

# CHAOS BRINGER

A Story of the Spiralchain

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## Onus

I am Hyrak, he who is Warlord of Onus.

I am Hyrak, he who was scientist of Rettik.

I am Hyrak, he who is scourge of Murrod.

I am Hyrak, he who was betrayed on Core.

I am Hyrak... and I have stepped foot upon not four worlds, but five.

This is a piece of my story.

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I stare into the mirror. It is a full-length mirror, once belonging to the Duchess of this pointless, sniveling city. She is long gone – spirited away by the damnable Gatemakers that continue to vex me – but her treasures remain. This mirror is a simple treasure, not magical or wondrous for any reason but its craftsmanship. Beyond the confines of this chamber, I hear my lieutenant and my Ellir and my mercenaries subjugating what little remains by way of resistance in Ain Holc.

The mirror is the first I have looked upon since first waking in the dirt of Murrod. I am hideous. The ordeals that have brought me to stand here on this night have been arduous, painful, and maddening, and I have emerged from each one tempered by its heat but burned by its flames. Scars cover all of my body now – ugly seams of pink flesh that will remind me always of the sensation of burning and freezing in tandem, floating adrift and lost. Lyda did this to me – Lyda left me to die. But I cannot die. She did not believe that, I think. Or perhaps she did not understand the lengths to which my benefactors will go to keep me alive. Were she still alive, I would make her understand. She put me back in the darkness... had it not been for the nascent and untrained talents of the whelp Gatekeeper, I would still float there in the horrible darkness. But instead, I crashed to Murrod, my armor melted and boiling, searing my flesh and leaving this monstrous visage.

I shatter the mirror. I was handsome, before all of this. I was tall and strong – unsavory characteristics for one of my family's station as citizens of Rettik. I was called abomination for my low-

walker-esque genetics, believed to be suited better for the life of a worker or a soldier than of a scientist. But I proved them wrong—I accomplished something those tiny, pompous cretins could not imagine. In a twist of cosmic irony, I ended up as a soldier anyway.

My brilliance and damnation was the Wave Acceleration Field. I found a way to open a wormhole into another dimension. What these backwater fools on Onus call a Spiralgate, I knew for its scientific attributes, and with my brilliance and my cunning, I opened that aperture in dimensional space and I sought to discover what lurked on the other side. What a vain, egotistical fool I was.

There was *nothing* there. I had opened a wormhole, indeed, but it did not take me to one of the vaunted Worlds of the Spiral about which the Gars obsess. I opened a doorway to the space between worlds, and the resulting vacuum tore me from my laboratory and deposited me in the blackness, adrift in space that was not space.

I have been to space. In my youth, when I feared that I may indeed be destined to be a low-walker, I stole my way aboard a transport that was bound for plus-strat insertion into a combat zone with a group of negspacer insurgents. It was thrilling to feel the bonds of gravity slip free, to see the starry void stretch out before me, even though we were never far from Rettik.

The place where I emerged from that wormhole was not space. It was without gravity, without light, without sound, yes—but it was without something else. It was without reality. I am horrifically intelligent, but I lack the vocabulary to describe the sensation. I was adrift not in blackness, but instead... nothingness. Void. The absence of creation.

And I felt it become *aware* of me.

It is difficult to say what would have happened next. If there is anything on any world that I fear, it is that presence in the void. It haunts me. Drives me.

Before that baleful awareness could fully grasp my existence—an existence that was an affront to its very being!—I was snatched away. A flickering field of blue light sprung up around me and swallowed me, sealing me off from the non-universe around me and, like the wormhole that had brought me there in the first place, carrying me to another point in space—perhaps even another point in time. I had no instruments with which to discern such a thing.

I could not move. My saviors numbered perhaps seven, though being unable to move my head or eyes, I could not properly assess the situation. I was on my back, stripped naked in short order, and lying upon a cold table. Brilliant lights hovered above my head, blotting out details. The sounds of movement and gibberish speech swirled around me. Cold, bright pain blossomed across my senses periodically. I could not scream or recoil—I could merely lie still as these vague shapes poked and prodded at me as though I were some laboratory specimen.

They cut into me and did things. Changed things. I do not understand what they did—the physics and biology and chemistry of their manipulations may as well be sorcery for my inability to interpret

their methods and consequences. But on that table, under those blazing lights and surrounded by unknown, unknowable creatures, I became what I am today. Immortal. Unkillable.

Then one of them leaned over me. For a moment, her head was between my eyes and those brilliant lights. Her features were impossible to make out, obscured by her shadow, but she was female – and if she was not human, she was close to it. She leaned down and she touched her lips to mine in a kiss that was hesitant, fearful – but also, I have convinced myself, hopeful. It was not a romantic kiss, it was more maternal – and it was also calculated, as everything done by those mysterious figures has been revealed to be.

After the kiss, my mind was awash in sensations, impulses, and fragmented memories. I imagine some kind of technology was imparted by that contact – some manner of nanotechnology, I suspect. In much the same way that my artificially-imbued Mindshaper abilities allow me to access certain esoteric mental frequencies, this near-woman had implanted some microscopic carriers of routine and conditioning into my brain.

Everything went dark then, and I could hear tension and fear in the indecipherable dialogue of my captor-experimenters. My benefactors.

The next thing I knew, that bright blue field of energy was materializing around my altered body once more...

And I woke moments later on Onus, not far from the abandoned towers now called Hyrak Arn.

Over time, the mental programming of my benefactors has slowly revealed itself. It cares little for providing rationale or context for its demands – it simply speaks to me of that which must be done. But from it I have learned some – enough that I do what I do by choice, not by force. I am not a successful conqueror because of surgical immortality, or implanted conditioning. I am the greatest warlord in the history of this or any world because of *conviction*.

The place where the surgery was conducted – the home of my benefactors – was the world the Gars call Nur. I know it. The world at the center of the Spiral was the birthplace of my destiny. Mine is the most vital role in the history of all mankind.

For all worlds are threatened. The malefic presence I felt in the void hungers for the destruction of all that exists, and if we are not ready for its arrival, we will all be destroyed. I will make this world ready. I will make every world ready. I will boil away the weak, the foolish, and the selfish, and I will temper the people of every world into a machine of war that beggars even the imagination of such a creature as that thing that lurks in the space between worlds. When my benefactors reach out from their seclusion on Nur, they will find the Spiral reborn as the perfect weapon. Eight worlds bound together by my hand. A Spiralchain with which to lash and bind the entity for all time.

I bring chaos to the Spiral, because without chaos, we will not ever grow strong enough to survive the end. I am the line between continued existence for all of mankind and vast and terrible oblivion.

I will not be stopped.