

RE: DEITY - THE BREATH OF CREATION

2.41 The Wedding

There were things happening, in the depths of the Void. Beings were shifting, expressing their power now that they were not wholly contained within the barriers of the Overgod of the Multiverse. Freedom gave beings life and meaning, and the Origin Deities were no different – like children finally set free of their house, they were bound and determined to explore.

The Emperor was not one such being. He had too much to do with those beneath him.

In the past half-million years, he'd worked and struggled and strived to protect and enhanced his Kingdom of Heaven and Earth – and for the most part it had worked! Introducing truesouls into the Kingdoms of Earth had been an incredible boon, even if those ascended souls who managed to reach Heaven were far more useful. It would have been perfect if not for the discovery of something else. Or, rather, someone, who had united the demons that represented the exact opposite of his Heaven.

Yet try as he might, he could not actually find the damnable leader, even if he knew it existed.

The Emperor grit his teeth as he glared at the assembled demons, the foul souls so bent on the destruction of all that was clamoring as they prepared for battle, ready to begin a siege against Heaven. His eyes narrowed, his heart stilled, and his hands gripped his great sword. This was not the way. Quelling rebels was no issue, but this was not the duty of him as a God. Perhaps as a King, but the two were not always one in the same – and what was a King to a true God? There was another solution here, that would not require the sacrifice of any of his men; only a sacrifice of the self.

“So be it.” he snarled, stepping forth and drawing his sword. His soldiers shifted behind him, more than capable of defending Heaven from this riffraff, but unneeded at the time. Meeting the other origin deities had inspired him, in more ways than one. As much as the nature of these demons ran counter to his own – who would desire to not create? What kind of a soul desired only destruction? – he had to make the correct choice here, one that was best for the future. These demons would never go away, not really. “If a space to call your own is what you so desire, then fine. Here. I will give it to you!”

His sword raised high into the sky, all four hands clutching the hilt and channeling the very power that had split apart the Void and created Heaven and Earth itself. Reality trembled beneath his might, rays of blinding golden light radiating from his body. Yet in the very last second before he struck he recalled a fight with the Void, and how easily he had been destroyed in battle. His power wavered, fear not only for his own self but for the safety of his people staying his might from reaching the very brink.

And he struck.

Reality was cleaved in a flash of gold, a rift torn open beneath the assembled horde of demons. They fell, screaming, into the newly-created Abyss; a realm of pure chaos and destruction, where they could do whatever they wished for however long they wished.

“There is your world. Make it or unmake it as you see fit,” The Emperor snarled, stumbling in place as his power fled him. Strong hands from his General caught him and held him upright, just long enough for him to catch his balance and watch as the rift slowly closed behind the demons. They had wanted destruction. He had given it to them, and created a new realm of his own.

“Was that wise, sir?” the General asked.

“We will see. They will still be an issue, but now we know where problems may come from,” The Emperor said, weakness creeping up into his limbs. He would have to rest after this for a long, long time; creating an entirely new realm that went completely against his nature took a lot out of him.

“Take me back to the palace.” He would have to delegate most of his duties to his retainers while he recovered from this...but what else had he trained them for, if not for moments like these?

Mr. Boxes turned his attention away from Heaven and Earth, the Void shuddering in response to the Emperor’s actions but not fully reacting. That last, split-second decision of the Emperor to lower his power output and not disturb the Void had averted but one of many potential Void disasters, even if the ripples would guide the next.

Elsewhere, The Progenitor’s universe promptly exploded outward in a massive bang, creation surging through the depths of space to remake its garden. The Void immediately reacted, juvenile void beasts, the so-called paradoxes, springing to life to begin the process of devouring the garden. This time, however, the Progenitor lashed out at them, beams of light annihilating the baby paradoxes to slow the devouring process. The Void shuddered again as one of MR-10’s drones floated by, blinded to the intricacies of the other universes thanks to the Overgod’s barriers, but collecting data all the same.

On the opposite side of the [Trial] grounds, Shin experimented with Void shards, the skeletal god trying to understand his own version of eternity. The Primeval Dragon, Sehyun, burned the Void with her breath, expanding her nest in preparation for whatever life she would create. And more experimented with the Void in their own right. Everything was within parameters. Everything should be working fine. Yet the data still showed a void catastrophe was going to happen.

...to their credit, the catalyst for the Void disaster did not come from any of the juvenile Origin Deities. Even in the third stage, one of the most important and dangerous stages due to its learning curve in regards to Void-related power gains, this batch was proving themselves to be one of the top percentage. Their moves were careful, calculated, and none were over or under stepping their growth and power.

But Fate had other plans, and it came from the Twelfth Universe.

Structurally, it was comprised of a tens of thousands of different pocket dimensions, the walls between each slowly decaying and merging into a greater whole. Beings of power grew within these pocket dimensions, creating their own reincarnation and afterlife cycles or divine laws as they took command over the untamed Will of the realm – only to combat each other, as their worlds continued to collide. Truthfully, there was no way to predict what the universe itself would come to look like until the final days of its growth, or someone took command over the entirety of the universe.

As it was now, to the Overgod's eyes, the Twelfth Universe was the decaying corpse of a dead god. Each pocket dimension was a cell, the walls decaying to become sludge that lesser beings fought over – its very body comprised of primordial chaos, its mind annihilated and soul shattered to become the lesser beings that now grew within the corpse. That was why no one had been able to come to the meeting – there were none worthy. Almost none who could even hear the Overgod's call without shattering into dust, and those who could would not even be able to understand it.

They were like ants on a circuit board, listening to a scientist describe what it did.

It was also, for this reason, that the Overgod could not warn them of their foolish actions. To them, it was eldritch and unknowable in nature, too great to be able to interact with relative-bacterium in any meaningful way.

One being

in particular was the problem. There were two, in honesty, who were quickly becoming hegemonies of their respective zones, though only one was the issue. It was a dark being, already tainted by the Void, intent on turning the entire universe into its vision. The other was a light being, a warrior clad in silver armor, who strove to protect that which lay beneath him. They were the universe's Light and Shadow, and they clashed because of it.

The Overgod of the Multiverse sighed as it watched the dark being reach for the void in one of their clashes, cursing the Light's name the entire time.

“Forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It muttered to itself, using the phrase of one of its oldest friends in only a half-mocking tone. “The problem is I have to deal with the mess.” Such feelings were usually foreign to a being as great as the Overgod, but as this was a mere shard of its existence, the absolute smallest it could possibly go without becoming something far, far lesser, it could be prone to feeling such things.

A ripple was sent through the Void as the dark being called the Void itself down, twisting it and bending it to its will. If this universe had been any other style, the Overgod could have intervened to some degree, such as by sending a quick warning to the aggressor, or let it slide, or by letting the universe be partially or wholly annihilated by the Void. Perhaps it could have even adjusted the barriers, to make it impossible to happen...perhaps that is what it should have done. But the data suggested another course of action. As the Overgod watched, a Void Being was created. It was neither the weakest nor the most powerful of the things the Void could make, but it was still exactly what was needed in this situation.

The Overgod frowned. It could not intervene, based on its own rules, and yet this entire situation felt wholly...contrived. Crafted. *Designed*. The Shard of the Overgod hummed to itself. Fate was at work here, and it pulled itself back, placing a few more protective measures in place. Everything it could do had been done. Any more might put the Origin Deities at even greater risk, as overuse of its powers could draw unwanted attention to the [Trials.]

And it contented itself to observe, for the moment, as the Void struck with a crack of power.

“Have you ever stopped to just admire the scenery?” I asked, staring up at the sky from Reika’s palace.

“Mother, we are in the middle of the ceremony,” Reika hissed, tugging at my sleeve. It was an exaggeration, of course, as we were not in the *middle* of the ceremony, but it was certainly about to begin. I hummed and grasped her hand, not willing to look down lest I start crying over Elvira and Gilles’ marriage. I didn’t care if the other gods saw me cry, I was their parent, not their overgod, but I couldn’t be blubbering before it even began.

Besides, I was a *little* distracted by the weight looming over the back of my mind, and the flashing notification telling me how close I was to gaining the Fate sub-domain.

“Just, look with me. We can take a moment to enjoy the moment, can we not?” I pressed, squeezing Reika’s hand tightly. My daughter sighed and turned her head skyward from where we stood at the altar, looking past the overhanging vines covered in flowers of all types to admire the night sky. Dao Stars twinkled merrily, the light of the Lunar Star shining down upon her Palace atop the Life-Giving Tree, where Elvira had insisted the wedding be held, contentedly. The soul of Celene within the Star watched, but my focus was on the dao stars themselves, watching how their energy flowed down into the Physical Realm, each and every one connected to the first Dao Progenitor, who had shown them the path...

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Yet all focus was here, tonight. Even the stars agreed, their light focusing here. It was the first true wedding between gods ever held, not even the God of Fire and Goddess of Water had been wed yet.

I smiled as the wind blew, leaves drifting through the air chased by petals, Aerial’s mischievous giggling carried along with it.

“...it is beautiful.” Reika allowed, shifting nervously.

“Can you see it? There, beyond the horizon.” I asked instead, looking further, past it all, past the glowing orange light of the floating lanterns, past the growing power from the sheer number of powerful beings present, through the low, peaceful humming of Argent as the god of metal tenderly played the harp, a half-dozen angels playing various other instruments. The symphony of it all was intoxicating, drawing my mind far afield.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.” Reika deadpanned.

“I can see it,” Kei said, from my left. My expression stiffened as I glanced at her – the fox-girl had her black hair done up in an intricate bun, flowers coloring her hair and nine tails swishing behind her like a dress-train. Her dress was one of pure obsidian, the stone flowing like water about her as she looked up at the sky with me, ears twitching. *You aren’t supposed to see it.* My mind whispered as I reached over and patted her on the head.

I wasn’t supposed to see it, either, and I didn’t even fully know what I was looking at. It was a rope in the sky, the biggest strand I had ever seen, invisible to almost all others but myself.

That was when the music truly began to play, and my attention was redirected to my daughter as she entered the venue.

Gods lined the aisle in seats of their own making, as chaotic and varied as my children could make them, the red-carpet in the aisle covered in rose petals. The branches of the Life-Giving Tree had been molded into a scaffold above, vines stretching between them with various other spirits and beings hanging from them to watch the proceedings.

The doors at the far end, carved by hand, by my very own self, were swung open as Elvira and Gilles stepped out.

Elvira was absolutely radiant.

Soft white light drifted from her wings, illuminating the venue with light even brighter than the Realm Sun. Her dress was woven of pure gold, the light of Heaven itself cracking through the night sky to illuminate her. Her hair fell to her mid-back, pulled into a tight pony-tail with a red string of karma...

I blinked. It truly was a red string of fate. I could see Keilan's hands in this, the string reaching over to wrap around Gilles' own done-up hair, his black hair pulled back into a man-bun, binding the two together. His suit was woven of shadows, as was his nature, though his expression was as bright as Elvira's own joy. Gone was the gloomy deity of shadows, always lurking behind Elvira, helping her from the shade – here, today, he stepped forward to stand beside her.

My heart swelled with pride at the duo, and I almost forgot my place as I began to step forward to embrace them.

“Not yet, Mother,” Reika whispered, holding me back. I pouted at her, her own yellow dress shimmering as she glared back. She had dressed up for the wedding too, her hair as green and vibrant as any spring and pulled up in a bun much like Kei's.

Elvira and Gilles slowly walked up the aisle, the Realm Sun itself peeking its head over the horizon, illuminating the night in a new dawn just so he could watch this one little thing. Darkness twisted and pooled as Elvira and Gilles came to a stop at the base of the stairs before me, neither meeting my eyes as Keilan rose from the shadows, a book of karma in one hand.

“Elvira, Goddess of Heaven and Divinity, Ruler of the Heaven Realm, Elected Empress of the Gods, my foolish little sister,” at this Keilan paused, giving Elvira a chance to shoot him a mock glare, even as she and the gods chuckled at the little jab. Keilan grinned. They had both been born at the same time, of course neither of them could be considered “little.” “You come here with your betrothed, beneath the eyes of the Four Realms themselves, to bind yourselves in eternal union.”

“Before the Karmic Judge, the Spirit Dragon, the Goddess of Change, before the Heavenly Dao and Father Himself,” This time it was Alexander who spoke, swirling into existence in the sky, twisting his long, sinuous body this way and that, sparks of spiritual energy raining down from above as he poked his head through the scaffolding. “Is your resolve strong enough to be bound for all time? Is your meaning deep enough to sustain this bond, in the eyes of the Heavenly Dao? Do you love your betrothed enough to make this vow before our Father and Creator, to swear your bond in His name?”

“I do,” Elvira said, meeting my eyes. Or maybe not, her face was blurry from unshed tears, though I could see her smile.

“Gilles, Divinity of Shadows,” Reika spoke, stepping forward with a quick glare at me to keep me in place, her dress flowing about her as she stepped down to be level with Elvira and Gilles. “You seek to take my sister’s hand in marriage in my Palace, in my Home, before the Eyes of our Eternal Parent.”

“I do,” Gilles said.

“Do not speak to me, speak to Her.” Reika said softly, placing a hand on Gilles’ shoulder. The shadow god, to his credit, did not hesitate this time, looking up at me and meeting my gaze. My hands twitched, and I withheld the urge to leap forward and wrap the two in a hug.

“I do.” He said, the two words filled with his intent and love. The Dao itself shifted in response to his and Elvira’s words, the heavens themselves, oh so different than Heaven as they were, recognizing their vow. And because I am the heavens and the heavens are me, I recognized the sincerity behind their words. Elvira reached over subtly, grasping Gilles hand and squeezing softly, not meeting his eyes as he beamed his joy to the world, feeling the acceptance behind it all.

“So be it. In the eyes of the heavenly Dao, in the presence of your Father and Mother, you made your vows.” I said, voice firmer than I expected with how my throat clenched with emotion. Karma swirled about the two, binding their souls together with a link so thick even I would struggle to cut it. I blinked away tears as the words continued to flow. “I now declare you husband and wife!”

Cheers rang up, rattling the very tree itself as Elvira and Gilles stood, turning and kissing each other softly and tenderly. Only once they had separated and turned back to me, beaming amidst gods throwing flowers and other such romantic items at them, did my resolve finally break.

“Now give me a hug!” I cried, flinging myself forward to envelop the two. Elvira laughed, Gilles chuckled, and the other gods roared out their cheers as tears of joy fell from my face. Elvira’s wings wrapped around us as she and Gilles returned the hug, patting my back. “What a wonderful day!” Words could not express how true that was to me. That Elvira had found love, that Gilles had found her, that, in this moment, all was right with the world. I had made new friends. I had healed my arm, and my children were growing well. My children were wonderful, and all was right with the Four Realms. They were safe. They were happy. We were happy.

Words cannot express how much the next moment pained me.

The sky itself shattered in my mind’s eye as the thread of fate – so thick it might as well be a chain – I had been watching finally snapped into place. A resounding crack echoed in my ears, my entire body stiffening as Mr. Boxes’ notification flashed in front of my eyes;

{[Sub-Domain Gained!

[Fate].}

“Not right now,” I whispered, beneath my tears, beneath the fear that lanced through my body like a dagger. “Let me have this moment.” Mercifully, Mr. Boxes complied.

“Father?” Elvira whispered, as we pulled away. My smile was shaky as I met her and Gilles’ eyes, showing none of the internal panic I was now feeling. This was their moment. I would not ruin it with ill tidings.

My hands touched their cheeks fondly, heart swelling with pride and love. Light radiated out from me in a swirling mass, the power of my own Dao flooding through them, strengthening the red string of fate they themselves had created, and Keilan had woven. Let it be as eternal as they desire it to be.

Ding!

{[Sub-Domain Gained!

[Love].}

“You will be alright.” I told them, wiping my eyes. “Look at me, I’m a mess! But I do believe that we have yet to finish the ceremony! Go, go! Greet your guests, and aren’t there gifts that have yet to be given?!” I called, waving at the assembled gods. Cheers rang up once again, goblets filled with all manner of drink – be it tea or liquor – raised into the air.

Elvira beamed at me as she and Gilles turned, the naturally suspicious shadow-god giving me one curious look before he was swept away in the tide of guests. I smiled as I watched, stepping back and letting the sounds of the world wash over me. Elvira and Gilles were sat at a long table brought out by my very own angels, Fu Hao and Stilicho, the latter of whom sported a little bruise from sparring with Xing Wu.

Gods placed items before them, each of them hand-crafted by the god in question. The god of tides placed a chalice before Gilles, made of gems containing the sound of the sea. Reika gifted Gilles a beautiful mirror, ringed in wood pulled from the heart of the Tree itself. Alexander showered the two in trinkets, bottled emotions of joy and laughter and love. Keilan gifted Elvira a picture, moments and memories of all joyful things cycling through the frame in a measured beat; each one relating to Gilles, and their family. Kei slipped a little pink ball into Elvira's hand, whispering promises to try and prank me together with her, much to Elvira's giggling delight.

Randus gave Gilles a bag of tea, and instructions on how to brew it exactly as Elvira liked.

Inesa gifted the duo an entire hearth, her dao woven into every brick and stone, filled with light and warmth. Even the Realm Sun and Lunar Star gave gifts, a necklace of blue ice appearing around Elvira's neck, a ring of solar fire on Gilles' finger, showing how much the Sun and Moon were growing.

Tears prickled my eyes as I grasped my gift, hidden away as it was. And a small hand placed itself on my shoulder.

"Is it time?" Aerial whispered, speaking for the first time in eons. The goddess of wind and secrets, she who knew all that was spoken in the Realms, met my eyes as she watched with concern. There was more than just concern there. There was *knowing*. "Your gift. Your fear – I know. Please don't be afraid, Dad."

"I am not afraid." I whispered to her. Her words were those of a child, trying to reassure their parent despite not knowing the issue. I loved her for it. "I am proud." With a reassuring squeeze of Aerial's hand I stepped forward, through the crowd that parted for me like water.

Silence fell over the crowd as I drew the Sword that Does Not Cut, the Fate Cutter, that which had severed the Shadow's fate and the most powerful weapon in the entirety of the Four Realms, a symbol of my power, out of storage. It vibrated eagerly in my hand, a hint of sentience having appeared in the blade, and Elvira's eyes were wide as I placed it between the two on the table, all the gifts that had been given before me separating themselves. Whispers rippled through the gods and spirits, shock foremost on their minds.

"From me, my children," I whispered. "I give to you the future of the Four Realms. Of all your siblings, the Sword chose you. It is both of yours, as you are bound together." Elvira's eyes were wide as she took the blade, hand trembling as she lifted the Void-touched sword. It hummed happily in her grip, the hilt rattling as it vibrated. Reika, Alexander, and Keilan all murmured as I stepped away.

"Father, I..." Elvira began.

"We are not worthy of such a thing!" Gilles finished for her, the dark god's eyes wide.

"Not yet, no, you wouldn't be able to draw out its full power. But I trust that in time you will be. You have grown well, and I am proud of you." I declared, bowing my head. It was not quite a passing of the torch, but my intentions were now clear to my children. I didn't know how else to describe it to them, especially with what was coming.

These Realms may have been created by me, but it was always meant to be *theirs*.

"Father," Alexander whispered, and I chuckled, the sound choked with emotion.

"Do not worry, there will be time and gifts for you, too, when the time comes." I said to him, though it was meant for all ears. "Now, don't get all sentimental on me, I will not be going

anywhere or withdrawing from the Realms again. It is simply acknowledging her position and growth.” This, at least, seemed to mollify my children, who had appeared concerned – perhaps they thought it meant I was leaving. I laughed with them, forcing it from my lungs, and let the party continue. I had intended to take a few steps back from the Realms. Let things be, and observe as I cut myself off from karma.

That...may not be possible anymore. For now.

But eventually, I had to turn away, sneaking off onto the balcony, away from all my children to stare at the sky and worry over something only I had to worry about right now.

Calamity was coming to the Four Realms, and as we were now we would not survive it. The threat that loomed above us would pop the Four Realms like an over-full balloon. The Void had stirred, the dye was cast, and my eyes pierced through the dense thread of fate that bound my Realms to a few others; there, in the distance, however many millions of years away, I saw it.

The One World, hurtling through the Void with all the speed and might of a meteor. And it was on a collision course with the Four Realms.