

MAGIC
The Gathering®

APCALYPSE

INVASION CYCLE • BOOK III



J. Robert King



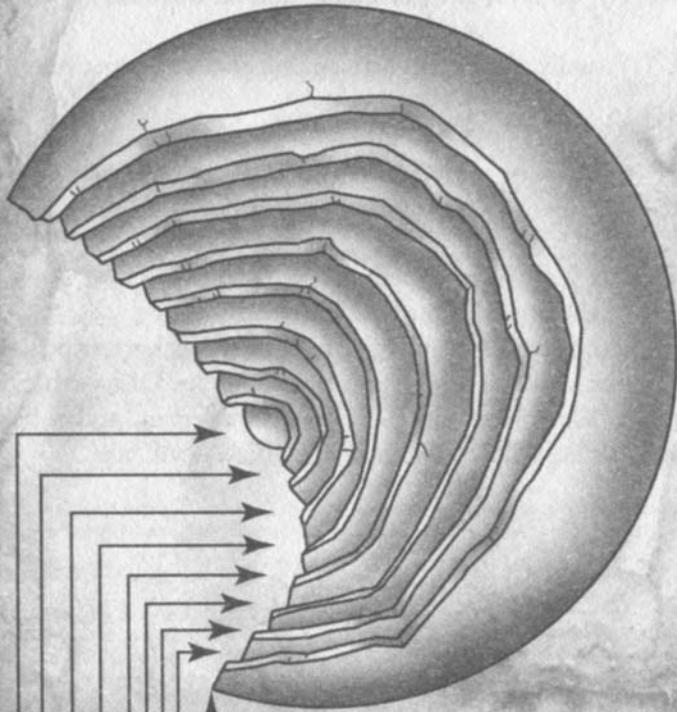
APOCALYPSE

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Phyrexia



Mechanical Parody of Nature

Metal Waste and Smoke Stacks

Impenetrable Tangle of Metal Pipes

Furnaces and Warrior Training Grounds

Boiling Ocean of Glistening Oil

Chambers of Yaugmoth's Inner Circle

Punishment Sphere

Pure Energy

Yaugmoth's Sanctum

Chapter 1

The Gladiators

It all came down to this: two men kneeling side by side before Yawgmoth.

These were no mere men, of course. One was a virtual god. His long, ash-blond hair spread across the stone, and his powerstone eyes were cast in deep shadow. Urza Planeswalker had first opened the gate to Phyrexia, had fought the first Dominarian war against demon hordes, had planned and executed the current world war down to its minutest detail. He had lived for millennia and had spent all the while preparing to face Yawgmoth—though he had never expected to do so in a full, abject, and willful bow. Beside him knelt a man who wasn't even a hundredth his age. No gray showed in his jet-black hair, and no worry lines in his high forehead, though he had inherited worry enough for a whole world. As Urza had unwittingly begun this great horror,

Gerrard had unwillingly received the onus of ending it. Centuries of eugenics had distilled courage, resourcefulness, wit, tenacity, and ferocity in a single vessel—Gerrard Capashen. With these qualities, he should have defeated the invaders. Instead, he bowed to them.

Side by side, the two best hopes for Dominaria pledged themselves to Yawgmoth.

The Ineffable was there and not there. Yawgmoth's mind formed the black dais where Gerrard and Urza bowed. Colder, sharper, more merciless than granite, the

dais stole each breath as it panted from the two men. It felt their homage in splayed and sweating hands. Beyond their fingertips lay more pieces of Yawgmoth's mind—cudgels, axes, swords, maces, whips, flails, branding irons, and every other death conceivable by the Lord of Death. These fantastical weapons, ored and smithed and sharpened by the One Mind, glowed avidly. Yawgmoth was in the dais and the weapons, in the black sands that filled the wide arena and in the black stands that circled them and the black sky that overarced it all. The arena and its weapons were no more or less than the dream of a god.

In all this irreality, only one thing was real.

Gerrard lifted his head and gazed toward the stands.

A solitary figure stood there. Hanna. Hair of gold, eyes of blue, skin of silk, lips of rose—only she was solid and true. Hanna had become all the world to Gerrard. He no longer cared to save Dominaria or even himself. He cared only to save her. To do so he had damned his own soul. That was why Gerrard bowed here.

But what bent the knee of the Planeswalker? Surely he did not bow for true love. Who, out of all eternity, had ever deserved Urza's love? Who but Yawgmoth himself?

Suddenly, Hanna was not alone in the stands. From dark corridors, creatures emerged.

The first were tall and gaunt, with skeletal faces and bodies draped in black robes. They moved like puppets on strings, weightless and jittery. Behind them loped hulking creatures.

Enormous eyes rolled fitfully in their rumpled faces. Clawed hands knuckle-walked down stairs. Then came spidery monsters that ambled on clicking legs. Beasts arrived in multitude—goat-headed warriors and cicada men, clockwork horrors and gibbering imps, creatures with mucous-skin and brains on arthropodal legs, monsters

covered in jag-edged knives, bald albinos with serpent tongues, onyx-eyed angels, blood-lipped devils, vampire hounds, skeletal vipers. Phyrexians all.

Doubtless, this was Yawgmoth's Inner Circle. Who else would he admit to this unholy place? These were the most vicious, murderous, and hateful of his minions. They slithered and floated, clomped and skittered to seats all around the amphitheater. The ground shook. Quite soon, the arena was filled. Hisses, shrieks, bellows, and moans rioted in the air. The stench of rot and filth, blood and oil, rolled downward.

For all their savagery, though, not a beast touched Hanna. Among them she walked, inviolate and determined, toward a balcony on one end of the arena.

It held a great black dragon, larger than the planeswalker Szat, larger than the Primeval Crosis. The beast's mantle bristled with horns. Its manifold wattle expanded with vile breath. Claws as wide around as a man clutched the rail of the balcony and seemed to sink into the stone. Voluminous wings draped robelike down its hackled back.

Urza lifted his head and stared. On wondering lips, he spoke the name, "Yawgmoth."

Hanna ascended to the balcony and seated herself within the ebon shadow of the enthroned dragon. She set her hand on his foretalon.

In amazed dread, Gerrard said, "She's taken his hand. She's taken Yawgmoth's hand."

"That dragon alone is not Yawgmoth," Urza replied, gesturing toward the wicked throng. "They all are Yawgmoth."

Gerrard understood. These gathered spectators were not servants of the god. These were avatars. He had filled the whole arena with fleshly simulacra of himself. He saw

through their eyes and heard through their ears and felt through their bodies. Though thousands upon thousands of creatures assembled, this was, in truth, a private audience.

The crowd quieted. Mouth plates and mandibles shuddered to silence. Every eye trained upon the two figures in their midst. The weight of that stare pressed Gerrard's and Urza's heads down to the stone. Where once they had bowed their faces, now their entire bodies went prostrate. That stare could have crushed them, but it did not. Yawgmoth did not want their corpses. He wanted their worship.

Through thousands of teeth and from thousands of tongues, a single voice formed itself: the voice of Yawgmoth. "At last, it has come to this."

"Yes, Lord Yawgmoth," breathed Urza reverently, "at last."

"It was inevitable," continued the voice of the multitude, the voice of the One. "All living things will bow before us. All things that do not bow will die. Even you, our greatest foes, lie now upon your faces in worship—and you live."

"Praise be to thee, Lord Yawgmoth," responded Urza.

Gerrard lay silent before the awful god.

"But you will not both live. Only one is needed to hand us Dominaria. Only one will ascend. The other will die."

The men lifted their heads and stared toward the high balcony.

Gerrard's eyes reflected the slim blue glow of Hanna.

Urza's eyes—queerly faceted things—reflected only the utter blackness of the dragon.

The men did not speak to their new master, but their faces asked a unison question: Is it I, Lord? Is it I who will sit in the hollow of your breast? Is it I who will die?

"We do not choose who will live and who will die. Through conflict, we rise. Through killing, we live. Through phyresis, we are transformed. We have slaughtered nations and worlds, have piled bodies to the heavens that we might ascend them. And we have ascended.

"If you will ascend, you must do so in battle. Already, you have risen this far. You have buried friends—nations of friends—and climbed up their backs. How else would you win your way here, to bow before us? But to rise beside us, you must fight one battle more, must bury one friend more.

"You, Urza Planeswalker, and you, Gerrard Capashen, shall battle one another to the death. We are the Lord of Death. We shall make the victor our servant. We shall make the slain soul our plaything."

Urza stared solemnly toward the balcony, his eyes glinting in thought. "Great Lord, forgive my presumption, but it would be a waste to destroy this masterpiece beside me. Gerrard Capashen took eight hundred years to engineer. Rather than destroy him, allow me to grant him to you, a gift, as was my titan engine—"

Gerrard interrupted, "I was about to say what a shame it would be to smash this old fossil. So many would pay to see his bones."

Urza snorted. "You are a mere man. You cannot hope to defeat me. I am a planeswalker."

Before Gerrard could respond, the crowd spoke the words of Yawgmoth. "Not here, Urza. You are not a planeswalker here. We have stripped you of every weapon, every spell, every immunity. Here, you and Gerrard both are mortal. One of you will prove it all too soon. Gerrard, let youth empower you. Urza, let age empower you. They and your wits are your natural weapons. The only other weapons you may wield are those before you."

The gladiators—for that was what they had become—turned their gazes to the swords, axes, and clubs ranked before them. Motes of energy raced around razor-sharp blades and brutal spikes.

"Each is deadly in its own right. Each is also magically enhanced to strike not simply flesh but also spirit. Perfectly conceived, perfectly designed, perfectly balanced, these weapons are the finest you will ever wield. Learn from them. Experiment. Practice on each other, and when you can strike a clean and killing blow, do so. We judge the living and the dead. Only a pure and worthy victory will be rewarded."

Gerrard raised himself to one knee. Clear eyed, he peered toward Yawgmoth and Hanna. "I'll gladly fight Urza. He created me in misery and doomed me to kneel here. I would fight him and slay him for no reward, and ascending beside you, Lord Yawgmoth, is great reward. Still, the contest would be more interesting if you'd give one extra boon to the winner and one extra curse to the loser."

The horrid menagerie heard. Through fangs and proboscises, they spoke. "We will do it. The victor shall receive that which he most desires. The soul of the vanquished, gathered unto us, will receive that which he most dreads. But your foe shall declare first. Name your desire, Urza called Planeswalker."

Though Gerrard had lifted himself to one knee, Urza yet lay facedown. His mouth sent ghosts of steam across the stone. He spoke in a whisper, but the dais was Yawgmoth. It gathered the sound and sent it out through the arena.

"I wish but one boon, Great Lord—to learn from you, to understand all you have done and how you have done it, to explore the brilliance I behold in this place, in this world. I want to know how you have brought metal to life

and how you have made life into metal. I want to understand not only artifice but phyresis. I want to worship, and in worshipping, to know."

Silence answered that request, and then the voices: "So it shall be granted to you, Urza called Planeswalker, should you prevail." The eyes of the crowd turned upon Gerrard. "And what of you, Capashen? What boon would you beg?"

He rose to stand. The movement seemed so strange, there beside the prostrate planeswalker. But something in Gerrard's eyes prevented Yawgmooth from lashing out.

"I want only Hanna. Return her to life. I don't want her on a string, as you keep Selenia. I want her free, alive, and able to walk through that portal back to Dominaria. I want you to place a mark of protection on her, that no Phyrexian dare harm her. For Hanna I fight."

A thrill moved through the assembled host. In the black balcony, Hanna sat beside the huge lizard. Her hand did not lift from its great talon.

"For one woman, you give up a whole world?" Gerrard took a deep breath. "She is my whole world." Heads shook and tongues clucked. "A great weakness, Gerrard, to have so big and soft a heart—a great weakness in a world filled with blades. We will grant this boon to you, as you ask, should you prevail." The air whined with an eager tension. A sudden gleam traced the weapons at the edge of the dais. "Now, Urza Planeswalker and Gerrard Capashen—rise and take up blades and do battle."

The Benalish master-of-arms cared nothing for halberds or poniards, tridents or mattocks. Gerrard wanted a sword—no unwieldy bastard sword or fainting rapier but a solid cutlass, the blade of a skyfarer. He strode toward the nearest one. Stooping, he clutched its hilt. It tingled, alive in his grip. Barbs of energy prickled across his knuckles and moved through his veins. The sword and its arcane powers

reached through the sinews of his body and tied knots in his heart. This blade had much to teach. Gerrard spun, leveling the sword. It hummed, thirsty for the blood of the planeswalker.

Urza stood there, unarmed. His strange gaze moved patiently from one weapon to the next. Here was the artificer, analyzing each hammer and rod against Gerrard as though he were an engine to be disabled. Through his mind tumbled weight ratios, tensile strengths, moments of arc, and calculated torque. He would not slay Gerrard but dismantle him, an artificer destroying a rogue machine.

The thought enraged Gerrard. The knots in his heart tightened, wringing hatred from twisted muscle. Let Urza ponder his weapon choice, spending time he did not have. Gerrard would teach him his error. He strode across the dais.

Eyes gleaming, Urza stooped and drew up a simple pike of polished steel. It was a defensive weapon, meant to keep attackers at bay, but useless once they had closed. Still, the black energies that crawled down the shaft told that this weapon had its own secrets. Power jagged into the hands of the planeswalker and crawled beneath his flesh, teaching him its ways.

Gerrard roared through gritted teeth and charged. He whirled the sword overhead and brought it down in a powerful stroke.

Urza countered, thrusting the pike up before him. Blunt steel deflected razor steel. The cutlass ground its way down the haft but could not force it aside. With two hands on the weapon, Urza had leverage. He drove the pike's head toward Gerrard's face.

The younger man checked his attack, planted his foot, and dropped back. The point of the pike slashed just beneath his jaw, opening a red gash within his beard. His

blood traced a line through the air. Red spots spattered the black stone, which drank it hungrily.

In the stands, hackled heads lifted toward the sky, and slimy throats poured out exclamations of joy. The dragon gripped the rail gladly. Only Hanna looked on in uncertain silence.

Gerrard retreated to gather focus. He wiped a warm smear across his off hand. First blood belonged to Urza. The old gaffer had strength after all, but Gerrard would draw last blood.

He lifted his blade again overhead and lunged. As before, the planeswalker's pike rammed up toward his face. This time Gerrard twisted to one side. He seized the haft of the weapon in his bloodied hand and hauled on it, extending his cutlass. Urza would either have to stagger onto the waiting blade or release his pike. He did the latter, though not quickly enough. Gerrard jabbed the butt of the pike at his foe, catching Urza in the throat and flinging him back atop the weapons.

Spinning the pike, Gerrard pointed it at Urza. "You've killed so many. How does it feel to stare at your own death?"

Urza leaped to his feet in a motion that belied his ancient frame. He held before him a mace whose head sported wicked spikes. A beaming look filled Urza's eyes.

"Always I have stared at my own death, Gerrard. I built engines to drive it away, but I saw it in every polished plate. I built academies to break time's tyranny, but I buried my students there. I built even you, Gerrard, and here you are, the face of death."

The mace whirled wickedly between them, bashing back Gerrard's sword.

"But you are not my death, Gerrard. Yawgmoth is. He is my death, and your death, and the death of every creature.

I accept that. You must too. Yawgmoth will never give Hanna to you. He is the death of all."

A cheer rose from the crowd. Yawgmoth loved Urza's speech.

Gerrard did not. "You're wrong, Urza, about this and everything else. I'll win back Hanna and free her from this place. I'll slay you." He hurled himself forward, wanting only to draw the man's blood. The cutlass sliced toward the planeswalker's neck.

Urza ducked, swinging his mace to strike Gerrard's head.

Both weapons hit at once—spikes through the young man's cheek and a sword through the old man's ear. Locked for a moment, teeth gritted in nonsmiles, the foes stared at each other. They stared at the bleeding face of death

Chapter 2

Revelations from the Thran Tome

"I know what to do," said the silver golem, Karn.

He stood on the slanted and scorched deck of *Weatherlight*. Torn apart by dragons, the ship had crash-landed on a volcanic slope. Wounded crew lay all about.

"I know how to save the world."

Captain Sisay stared incredulously at him. Her jaw hung open. Sweat wept down her ebony skin. She glanced up the slope, where monstrous figures descended toward the ship.

"You know how to save the world ... ? That's ironic, since we can't even save ourselves."

Sisay strode to the nearest ray cannon. She pumped the treadle. It was sluggish. No power mounted. She spit on the manifold. The moisture only hung there, not sizzling away.

"We got any guns?"

From the other cannons came shouts. "Negative."

"Not here, Captain."

"We've got nothing."

"Damn," hissed Sisay. She clutched the fire controls in hope that some energy might remain. Only a twist of smoke issued from the barrel. "We've got nothing."

"We've got something," Karn said. He had followed her to the gun, and he held out before him the *Thran Tome*. "We have the salvation of the world."

"A lot of good that'll do—" Sisay said, gesturing toward the approaching armies. She drew her cutlass. Jagged

silhouettes filled the mountain. "I'm glad you're not a pacifist anymore."

Karn shook his head. A strange light glowed in his metallic face. He seemed almost to smile. "We won't have to fight them. That is work for others." He gestured to the broad volume in his hand. "This is our work."

"That is our work," Sisay insisted, sweeping her sword out toward the armies. Her mouth dropped open.

No longer did the beasts descend the slope. Horn-headed Phyrexians turned instead to engage a new foe—horn-headed minotaurs. The warriors of Hurloon attacked with a fury born of vengeance. They dismantled Phyrexians and flung away the scales and bones. Other Dominarians fought too. Tolarian Metathran, blue muscled and silver haired, seemed like warriors made of sky. Though they were colder killers than their hot-blooded allies, the Metathran were no less deadly. Battle axes clove spiked heads. Strivas sliced claws from monstrous hands. War cries bellowed from minotaurs, and battle songs from Metathran. It was a pitched battle, but a matched one.

"They have things well enough in hand," Karn said. Sisay shook her head. "Not for long."

Across the slope galloped Phyrexian gargantuas. Huge fists of muscle, the creatures bellowed. Their talons shook the ground. Their claws clutched and killed minotaurs. Their fangs clamped down on Metathran.

"They are more than sufficient," Karn said as more defenders arrived.

Yavimayan Kavus swarmed into the battle. Enormous lizards born of fire and foliage, Kavus had a taste for Phyrexian flesh. The smallest Kavus were four-legged beasts that could gobble down a bloodstock. The largest were six-legged monsters that could swallow a whole platoon. In

moments, they did just that. The battle turned into a Kavu feeding frenzy.

"And should you need greater assurances," Karn said placidly, "behold."

Beyond his outflung arm marched an army that eclipsed the sun. From marshy forests below strode magnigoth treefolk. As tall as mountains and as wide around as towns, the animate trees were indomitable defenders of the world. Their roots clutched the ground, driving them toward the battle. Their boughs reached out upon the wind. In scant minutes, *Weatherlight* would be safely surrounded by the treefolk.

Sisay stared wonderingly. "How did you know, Karn?"

"The ship," he replied simply. "Her hull calls to the magnigoths. She summoned them."

Sisay shook her head. "No. I mean all of this. How did you know we would be safe?"

He seemed to shrug, an odd movement in his massive shoulders. "I suddenly know a great many things. Come, I will explain." With that, he turned and strode aft, toward the captain's study.

Sisay followed. She absently waved for Tahngarth to join her. "You'd better come hear this."

The minotaur warrior looked up where he crouched beside the capstan. It had ripped itself loose during the crash, and Tahngarth had been working to reattach it. He wasn't in great shape either. His white-and-brown fur was mottled with burns, some serious. Sweat rolled from his twisted horns. Tahngarth nodded, glancing after Sisay.

"Come on, Multani," he rumbled, seeming to speak to a hole in the deck. "Karn's found something."

From shattered planks and charred wood, another figure formed. He constructed his body from *Weatherlight's* living hull and lines. A tall, splintery frame with joints of hemp

and knothole eyes, Multani made even Tahngarth seem small.

"I hope it's something miraculous," Multani said. "I am fresh out of miracles."

Ever reticent, Tahngarth only nodded. The two followed their captain.

Sisay strode across the amidships deck. En route to her study, she crouched down beside Orim. The healer knelt next to a man who had broken his arm in the crash landing. She had splinted the limb and was finishing the final knot on the sling. Sisay set a hand on her shoulder.

Orim looked up, smiling ironically. Her eyes twinkled like the coins that hung in her dark hair. "He's the last of the serious ones. Lots of other bumps and bruises, though." Sisay studied the man. "How's your arm, Ensign?" "Fine, Captain," he replied, mustering up his courage. He lifted the splinted arm. "I'm thinking even of sharpening the end of the splint and using it like a claw."

Sisay laughed. "Good man." She turned toward Orim. "We need you in the study."

Orim nodded, looking above Sisay's shoulders. Multani and Tahngarth towered there. "You're burned!"

"Later," Tahngarth said, waving away the suggestion. "Important business."

A pensive look entered Orim's eyes, a look shared by her comrades. This was all that remained of Weatherlight's command core. Gerrard was gone—heaven knew where—and Squee with him. Hanna was dead, and Mirri, and Rofellos. Crovax and Selenia had turned to evil, and who knew the fate of Takara or Ertai? Only these five remained—two women, a minotaur, a forest spirit ... and Karn. He waited for them beyond the captain's study door.

"Let's go," Sisay said quietly. She led her comrades into the study.

It was a decorous space. On either side, the stern gunwales formed converging walls. Wood gleamed with life. Lanterns shone on the ship's ribs. Low benches with deep cushions sat beside ornate rugs, and bookshelves bolted their precious cargoes firmly in place lest a rapid course change should scatter them everywhere. On the desk on one wall, the *Thran Tome* lay, bathed in lantern light.

Karn stood beside it. He held his massive hands outward. "Please, friends, make yourselves comfortable."

Sisay and Orim sat on the bench. Tahngarth merely planted his hooves and crossed his arms. Multani made himself at home by melting into the hull. His body of splinters fell into a tidy pile beside the boards, and his spirit scintillated through the living wood.

In a low, intense voice, Karn said, "In desperation, I found what I found." He lifted the *Thran Tome* in one hand and held it up. "This book, this ancient part of Gerrard's Legacy, has been our sole source of information about Weatherlight, but damned laconic—" Karn almost seemed to color. "Forgive my language."

Sisay gave him a crooked grin. "We're all sailors here. Continue."

"Always before I was patient, teasing out information for small repairs, small changes. This time, though, the engine— well, it is no less than destroyed."

Sisay stared stoically forward. The only emotion that showed on her face was the slight hitch of her mouth as her teeth caught her lip.

"I opened the book to see the same meaningless illustrations, the same partial explanations. I hurled it—"

"You what?" Sisay interrupted.

"—and when it landed, it had opened ... differently." That enigmatic announcement was enough to stun the

others into silence. Karn met their wondering gazes and strode toward them, holding the book open. "Do you see? Do you remember these diagrams? These words?"

Sisay, who had spent the most time poring over the tome, stared levelly. "Yes, of course. The same indecipherables."

Nodding, Karn turned page after page. Then, like a showman doing sleight of hand, he opened the book to its central spread, flattened it so the two halves of the spine met and fused, turned the book on its end, and opened it again. The *Thran Tome* was suddenly twice its previous dimensions, with a much longer spine and wider, deeper pages. Across those pages appeared, in part, the words and images they had all seen before, incorporated now into larger patterns, larger pictures.

"These are not separate pages," Karn explained as he turned them slowly, allowing his friends to gape at them. "They are all joined in a single fabric, layered atop itself, folded and seamed. It is a fabric that tells of what has come before. In reading it, I have discerned what is coming next."

It was too much for Sisay. She leaned forward and laid hands upon the new pages. Her fingers gently caressed them. Her eyes roved the images—she saw a man, no, a god, enwrapped in thought as in cloud. The god's brow was rumpled, his long hair wild about his head, and his face cast in deep shadow. An eerie, mad light shone in his buglike eyes. The whole image would have been very disturbing, rendered in turbid strokes of black, except for one bounding column of light whirling into being from the man's brow. It was another man, formed out of thought alone. He was a hope, a savior.

"This isn't a technical manual," Sisay said wonderingly. "This is a portrait."

"This part, yes," agreed Karn, "but it is just one corner of an endless and ever-changing mural that depicts this whole conflict. And for every image here, there are a thousand words. The *Thran Tome* is as much a symphony as a book, a great mosaic of vision, oracle, and beauty."

Sisay said, "How can you have deciphered all this so quickly, from the time of the accident till now?"

The silver golem seemed almost to sigh. "I have had more time. I already knew every page here. Now I am assembling them. They all fit with what I've been remembering—or maybe, I fit for the first time. I've regained a millennium of life, and I'm wriggling free of my silver shell. When I killed at the Battle of Koilos, I remembered having killed before. It was a narrow crack in a great dam, but through it trickled and then sprayed and then flooded a thousand years. I see it all, and much more.

"What I see here," he splayed his hand across the pages, "I've already seen here." He ran his fingers across his head.

Still staring at the image of the god's brainchild, Sisay said, "What does all of it mean?"

"This is Gerrard," said Karn, "bom from the mind of Urza Planeswalker. For centuries, Urza strove to create the perfect creature to inherit his perfect machine the Legacy. He made the Metathran, though they were too dependent upon orders. He turned next to humans and made creatures the likes of Crovax, and even yourself, Sisay." Karn slid a gentle finger beneath the woman's chin, a touch so soft and familiar as to make her look away. "He was very near perfection with you and Crovax—perhaps too near. You each have a pure heart—which can be as easily made pure evil. No, for his warrior, Urza sought a rugged, pragmatic, and slightly angry human. For all his faults, Gerrard is the incarnate thought of Urza Planeswalker, and the last hope for the world."

"But where is Gerrard?" asked Tahngarth. "And where is Urza?"

Karn's eyes grew dull. He seemed lost. "I do not know. But in their absence, we must be them both. We must wield the Legacy."

"Yes, Karn," Sisay pressed, "tell us about the Legacy. Tell us about the Null Rod and the Juju Bubble and the Skyshaper—"

"And the Bones of Ramos," added Orim.

"And *Weatherlight*," Tahngarth offered.

"And even me," Karn finished. He flattened the *Thran Tome* again at its centermost page, pressed the edges of the spine together, turned the book, and opened it again.

Larger pictures beamed from the inner pages, these florid, painted by a skillful hand. Islands floated on blue seas. Lava pools quenched thirsty mechanisms. Forests grew living cogs for enormous wheels. Grain rippled beneath feathery skies. Bogs opened to tannic depths. Hidden in all the scenes were parts of the Legacy.

"The Legacy. How long we have sought its pieces. How much hope we have hung on them," Karn said as he opened the book again.

The next page showed Urza garbed in a raiment of light, stepping world to world. His robe was magely, dark blue with silver piping. His pockets dripped strange artifacts. They occasionally tumbled to remain in one world or another.

"Urza wanted to keep these powerful artifacts out of the wrong hands. Some he scattered. Others he left hidden where he had discovered them. Some even—your Bones of Ramos, Orim—were hunks of machinery left from the war on Argoth. All were devices that could enhance his flying machine. That's why he set us on the scavenger hunt."

Multani spoke from the hull behind them. "Urza could always see the details but not the whole. He made great machines like you, Karn, and *Weatherlight*, but had no idea what to do with them."

Karn's eyes were haunted by memories. "When I was first made, I was meant to travel back in time and destroy Yawgmoth before the Thran-Phyrexian war. The time machine, though, could reach back only a day or two, and it eventually overloaded, destroying Tolaria. Then Urza had no use for me. I had to find uses for myself. Working the mana rig at Shiv, manning the engines of *Weatherlight*—a thousand years, later even guarding Gerrard. I was simply a scrapped design, a piece of junk, except that I always sought some way to be useful.

"The rest of the Legacy is the same. We have hoped in it wrongly. It's a collection of junk unless we know what to do with the pieces. These artifacts are powerful, true, but they are not perfect. Urza never had a single purpose in mind for them. He was an inveterate tinkerer, who knew a good bit of machine or magic when he saw it, and who stored it away until later. He knew all the pieces would be powerful in the right hands. Those hands were Gerrard's. Now they must be ours. We must decide what to do with the Legacy."

Again from the wood spoke Multani. "Urza could never see the whole, but you do now, Karn. Tell us. What do we do with the Legacy?"

Karn folded the *Thran Tome* once, halving its size, and once more, until it appeared as the book they had known before.

"Come with me. The steam will have cleared from the engine room now." With the *Thran Tome* tucked under his arm, Karn strode from the chamber.

Tahngarth, Orim, and Sisay traded wary glances. Sisay spoke for them all. "What do you make of the new Karn?"

Orim shook her head. "He speaks like an oracle. He suddenly knows so much."

With a huff, Tahngarth said, "He suddenly thinks we need to be Gerrard."

Standing, Sisay said, "We do. Gerrard and Urza and Hanna ... We need to be everyone and everything if we want to win." She was the first to follow the silver golem. Orim shrugged and went as well. Tahngarth gave another snort before following. For his part, Multani coursed through the planks at their feet, through the amidships hatch, down the companionway, and through the engine room bulwark.

Karn had been right. The place was in shambles. The joists overhead ran with condensed steam. Droplets plunged down onto a shattered engine. Fissures snaked across the fuselage. Seven of the twelve mana batteries seeped green superfluids onto the planks. Power conduits smoked. Manifolds crackled with heat stress. The Skyshaper was half crushed by the impact, and the Juju Bubble was as opaque as a cataracted eye.

Beside it all stood Karn, both engineer and engine component. He seemed somehow deflated, standing there in the presence of the ruined engine. He clutched the *Thran Tome* as though it were a shield.

Captain Sisay led her crew into the engine room. She stopped and stared at the wreck.

Sisay let out a groan. She laid her hands on the ragged mechanism. It seemed *Weatherlight's* pain traveled up her body. Her head drooped, and her knees buckled.

"What good is the Legacy when *Weatherlight* is in pieces?"

Karn's voice was solemn and low. "In pieces, yes—*Weatherlight*, and all of us. It had to be broken down to be rebuilt into something new. My memories have been transforming me." He lifted the *Thran Tome*. "Here are the memories of *Weatherlight*. Let them transform her." He reverently laid the *Thran Tome* atop its manifold. "If *Weatherlight's* engine yet lives, she will remember and be transformed."

Light awoke along the edges of the book. Every page beamed. A fiery glow licked up across the leather cover. From orange to blue, the radiance intensified. Soon, the *Thran Tome* was fully engulfed. Seeking arms of energy ran from the book onto the engine manifold. Where the fire went, cracks fused. Dents smoothed. Metal thickened. Glass sealed. In mere moments, the dancing power had spread to envelop the whole engine.

The fire twisted metal into new configurations. It forged new connections. It widened the firebox and deepened the mana batteries and reshaped the whole mechanism. The crew could only stand back and gape. Sisay muttered, "What is it doing?"

"Transforming," Karn said. "It is becoming what it must become."

A voice came from the wooden walls all around—the voice of Multani. "I will do the same with the hull—infuse it with the memories of the ages. I will transform it into what it must become."

"Soon, *Weatherlight* will attain her final configuration," Karn said.

Sisay nodded, eyes wide. "But still, she is only a tool. Still, we must decide what to do with her."

"Yes," Karn said. "We must transform as well."

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