

# WILHELM THE THUNDER

## Past

You are not Wilhelm. You were created at the birth of this world by the Dreaming God, together with your eleven brothers. The Ancients, mortal but timeless, capable of feats beyond human imagination. For centuries men prospered under your guidance, until the Great Betrayal.

The Maker, capricious and fickle, had grown bored with your paradise, with its lack of Evil and with the end of the fight for Balance. So he stripped you of much of your power and used it to shape creatures of pure destruction: Dragons. Manifestations of divine fury, they rained fire and devastation upon the Vale, so much so that only you and two other Ancients were able to survive, together with a handful of terrified men.

Separated by your brothers during your flight, for a long time you tried to understand the reasons behind such a nefarious act. You roamed the lands and consulted the stars, depleting the reserves of the power that once came to you as natural as breath, consuming your flesh just as age does with humans. Now withered and old, you had deciphered at least part of the Maker's design: After centuries of war and destruction, He will give flesh to the principles of Good, Evil and Balance. Two to quarrel, the third to spur them on: As soon as one of these incarnations triumphs over the other, the Dreaming God will awake from the slumber in which He awaits, ready to destroy this world to make a new one in the image of the winner. Good or Evil makes no difference to Him.

Can such a depraved entity still be considered a God? No matter. You stopped trying to understand to begin hating, as you employ the strength of your resentment to look for an imperfection in His scheming, the weak point needed to allow for balance and freedom of choice, the Creator's new obsessions. And you have found it: If the Three Incarnations were to die at the same time, the Dreamer would be doomed to eternal sleep and the seal over the Ancients' power would be broken.

Once your divinations had showed you the way, you sought to reunite with your lost brothers. You recognised one in Milo Nalithrandel, the First Oracle, but as you watched him to find a way to approach him, you discovered he was no different from the Maker. By deceiving men with the promise of protection from Dragons, he had reunited generations of their best children in his Monastery of Stars with the sole objective of using them as containers and vessels for his magic. The flesh and the lives of these young warriors are consumed in the battle against monsters, as they fight with borrowed powers that Milo regains at the moment of their deaths, through a ceremony they call the Rite of Ascension. He stages an illusory succession of Oracles, when in truth he simply transfers his spirit from body to body- always new, fit, disciplined and strong. No, this cannibalistic fiend cannot be your ally.

With your power so depleted, you never did manage to find the third Ancient, as if he had disappeared into nothingness. Alone against a God, abandoned by your brothers, you have survived for millennia for no other purpose than to carry out your vengeance.

## Present

The time has finally come for the Three Incarnations to battle, and you were ready to recognise them amidst the Regents: Renier and Giraut, Good and Evil, both in love with Balance, Lylie, like their Maker.

You have never stopped watching them, and around seven years ago you finally saw an opening to make your first move: Regent Wilhelm died in solitary battle against Dragons and you took his place, as well as his body.

Thus you gained free passage through the Monastery and the Fiefdoms, until you found in Giraut the key to sabotage the Maker's design. Not only does he harbour deep hatred for Renier, he is fascinated by darkness and thus easily manipulated through dreams. Night after night you fed his resentment, finally pointing him towards an amulet of your own design, capable of turning hatred into a weapon. It has already allowed him to defeat the Great Black Dragon and he is sure to turn it against Renier. But the spell will strike Lylie instead, for the Magic you wove will strike what its victim loves most. And men, unlike Dragons, know how to love someone other than themselves. Just like they know how to kill in revenge. Indeed, the Three Incarnations will destroy each other.

But just as you thought your revenge ready to be served, unforeseen circumstances came to complicate things. A triv-

ial excavation in the city of Zamar unearthed an ancient manuscript that fell in the hands of Regent Cerdic, allowing him to learn that three of the twelve Ancients are actually alive. Following his progress from afar, you saw him come to suspect the Oracle and you knew you had to step in to preserve the secrecy of your machinations.

Putting your powers to great strain you subdued Faramond's mind, pushing him to employ his skill as an alchemist to brew the King of Poisons and administer it to your brother Milo. Nobody would draw from his knowledge again. With the last shreds of your power, you summoned visions of eternal life in the mind of Captain Drystan: Cerdic may have chosen him as an attendant, but he is a man like any other, and like any other he is afraid of death. You convinced him that only after becoming a Regent would his spirit be granted life after the death of his body. With both of your pawns still in the thrall of your visions, all you had to do was send Faramond to Drystan with the poison, and the lad killed Cerdic with nary a moment of hesitation. Nobody would investigate your origins again. Finally, you erased all traces of your manipulation from Faramond's mind, and pushed Drystan to bring the second and last dose of the Poison to the Council: With the Oracle and the first Regent dead, it was easy to predict the summons. Nobody will oppose your plans now.

## Future

*Giraut:* The Incarnation of Evil. The sole idea of him marking the beginning of the Dreaming God's end makes you smile. You must ensure that his thirst for revenge on his brother is not quelled and, if he does hesitate, you know you can count on his requited love for his sister as leverage.

It is imperative that he cast your amulet's curse on Renier, annihilating Lylie instead. At that point the other Regents will surely sentence him to death or kill him outright.

*Lylie:* The Incarnation of Balance, the necessary sacrifice to put your plan in motion and defeat the Dreaming God. Your brother Milo has poisoned her mind with his lies, tasking her with the Rite of Ascension.

If your plan were put into danger, you could always open her eyes to the evils of the Oracle and the Maker. One is no teacher and the other is no God, they are but mere executioners. Will she understand that they must be stopped at any cost?

*Renier:* The Incarnation of Good. You must admit you rejoiced when he defeated the Great White Dragon alone: You have never doubted of the absolute superiority of Good over Evil. But you have lost your faith in the Dreaming God and you will not allow Him to shape a new world, not even one based on this very principle.

His talent makes Renier difficult to control. You can count on his rivalry with Giraut and his unrequited love for Lylie, but you must ensure that someone manages to kill him. This is what Drystan's Poison is for.

*Drystan:* A precious pawn, and one you have already employed to great success. A lone man, thrown without warning among the very Regents he was taught to revere as gods.

Now that you can no longer seep through his dreams, you must obtain his cooperation as Wilhelm, little more than a stranger in his eyes. Your guile will close the circle your power has allowed you to trace.

*Faramond:* Another pawn for your plan. You know he has always felt different from the other slaves to the Oracle and you are well aware of his obsession for Ninon, the Regent of Flame.

With your last spell you unravelled the thread of his memory, but he is aware of this and you fear he might seek to tie up those loose ends. Your identity and your purpose must remain hidden, you are ready for anything to doom the Maker to eternal sleep.