Chapter 7:

The Predecessors

The Predecessors

Existing long before the Sentients were the Predecessors, the gods’ first attempt at creating sentient life to live and die on Aethra. These beings were nearly perfect in every way: they were gifted with the powers of Aether (able to perform feats and abilities Sentient Aetherians could only dream of), they were invariably strong, fast, wise, and tenacious, their bodies were sculpted to perfection, they rarely needed to sleep or eat, and their natural lifespans were longer than any given Sentient’s by a large magnitude. For thousands of cycles they built their civilizations unimpeded by monsters of any sort; however, they built so high, advanced so far, mastered everything the world had to offer by such a large degree, that soon the gods began to fear for their superiority as the divine rulers of the universe, and became afraid that their creations would one day subjugate and replace them. So, in an attempt to undo what they had done and put a stop to the Predecessors’ advances, they started the War for Dominance, a conflict that lasted for over 3000 cycles.

The Predecessors’ War for Dominance

The War for Dominance started when the gods suddenly and without warning laid siege to the flying city of Babel, bombarding it with their divine arcane power and utterly razing it, causing it to plummet to the ground below, killing the hundreds of thousands in the city and several million more with the resulting shockwave. During the coming days, they laid waste to more cities and countries, killing millions and kickstarting a war that could only end with one side completely annihilating the other.

Acting quickly and using their incredible powers and knowledge, the Predecessors in the remaining cities enacted arcane barriers, called Staves, around them that sealed the gods and Titans out and protected them from their might. To combat this, the gods created armies of Monstrosities, led by Dragons, who were given Kobolds as slaves in return for their service. Over time, some of the staves failed and grew weak, allowing the gods to lay siege to the Predecessors’ cities once again, though this time, they fought back. For hundreds of cycles this went on, with one side doing everything they could to strike at the other, and neither making much progress.

The End of the Titans

Several hundred cycles into the War for Dominance, the Predecessors realized they would need something else, something more, if they were to not only to defend themselves from the gods’ wrath, but also overthrow and dethrone them as vengeance for starting the war in the first place. And so, using promises of power and absolving of wrongdoings, they convinced Kraken and Leviathan to switch sides and fight for them.

Thus, a little after a thousand cycles into the war, thousands of Predecessors, backed by Kraken and Leviathan, launched a series of assaults against the other Titans. Several thousand Predecessors died, and Kraken and Leviathan were scarred for the rest of their lives, but one by one, the other Titans fell: Bahamut was killed in the skies above Media, his body crashing to the earth and remaining there to this day; Orisha was slain in the forests of Sal’tu, where the Titan’s Grave tree now grows, towering over the surrounding land; Skadi was dragged into the East Ocean by Kraken, and since then the waters have been forever stained black with her blood and Kraken’s acid; and lastly, Tiamat was hunted and chased all across Ahkos, never given respite until she was trapped and forced to sacrifice herself in a kamikaze-like arcane explosion, shattering and scarring the land around her and creating the Titan’s Crater.

Still, despite their losses, the Predecessors viewed the deaths of the Titans as a huge victory, and many saw it as the first major turning point in the war and a sign that perhaps, just maybe, they just might be able to come out on top and beat the gods at their own game.

The Death of Magus

Spurned on by the killings of the Titans and now fighting with renewed vigor, the Predecessors continued to fight until the next major point in the war, roughly 1200 cycles after Bahamut fell from the sky. This time, it would not be a Titan, but a god who was slain, and a Predecessor would take their place. 2400 cycles into the War for Dominance, a relatively small battalion of Predecessors, led by one called Loki, managed to locate, steal, and destroy Magus’ Wand, rendering the god mortal until the next midnight, which they managed to hold this off to give themselves more time with the help of their strongest Chronomancers. Shortly thereafter, they forced Magus into open combat, and after all of the Predecessors but Loki had fallen, Loki struck a mortal blow upon the god, ending their reign as the lord of Magic and replacing them with Loki, the new god of Magic, the element of wonder, illusions, and mysticism.

With the Titans dealt with and a god under their belt, the Predecessors believed their victory was now assured, and that it was only a matter of time before the relics of the rest of the gods were found and destroyed, their owners soon to follow. However, this didn’t quite work out how they planned, as something no one could have foreseen occurred: Loki switched sides. Or rather, it would be more accurate to say that Loki’s newfound godhood gave them a new and utterly unique perspective on the entire conflict, one that left them unsure of which side they should be loyal to and how best to act using their new powers. Because of this, they chose to remain neutral for the remainder of the war, secluding themselves on the Plane of Magic and waiting to see how the rest of the conflict would play out.

Despite this setback, the Predecessors were still ecstatic, and were now utterly convinced that the war would be theirs. This renewed vigor drove them on to find a swift and decisive end to the war, one that would result with the gods either replaced or out of the picture and the Predecessors as the divine rulers of the universe.

The Cataclysm

Finally, after 3000 cycles of constant battles against Titans, gods, Monstrosities, Dragons, and, on rare occasions, even each other, the end of the Predecessors’ War for Dominance came. Hundreds of cycles after the death of Magus, several Predecessor scholars believed they had found a way to destroy all of the gods at once, a spell that would utterly annihilate every divine being and wipe them from existence. For another hundred cycles this spell was carefully developed and built upon, with nigh every Predecessor doing their part to bring it to completion and bring the 3-millennia-long war to an end.

However, in their eagerness and anxiety to end the war, the Predecessors made a mistake; perhaps they rushed the development of the spell, perhaps their incantations or measurements were wrong, perhaps they were sabotaged; it is now impossible to know the true cause of the Cataclysm, but whatever the cause was, the result was nothing like the Predecessors intended. Rather than wiping out the gods and ending their reign for good, the Predecessors instead trapped each of the gods save Loki on their own plane and did… something to themselves, for they were not quite wiped out, but nor are they around any longer – for the most part. Some Predecessors still remain on Aethra, in extremely secluded places, biding their time and trying to decide what to do next. Some were shot forward in time by an unknown amount, and who’s to say when they will emerge? Many millions were killed instantly, some were petrified, and some exist now only in dreams or spectral form, haunting Sentient minds or wandering the Central Ethereal Plane for the rest of eternity.

Only four gods did not have planes, and so had nowhere to go; however, their relics remained, with fragments of their consciousness still in them: Lucifer of Light, Chronos of Time, Materia of Space, and Umbra of Dark. These gods could not die without a being to replace them, but had no plane to be sealed to, thus, they are said to be “missing”, though their physical bodies have long been presumed dead. Despite this, they still maintain a modicum of their power, and use that power to come to Sentients in dreams and visions, and are able to communicate with them and the other gods via their relics, which they are able to relocate through great effort.

The Sentients

After the Cataclysm, the gods were… hesitant to replace the Predecessors with another generation of sentient life. For thousands of cycles they sat, trying to find ways to leave their planes, trying to think of ways to bring back what they had lost – all to no avail. Eventually, many of them began to feel a longing to create again. They wanted Aethra to thrive and flow with intelligent life, and seeing it as it was now – overrun with monsters and irrevocably scarred by millennia of war – disgusted and saddened many of them. Not to mention, one by one they began to realize that sentient life was beginning to occupy Aethra again anyway, as the Drakon evolved from the Kobolds, Goblins began to evolve from Orks, and certain Beasts were becoming more and more intelligent – enough to even be called sentient in their own right.

So it came to be that the gods resolved to create sentient life anew – though this time, they were determined to be far more cautious about it. So, they decided that the best course of action would be to create imperfect beings, who were far more limited in scope, power, lifespan, and every other way in which the Predecessors had been nearly perfect. They debated and argued amongst each other for hundreds of cycles, but in the end agreed that instead of one sentient race, this new generation would be comprised of 4, each embodying one of the core aspects of the Predecessors: the sapient Gnomes were granted their intelligence; the hardy Dwarves embodied their incredible strength; the graceful Elves were gifted their nimble finesse; and finally, the unyielding Humans were blessed with their undying tenacity. This new generation of Sentients would populate and take back Aethra from the Monstrosities that now plagued it, and help heal and cover up the scars left by the Predecessors’ War for Dominance. Thus, as the sun rose on the first day of a new cycle, thousands of the new Sentients were placed sporadically in the ruined cities across Ahkos, and from there were left to their own devices to explore, populate, and rebuild the world.