

Chapter 1

An Ending, and A Beginning

In a place infinitely far away, past the nether spheres of existence, out between the realms of madness and death, resides a bleak planet. No bright stars look down on this planet anymore; the stars died out uncounted billions of years before the edges of the universe and the familiar solar systems we know ever came into existence from the gases and vapors of nothingness.

This lone planet has no neighbors to visit with, no friends among the bleak and destroyed lunar landscape. It is alone in every sense of the word, residing in the dark space that hangs in an eternal midnight along the far borders of this universe, close only to the insane boundaries of primal eternal chaos, from where all things come, and to where all things must return in the end. This lone planet spirals closer in its orbit around a dark sun that no longer exists. The skies of this realm are wretched and dim; dark clouds offer a windswept dance in the eternally red skies, no longer containing an atmosphere in which life is capable of sustaining itself. Even closer, and one can make out shrouded forms that are concealed by the deep clouds. Mountains, canyons, valleys, all earthen structures which once were covered in lush landscapes and immense greenery, now wasted and barren, white sands the sole remnant of the forests that blanketed the planet uncounted years ago.

Even closer, and one can now witness the empty riverbeds and lakes; all the water having been evaporated instantly in an explosion when the atmosphere withered and collapsed into death. Although there is no ice anymore, the place is frozen solid, the absence of sunlight or starlight plunging the temperatures down to hundreds of degrees past absolute zero. At such temperatures the very molecules are frozen solid, effectively sealing this entire world in one crystallized moment of time forevermore.

Immense structures now rise up in the eternal shadows that cloak this destroyed planet. Megalithic spire and towers lie huddled together as if for protection in the base of the mountains. This ruined world once gave rise to the greatest of all civilizations, one that offered its final death throes in eras long past. The only remnants of this culture lay in the stone fortresses of its cities that rise up like jewels in the landscape.

But something now moves in this wasteland of frozen decay. A glimmer in the sulphuric emissions of dying volcanoes, a shimmer of light in the vacuum of space. A figure now appears

in the darkness, cloaked in powerful magicks that glow a multitude of colors as they whirl madly around its shrouded form. The figure hung motionless in the space for a moment, contemplating the preserved city below itself. Ever so slowly, a black gloved hand extended from the inner confines of the dark robes, holding aloft a carved staff glowing with unearthly power. Esoteric words were whispered, carried away on the solar winds with no creature to hear them save itself. Moments later another figure appeared in the desolate landscape, cloaked in the deepest red, as if the blood of God was spilled onto the cloth.

For what might be an eternity the two beings contemplated each other over the Ancient ruins. Then the black-robed being finally offered a greeting which would be unintelligible to any other being in the universe except for the cloaked figure before it.

“You are finally here,” was all the one in black uttered.

“You are early.” The figure in red countered, “We were not due to arrive until the Netherstar arrives. You have been here for almost two thousand cycles.”

“I have been contemplating this city.” The figure in black robes offered a reply, the magick spells now circling its form in large, erratic arcs. “I have been here before, in times when it was still populated. I taught them, once.”

“Interfering with Fate once more, I see.” the red figure spoke up, drifting closer to the black one. “You know that is not our way. We observe, and do nothing to change the course of events. Like that one.”

The red one waved its arm into the dark sky, where a speck of light now appeared as a dot on the dark nothingness. It was countless billions of miles away, distances incomprehensible to mortal humans, but these two creatures were far, far more than mere human. They both gazed up at the light across gulfs of time and space, and watched for a million cycles as the light began to grow larger, illuminating landscapes that had been frozen in darkness for nearly all of history. It was the Netherstar, a piece of incandescent rock hurtling through space, otherwise unremarkable except for this one instant.

The comet shot closer to the destroyed planet, casting a fiery glow over the ruined mountains and canyons. For a thousand cycles the two figures watched as the Netherstar hurtled towards this desolate planet, finally colliding with the wrecked mountains. The impact tore a third of the planet off into the space around it, pulverizing the world into dust. The other remnants of the planet fell away at the explosion, the heat of the Netherstar melting the ageless

mountains to dust in a silent apocalypse.

And through it all, the two figures hung in space, idly observing the cataclysm around them, earthen debris shot by them into the darkness of space, their magickal shields preventing any sort of collision. Still they watched as the cities below them were torn apart, the ancient spires crumbling into dust and blown away into nothingness.

The destruction continued, the Netherstar finally reaching the violent end of its life, offering one last explosion as it chewed through the frozen ground to the very center of the shattered planet. But this was not an end, merely another beginning as the final explosion ignited gases that were stores within the planet's core for billions of years. Within one instant the gases exploded with a force that was capable of destroying whole universes, vaporizing the remnants of the planet and surging together with the bright glow of something new. Something different. A new beginning.

It was now over, and instead of the ancient planet, a star now burned in the black emptiness of the universe. It would remain alone for billions of more cycles, until particles of dust from the collision would eventually group together under the gravity of this fresh-born sun. In time there would be whole planets, giving rise to new forms of life and civilization. With one ending was another beginning, in a cycle that continued forever. The two figures now gazed upon the star that burned only feet away from them, their powerful magicks preventing any possibility of harm.

"You knew and taught them?" the red cloaked being asked, restarting the conversation begun eras before.

"Yes," the black-garbed one replied. "I offered them aid when they requested my help, when they realized their planet was dying."

"And what did you give them?"

"Instructions, knowledge. I showed them how to build great ships that would leave the planet, which they could live in for millions of years while they traveled to a new planet."

"And did they use these instructions?" the one in red asked.

"I believe so." It replied, running its gloved hand along the carved staff. "They were too intelligent to dismiss my help."

"And what were these beings called?"

"I no longer remember. It is not important." The black one brusquely replied, signaling

that the time for idle conversation was now over. A few more words were exchanged as to the time and place as to their next meeting, and then the figure in red disappeared, the remnants of its presence rapidly fading into the Ether. The one in black watched the new star for a few moments more, and then it too disappeared into the nothingness of space, traveling to another place and time, turning his eternal eye to the planet of Earth, to observe the climactic events which would soon be occurring. To observe an ending, and another beginning.

