

## RE: DEITY - THE BREATH OF CREATION

### 1.8 The First Mortal Race

My workshop was an absolute mess. Essences of various elements and energies, diagrams, and a thousand other materials lay scattered about the wood desks lining the walls or across the marble floor. Various examples of life, some half-finished and some as pristine empty shells preserved in time, were mixed in with the mess, more appearing as I used them for reference. Some even floated through the air for quicker access, so I could examine, then toss them away just as quickly. I just didn't have the presence of mind to clean it all, even if all it would take was a wave of my hand.

Creating a mortal race was kicking my ass.

I glared at the soulless body of a human floating in front of me, t-posing with eyes closed. Creating *them* wasn't hard – I knew humans inside and out – they just weren't *enough*. No, that wasn't right.

I heaved a sigh and closed my eyes, changing the way I was thinking. For what they were, for their universe, humans were more than good enough. Strong, hardy, adaptable, with plenty of room for physical, spiritual, and mental growth. And, most importantly, humans were the kind of catch-all

vessel that a frankly astounding variety of souls wished to inhabit. Everything from great evil souls to great good souls were attracted to them for whatever reason. There was truly nothing wrong with the human template for my old universe. But not for the Four Realms.

Forgetting for the moment about souls and how reincarnation differed between universes, even the physical aspects of humanity weren't enough. Already the other lifeforms I had created were showing signs of magic and cultivation, spirit beasts, I called them, even the ones that weren't originally designed to do so. And these beasts wouldn't just challenge normal humans for supremacy, there was a high likelihood they'd utterly dominate them.

Humans just weren't designed for the Four Realms style of cultivation.

Yet, because of their adaptability, I had little doubt they would eventually find a way. I could already imagine it; them, not being given the tools to succeed rising up anyways, "defying the will of the heavens," maybe even picking up arms against their divine parents, seeking to supplant the heavenly Dao...I shuddered. I would like to avoid accidentally leaning into that, where possible.

I made a Xianxia universe, however accidentally, and there was no changing that. To try and go against it would be setting myself up for future failure – might as well accept it and plan for it.

“So, avoiding that, let’s see what I can do here,” I muttered to myself, leaning forward and eyeing the human body critically. I liked the basic design, having grown quite attached to it from my own lifetimes, so that would likely stay plus or minus a few modifications. Just as I reached out to begin, however, an all-too-familiar presence suddenly appeared behind me.

“Ma’am, are you still working?” Randus asked, the salt-and-pepper haired god blinking his dark eyes in mock surprise when I turned around to stare at him. “You *are* awake. I was afraid you had drifted off again.”

“That happened one time, Randus, and you were born from it so I can hardly call that unproductive. And how many times do I have to tell you to call me Father or Mother?” I said with fond exasperation, shaking my head and trying my hardest not to get annoyed with the interruption. I was about to get on a roll, too, I could feel it...

Ah, who was I kidding? I’d been stuck, and could use a distraction.

“I am Your servant, Ma’am. I could never call You so familiarly.” He said, bowing his head slightly, folding his arms about his middle formally. I groaned and pinched the bridge of my nose, practically hearing the way he capitalized the You’s in that statement just to annoy me.

“You are my child, and will do as you are told.” I said, crossing my arms.

“The effect of that statement is lessened when we are all Your children, Marm.” He said, still bowed. I narrowed my eyes at him, and sighed in exaggerated frustration with the young man. He was definitely my child – inherited my sarcasm to a T, and then dialed it up to eleven.

“What do you want, Randus? As much as I love our talks, I cannot imagine you came here just to bug me. Especially considering what I’m in the middle of.” I drawled. Randus’ eyes predictably drifted to the human body the moment I said that, his eyes flashing with interest. As the deity of dreams he had a vested interest in the appearance of mortals. Their dreams were vastly different than the dreams of beasts and gods, after all.

“Lady Reika has come to visit, though I cannot imagine why.” He said after a moment. I shot to my feet, excitement suddenly coursing through me.

“Oooh, is it about that secret project of hers?” I was practically vibrating at the thought – she’d been incredibly secretive about it and, being the responsible parent I was, I hadn’t peeked. Much. It was really hard not to, ok?!

“I cannot say. But I could not stop her from entering, and you are a wimp about keeping your children out of your workspace, so I thought you would like a warning.” He said. Instead of replying I flung myself forward at great speeds, timing it perfectly so that when Reika pushed open the doors to my workshop I was already there, flinging myself onto her in a great big hug.

“Reiiikaaaa! Randus is bullying me!” I wailed, lifting her off her feet in a bear hug, spinning her around. She laughed, green hair flying about her head as we spun. “I’ve been so lonely with only him around! You hardly visit anymore!” I set her down and she shook her head fondly, pulling out of my embrace and straightening her dress.

“That is because, unlike You, she’s been busy managing her Realm. Life is very tricky like that.” Randus drawled. I pointed an accusing finger at him.

“SEE?!” I cried. Reika laughed again, attempting a mock glare that was more cute than menacing, and wagged an admonishing finger at him.

“For one so young, you sure are cheeky, Randus,” she said. “Although that is why we like you, do try to be a bit nicer to Mother. You know She is working hard to keep balance in the Four Realms.” Randus and I silently stared at Reika, a soft smile still dancing on her lips, the elemental flowers in her hair sparkling along with her quiet joy.

“You are far too sweet,” I decided finally, having half expected her to join Randus in ribbing me.

“We must protect her,” Randus agreed, and I nodded along with him. Reika flushed, shifting from foot to foot and clearing her throat. “Though I must disagree with you on principle alone, Lady Reika. Were it not for me, the Grand Palace would still be unfinished.” I shot Randus a halfhearted glare. True though that may be, it was only because I didn’t care about the palace that it hadn’t been finished. I cared about doing other stuff with my time. Only his incessant whining had convinced me to finish my own house. Does that make me a workaholic?

With a good-natured grumble I turned back to Reika, getting my first good look at her in...wow, had it truly been nearly a hundred years since I’d last seen her? Time goes by so fast as an Origin Deity.

She’d changed a little. Her hair was pulled up into a tasteful bun, tied with an ivy vine that grew down to hang below her waist. The flowers in her hair were more vibrant, the elements that comprised them now denser and more compact, the petals far more detailed. A few new ones had even popped up, flowers of metal and light glimmering amongst the reds, blues, and yellows.

“Sorry for the abrupt visit,” she said. “I just wanted to show you something neat. This little snake right here, it’s the only one of its kind that I’ve been able to find,” With that Reika shook out her sleeves, a small rainbow-colored serpent with white wings slithering out to glance about the workshop. Its forked tongue flicked out, tasting the air, and I cooed at the little creature.

“You are always welcome, and he is beautiful, isn’t he?” I mused, scratching its chin. My connection to the Four Realms told me that Reika was wrong, this wasn’t the only one of its kind, but my mind was distracted by something else. The snake’s scales held traces of seven different elements to it, not making it a spirit beast, but rather...I hummed, an idea forming as I took the little creature from Reika, turning back to the human. “I wonder...”

With one hand I made a grasping motion, five different elemental essences, captured in jars, flying up from the ground to hover around me. The human’s body deconstructed itself cell-by-cell, rebuilding just as quickly with the essences I had chosen imbued in every fiber of its being. Metal and earth for the bones to be the foundation; earth and wood for the flesh, to stimulate growth; fire and water for the blood, to carry passion and nutrients both; and all five combining for the vital organs. Immediately I could tell the body was far stronger than it had been before, aligned with the elements albeit imperfectly.

Stolen from its rightful author, this tale is not meant to be on Amazon; report any sightings.

That was by design. I had intentionally left room with the elements I had chosen for another to slip in if necessary. That way if, say, someone wanted to cultivate lightning they absolutely could. These five just provided a nice, rounded balance. And as physical elements were chaotic by nature, that would allow these people plenty of room for growth and change. They didn't need to be made eternal, like my own body was, but I could tell there was certainly the potential there. A potential I couldn't remove, even if I tried.

"Mother...?" Reika asked as I moved on to the cultivation pathways, fingers dancing in the air as if I was playing the piano.

"Leave Her be. You know how She gets when She is in the creative mood." Randus said, unable to hide the excitement in his voice. *You know I can hear you, right?*

I wondered, but didn't respond verbally.

Instead I opened my palm and willed the white energy of the Heaven Realm to come forth, gently pressing it into the physical form. I did not force it to merge with the body as I had attempted previously, instead I carved pathways which would allow energy to flow in and through the flesh and bones. The purity of the Heaven Realm's energy would both keep qi in – which was a blanket term for all the different kinds of energy – and let it naturally seep into the physical form to nourish it, without tainting the qi with elemental energy.

As the yang-aligned energy of the heaven realm could be intensely physical, I had been trying to forge the body out of it; but it would be better to let the energy nourish said body and bolster the other energies that comprise it, than have it be exclusively that.

With a frown I pulled out some Karmic Realm energy next, focusing it mostly on the head area to create the mind. The phrase “mind-body-soul” wasn’t simply a phrase – in many ways, the mind was very much different from the soul and more than just the body. And considering the black energy of the Karmic Realm was rich in mental, psychic energy, it only made sense to form the mind out of the stuff. As soon as I finished crafting the basic template for the mind and placed it in the body it flooded through the entirety of it, black energy flowing down to craft a nervous system made out of the elements, but guided by the mind. I smiled. All that was left now was the soul.

“Randus! Bring the carriage around, would you?” I asked suddenly, getting the feeling that now, *right now*, was the time to introduce my first People into the Realms. For once he did so without lip or argument, vanishing entirely from view as he teleported toward where I kept the carriages.

“Are you going to create them now?” Reika asked softly, trying to hide her own excitement.

“Yes. No time like the present, and I think I’ve got it this time,” I said with a grin. “And it’s all thanks to you and this little one.” I raised the rainbow-colored snake in the air, grinning at the little creature that had been my inspiration. Reika beamed as I handed it back to her, promptly turning on my heel and marching towards the veranda. The mortal body floated along behind me, still T-posing mostly because I found it funny. It wasn’t just T-posing. It was *aggressively* t-posing.

My workshop was genuinely huge – mostly because of the scale of some of the things I had to work on – with massive glass double-doors on the far end that opened up to the veranda. Randus was already there, sitting at the helm of a large gold-and-black carriage pulled by four horses of lightning and cloud. Storm horses, and these ones were immortal. Mostly because I loved them to bits, ever since the first ones had managed to cultivate lightning into their mortal bodies in the Heaven Realm, so I had chosen a few to become the steeds to draw my carriage.

“To Cradle, Randus!” I cried, sitting beside him on the front seat. He stared at me blankly and I grumbled, reluctantly slipping around to get inside the carriage. It was almost nauseatingly luxurious, by his design. Red velvet cushions, tasteful silver and white decorations as a sharp contrast to the black exterior, and a chest full of ice and fine white wine.

Ok, that last one I was alright with. Even if I preferred reds, you couldn't call yourself Italian without appreciating some whites. Er, well, ex-Italian. And, white wines were for celebrating!

Reika was already waiting for me inside, and I positioned the mortal body to be sitting across from me while I sat next to her. She raised an eyebrow at me but I largely ignored her silent judgement, focusing on the finishing touches. The spiritual part of the body would need to wait until a soul was put in place, but that didn't mean I couldn't mess with the aesthetics. The carriage started forward with a jerk, the familiar sound of thunder echoing in my ears as the storm horses took off.

Rubbing my chin in thought, I tried various little changes to the body. Four arms? No, tacky. Purple skin? Not bad, but not what I was going for. How about lines of gold or silver on their skin – stripes! Ok, I actually kind of like that. Pointy ears? Only slightly. Not the massive elf ears, that wasn't ideal for me. Claws...? No, impeded dexterity too much. *Six* fingers! No, now I was thinking too much.

Shaking my head I banished all extraneous thoughts from my mind. Keep things simple – in truth, the simplest answer was usually the correct one.

As the Christians said in my old world; "God created Man in His own image." So I started with that.

Two arms, two legs. Eyes, a mouth, ears – though I kept them slightly pointed, because I liked that. And horns matching mine, curling things that swirled up over the top of the head for the men, and around the side of the head for the women. I was tempted to give them a feathered tail like Elvira's, or wings like Keilan's, or even flowers in their hair like Reika, but ultimately decided against it. They would want to create their own People, and would copy what I had done simply because that is who they were. They would make their People in their own image.

In the end, the only change I made to their form compared to my own was I kept the lines of gold or silver on the skin. It formed little designs, running down the arms and legs to end mid-palm and mid-sole, stretching across the chest and running up the back of the neck. Those were quite enjoyable, and I added a little something only those who were spiritually powerful would consciously notice. The lines, much like their physical appearance, would reflect karma. How bright they were, how dark they were, how beautiful or ugly – all would be a reflection of karma. And unless someone had an intricate understanding of karma, they wouldn't be able tell it from a glance.

Bright and beautiful did not equal good. Dark and ugly did not equal bad. To me, everything was clear-cut. To mortal beings, whose vision was intentionally limited as that was part of the nature of growth, it would be far more muddled.

"We are here, Ma'am," Randus drawled, the carriage pulling to a stop with hardly a rattle. I floated out of the carriage without a word, the mortal body floating after me, and looked down upon Cradle.

It was an Earth-sized planet with ten continents, orbiting one of the two lesser suns that, in turn, orbited the Life-Giving Tree and the landmass it resided on, Pangea. This would be the test. The Cradle of life. The "garden of eden," even if it wasn't truly a utopia. I smiled. I already had the perfect spot for them.

With a clap of my hands the body split into two; male and female. The male had hair as black as mine, the female a brilliant grey. Both were equally fit, neither too slender nor too fat, with leaves covering their naughty bits. Adam and Eve. I chuckled a bit at my little joke – as if all of a People could spawn from two individual beings. With another clap of my hands the people multiplied, thousands floating in space before me.

"They don't have souls, Ma'am," Randus said helpfully. I rolled my eyes, cupping my hands together and calling forth the souls that had been waiting for this chance. They were not spirits. They were not divine, though they certainly had the capability to be. They were...something else. Like my oldest children and myself, they were the kind of souls that created energy through their very existence; I did not want to create cultivators that drained the energy of the land, bleeding it dry for their own use. They would use said energy to fuel their own growth, and return it through their existence.

Cultivation that fueled their own growth, and the growth of the realms.

Ideally, a win-win.

Gently I pressed the soul into the first body, clicking it into place like a puzzle piece. Immediately a qualitative change flowed through it; the soul activated the heart, the mind activated the body, and the body fueled both, the essences of each twisting together to make one great, cohesive whole. I smiled, watching it grow...and promptly fed each of the other bodies souls of their own.

“They’re beautiful,” Randus breathed in a rare moment of awe. I looked back at him and couldn’t help but smile. His eyes were glazed over as he watched the dreams of all these mortals, young as they were. And, in that moment, I realized my other children had come to join us, watching on silently as I created the First People.

“What are you going to call them?” Reika asked.

“Fae. They’ll be called the Fae.” I stated, tasting the name and finding it...adequate.

Creation!

You are the first of the twelve Origin Deities to create a truly sapient race, whom you have named the [Fae].

Instead of fearing the path towards Mortal Immortality you instead embraced it, creating a method for the [Fae] to achieve eternity through their cultivation passages. Although this race's growth may not be as fast as others, they will be tenacious and powerful, paragons of their chosen demesne, with naturally long lives beyond that granted to them by pursuing immortality. All will know that the Fae were the first to be created by their Origin Deity.

Growth of the Four Realms increases by 20% as a direct result of your actions.

As soon as the box popped up, thankfully without much sarcasm, the Four Realms shuddered, groaning as energy began to flow out of the thousands of Fae. It was minuscule compared to what I or my children produced, but still there. And a bit of it even flowed to me, feeding my own soul and gradually increasing the density of my power, through my connection to my People. It was an unexpected surprise, but a welcome one, and made sense in a way. As I had created them, they were my responsibility, and as such had formed a karmic connection with them.

This would, in way, boost my own power. Slowly, steadily, but never would it be as good as pursuing my own personal growth.

“Now then, let’s get you situated,” I said, waving one hand airily. The thousands of Fae descended to the world below, scattered into tribes across the ten continents of Cradle. I would watch them for a time, ensuring they’d survive, but soon enough I’d scatter them all across the physical realm and Pangaea.

Exhaustion swept over me and my shoulders sagged, though the smile on my face did not diminish even as my children crowded around. Alexander peered at them, Keilan was muttered to himself, and Elvira nodded sagely as she watched the Fae inspect their surroundings with the curiosity of a child. Who knew creating a sapient race would be so draining?

Ah, well. At least it was official now. The Four Realms had its first sapient beings.