

RE: DEITY - THE BREATH OF CREATION

1.39 A Talk Between Gods

I sat alone, a cup of fragrant green tea in one hand as I stared out into the Void. For the first time in a long time, my thoughts were blissfully empty, devoid of pressing need to act or do anything. My incarnations were running about the Realms, doing work still, of course, but my main body? It was taking some time.

And I was waiting for someone.

I saw it before it reached me. It was just a flicker, a glimmer of light, a vague shape flying in out of the corner of my eye from some point unknown, but I still saw it. And I greeted it before it could greet me.

“Tea?” I asked, conjuring another cup for Boxes. For a moment the air before me flickered, as if trying to make itself into something, but I focused through it. With the new sight granted to me I could almost see through it, to the truth of what it was...and I would prefer to have a true conversation, rather than a text-to-speech style chat like what we usually had.

“You can sense my coming now.” Boxes said, voice oddly monotone. It took shape as a little white ball of light before me, flickering and sparking with each syllable like a little nerve ending. *“Congratulations are in order. You survived the Shadow of the Realms – though its nature varies from universe to universe, the fundamental trial is something all universes go through.”*

“So it is a trial? One of the [Stages]?” I asked, frowning and sipping at my tea. I hated the idea of this being some sort of stage in a game. “I swear, if you tell me something like “quest complete” I’m going to be livid.” The ball of light that was Boxes chuckled, sparks flying off its form. My eyes burned just looking at it, but I continued my focus to peer through its veil.

“It is a trial, but not a [Stage]. To put it in your game terms, this would be more akin to a hidden side-quest, albeit one necessary to overcome. Most origin deities don’t notice its presence until much later in the trials, let alone resolve it in [Stage 2]. I do believe that puts you in the top point-five percentile.” Boxes explained, voice remaining monotone and tinny to my ears.

“So it is resolved, then?” I asked sharply.

“You will always feel its echoes, and as it is a creation of cause and effect it will, to some degree, always be lurking...but it is as resolved as can be expected from an Origin Deity so young.” I grunted in acknowledgement at that, taking a bit of time to digest that information and sipping at my tea. *“Now, I do make it a point to visit every young god – be they an Origin Deity or a replacement – that makes it through the ‘Shadow,’ and give them a gift.”*

“A gift?” I asked, raising my eyebrows, mind immediately whirring in suspicion.

“It’s nothing crazy, like I am sure you are thinking.” Boxes said, flickering as the burning sensation in my eyes intensified. I took a deep breath and refocused, Boxes pausing to allow me that moment to collect myself. Was it really so hard to look at it? Even this tiny sliver of their being? What kind of a monstrously powerful entity was it, to be so...*impressive?*

Then, just like that, a box appeared before me, a little tag taped to the top that read; *To Statera Luotian*. It was maybe as tall as my forearm, and four times as wide, wrapped in blue wrapping paper and tied together with a pink bow. I set aside my tea and carefully gripped the box, gently tearing open the paper and opening the top flaps with a perfectly healthy amount of suspicion – only for the contents within to well and truly shock me regardless. A small gasp escaped me despite myself, a little thrill of excitement running up my spine as I tore the top off the box to behold three, glittering bottles of liquor and a bag of leaves.

One was clearly whiskey, its amber liquid shining despite the absence of light; another was a bottle of red wine, the label written in the spiritual language of my home universe; the third was a bottle of some kind of fermented energy that I didn't recognize; while the bag was stuffed full of tea leaves that practically hummed with positive energy.

"Oh, you shouldn't have!" I cried in delight, pulling out the bottle of wine, the corners of my eyes crinkling as I recognized the handwriting of one of my old bosses. The bottle itself wasn't made by them, but clearly Boxes had gone out of its way to get an old friend of mine to sign it for me. That wasn't what I was going to drink first, however, and put it back in the box.

"The third bottle is fermented Primordial Chaos, one of my favorites, for a time. I wouldn't drink it until you're a few billion years older, and far stronger. One whiff will knock you off your feet." Boxes helpfully supplied even as I pulled out the bottle of whiskey. I cast a glance at that third bottle suspiciously, truly not seeing it as Primordial Chaos, before promptly popping out the top of the whiskey and taking a deep whiff.

I immediately sighed happily, waving one hand to conjure two crystal glasses, a singular, square ice-cube sitting in each. With deliberate slowness I poured myself and Boxes a glass, extending it to the entity.

"Care for a drink?" I asked hopefully. A flash of light that I read as incredulity shot through the being, followed by a hum of amusement as it reached out, and the glass was taken from my hand. I raised my own glass, clinking them together before taking a long, slow sip. The liquid fire that burned down my throat – no, it was much more than liquid fire, I'd tried actual liquid fire before and this was so much better – forced a pleased groan out of me as I savored that one small sip, closing my eyes appreciatively.

Boxes did the same, coming to sit beside me.

"Any questions?" Boxes asked. *"I am willing to answer a few."*

“How are the others doing?” I asked, mind drifting to the other origin deities supposedly out there, making their own universes.

“Well enough. It is still early, though soon enough I will have you all meet. [Stage 2] is almost over for all the universes; I’m dilating time in some places, to make sure everyone is mostly on the same page. Once that is done, we’ll hold a meeting.” Boxes mused. I really should come up with a better name than Boxes, especially since I am actively trying to see through its messaging system now. *“You have a little bit of time to recover, before then.”*

“How am I doing?”

“Don’t ask questions you don’t want to know the answer to. Just keep on moving, as you have been, and you will be fine.”

I chuckled a little at that, taking another sip of whiskey. It was true, though. A part of me did want to know how I was doing, but another part of me was afraid of a more specific answer to such a question. More importantly, I was afraid that hearing the answer would make me make a mistake. Sometimes, ignorance was bliss. And sometimes, ignorance was key in getting people to make the correct choice to move forward. I would learn about it in time, probably at the meeting if I’m being honest.

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“Well, that’s all I’ve got to say,” I said with a shrug. “Care to sit and drink with me for a bit longer?”

“Only if you quit looking past the veil of the boxes. It’s causing unnecessary strain.” Boxes said. I smirked and took another sip, letting my energy and eyes relax as I turned my attention out to the Void, past Boxes. The little flashing light faded into obscurity, its voice falling silent. And immediately the budding headache that had been building in the back of my skull vanished, the burning of my eyes fading away with a few quick blinks. I took another sip of whiskey and groaned appreciatively. Oh yes, I would have to savor this stuff.

“Hit me with it, then, oh great and mighty Boxes, so we can sit together for a while yet.” I drawled, sitting back casually and setting the box of liquor and tea to the side. And, finally, I allowed Boxes to show me the stats they’d been waiting so patiently to show. And I thanked it for waiting, this time. I would not have appreciated these popping up in the middle of everything that had happened.

Ding!

Creation!

The Lunar Star: You have successfully created a counterbalance to the Realm Sun, dubbed the Lunar Star, or Moon. As the Realm Sun circles the Four Realms, it provides light and heat to only half of creation at a time. The sheer weight of its presence, both in a spiritual and gravitational sense, was distorting the Realms, pulling them in one direction at a time.

The Lunar Star counterbalances that, reflecting light so even in the darkest of times, the light of the sun may come to guide those who look for it, as well as evening out the Sun’s pull.

Yet it is not heat. It is cool; a soft light, to the Sun's harsh. A cold gust to the Sun's burning winds. A Yin to the Sun's Yang. A balance, added to the scales. A light, for those whom find the Sun too bright.

Growth of the Four Realms will increase significantly following this creation.

Show more

Ding!

[Stage 2] complete. Congratulations!

You have successfully completed [Stage 2] of the [Deity Trials] – the individualized planning stage. With a clear goal of how the base internal structures of your 'Pantheon' will look and interact with each other in mind now, as well as much of the foundational structures being laid out, you are ready to move onto the next [Stage]. [Stage 3] will begin once all Origin Deities complete [Stage 2], and will kick off with a meet-and-greet between all Deities. In the meantime, continue to solidify the foundations of your universe, promote its growth, and guide mortals.

Ding!

Hidden Trial Complete! [The Shadow of the Four Realms]

All universes face their respective Shadows, at some point. 60% of all destroyed universes fall due to the actions of their Shadow, and 75% of all slain Origin Deities are killed by their Shadow. Just as Ymir was slain by Odin, thus setting Ragnarok into stone. Just as Ra was banished from the earthly realm by Isis, was forced to merge with Atum, and is forced to drive off Apophis each night. Just as Phanes was eventually slain by Zeus, who consumed his power, or the tragedy of Izanagi and Izanami.

Betrayal is a common theme. So is destruction.

Some gods overcome their Shadow but are forced to accept uncertain terms. Some Origin Deities, such as Pangu, willingly give their lives to keep the Shadow at bay and stabilize their worlds. Only time will tell how your Shadow will turn out, but know that the worst of this trial has been overcome.

Congratulations! You are [2nd] among the Origin Deities of this trial to overcome your respective [Shadow].

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“Second?” I asked, pointedly raising my eyebrows. I thought I was in the top one percent of speed for the Shadow. Yet someone else beat me to it? The answer did not come as a box, but as a voice.

“Indeed. That is solely due to the nature of that Origin Deity’s universe, however, effectively banishing the Shadow through its conception. It was a sacrifice.” Boxes replied. I opened my mouth to say something, but no words came. I wasn’t even sure what I wanted to say to that. With a quick shake of my head I banished all those thoughts and sat back even further, taking another drink.

This was enough, for now.

And together, we sat there, two gods drinking fine whiskey and staring out into the Void.

The Overgod of the Multiverse was a busy being. The number of incarnations it could create was unfathomable. The amount of power at its fingertips unimaginable. The amount of information it received in a single attosecond simply inconceivable. Its perception of time was simply ludicrous; a billion years could go by in the blink of an eye, while a nanosecond could take an eternity to pass.

Even despite that, or perhaps because of it, its workload was almost overwhelming. And was why it had chosen to pass off many lesser duties to other beings or powerful origin deities, to give itself some time to take care of matters that were actually important. Yet it still always managed to oversee the [Deity Trials]. Even if other divinities could take the reins, it didn't want that. This was one of the *things* that kept it sane, the small duty that felt important simply because the Overgod enjoyed doing it. Even if the only part of their being that could be spared to watch over them, especially in these beginning stages, was a little incarnation of nearly-minimal power – a sliver that was almost too powerful for baby Origin Deities to view.

“The batch this go-round is looking good,” the incarnation muttered, unable to appear as anything other than a ball of light, so little of the Overgod's true essence as it contained. Screens of various different projections and predictions filled its vision as it settled back in its spot in the middle of the twelve budding universes; its workshop. Which was, in truth, little more than a blank room filled with data sheet. “We've got a good variety of universes, too. The selection process was quite thorough, and Statera developing such deep True Sight at such a young age is remarkable...oh, the Four Realms is looking like it might be able to grow into a Heart-verse. Fifty percent chance; that's pretty high for a young universe. Do we need more Heart universes?”

A quick connection to the Higher Consciousness confirmed that yes, in fact, they could *always* use more Heart universes. They tended to be a lot harder to destroy, as they filled the Heart of the multiverse and therefore weren't as open to threats like the Void, but on the flipside were a lot harder to raise, too.

There was a fairly good chance the Four Realms might not even grow into a Heart-verse though, as there was a lot of time left before it could be merged into the multiverse at large. With a hum it continued to go over the data; in fact, there were quite a few universes amongst the twelve that could fill in key spots in the multiverse...this really was a good batch! The Overgod's incarnation paused, then, as a new command came flooding down to it. Carrying with it strange new orders. But orders it agreed with, because they still came from itself.

"Well, we haven't done that in a while. Might even promote some exceptional growth in the young ones." It mused, going over the projections and agreeing with the results. It was high-risk, high-reward, but in the end, all things were. Reaching out it connected itself to a different function; accessing a specific series of data entries from all across the multiverse. A list of souls appeared before it, and it mused for a second. "Yes. Let's give these little ones a Monkey Wrench or two. They have the potential...so it could turn out quite well."

Selections made, the Overgod's incarnation returned to pouring over the data from the twelve universes, taking great care to watch for any inconsistencies or rapid changes. That was its job, after all. To keep things stable until they could stand on their own.