accomplished of the Chosen. Ross was the *last* person who would kill one of them.

“He said something about knowing what happened to the Chosen who disappeared,” Dhara said.

Jerome stared. For several years, one of the Chosen, usually a young one, would disappear from their lodgings without a trace. People speculated that they had run away or been kidnapped. Jerome had long wondered what the truth was. What had Ross learned that would cause him to attack the Keepers?

“So?” Jerome said.

“So, he killed one of the priests.”

“How?”

“I don’t know.” The desperation in Dhara’s voice sent a chill through him.

Something more sinister was going on here. He dragged Dhara to a stop just inside the doors of the great library. If the Keepers of the Light thought the Chosen had turned on them, they would wreak a hideous revenge. “Get the children,” he said. “I’ll meet you at our apartment.”

Dhara grabbed his hand. “No, come with me now before it’s too late.”

“I can’t.” Jerome cast his gaze around at the inferno. “I have to

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help. The stone is here.”

Dhara stared at him, tight-lipped for a moment before giving a curt nod. She pulled him into a fierce kiss. “Come back to me,” she whispered and disappeared down the long hallway.

A knot pinched Jerome’s throat, making it hard to breathe. He blinked at the sting of tears from his eyes and rushed to the section of the library where the Mystics of Light kept their most ancient and precious texts. He had to do *something*. The devouring flames licked hungrily at the old, dry pages that contained the wisdom of thousands of years and the knowledge of countless Chosen Ones.

The vast and irreplaceable treasure trove of knowledge that had nourished and enriched the worship of the Light fell prey to the ignorance and presumption of a few Keepers who insisted on a new path. Jerome hesitated.

He would save so many volumes if he could, but he couldn’t carry them all. He jerked a tiny leather-bound book with silver writing from the shelf and slipped it into his pocket. The two books he now held contained the ancient worship of the Light as it had been received from Illurien, the creator herself. If nothing else survived, these must.

A cry burst from the doorway, and Jerome spun to find it clogged with scholars desperate to escape the raging inferno. But the scholars were being pushed back into the burning library, stumbling over one another.

“What are you doing?” someone shouted.

A green light lanced into the crowd of black-robed Chosen Ones, cutting through them like a lightning bolt. Shrieks of terror and pain echoed through the library as bodies flew backward, trailing green smoke. Bits of clothing floated in the air suspended in the heat of the betrayal.

The survivors scattered. Yellow, blue, and red bolts of light chased them, scything through them like grain before the sharp blade. The Keepers of the Light appeared in the doorway. The transformation in their countenances shocked Jerome almost as much as the horror of what they were doing.

They had all been older men, but now they appeared as though they had aged fifty years. Their skin stretched tight on their emaciated faces, and the fingers they pointed at the fleeing Chosen seemed

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more skeleton than living. Llaith led the pack with a gleeful grin as his red light ripped into the Chosen, burning and destroying.

“What have you done?” Jerome whispered.

He knew Llaith and the other priests who called themselves the Transcendents had been probing the depths of the Light in their search for a new path. They said they would transcend the old, worn-out forms of worship and inaugurate an era of rebirth by preserving the best minds in the study of the Light, so the knowledge did not have to be relearned with each new generation.

It had always been a dangerous, yet enticing, proposition. Many of the Chosen had joined them, but it had changed them. The once-wise old men who had tutored the Chosen had become demons of darkness, bent on the destruction of the true worship of the Light at any cost.

Their haughtiness sickened Jerome. Did they think they could replace the Creator and become the focus of the worship of the Light?

The grim scene transfixed Jerome despite the urgency gnawing at him. He had to do something.

The Keepers of the Light were actively murdering the Chosen and destroying the knowledge of the ages. Several of the Chosen who were still alive gathered in a group and fought back. Their own beams of light replied to the power surging from the Keepers until a blinding kaleidoscope of color flashed and burned about the library. But their light was feeble in comparison, and they were soon swept away amid the rainbow of death.

Jerome choked on the despair that burned in his throat. Heat from the fire in the library became oppressive as the shrieks of the dying scholars split the air. The Keepers turned toward Jerome. Llaith raised a hand in his direction. Jerome ducked and sprinted for the back of the library. A beam of red light chased him into the stacks, cutting through his robes. Books leaped into the air, erupting into flames.

Desperation gave Jerome renewed speed as he wove his way amid the destruction, seeking the tiny alcove where the treasure lay. It was an object long thought lost but which had been carefully preserved and protected by the secret elite who called themselves the True Believers. They understood the prophecies and knew the time would come when the Keepers of the Light would turn upon their own.



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They had foreseen this very day and prepared for it, though Jerome knew they had not expected this vicious butchery of the Chosen.

Jerome was not one of the leaders, but he knew about their most prized possession. He couldn't leave the library without trying to save it. He slipped into a small recess that held a little-used altar of the True Believers with its polished, white stones. It was hidden here somewhere. Would he have time to find it and escape?

The tiny room felt cool compared to the heat devouring the hall behind him. Invisible energy pulsed from the altar as if it were calling to him through the chaos and destruction. He placed his hands on the altar, closed his eyes, and tried to still his racing heart. The treasure—an ancient power Jerome knew almost nothing about—would only yield itself to one who had no desire to use it for personal gain.

A light flashed, and a diminutive panel slid open to reveal a beautiful, clear stone with delicate, silver writing. A spider web pattern had been etched into its surface. Inside the stone, a geometric design with a full circle in the middle and a half-circle on either side pulsed a silver light. Jerome gasped at the simple magnificence of the stone.

He knew this symbol. The triple moon that represented the three phases of the moon—waxing, full, and waning. It was also called the triple goddess and showed the three phases of womanhood—maiden, mother, and crone—representing the cycle of Illurien's struggle with Shaheen, the child of Light who refused to join in the Song of Creation, Shaheen's rebellion, and her ultimate destruction.

Jerome had heard stories of the two Cosmic Stones, the Eyes of Illurien, the Protectors of the Temple. Illurien had prepared them for the end-time when the Promised One would finally come to purify the Light. She had touched them with her finger and so imparted a portion of her power to each stone. This was one such stone, but Jerome did not know where the other might be.

An overwhelming sense of awe and reverence filled him as he reached out a trembling hand and lifted the cool stone from its hiding place. At his touch, a brilliant silver light flashed and poured from it. His whole body tingled with the sensation, and he almost dropped the stone in shock.

The stones were reputed to produce such light, but he didn't have time to consider the wonder of the ancient, sacred object. He

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placed it carefully in his pocket next to the books and turned to face a raging inferno that filled the doorway.

He was trapped. There was no way out. He put his hand in his pocket to feel the cool comfort of the stone. Silver light burst from his pocket as his hand touched it, and he flinched with surprise.

Then a scraping, scratching sound came from behind him, and he spun, jerking his hand free from his pocket, readying for a fight. But a woman's head poked out of a passage in the wall, her long black hair brushing the floor. She paused, apparently as startled to see him there as he was to see her. A tunnel? Here in the library?

"Elaine?" Jerome said.

"Do you have it?" she demanded. Her golden earring glittered in the light of the fire, contrasting sharply with her dark skin and black hair.

"Yes."

"Then come on. We have to get out of here."

Jerome didn't bother arguing. He ducked into the tunnel, fell to his hands and knees, and crawled into the cool blackness. The door scraped closed behind him, and the darkness engulfed them.

"We've sent as many of the Chosen and their families as we can to the chambers," Elaine said, "but the priests are slaughtering all of the Chosen, even those who joined the Transcendents."

"I saved the Book of Light," Jerome said.

Elaine paused in crawling, and he almost bumped into her. "Well done," she said and began to crawl again. "There's only one safe place for it."

Jerome banged his head off the low ceiling. The tiny space pressed in upon him, and it became hard to breathe. Panic gripped his throat.

He yanked the silver stone from his pocket, desperate for the light to push back the suffocating darkness. The light from the stone burst through the tunnel, cool and reassuring. Elaine stopped and craned her head around to peer at him. Wonder and surprise shone in her face.

"How did you do that?" she asked.

"What?"

"The stones only shine for those selected by Illurien to wield them."

"I..." Jerome hesitated. "I just picked it up, and it glowed like this."

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“The stones have been used only one other time,” Elaine explained, “when Shaheen invaded the temple herself and began killing the Chosen.”

One of the stones lining the tunnel gouged into Jerome’s knees, and he grimaced. He had never heard this tale.

“She even entered the sacred chamber,” Elaine continued, “and tried to throw down the altar, but a Chosen named Eliezer called power from the stones and forced her to withdraw, saving the Temple of Light. She has never tried to come back.”

“You think she’s behind what the Keepers are doing now?”

“Of course,” Elaine said as if this should have been obvious even to the most witless child. A new sense of hope and excitement sounded in her voice. “Jerome, the stones must have selected you to fight for us, to be our protector.”

Jerome glanced down at the beautiful stone. “I’m only a scholar.”

Elaine continued crawling, and Jerome hurried to catch up.

“The stones have chosen you,” Elaine insisted. “You must find the other.”

Jerome followed, using one hand so he could still hold up the light of the silver stone.

“What about Dhara and the children?” he asked.

“I’ll get them out. You must find the other stone so you can stop this.”

“How? I’m not one of its caretakers.”

“Use that stone,” she said, pointing back at the one in his hand. “They know each other. The moonstone is the seeking stone. It seeks out dangers to the temple, and it finds the one who can wield the stones. It will take you to its sister stone.”

Their breathing became ragged as they continued down the long tunnel.

“The sunstone concentrates the powers of the stones,” Elaine panted, “and the mind of the one who holds them. To truly wield the power of the stones, you must hold both of them in your hands. The stones will then seek and destroy the enemies of the Temple of Light.”

“Do you know where the sunstone is?”

“No,” Elaine said. “Only two of the caretakers know the exact location of each stone, and they were both just murdered. I know it

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is in a secret chamber below the temple. That is all.”

“How do you know all this?”

A long silence ensued, broken only by the scraping of their shuffling crawl down the sloping tunnel.

“I lead the True Believers,” she said.

“You?” Jerome gasped. “But I...”

“Don’t sound so shocked.”

“Well...” Jerome didn’t know what to say. He and Elaine had grown up together in the temple. They had been chosen the same year.

“I can’t do this,” he said.

Elaine scowled over her shoulder at him. “You have no choice. The stones have called *you*.”

They scrambled through the tunnel until they came to a small doorway. Elaine poked her head out and then slipped through. Jerome followed. He dropped the stone into his pocket as he found himself in one of the dwellings below the temple.

Clothes and dishes lay scattered everywhere, evidence of the occupants’ hasty retreat. They picked their way across the room to the wooden door. Elaine peered out and gestured for him to follow. They had only gone a few paces when the scuffling sound of scurrying feet reached their ears.

Jerome spun, expecting to see some terrified Chosen seeking to escape the murderous priests. But Llaith stepped around the corner they had just passed and smiled at them. Where his eyes had once been, a new and terrible bloodred light burned. His skin sagged on his skull as if it were about to slide off. He raised his hands.

“Run!” Elaine shouted. “Find the stone.”

She turned to face Llaith.

Jerome grabbed at her sleeve. “Don’t! Come with me.”

Elaine swatted his hand away. He saw in her gaze that she expected to die.

“My duty is to the stones and the Chosen,” she whispered. “I am counting on you to save them both. Now go.”

Jerome swallowed the horrible knot in his throat and fled as the crackling sound of power erupted in the corridor behind him.

He drew the stone from his pocket and experienced the comforting coolness of its power.

“Find your sister stone,” he murmured.

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A beam of silver light shot down the corridor, and Jerome sprinted to follow it. It led deep beneath the temple through a series of strange doorways he hadn't known existed until he clambered up a makeshift ladder into a tiny room.

He bent low before a little altar of polished wood. The sunstone must be here somewhere. He touched the altar, but nothing happened. So he laid the moonstone on it. The stone continued to glow. A click sounded, and a door on the altar slid open.

The golden sunstone lay on a velvet cushion. It was round like the moonstone and covered in the same delicate writing. Carved in its center was a large black spider. Jerome hesitated before picking it up. A beautiful, golden light burst from the stone, and an immense sense of power filled him almost to bursting.

He wanted to kneel there and bask in the glory of these stones, but he didn't have time. After slipping the Book of Light into the drawer of the altar, he pushed it closed. The book would be safe here, until he could come back for it.

Then, he backed out of the chamber and retreated the way he had come, trying to memorize the twists and turns so he could return the sunstone to its hiding place if he survived. Pausing at each door, he scratched the tiny symbol of the eye in the palm of the hand just to make sure he could find his way again.

When he came out into the main tunnel, he stopped. Sounds of crying reached him. He dashed to the sacred chamber under the central courtyard. A woman crouched beside the altar, clutching two infants to her. One of the babies cried while the woman tried to hush it. The room was flooded with bright light even though it was deep underground.

Gold writing covered the white marble walls. Huge columns rose up to support the ceiling while the stone altar sat directly in the center of the circular chamber. The stones in Jerome's hands pulsed in response to the power emanating from the altar.

Jerome stepped into the room, and the woman lunged to her feet, her eyes wild with terror.

"I won't hurt you," he said.

She backed away from him. She had deep olive skin and black hair. Her white robe was stained with ash and blood. "They're killing us all," she stammered.

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"I know," Jerome said as he struggled with indecision. He needed to run and confront the priests to stop them so he could find Dhara and his own children. The wrenching fear that something might happen to them was almost paralyzing, but he couldn't leave this woman alone and defenseless.

He strode to a little writing stand, grabbed a piece of paper, and scribbled the directions to the chamber from which he had just come. He scrawled them down twice just in case he would need them again and tore one set of instructions off to give her.

"Follow these directions," he said. "They will take you to a chamber where you can hide."

She adjusted the children in her arms so she could take the scrap of paper.

"If you get confused, just check under the latch on the door. The symbol of the eye in the center of the hand is scratched there to show the way."

She nodded her thanks and raced into the tunnel. The echo of the baby's cries faded as she disappeared down the long winding corridors. Jerome scratched the symbol he had just described into the second set of instructions, stuffed them in his pocket, and sprinted from the room.

As he ascended through the tunnels, the reek of burning nearly choked him. Fumes had settled into the chambers, filling them with caustic smoke.

He burst into the central courtyard where the sacred sundial jutted into the sky. Flames from the burning library jumped and gyrated in a wild, chaotic dance of death and destruction. Bodies lay strewn about the white cobblestones. The ghastly scene dragged tears from his eyes. How could they do this? The ones who were supposed to protect and nourish the servants of the Light had become their executioners.

A groan reached his ears, and he scanned the courtyard until his gaze fell on a form that had been tied to the white spire of the sundial. He rushed over to find Ross Celyn sagging from the ropes that bound him. His clothes were burned and torn. His flesh was raw. Bits of it had been savagely shredded. Blood dripped to the white cobblestones in a steady, haunting rhythm.

"Ross?" Jerome breathed.

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Ross raised his head and blinked at him. "I have failed."

"Why did you do it?"

"I had no choice," Ross whispered. "They were going to kill my family, my little boy."

"But why?"

"Because I defied them."

Jerome thought of Dhara and his children. Had Elaine found them? Had Elaine survived her encounter with Llaith?

"I have the stones," Jerome said.

Ross blinked at him.

"Elaine said they were prepared to protect the temple."

Recognition shone in Ross's burned and mutilated face. "The Cosmic Stones," he whispered. "That's what I lacked. If only I had possessed them."

Jerome frowned in pity and laid a hand on Ross's arm, searching for the words to explain what had happened. "They work for me," he said. "But I don't know how to use them."

Ross shook his head. "It's too late. I'm broken. You must do this, Jerome." With a gasp, he said, "Save the Chosen."

Ross's head fell forward, and he went limp. For a moment, Jerome thought Ross was dead, but his chest still rose and fell. Jerome untied the ropes and lowered his friend to the ground.

The horror gave way to a deep sense of destiny. Jerome had only ever lived for this moment—to be the one to wield the Cosmic Stones in defense of the Temple of Light and the Chosen.

Jerome straightened. He had to find the priests. He had to stop this. But first, he had to ensure Dhara and the children were safe. He could not sacrifice them. He would not.

A cackle rang over the roar of the inferno consuming the library. Jerome spun, gripping a stone in each hand.

Llaith strode from the shadows to stand in the yellow-orange light of the dancing flames. The breath caught in Jerome's throat. How had he come to be here? Where was Elaine?

Mingling terror and fury burned in his chest. Llaith's eyes churned with an insane red fire, and the flesh was falling off his face, but he didn't seem to notice or care.

His robes were smoking, and he favored his right side. Apparently, Elaine had injured him but not conquered. Jerome tried

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not to think of her body laying broken and bleeding in the tunnel. Perhaps, with the aid of the stones, he could finish Llaith for her.

“What have you done?” Jerome shouted. “How could you do this?”

“We will transcend the failure that has gone before.” Llaith’s voice was harsh and labored. “To transcend, we must purge the temple of the dross.”

He raised his hands, and a jet of red light slashed toward Jerome, who stumbled back in panic, willing the stones to come to his aid. A silver and golden light flashed, and Llaith’s red fire exploded into a geyser of light that threw Jerome backward. Llaith’s fire had not reached him. The stones had protected him.

A scream of rage burst from Llaith’s skeletal maw. “What is this?”

Jerome regained his balance in time to receive another burst of power from Llaith. Again the stones flared, and again he was driven back, but this time he kept his feet and responded by sending a golden ball of fire rolling toward Llaith. The flame enveloped Llaith, and for one desperate moment, hope flared in Jerome’s heart. Maybe he could do it.

Jets of red fire crackled through Jerome’s attack, and his ball of power exploded. Llaith stood before him, a portion of his garments burned away and his charred flesh smoking. He barked a deep, rumbling laugh that sent a chill up Jerome’s spine.

“Holy Mother of Light,” Jerome gasped. “What have they become?”

The ground rumbled under Jerome’s feet and heaved, sending him sprawling headlong onto the white cobblestones now stained with ash and blood. Dairen, another of the Keepers who had joined the Transcendents strode into the courtyard before the sundial.

Jerome scrambled to his feet just as a jet of indigo fire roiled toward him to join the blast of red light Llaith cast at him. In desperation, Jerome called for the power of the stones. They flared and intercepted the power of the Keepers, but he was driven back. They were too strong. He might have been able to withstand one. But two?

Panic gripped his throat. “Dhara,” he whispered. He couldn’t leave her to this. He lashed out with the power of the stones and fled across the courtyard to the section of the temple where he and



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Dhara had their living quarters. He had to get her and the children away. Then he would return to die, for die he must.

To his horror, he found the doors of the homes of the Chosen forced open, bent inward on their hinges, charred and smoking. The odor of burning wood and roasting flesh filled the corridor. Terror gripped his throat. Had he sent Dhara into the path of the Keepers?

He burst into their rooms, and a priest spun to face him. It was Durr. His face had undergone the same monstrous transformation as Llaith's, and his eyes shown a brilliant liquid blue.

Durr held up a piece of paper. "What does this mean?" he demanded. "Which chamber? What place?"

Jerome swallowed the panic that choked him. Dhara had left him a note.

"Have you learned how to use the chambers?" Durr asked.

"Please," Jerome said, tightening his grip on the stones. Their warmth filled him, washing away his despair. He could do this. The stones had chosen him.

He called for the power just as Durr shot out his hand, and a burst of blue light slammed into Jerome's chest. He flew backward against the wall, flailing like a fragment of cloth in the wind. His head cracked against the stone, and he fell into the black oblivion.



Jerome stirred at the rending pain in his chest and his head. His eyelids felt heavy as he struggled to open them. Something warm and sticky clung to his cheek.

Dhara. Where was Dhara? He crawled to his hands and knees. Durr had gone, but the note he had held lay on the floor. Jerome picked it up, staining it red with his blood. It was her handwriting. She had fled. She had escaped. But he had failed. The temple had fallen, and he would die like the rest of them. He patted his pocket. His only hope now was to protect the stones and find Dhara.

Jerome forced himself to his feet, swaying at the surge of dizziness and nausea. He climbed onto the bed and pulled a loose stone from the wall. Dhara used it to hide the Books of Light they had sneaked from the library here for personal study. Jerome slipped the second book into the cavity, placed Dhara's note on top of it,

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and then settled the sunstone on top of them both.

The sunstone burned with a golden fire until he withdrew his hand. He paused as a sense of doom swept over him. If the stones had selected him, why hadn't they protected him from Durr? Why had they allowed the Chosen to be slaughtered? Elaine had been wrong. He had wasted precious time when he might have found Dhara and escaped with their children.

Jerome glanced at the moonstone. It was his only hope now. It would lead him to Dhara. It would find her. Then he could come back for the sunstone once his family was safe, and he would do what he could to avenge the fallen.

He pulled out the slip of paper that held the directions to the tiny chamber, trying to remember how to get there. He stumbled out into the corridor and held up the moonstone when the sound of running footsteps reached him. Jerome staggered back into the room and pressed his body against the wall. His breathing was ragged as the terror raced through him. He trembled in a cold sweat.

"I saw one," someone shouted.

Jerome scanned the room, searching for a hiding place for the moonstone. He bent to slip it under the wardrobe when someone burst into the room behind him. Something slammed into his head, and he sprawled onto the table with a crash. He struggled to hide the moonstone under the wardrobe, desperate to protect it. Warm blood gushed down the side of his face. Darkness rushed in. He had failed. The purging of the Temple of Light was complete. The Chosen had fallen.



Something sharp pierced Jerome's side, and he gasped at the new rush of agony. As the world spun into the swirling blackness, the pain faded to numbness. A white light appeared beside him. A boy dressed in a black robe emerged from the light to stand over him. He wore a look of concern, and he extended a hand to him as if he expected Jerome to hand him the stone. Jerome struggled to rise, but he had no strength in his limbs. The boy frowned.

"I'm sorry," Jerome tried to speak, but the air gurgled in his throat. He was paralyzed. Life was slipping from his body.

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A female voice burst through the pain and the darkness. "Die in peace, Chosen One. You have saved the Cosmic Stones and the Book of Light for the one who will come."

Jerome groaned. He was not meant to defeat the priests but to save the stones and the sacred writings from the fire and destruction.

"The children are safe," the voice said, "and will return to the temple someday."

"And Dhara?" he thought.

"She came back for you," the voice said.

No. Not his beloved Dhara. Why would she come back to such a place to face certain slaughter? But he already knew. It was the same reason he would have come. She loved him. Jerome quit resisting. The children were safe. The stones and the books were safe. Their lives had not been sacrificed for nothing.

"Dhara," he whispered.

A woman stepped into the light and smiled at him. "Dhara," he whispered again. "Where are our children?"

"I sent them on," she smiled.

She took his hand and pulled him to his feet. Jerome sighed, and his soul slipped free, leaving the pain and regret behind.

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I hope you enjoyed *The Purge*, the prequel short story to the fantasy series [\*Worlds of Light\*](#). Please continue the adventure with the first book entitled [\*The Cleansing\*](#). It is available on [Amazon for \\$5.99](#).

### [\*Worlds of Light: The Cleansing\*](#)

Some secrets are written in ash and fire...

Kell Crawford lives alone with his mother, who has a bizarre fascination with light. When she is murdered by a mysterious stranger, Kell goes on the run to escape the murderer and find the father who abandoned him as a baby. Chasing his mother's last cryptic message, Kell finds his way into an underground tomb, which transports him to a strange temple where skeletal priests worship the Light and think he is their Promised One.

But something has gone wrong. Some other being has possessed a portion of his soul. The priests both fear and hate him, and a terrible darkness seeks to claim him—all while an ominous power is growing inside him. Now, Kell must learn to harness that power before he loses everything—even his soul.



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# ABOUT J.W. ELLIOT

J.W. Elliot is a professional historian, martial artist, canoer, bow builder, knife maker, woodturner, and rock climber. He has a Ph.D. in Latin American and World History. He has lived in Idaho, Oklahoma, Brazil, Arizona, Portugal, and Massachusetts. He writes non-fiction works of history about the Inquisition, Columbus, and pirates. J.W. Elliot loves to travel and challenge himself in the outdoors.

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[Prequel: \*The Purge\*](#)

[Book I: \*The Cleansing\*](#)

[Book II: \*The Rending\*](#)

[Book III: \*The Unmaking\*](#)

## **The Ark Project**

[Prequel: \*The Harvest\*](#)

[Book I: \*The Clone Paradox\*](#)

[Book II: \*The Covenant Protocol\*](#)

## Heirs of Anarwyn

[Prequel: \*The Ruin of Goldereth\*](#)

[Book I: \*Torn\*](#)

[Book II: \*Undead\*](#)

[Book III: \*Shattered\*](#)

[Book IV: \*Feral\*](#)

## Stand Alone Novels

[The Miserable Life of Bernie LeBaron](#)

[Somewhere in the Mist](#)

[Walls of Glass](#)

[Recalibration \(Novelette\)](#)

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J.W. Elliot

## Writing Awards

**Winner of the New England Book Festival 2022** for Science Fiction for *The Covenant Protocol (The Ark Project, Book II)*.

**Honorable Mention in the New England Book Festival 2022** for General Fiction for *Torn (Heirs of Anarwyn, Book I)*

**Runner Up** in the **New York Book Festival 2022** for Young Adult for *Torn (Heirs of Anarwyn, Book I)*.

**Runner Up** in the **San Francisco Book Festival 2022** for Science Fiction for *The Covenant Protocol (The Ark Project, Book II)*.

**Honorable Mention** in the **San Francisco Book Festival 2022** for Young Adult for *Torn* (*Heirs of Anarwyn*, Book I).

**Runner Up** in the **Los Angeles Book Festival 2022** for Science Fiction for *The Clone Paradox* (*The Ark Project*, Book I).

**Runner Up** in the **Los Angeles Book Festival 2022** for Young Adult for *Torn* (*Heirs of Anarwyn*, Book I).

**Honorable Mention** in the **Los Angeles Book Festival 2022** for Science Fiction for *The Covenant Protocol* (*The Ark Project*, Book II).

**Winner of the New England Book Festival 2021** for Science Fiction for *The Clone Paradox* (*The Ark Project*, Book I).

**Award Winning Finalist** in the Fiction: Young Adult category of the 2021 **Best Book Awards** sponsored by American Book Fest for *Windemere* (*Archer of the Heathland*, Book V).

**Award-Winning Finalist** in the **American Fiction Awards 2021** for Young Adult category for *Walls of Glass*.

**Award-Winning Finalist** in the Science Fiction: General category of the 2021 **American Fiction Awards** for *The Clone Paradox* (*The Ark Project*, Book I).

**Chet Kevitt Award** for contributions to Weymouth history for the publication of *The World of Credit in Colonial Massachusetts: James Richards and his Daybook, 1692-1711*. Awarded by the Weymouth Historical Commission, 2018.

### **Writers of the Future Contest**

Honorable Mention for *Recalibration*, 2018.

Honorable Mention for *Ebony and Ice*, 2019.