

I. Zanitlasnadzazani

On the coming of the Ancients to Zhdant, the creation of the world and the origin of the Shining Ones.

Long ago, when the world was young, Zhdant was but a vast and barren expanse, devoid of life and light. The waters of its oceans roared in endless fury, the winds howled in untamed rage, and the lands were little more than craggy stones and the hollow echoes of the deep. In those days, before the first step of time could mark its path across the ages, the world was wreathed in darkness save for one light, distant and red but constant, that shone above the empty realm.

It was in this time that the Ancient Ones, the Zanitlasnad, came to Zhdant. They named the red light Pliebrzhdieni, the Lord of Light and Life, as it was the only thing that brought warmth and life to the cold expanse. Pliebrzhdieni had neither rival or companion; it was solitary in its splendor, and from it, all that was life and light upon Zhdant emerged. Yet the loneliness of the Lord of Light weighed heavy upon the vast firmament, and even the brilliance of its radiance could not quell the longing that stirred within the celestial heart.

The Zanitlasnad were travelers of the heavens, and they were creatures of ancient wisdom and untold power, who wandered the cosmos in search of worthy homes and refuges from the unknown perils of the void. When they arrived upon the lands of Zhdant, they saw that it was a world rich with unlooked-for potential, sparse with life but rich in metals and fabulous gems, a place that might one day become a sanctuary for their creation.

Armed with their vast knowledge, the Zanitlasnad began their work. They raised the earth from the the seas and placed the stars upon the velvet sky, each according to their design. They brought with them many wondrous creatures, both great and small, some for sustenance, others for companionship, and others still to serve the will of the Zanitlasnad. The lesser they seeded across the surface of Zhdant in places where they might find life and sustenance from the land; the greater they assigned tasks according to their talents.

The Zanitlasnad in their wisdom had brought with them servants, vassals, and slaves, but among them, one kind arose to surpass the others. These were the Zhodani, the Shining Ones, whose minds were quick and whose hearts burned with the brilliance of the stars. They grew in stature and intellect, and the Zanitlasnad recognized that they were no ordinary creations. These beings, were more akin to their masters than to mere slaves, and were gifted with understanding and purpose. And so, the Zhodani were elevated in stature amongst their lesser servants, for they

were the chosen of the Zanitlasnad.

In that time, Zhdant knew only one light in the heavens, and it was Pliebrzhdieni, the Lord of Light and Life. Yet the Zanitlasnad, ever wise, looked upon the skies of Zhdant and saw that the heavens were incomplete, for Pliebrzhdieni, however radiant and mighty, stood alone. And so, turning their craft to the heavens once more, through many great works they caused a new light to appear in the sky, of lesser brilliance but no less in stature. This new light was not constant like Pliebrzhdieni, but fickle and elusive. It shone only in brief moments, sometimes showing its full face to Zhdant, but waxing and waning in its time, sometimes appearing as a mere sliver, and sometimes showing its face not at all. Moreover, its radiance is often hidden by the shadow of clouds, leaving the world below in darkness or in a pale imitation of its light.

This light the Zhodani named Viepchaklzhdieni, the Light that Fades and Returns, and they gave to it a second name, and called it the Lord of Waters, for when it shone faintly in the sky, the seas would rise in great fury, thrashing against the shores in a tempest of dark waves. The seas were the domain of Viepchaklzhdieni, and when its light was dim, the waters would grow fierce and angry. But when the light returned to its fullest, calm would descend upon the world, and the land would rest.

The union of these two lights—Pliebrzhdieni, the Lord of Light and Life, and Viepchaklzhdieni, the Light that Fades—was a time of great tumult upon Zhdant. The seas swelled with anger, and the lands shook with great tremors. Mountains were torn asunder, rivers were redirected, and cities that the Zanitlasnad had built were laid to ruin beneath the fury of the waters and the quaking earth. For the union of Pliebrzhdieni and Viepchaklzhdieni was no peaceful one; it was a marriage of contrasts, and these contrasts waged war upon the world.

The wrath of Viepchaklzhdieni was great, for he harbored envy toward Pliebrzhdieni, whose light was eternal and unyielding. Viepchaklzhdieni, the Light that Fades, often sought to hide the radiance of Pliebrzhdieni from the world, plunging Zhdant into darkness, so that all might feel the emptiness that came with the passing of the light. But though Viepchaklzhdieni's shadow could dim the brilliance of the Greater Light, it could not keep it hidden forever. For the Greater Light, Pliebrzhdieni, always returned, bringing with it the warmth and life that all upon Zhdant relied upon. The wrath of Viepchaklzhdieni would pass as quickly as it had come, but the scars of that tumultuous time remained.

And from their union, four children were born. These were not ordinary children, but beings of immense power and purpose, each with their own rulership and dominion over Zhdant. Their names are here recounted that they may be known and remembered throughout the ages, as they will come to shape the world in ways both wondrous and terrible.

The firstborn was Adrablsish, the fleetest of the children, who became the messenger and herald of the gods. Swift as the winds themselves, Adrablsish traveled from one end of the world to the other, carrying the word of the gods to all corners of Zhdant. His wings were the light of dawn, and wherever he went, the hearts of the people quickened with hope.

The secondborn was Pliantshotl, the herald of war and conquest. Strong and unyielding, Pliantshotl wielded the power of the storm, and where he went,

the land trembled beneath the weight of his might. His cry echoed across the battlefield, calling forth the forces of war and bringing both glory and ruin in his wake.

The thirdborn was Brovlekal, the Lord of Winds. His breath was the wind that swept across the seas and fields, carrying with it both the fragrance of flowers and the roar of the tempest. Brovlekal's moods were as fickle as the weather, and when he was angry, the winds howled like the cries of a thousand lost souls. But when he was content, the winds would sing with the melodies of the earth, carrying peace to the people of Zhdant.

The youngest was Emkachdraf, whose dominion was death and rebirth. Emkachdraf was both a harbinger of endings and a promise of new beginnings. Where death took its toll, Emkachdraf would be there, ushering in the cycle of life once more. Emkachdraf's hands were gentle but firm, for they held the power to both destroy and renew, to lay waste to the old and bring forth the new.

These four children were not alone. From them were birthed countless grandchildren, the Dlemstait Tsiaqr, the wandering marauders who lit the skies with their wild and capricious moods. These lesser zhdieni were wild and unpredictable, often flashing across the heavens wreathed in flames, their coming both feared and admired by the peoples of Zhdant.

Yet even as the gods wrought their great works upon Zhdant, the Zanitlasnad did not falter. They had seen the tumultuousness of the union of Pliebrzhdieni and Viepchaklzhdieni, and though the world had been shaken, they did not despair. With their servants, the Zhodani, the Ancient Ones set about rebuilding their cities, restoring their wonders, and reclaiming the glory of their time.

After an age of toil and rebirth, the greatest of the Zanitlasnad raised up a great city in their honor, a city that would stand as a testament to their strength and resilience. This city was called Zhdantpreql, the City of Perilous Refuge. It was a place of grandeur, with spires that touched the heavens and streets that shimmered with the light of a thousand stars. The people of Zhdant, both Zanitlasnad and Zhodani alike, gathered in this city to celebrate the peace and harmony that had returned to the land. In that time the Zanitlasnad worked many wonders, harnessing the powers of the mind to bend the forces of the universe to their will.

And thus, for an age, the Zanitlasnad ruled Zhdant, and the world knew peace. The Zhdant became known by another name—the Land of the Gods—where the gods walked among mortals and breathed life into the world. It was a time of great prosperity, and the people lived in harmony with the forces that had shaped their world.

But in time, as all things must, the age of the Zanitlasnad passed, and Zhdant entered a new chapter. Yet even as the gods withdrew, their mark remained upon the world, and the light of Pliebrzhdieni and Viepchaklzhdieni continued to shine upon the land.

II. Iadlakotzadzazani

Of the Great War of the Heavens

For three Ages the Zanitlasnad ruled Zhdant and under their dominion, the world flourished. With their knowledge of the stars, the earth, and the waters, they wrought from the land and sea cities of splendor, a marvel to all who beheld them. Yet among their many thrall races, none were held in higher esteem than the Zhodani, the Shining Ones.

The Zhodani were their trusted servants, their stewards, chosen for their brilliance and beauty. Under the guidance of the Zanitlasnad, the Zhodani grew in stature, becoming not only the most enlightened of the thrall races but also the closest to the Zanitlasnad themselves. Together, the Zanitlasnad and the Zhodani transformed Zhdant into a world of abundance and peril, a place where cities gleamed beneath the light of the sun, Pliebrzhdieni, and where the great moon, Viepchaklzhdieni, wrought tides and quakes that could move mountains and shape the very land.

Of all the cities that rose in this age, none rivaled the magnificence of the Golden City of Zhdantpreql, the City of Refuge, which stood on the vast shores of Qiknavra, the Timeless Kingdom. It was a city that glowed with the light of both the Zanitlasnad and the Zhodani, a place where knowledge and power were revered. It was the beating heart of Zhdant, and under its gleaming spires, the world prospered in harmony. Yet, as all histories are marked by cycles of joy and sorrow, so too did Zhdant's age of greatness come to an end.

From beyond the circling worlds of Pliebrzhdieni came a new adversary dark and terrible in form and insatiable in his appetite for war. His name was Untsaypyo, a being of incredible intellect and overwhelming ambition, but also one whose heart was dark with jealousy and pride. Untsaypyo was not content with the wisdom and peace that had flourished among the numberless stars for so long. He desired more — more power, more dominion, more control over the forces of nature and life itself.

The wise have said that Untsaypyo's ambition was born from his envy of the sun, Pliebrzhdieni. He watched as this great light bathed Zhdant in its golden radiance, and he coveted the power of that eternal glow. It was not enough that the Zhodani and the Zanitlasnad commanded great works, for in his mind, the light of Pliebrzhdieni had become a symbol of their supremacy. He sought to break that light and bend it to his will, to eclipse it and bring all the scattered worlds under his dominion and rule the great Empire of the

Zanitlasnad as its one true power.

At first Untsaypyo sought to woo the Zanitlasnad, offering them gifts of power and wonder, luring them with promises of prominence and glory in his government. And some among them found his offerings enchanting, and they fell under his thrall, becoming his slaves.

But the hearts of the Zanitlasnad upon Zhdant were noble, and they could not fathom the depths of Untsaypyo's ambition. His desire for dominion grew ever more monstrous, until the day came when he could no longer hide the darkness that had taken root in his soul. With a swift and savage stroke he turned against his brethren, betraying them with a force of will and an army that had been gathered in secret over many ages. Monstrous beings he sent against them, dark constructs and twisted creatures of the dark heart of the cosmos, creatures who had been warped by his will into horrific forms. These were his servants in the Great War of the Heavens, a war that would last a thousand years and shake the very foundations of Zhdant.

Thus began the war that would mark the end of the Zanitlasnad's reign. The heavens themselves trembled in response to the strife, as the sun and the moon became silent witnesses to the battle between the Old Ones. The armies of Untsaypyo clashed against the forces of the loyal Zanitlasnad, and the world of Zhdant was torn apart by the fury of their conflict. The great cities of Zhdant that had once flourished in harmony fell beneath the relentless onslaught of destruction, and the seas that had for a time been calm arose in fury, lashed by the rage of Viepchaklzhdieni.

The war was long and brutal. The Zanitlasnad, wise though they were, found themselves fighting a foe who understood their own powers and sought to use them against them. For Untsaypyo knew the ancient ways of his kin and twisted them, manipulating the very elements and forces that had once been used to nurture Zhdant.

The battlefields stretched across the land. Great winds howled through shattered mountain passes, while the seas boiled beneath the wrath of the moon. Rivers ran red, and the once-verdant fields became wastelands of ash and ruin. In every corner of Zhdant, the echoes of the war could be heard, for the sky itself had become a battleground, as untold forces clashed and rained destruction upon the land.

The greatest of the Zanitlasnad, those who had led the creation of the world, fought bravely and valiantly to protect their people. Yet they could not halt the tide of darkness that swept across the land. Their magic, their wisdom, and their might were no match for the sheer extermination and malice of Untsaypyo. In the end, they made a terrible decision — one that would spare their most trusted and beloved servants, the Zhodani, from the horrors of the war.

In the shadow of impending destruction, the Zanitlasnad gathered the Zhodani and gave them a task of utmost importance: to flee the city of Zhdantpreql, the City of Refuge, and seek refuge in the distant and sacred Shivvajdatl, the Mountains of Moonlight. These peaks, untouched by the wars below, were to be their sanctuary. It was a bitter farewell, for the

Zhodani had long been a part of the Zanitlasnad, their light, and their wisdom intertwined.

And so the Zhodani departed, their hearts heavy with grief, leaving behind the city that had been their home and the masters that had given them life and wisdom, knowing that they would never see either again. They climbed the winding paths that led into the heights of the Shivvajdatl, where the moon's light cast long shadows upon the land. The journey was arduous, but they were strong, and the mountains provided them shelter from the madness that raged below.

From their sanctuary high above, the Zhodani watched with heavy hearts as the war reached its devastating climax. For a year and a day, the skies above Zhdantpreql burned with fire as the full force of Untsaypyo's wrath was unleashed upon the city. The forces of the dark armies tore into Zhdantpreql with a ferocity unseen before, while the moon itself raged, shaking the very bones of the earth. The wise have said that the sky turned red, and even the stars themselves faltered in their courses as the forces of light and darkness collided in a cataclysmic storm of destruction.

When the fires finally died and the ash settled, nothing remained of Zhdantpreql. The shining city, the heart of Zhdant, had been reduced to shattered ruins. The Zhodani, high in the mountains, could do nothing but mourn, for their beloved city was gone, and with it, the civilization of the Zanitlasnad.

The war had ended. The Zanitlasnad, though victorious in their final battle, had suffered greatly, and their reign was no more. Untsaypyo had triumphed in his dark war, but in doing so, he had fractured the very worlds he had sought to control, and it was rumored in that time that in his hubris and rage he himself had joined the battle below, falling at last to the death strokes of his own monstrous forces. The Zhdant that had once been a place of harmony and abundance was now a land of scars and broken dreams. The Zanitlasnad, now scattered and weakened, could no longer rule as they once had.

The Zhodani, though spared the worst of the war, now faced a new world, one without the light of their masters to guide them. For many ages, they remained in the mountains, holding the memory of their fallen city and people close to their hearts. Yet, in time, they swore an oath to rebuild what had been lost — not in the same image, but in a new form, one that would honor the sacrifices of the past and bring forth a future of hope.

Thus ended the rule of the Zanitlasnad upon Zhdant. The Great War of the Heavens had torn the world asunder, and the echoes of its fury would live on in the lands for all ages to come. The legacy of Zhdant, the City of Refuge, and the Shining Ones would never be forgotten. It was written in the stars, sung by the winds, and carried by the tides that had once been ruled by the light of Pliebrzhdieni.

III. Noratsetlqikadzani

On The Age of Darkness and the Flight of the Zhodani

Thus began the Age of Darkness, the Noratsetlqikad. For a thousand generations of Zhodani, the world remained locked in the grip of a frozen wasteland. In the early days of the age, the Zhodani—bereft of their masters, the Zanitlasnad—struggled to survive. The once-great civilization they had served was shattered, and they found themselves scattered across the land in small, divided tribes. The warmth of their golden cities had long since faded, replaced by cold camps and nomadic wanderings. No longer the shining ones, the Zhodani were mere survivors and refugees, clinging to life in a world that seemed bent on their destruction.

In these dark days, many of the Zhodani sought refuge in the east, where they believed the ruins of Zhdantpreql, the City of Refuge, might still offer sanctuary. Some sought to reclaim the lost wisdom of the Zanitlasnad, others hoped to uncover the wonders of the ancient world. But those who journeyed eastward found naught but death. The land was poisoned, the skies choked with ash, and the city itself was little more than a twisted ruin, haunted by horrors born of the war. The air itself was thick with a deadly miasma, and monstrous creatures, twisted and mutated by the war's devastation, roamed the land.

Others turned south, hoping that the warmer lands might offer refuge, but the seas were clogged with ice, and the land itself was as inhospitable as the frozen wastes to the north. The southern lands, too, had been poisoned by the war, and no sanctuary was to be found.

Thus, the Zhodani were left with no hope. Their once-great nation was now a fractured remnant, scattered across the barren world, its people divided and despairing. But in the darkest of times, there arose a leader among the Zhodani who would change the course of their fate.

The Rise of Drazhshtevrzda

Drazhshtevrzda, a wise and learned leader, was one of the few Zhodani who had not lost hope. In his youth, he had been favored by the Zanitlasnad, blessed with knowledge of the stars, the ancient ways, and the healing arts. It was Drazhshtevrzda who first spoke of a new land to the west, a land untouched by the ravages of war, a land where life could once again flourish. He had learned of this land from the wisdom passed down to him by the

Zanitlasnad.

But before the Zhodani could reach this land, Drazhshtevrzda knew, would require crossing the vast and inhospitable expanse of the Crashing Ice, the Kichtoetsetl. The Crashing Ice stretched endlessly to the north, a frozen wasteland where no life could survive, a place of constant storms and shifting glaciers. It was a place where even the most resilient of creatures perished, and many Zhodani questioned the wisdom of attempting such a perilous journey.

Yet Drazhshtevrzda's voice rang clear and strong. "If we do not journey west, it is our doom to wither in this frozen graveyard," he declared. "There is a new land where the ice cannot reach, where the light of Pliebrzhdieni can warm our hearts once more. But we must cross the Crashing Ice to find it. We must make the journey, for only by following this path which the Zanitlasnad have shown to me, will lead to our survival."

And so, despite the doubts and fears of many, the Zhodani rallied to Drazhshtevrzda's cause. The first Zhodanizar—the Journey of the Zhodani—began.

The Journey Across the Crashing Ice

For an age, the Zhodani trekked across the endless frozen wasteland, their path marked by nothing but the vast whiteness of snow and ice. There was no shelter, no respite from the biting cold, and the days and nights blurred into one long, frozen nightmare. The light of Pliebrzhdieni, now but a pale glow in the sky, did little to warm them, and the cold winds of the Kichtoetsetl howled endlessly, tearing at their bodies and spirits.

By day, the Zhodani followed the pale light of Pliebrzhdieni, their only guide in a world of unyielding whiteness. By night, the faint glow of Viepchaklzhdieni, the moon, offered a brief and meager respite, but it was a cold, waning light that offered scant relief from the bleak darkness of the starless night sky. The ice beneath their feet cracked and groaned under Viepchaklzhdieni's wrath, as if the world itself was starved for sustenance and sought to swallow them entirely.

There was little to sustain them in the crossing of the Crashing Ice. When they could, they hunted the creatures of the ocean, which swam beneath the thick sheet. But food was scarce, and many perished from hunger, cold, or the cruel forces of nature. And still, the Zhodani pressed on, driven by the hope of a better land to the west.

Years passed. Then decades. The journey stretched into centuries, and the Zhodani despaired of ever finding safe lands. But the children and grandchildren of Drazhshtevrzda—the Drazhshtevdrats—kept the flame of hope alive. They had inherited their ancestor's wisdom and leadership, and they continued the journey, never faltering.

And then, at long last, after a thousand generations of struggle, the Zhodani arrived at the land so long foretold. After many ages of wandering, the skies

had begun to clear and the ice thinned. This new land was fertile and green and the seas, though lashed by Vlepchaklzhdien's fickle fury, were rich with life. They named this new land Dleqiats, the End of Our Quest, for they had at last found the refuge they had so long sought.

The End of the Age of Darkness

Secure in this new land, the Zhodani settled, grew and flourished. In the fullness of time the ice receded, revealing new and fertile lands to the north untouched by the horrors of the war. The light of Pliebrzhdieni shone bright once more in the skies of Zhdant, and life returned to their hearts.

Thus, the first Age of Darkness, the Noratsetlqikad, came to an end. The Zhodani had found their refuge, and though they would never forget the trials of the past, they embraced their new future, a future where the light of Pliebrzhdieni shone brightly once more. And the world of Zhdant, in time, began to heal.

