

History of Aridus

"Flying machines and stone streets covered the world. Huge monolithic buildings dotted the landscape like spots on a mongrel dog. The people lived comfortably and went about their daily lives. There was no magic, only science. Science was to be the catalyst for the Apocalypse to come.

The people of the old earth, the name long forgotten, we for the most part peaceful. But, like every race or village, there are those who wish to dominate and rule all. As can be expected when tyrants try to rule, the people rose up and war erupted around the entire world. Flying machines dropped objects releasing unbelievable, godly amounts of energy causing entire cities to vanish in a blink and flash of searing light."

- Excerpt from the histories of the Magi.

"We watched as the human race warred with itself. Their inventions of destructive power becoming more powerful than the last. Destruction reigned upon the world. We retreated further into our forests, the Queen choosing to not involve the People in the world for fear of our own extinction.

We watched as the human race nearly annihilated itself, brought to the brink of extinction by their inventions and greed for power. We watched as they fled to the mountains and under ground. We watched as their cities crumbled and decayed.

We continue to watch...."

- Lost Records within the Elven Royal vaults in Anthatal.

The Valheru, also called The Dragon Lords, were the first race and among the most powerful in the known universe. They rode on the backs of great dragons, travelling throughout the lands in search of plunder. Arrogantly presuming themselves to be gods, they also created lesser races to serve as slaves. As a result of their wanton acts of destruction, energy was released from the once mighty civilizations the Valheru Destroyed. Reaching a critical point, these energies formed a new pantheon of gods. While the new gods strove among themselves, the Valheru, exhorted by one of thier own (Draken-Korin), attempted to overthrow the new order of gods. Ashen-Shugar was the only Dragon Lord to disapprove of his Draken-Korin's plans, but he did nothing but watch as the other Dragon Lords rose to battle the gods. Ashen-Shugar, the most powerful of the Valheru, felt something "alien" to his kind, a desire to protect the world. Space and time became warped as the Valheru battled the gods in the time known as the Chaos Wars. Of one hundred gods, only sixteen survived, but the Valheru were defeated. With the exception of Ashen-Shugar, the Valheru were cast away into another dimension to prevent them from returning to their homeworld, Midkemia. With the coming of the new gods Ashen Shugar felt himself become alien to the new order, as if reality rejected his nature and he fell into a torpor, sleeping in his mountain on his throne many ages after the rest of the Valheru had gone away.

The Elves

In the beginning the elves lived with the other Fae creatures, pixies and nymphs and satyrs long before man moved out of caves and began to farm. The elves had a wanderlust that separated them from the other Fae, their curiosity about the mortal world caused many tribes to leave the Fae realm. In honor of their Fae cousins and their Fae magic the elves created a tree in the City of Anthatal that had several purposes. It became known as the Tree of Life, a symbol of the elves' new life outside of the Fae realm and the source of Elven magic. The tree was blessed by the father of the elves, Corellon Larethian, at the tree's creation making a portal to the Fae world for those who know the proper spells and rituals.

Over the next several thousand years the elves watched as the race of man crawled from the caves and matured into roaming bands of hunters, following the migrations of the deer and other wild game they used for sustenance. The elves watched as man settled and became farmers, growing crops in inhospitable and nearly barren ground then learning that the darker, mineral rich soil was better.

The elves watched, and grew angry, as mankind invaded the great forests of the world, felling trees without remorse or understanding. It was then that the elves made themselves known to mankind, becoming instructors in the sanctity of nature and how to gather from the forests what was needed and how to replenish what they took.

This lasted for several centuries and the elves faded back into their forest domains, content that the humans would do as instructed, how could they not?

Centuries passed and the elves faded from mankind's memory into the realm of myth and legend as science overshadowed magic and mysticism. Wars raged and the humans nearly destroyed the entire world. It was during this time that the elves were separated from their homeland of Anthatal and a new god came to lead them from their troubles, the elf god Tanethir and his wife Alariel. Some elves resisted the new god, their hearts staying true to Corellon, but those soon vanished in the wanderings of the elves. It was Tanethir who told stories of the humans causing such strife before, and so convincing was He that the heart of the elf king was swayed into that belief.

For the elves, as told in the King's personal journals, this was the second such event caused by the human race and they would no longer try to protect a race so bent on killing itself. The elves stayed in their magically protected forests and watched as the remnants of the human race retreated into sheltered valleys, delved into the earth's protective embrace, or hid within the forests and watched as the centuries passed and new races began to emerge once more.

The Feral Gnomes

First to appear after the great holocaust were the vicious and feral gnome like creatures. Simply referred to as feral gnomes by the elves. They appeared from the deep forests, creatures of a wizened appearance and bleary looking eyes, and large noses. Their skin yellow tinged and their smile reveals feral looking teeth. These feral gnomes returned to the daylight after years of hiding in burrows, digging with their hands. Tribal and tenacious, these gnomes worshipped strange beings and would offer up as a sacrifice any who were caught trespassing in their lands.

The Treydacht

The second race to appear, or at least become known to the elves, is the Treydacht. In the mountains lived tribes of these huge and brutal creatures, creations of the evil king of old. A genetic creation, spliced from monster and human to create the ultimate warrior. These were thought destroyed when the people rebelled against the king of old, however, they survived and flourished in the desolate ranges of the Desolate Mountains. When they came back into the world of men, they brought with them something long lost and forgotten... a god. A god that valued battle and strength and punishing your enemies. Reclusive and tribal, the Treydacht very rarely allowed those who passed through their territory to live.

The Dwarves

From the ground came the grumbling but hearty dwarves. A short race, but muscled like a bull and with an endurance beyond anything humans had ever seen. They were master builders of stone and metal and reintroduced the world to forged tools and weapons. Taciturn and gruff, the dwarves are usually creatures of good and will help their neighbors as much as able, however, their people and family tend to be forefront in their minds.

The Humans

The last to appear, and the one the elves believed should have been exterminated, were the humans once again. They started out differently from the previous mass destruction that they'd caused. This time they remembered, and they remembered the teachings of the elves. This was an astonishment to the Elves, but also made them curious.

The humans once again became farmers, for the most part, in small villages and hamlets, content to stay as they were with no desire to explore to create more than what was needed to maintain their homes.

The races lived in peace for many, many years and then an evil human king decided that he wanted to take over the world for himself. The days of magic have been long since forgotten and science ran supreme in the world. The king, out of fear or pure dislike or a feeling of superiority, made an effort to exterminate the other races. He started with the weaker halflings and moved on to the orcs and then to the ogres. His march of destruction and death was nearly unstoppable.

The other races hid in caves and in the deep forests out of sight and out of mind of the insane king, only a remnant remained of the elves, gnomes, and halflings.

With the other races out of the fight, the king now focused on taking over the rest of the human race. His scientists experimented with old monster DNA and created his own race of super soldiers. Resilient, strong, and pure fighting machines they dominated the world and the king ruled for nearly two hundred years.

A rebellion was launched against the king, the people wishing to be free of his tyranny and the fear. The weapons used and the energy released in the battles nearly destroyed the world. The king vanished along with nearly ninety percent of the world's people of all races. The world had been sent back into the stone age.

After the destruction and near extinction of the human race there were few survivors. Those that survived attempted to gather all the knowledge of the past into one place. They became the knowledge keepers and tried to use the knowledge to keep the human race from complete extinction.

After centuries of fighting for survival and clawing their way back to a more "civilized" way of life, the knowledge keepers began to scour the amassed writings and knowledge. In their cavernous vaults they found that the science of the old world would no longer work, and much of their understanding had been lost. Much of the books and writings had decayed and the language forgotten. They had to find an alternative.

Within the books of knowledge were those of the mystical arts, once though just a fancy or sleight of hand and trickery, illusion. They began to delve into the mystic world and found that magic was strong in the world, though not always reliable. The keepers of knowledge soon took upon them the name of Magi. It was during this time that the humans realized they were not alone.

As happens to all civilizations, war once again began to sprout over territory and greed. Weapons were made, weapons of power and might. And within several hundred years the races nearly destroyed themselves, again... Once again, the elves merely watched and did nothing, their long memories recalling events from centuries before. Once more, the King ordering the elves to remain secluded from the other races.

Current Time:

The races now have their third chance at life, fortune and survival. Humans and dwarves work together to build towns and cities, though most humans live in small hamlets and know nothing beyond fifty miles of where they live. Superstition runs high when the weather turns hostile and black. On sunny days, strangers are welcomed and offered food and shelter.

In the greater parts of the world, Rune Magic is used to enhance lords and warriors, creating a near invincible warrior or a prince that cannot be denied. However, there are ways to destroy these mighty Lords and warriors of the high and noble houses.

Screams of agony rend the air as sorcerers called facilitators use magical branding irons to draw the attributes from one person and grant them to another.

By this method, a lord may take various strengths from hundreds or even thousands of his vassals and bestow them upon himself—or his warriors.

These strengths include the mighty powers of wit, brawn, and speed...

Even such basic sensory powers like sight, hearing and smell can be given or taken.

Thus, a wise man who surrenders his wit will become a drooling idiot while his lord draws closer to having a flawless memory. A man who grants his sight will go blind, while his lord gains hawk-like vision. A woman who bestows her beauty will become a hag, while the lord becomes more and more irresistible to those around him.

But there is an even more terrible price: the attributes only remain with the lord so long as both he and the vassal live. If a vassal dies, the lord loses the attribute and thus can become vulnerable. If the lord dies, the attribute returns the person who gave it. Thus, the Runelords must be ever vigilant in protecting their vassals, even to the point of shutting them away in the dungeons of their castles.

Now is the time for the gods to reveal themselves; time for the elves to come out of hiding. A time for heroic quests, fortune and fame, and religion.

Character Tie-In Plot

Current characters are adventuring through White Plume Mountain, unaware of the chaos happening above. However, they are experiencing strange things.

- Cleric's spells begin to weaken and misfire before they lose connection to their deities altogether.
- Adventurer's run into demons and extra-planar creatures where there should be none.
- Mages' spells begin to behave erratically, and on occasion will backfire.

The floors of the tunnels and caverns leading out of White Plume Mountain are littered with mummified remains of what appear to be humans, elves, and dark elves; all are propped against the walls, looking as if they died while they rested or slept.

Exiting the tunnels, the entire landscape has changed. The forest surrounding the mountain is gone and only desolate shale and rock cover the area. Off in the distance, roughly ten miles to the east, there is a small town or village.