

Amidst the barren wastes of Shurima sat the ruins of an ancient temple; a grand structure built to revere and honor the Sun. Now, little more than broken pillars and decaying stonework jutted from the dunes. This place had remained undisturbed for centuries, ever since the empire of old collapsed. Tonight, however, this site was a battleground.

Flashes of blue and purple lit up the night as two ancient and powerful forces clashed: Malzahar, the zealous seer who had betrayed humanity to the Void, and Xerath, the mad magus who had brought an end to an age in his quest for freedom. Another great *boom!* was heard as arcane lightning clashed against spatial rifts, both parties struggling to push back the other's attack.

"Insolent fool," spoke the prophet, his voice echoing in the space around them. "To resist is futility itself... It matters not how much power you stole, Magus; it is but a spark in the endless darkness of the Void." As their spells clashed, sparks of energy flew off, striking the ruins and causing them to crumble. The space where the two energies collided seemed to ripple and shift, as if reality itself wavered at the two opposing forces.

"I did not STEAL anything, seer!" exclaimed Xerath. "This power... This power was meant for me! True Ascension is not earned, but claimed by those with the will to defy fate itself! I and I alone am deserving of this magic, and it will be your undoing!" Suddenly, Xerath's spell began to gain ground, slowly pushing back against Malzahar's. "The Sun, the Void, the Armordillo, the Weaver... Shurima is plagued by false deities and avatars, and you are no exception, Malzahar. You shall learn the same lesson as all the rest: gods do not come from half-truths and sermons based on myth; they are not enigmatic beings that must rely on mortal vessels to do their bidding! No, there is but one being in all Shurima fit to be called a god, prophet: me!"

Suddenly, Xerath's magic overtook his foe's, and the Void's energy gave way to the beam of blue light that collided with Malzahar's open palm. A great explosion engulfed the seer, and Xerath felt certain of his victory as dust rose up to obscure the seer... But when the dust settled, Xerath found himself greeted by ominous laughter as Malzahar continued floated there, his form protected by a barrier of the Void's energy. The Ascendant felt himself forced back as a blast of magic-dampening energy struck his form from both sides.

"You truly are naïve," said Malzahar, gazing upon the arcane being with a condescending gaze. "Powerful, yes, but naïve... 'The will to defy fate?' Fate cannot be defied! It was destiny that the empire should fall, just as it is destiny that you shall perish, along with the rest of this world. Gods and men alike shall tremble when the Void comes, but the souls of the devoted shall know salvation! Here, allow us to grant you a taste of what awaits ..."

Xerath was preparing to unleash another spell, but suddenly, a dark aura surrounded him. "What is this?" asked the Ascendant. "What are you-" but before he could finish, Xerath suddenly found himself elsewhere; now, he stood atop a tall dune, his power gone, and his form once more that of flesh and blood, clad in the attire of the Grand Magus of Shurima. The sky was filled with ominous dark clouds and rippled with violet light. Outerbeasts swarmed around him; in the air, on the land, in the rivers and underground. They devoured everything they could find, from screaming mortals to terrified wildlife. That, however, was not the worst of it.

In the distance, a great shape stood, towering above all. It was a malformed thing, resembling a great stone colossus whose form had cracked to reveal rippling Void energy beneath its rocky exterior. Where its left arm would be jutted a mass of writhing tendrils, all formed of that same ethereal essence. Its form was so massive that its head vanished above the dark clouds, and the landscape around it seemed to tear itself away from Runeterra and drift upwards, as if feeding itself to the monster's unseen maw. For the first time in ages, Xerath felt genuine fear and helplessness. He could not fight this. He could not defeat this. He was powerless.

Xerath fell to his knees and watched as the end of the world unfolded, knowing he would soon perish as well. However, just when a group of Outerbeasts began to converse on him, Xerath saw something in the corner of his gaze. Fragments of a great construct flew upwards: the Sun Disc, cracked and shattered into pieces. Memories flooded back through Xerath's mind: his whole life, from enslavement to Ascension flashed before him. It couldn't end here.

"No," Xerath said. "I will not waver! Not now, not ever!" He stood up, and blue light consumed him. The Outerbeasts snarled and retreated, only for the light to grow brighter and brighter, consuming everything around him. The Malefic Vision faded, and the pieces of the sarcophagus dispersed. Xerath Ascended to his true form, shining like a small star. Malzahar snarled and drew back.

"Impossible!" cried the prophet. "Your mind should be shattered!"

"I am the will of man," said Xerath. "Unbound by flesh! This world may crumble, but I shall remain!" A volley of arcane projectiles shot forth, bombarding Malzahar's shield, shattering it. Xerath continued this assault, forcing the seer back with each blow. Soon, the prophet collided with one of the nearby pillars, shattering it. Realizing that this host body was too injured to keep fighting, the seer opened up a rift into the Void, fleeing.

Xerath stared in silence where the prophet had been, his power subsiding. "Let them come," he said. "I am he who tore the Sun from the sky; he who defied fate to become a god. I am Xerath... And I am eternal."