

RE: DEITY - THE BREATH OF CREATION

2.4 Echoes of the Past

Elvira found me while I was teaching Kei, Reika watching on as she worked to develop the top of the Life-Giving Tree. She descended from the skies on a ray of golden light, piercing the cloudy substance of the Heaven Realm and the barrier separating the Physical and Heaven. Reika huffed at her sister at the interruption, the staircase she had been setting up crumbling a little under Elvira's natural pressure.

"You'll have to build it stronger than that, dear," I told her absently, watching Kei as she tried to mold the elements in her hands.

"Thanks. I couldn't have guessed." Reika said dryly.

"I apologize. I hope I didn't come at a bad time," Elvira said hesitantly. I tore my gaze away from Kei – who screamed in frustration as the little mold she'd been making exploded in her face, bolts of lightning shooting every which way. I caught one between my index finger and thumb before it could hit me in the face, Elvira casually stepping out of the way of another bolt that raced forward and struck Reika's staircase, causing it to crumble further.

"No, no, I am just helping Kei figure out the process of creation. It is going." I said, not elaborating on how, exactly, it was going as I flicked away the lightning bolt. Kei's tantrum in the background was evidence enough. "And Reika's just trying to figure out the process of how to build a bridge between the Realms." That was going, too. As evidenced by Reika's annoyed huff, her arms crossed over her chest as she glared at the pile of rubble before her.

"I could help with that, sister, if you wish." Elvira said gently.

“No.” Reika said firmly. “I got this. We already talked about it. I have hundreds of thousands of years at minimum before any Immortal is capable of climbing the Tree and crossing the Realms. Just...leave me be, please. Do whatever you came here for.” My blonde daughter raised her hands in surrender, turning back to me and fluttering her wings anxiously. I nodded along with Reika’s statement, scratching my chin. It honestly surprised me how much advancement slowed once a soul reached Immortality; simply because the gap to the next threshold was so large, and the available energy for cultivation wasn’t always as dense and pure as necessary.

“Well, I apologize in advance for distracting you.” Elvira said, rubbing the back of her neck and walking over to me.

“How can I help you?” I asked. “Relationship troubles?” At this Elvira turned crimson, mouth opening and closing in shock and embarrassment. I knew Gilles was trying to court her now, but hadn’t worked up the courage to formally ask her yet. Or formally ask me yet. I found it rather cute.

“No!” Elvira denied, much to my disappointment. I pouted a bit, annoyed at my lack of a chance to put the fear of Me into someone trying to date my daughter. Even if Gilles was technically my son. Even if Gilles and Elvira weren’t technically related, despite both being my children.

Being an origin deity was weird, I admit.

“I came here because I just wanted to talk a bit.” She said, shifting her feet nervously.

“I always have time for that.” I said with a smile, feeling Kei trying to mold the energies of elements once again. It was one thing to control them. It was another thing entirely to force them into concepts, and creating something new out of them. Kei would eventually get it, but unlike her mother she did not have the benefit of being purposefully designed by myself to be able to touch

upon the powers of creation. “What did you want to talk about?” I asked, once I was certain Kei wasn’t going to explode herself again in the next sixty seconds.

“Well, I remember you making a promise to talk about your past lives with me.” Elvira said, smiling sheepishly. I blinked. Reika stiffened. Kei yelped as she lost control over her elemental bundle and promptly froze one of her tails in a chunk of green ice. “Unless now is a bad time.”

“Of course not! I’d be happy to. Is there anything in particular you wanted to know?” I asked, waving my hand. A table and chairs appeared before us, which Elvira gratefully sat down upon as I did as well. Randus appeared in a flash of light, holding a steaming pot of tea that he promptly poured for both myself and Elvira. “Nosy.” I accused him good-naturedly, the butler god of dreams having the decency to look slightly ashamed. Elvira just laughed.

“Do not be too harsh on him, Father. If I wanted this conversation to be private I would not have come here to have it. Besides, I do believe we are all curious as to your history before the Four Realms, and I find myself with a bit of time.” She said, taking a sip of her tea and eyeing Reika out of the corner of her eye, her sister trying, and failing, to look like she wasn’t paying attention as she stood at her little pile of rubble. “We can start wherever you wish.”

I was silent for a moment, blowing on my tea and taking a thoughtful sip. My eyes scanned my daughter, noticing the tenseness in her shoulders and tightness of her aura; stress was eating at her a bit. Mostly from the Shadow’s fate forcibly advancing the creation of her sub-domain. She had a fair idea of how to direct it, but having something as important as this be fast-tracked to completion was never comfortable. Lessons that usually took millennia to learn, and processes that could take millions of years to complete had to be condensed into a far shorter time-frame.

She had sought me out for two reasons. Primarily, she had truthfully come to me to have a talk, to relax and forget about her own troubles for a moment. Secondly, and perhaps subconsciously, she had come to see if I had an answer to some of the problems plaguing her. And she had been watching the Paragon Soul, Dei, to solve some of those problems. He would not aid her in this regard. Only she could solve her own internal dilemmas.

But I could still do what I could to help her along.

“First off, I believe that I should begin with how powerful I was in my home universe. In truth, I was never all that powerful. Maybe as strong as the current Fu Hao, perhaps a little stronger.” I started, rubbing my chin.

“Not that powerful?” Elvira asked, raising her eyebrows at me. “Fu Hao and Stilicho are the strongest angels to exist, second only to the gods themselves, and greater than many of the younger ones. And you claim to not have been that powerful?” I laughed lightly, shaking my head pointedly.

“You are mistaken. Power-wise this is a one-to-one ratio, but the scale is off. I was as powerful as those two are now, that is correct. However, you must bear in mind that this was in a universe four trillion times larger than the current Four Realms. And that is only in the part I was aware of, and not including the size of the spiritual realm of existence. It is very likely that the universe was even larger; such information was beyond my pay-grade.” At this, Elvira sucked in a breath, eyes going wide at my revelation. Indeed, my home universe was far, far larger than the current Four Realms. To a size that was nearly unimaginable – and I had been in charge of existing upon a single planet, taking it from one age, through the others, all the way to the age of space travel. Then continuing to watch over them as a spiritual entity.

“I cannot imagine,” Reika said, giving up all pretenses of working on the staircase to instead sit beside us. Elvira shot her sister an amused look, but quickly focused back in on me.

“The Four Realms will eventually get there.” I promised. “But as you can see we still have a ways to go. Once the growth rate starts picking up, I imagine it will really start expanding. What the end-size will be, I am yet unsure.” Elvira and Reika shared a look as I sat back in my chair, eyes glazing over a little as I reminisced.

“Ah, the friends I made there. They were a colorful bunch, let me tell you. And mortals had a habit of pitting these great souls against each other in their minds and myths, when in truth they were

great friends, or at least friendly coworkers. One of them even got into the habit of turning my drink into wine as a prank – joke was on him, though, I love wine.” I laughed a little at the memory of the first time that happened. “It wasn’t until my final life that I came to realize why so many of those great souls had taken an interest in me; I was destined to rise up amongst them, even if only temporarily. I wonder what they’d say to me now...?” I trailed off, for the first time in a long time wishing I could go back to my old universe, talk to my old friends and ex-family, see their faces. Discuss things.

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...but not to stay. No, my home was here now.

In truth, I was beginning to wonder what nature of my old home was. Knowing what I know now, I suspected that it was not as simple as I had once believed. Especially not with Mr. Boxes’ implications that Yggdrasil, Olympus, and various other mythologies had actually existed at one point. There being various religions and religious beliefs on one planet, amongst one People, wasn’t far-fetched, nor was the idea that the mortals had come up with their own ideas while completely ignoring the truth of the spiritual. However for them all to have existed? Even if not all, but the most widely-known? I struggle to find that coincidental.

“Your lives...you said that you were once an Emperor,” Elvira said. I nodded, breaking out of my reminiscing and musing.

“I did indeed. My first life. Ended up creating a civilization that outlasted nearly all others, even if it changed over time. Not that that had been my original intention; I had simply wanted the tribes and clans to stop warring and come together as one. It was a simple desire, but led to many great creations.” I told her. “They eventually came to call me the Yellow Emperor. It was a good start, but not my ideal path. I daresay none of my individual lives were my ideal, but collectively they made me who I am.”

“What other lives did you lead?” Kei asked from behind me.

“Watch your fire, Kei,” I said absently, and Kei cursed, leaping away and patting at the ghostly blue flames that had covered one of her tails. I watched her for a moment, and only continued when she had put out her fires and refocused on me. I knew why she was so interested – this was a mirror to Dei’s fate, and she was trying to understand why he was doing as he was. Except it wasn’t a mirror. Dei had his own path. “Many lives. Each a different aspect of living. I was a Warrior, a Healer, a Slave, a Trailblazer...four male, four female. The idea was to encompass all of mortal life in what time I had – and, keep in mind, many of these lifetimes were less than a hundred years. Humans don’t live as long as Fae, nor do they have the added benefit of physical cultivation. The soul was immortal, the body was not.” I paused.

“In fact, most of those lives ended up being part of something integral, even if I wasn’t the star. That wasn’t the case in my last life, though. I was a starship captain. Captain Catherine of the USS Galactica. Was the first captain to pilot a ship out of our solar system and into new horizons – and, better yet, I also founded the first human colony in a separate solar system. That wasn’t enough for me though, oh no. I discovered more habitable planets in history and rewrote what we knew about the cosmos, *and* met the first sapient alien lifeforms. The history books still called me the greatest explorer in history by the time I was called here, blazing the trail for humanity to spread into the galactic frontier. At least, they did last I remember. It was honestly a pain in the ass. So many people accused me of things I didn’t do, or praised me for deeds that were someone else’s doing.” I grumbled, shaking my head.

“So you were one of the first Emperors of your homeland, and also the one who led them into greater things.” Elvira summarized. I nodded.

“Yes.”

“Why though? Why the eight lives, only to bring it back around?”

“Because that was the point. There was an idea, not coined by me but adopted by my first people, that the entire universe moved in cycles. From the micro to the macro, all of life was like a cyclical wheel – eventually you may find yourself in the same kind of place and situation as you were

before, but as you are no longer the same person, the results can be different. My duty was not to see myself alone grow, even if that was how my path was initially sold to me. It was to see the entire planet grow, and do my utmost to guide it toward a better light. I was not alone in this endeavor, of course, but I was one of the souls who took the longest to do so. Anyways, this idea was written and expanded upon in something called the I Ching – or, as another translation, the Book of Changes.

“This idea was that almost all of existence could be boiled down to eight different elements, which could then be used to divine future events and the laws of reality, all stemming from one source and four stages of energy. Young Yin. Old Yin, about to become Yang. Young Yang. And Old Yang, about to become Yin. These four made eight Trigrams. These eight Trigrams formed Sixty-Four Hexagrams, which in turn created a divination method for all of mortal existence. A spiritual guide that moves in cycles, and advances. I started as an Emperor, forging a path for my people toward peace and advancement of society. I ended as an Explorer, doing much the same. Two different lives, very similar results, and ending in the same place I began. Yet I was changed, and so the ground beneath my feet felt and looked different.” I explained, waving my hand. Behind me a diagram appeared of these eight trigrams, and the four stages of energy. Elvira and Reika’s eyes lit up as they beheld it, sharing a look that spoke volumes. Randus rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

“One source. Four stages of energy. Eight pillars.” Kei said suddenly, a light of understanding flashing in her eyes. “You mentioned that before. You called me a pillar.”

“Yes indeed. Ironically, the basic structure of the Four Realms’ deities follows this path as well; albeit as we continue to grow and evolve, that structure will grow and evolve as well.” I explained. “For example, there are already more than sixty-four gods in the Four Realms, and most of them have not completed their “paired trigram,” or sub-domain, to round out the diagram. Nor have all eight of the “pillars” appeared. So clearly the foundation is designed after this idea, even if we are already extending beyond it. All this does, however, beg the question; how much of the Four Realms truly is influenced by my past, and my own self?” It was a thought that had been bugging me for a while now. There were too many coincidences. Too much had mirrored echoes from my past life, even if they were myths and the like.

Was this just coincidence? Or was it, like my effect upon the fates of the Sun and Lunar Star, because of me? Or was it an echo of something greater, reverberating within my own realm? My thoughts immediately turned to Mr. Boxes, and wondered what its role in the shape of the multiverse was. But in truth, I figured it was all of the above. That was what my gut was telling me. I mentally shrugged and took another sip of my tea, looking upward to see Aerial floating in

skies above, listening. I wiggled my eyebrows at her, and she blew a little gust of wind that smelled like cinnamon my way.

“Why,” Elvira said, “didn’t we live mortal lives, then?” I returned my gaze to her, pondering the spirit of her question. If such lives had been so important to me, so profoundly influential upon my growth, then why hadn’t she and her siblings lived through the same? What made them different? My answer to that was “everything,” but such would be an unsatisfactory reply.

“Living as a mortal was all well and good, but at the end of the day it was just another pathway to something greater. You kids did your time learning to create entire Realms out of nothing but the stuff of creation. Unlike me, it wasn’t necessary for you to live mortal lives; though, if you want to try it, there’s nothing stopping you now. Create a few incarnations of yourself, and go live a few lives as mortals. You can even wipe the incarnations’ memories and make them travel through the cycle of reincarnation.” I said with a shrug. Aerial blew another gust of wind at me and I smiled up at her, the wind goddess starting to look impatient. “But! I do believe other duties are calling me now. I promised a few of the elemental gods that I’d help them rearrange some things, show them a bit, maybe help them create their own races.”

“I won’t keep you any longer.” Elvira said, standing. “Thank you for the chat.”

“Anytime, dear. Sorry our chat got cut a little short.” I said, drifting heavenward while still in a sitting position, sipping at my tea. “Now –“

It was at that moment that I paused, glancing to the side at where I could feel and see Mr. Boxes approaching as little more than a flash of light, pulsing like the end of a nerve.

Ding!

Alert!

[Stage 2] Completed

[Stage 2] has been officially completed by all origin deities. There will be a grace period of 100,000 years, after which the first [Meeting] between origin deities will take place.

All participants of this iteration of the [Deity Trials] will be summoned to a meeting place, allowing you all to interact, discuss, and mingle with each other. I will also be going over basic statistics and rankings between each of the gods and their respective universes. You will be allowed to bring one guest.

After this meeting, [Stage 3] will officially begin. More details will become available as the deadline approaches.

Show more

“ – now I have preparations to make.” I finished, nervous energy bubbling up in the pit of my stomach. Finally. I was finally going to meet the other origin deities. With a happy laugh I teleported away, toward the elemental gods. A hundred thousand years. Seems there was still much to be done in that time, but I had the feeling it would fly by.