

RE: DEITY - THE BREATH OF CREATION

1.9 Enlightenment

I personally watched the Fae for three years, and to be honest, their progress in that time completely surprised me. Spears were made. Fire was discovered. Shelters were built. And, sure, I had a bit of a hand in helping them, but there were a lot of hands-off moments too. I ignited a fear response in hunters who strayed too close to dangerous animals, helped gatherers find edible plants, and even showed them the basics of cultivation – essentially just meditating to find the energy within themselves, and a bit of a hand in finding good spots to meditate in.

Not that any of them had truly stepped on the path of cultivation yet, despite this. It would probably take another generation or two for such things to really get going.

On the other hand, they'd started creating the written language, figured out how to knap flint, and started experimenting with clay to form pots, all without my guidance. One tribe even figured out how to make rafts and started to traverse river systems, all on their own! I was so proud to see them thriving, creativity and the need to survive fueling their advances.

For those moments I did help them, however, it usually wasn't as myself. As I still had trouble controlling my aura, it being a bit too much for most mortal souls to handle unrestrained, my omens were usually more subtle in nature. A gust of wind at a key time, tickling a bird to convince it to chirp, cracking a rock, sending little nuggets of emotion down on the tiniest slivers of my power, to manipulate a certain response. Things like that, easily ignored but, if they were willing to listen, was still a sign. Other times I let them make mistakes on their own; sometimes the best way to teach children not to play with fire, is to let them touch fire.

Eventually my personal supervision would have to be replaced with the guidance of other gods, powerful spirits, or angels, once a few of the latter appeared. I just wouldn't have the time to keep an eye on everybody all the time always once the Fae started to proliferate and the Realms expanded. Compared to mortals I might as well be omniscient and omnipresent, but I of all people knew my limits and there was only so much time in the day to get things done; and, bad as it may sound, my time was better spent solving big problems than little issues.

That didn't mean I couldn't help get everyone settled, however, and wouldn't take the time to listen.

"They're doing very well, don't you think?" I asked, smiling down at Cradle and nodding my head. When no one replied I glanced over my shoulder, blinking

at the gods assembled behind me. Elvira and Keilan had their eyes closed, sitting cross-legged as they meditated. Reika was watching everything below, enraptured, while Randus did his best to meditate while standing *and* waiting for me to give him an order. Even the Realm Sun beamed down upon the planet curiously. Interestingly, though, Alexander was nowhere to be seen.

Most of the other gods were just looking curiously at my People rather than undergoing enlightenment like my first children, muttering to themselves the whole time. I nodded to them, and focused a little more intently upon Elvira, Keilan, and Reika, curiosity driving me to try and understand what they were going through.

I could practically *feel* Elvria and Keilan's understanding of their own divine domains deepening, the plasmatic aura that surrounded Elvira fluctuating as her control over her power tightened. Keilan was the same, karmic threads gently drifting about him, his fingers twitching as if he was weaving a tapestry with them. Reika, on the other hand, seemed to be getting something else entirely out of it, flowers blooming in her hair while others died and fell into the depths of space.

"I'll leave you to it, then," I said softly, so I didn't break them out of whatever "enlightenment trance" they found themselves in. Instead I turned toward the Life-Giving Tree and the landmass that it grew from, Pangea. It was time to spread the Fae.

I laid my palms flat, tens of thousands of mortal souls appearing upon them like grains of sand. Gently I blew them away, bodies forming midair as they rocketed toward Pangea, forming clusters and tribes all across the multi-planet sized landmass. They, too, I would watch carefully for a few years, especially since Pangea was more dangerous than Cradle.

“So this is why you rushed to create mortals,” Alexander whispered from behind me. I jumped in surprise, whirling to meet his rainbow-colored eyes. He had shrunk his draconic body as to not disturb his siblings, though the god of fire and goddess of water still hung from his back like monkeys. They’d taken a shine to him, clearly. Gently he butted his snout against my chest, careful not to disturb the little gods that clung to him. I chuckled and scratched him behind his horns, where he liked it. “Their mere creation is helping us understand the nature of existence. Keilan has been struggling to touch that ‘mental energy’ of his for some time now, but now look at him. It’s practically rolling off of him in waves.”

I glanced at Keilan to see that Alexander was right. Mental energy, or psionic energy, as I preferred to call it, was condensing itself around his head like a shell. I’d been so focused on his playing with karma that I hadn’t noticed.

“Yes, but also no. Though it is a pleasant surprise that you kids are getting as much out of this as you are, I can’t say I expected it. Contrary to your belief, I’m not all-seeing, nor all-knowing.” I said with a shake of my head.

“Only because you don’t want to be,” Alexander said, moving around behind me to rest his head atop my own so we could both look out over Cradle and Pangea.

“Only because freewill makes it too complicated to.” I countered. Freewill was, in my opinion, the greatest blessing and greatest curse of a living soul; it was an inalienable right, and could not be forcefully taken. It could, however, be willingly surrendered. But the point was that no one could force another to do anything if they really didn’t want to; for good or ill. “Seeing the future is all probability and statistics. Up to a point I can calculate how everything will turn out, but far enough into the future? The probabilities and things are just too much, even for me. No, one of the main reasons I created the Fae is...well, I lied, I did hope you kids would start to understand why I wanted to make them so bad, and the enlightenment is part of that, but also because the Four Realms have been at peace for too long.”

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“What?” Alexander asked, confusion evident in his tone. “Things have been fairly chaotic, Father, with the processes of creation.”

"True." I allowed. "But I can feel something coming, Alexander. A tribulation, a storm, *something*. The creation of the Four Realms has stirred up some things, the dust is just now starting to settle, and we're about to see what a tribulation really is. The Void is getting restless." I muttered, looking up at the sky. Through the veil of the Realms, beyond the Realm Sun that circled them, and through the protective shell of primordial chaos that surrounded the universe was the Abyss, where chaos met nothingness. It was a rolling, roiling tide of destruction and creation, the Void eating into the chaos, returning it to nothing, while the chaos in turn created its own self through the chaotic process of destruction, seeking to expand ever-outward. And beyond that, lay the empty Void.

It was making me nervous. Something was stirring out there, and I didn't even know how it was possible for *nothingness* to be stirring. And on top of that, the Shadow –

"And you claim yourself not a seer," Alexander joked, pulling away from me. I snorted, turning my attention back toward the Fae.

"Someone of my power level can't help but see large events when they're in the future, because they are a culmination of past choices. It's the little things, the aftermath and the buildup, that are in flux. How bad will it be? What will it be? I don't know. Only that something is coming." I replied easily. It was just like the phrase "the best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago, the second best time is now." When I plant that tree, I can see that it will grow there and can protect it so it does. To an extent I can predict its future. But what will it

endure? What weather will strike it? Who will see it? That is the point, and the question. I could see the looming event, but what it was escaped me.

We were silent for a moment, and I fixated on Cradle once again.

Many tribes had already started to worship me – or at least the concept of me. They had even taken note of my name, reading it through our connection, or perhaps a particular deity of dreams whispered my name to them. That sounded like him. One of the priests started calling me Mother Statera and Father Luotian, worshipping the two halves of my name as two separate entities. What a ludicrous notion. As if I would do something as asinine as choosing a side by picking a gender. I am as I am, and I am Statera Luotian, Origin Deity of Balance. Still, it was kind of funny to see them already misinterpreting things. Ah, mortals, they never change. Still, the worship was...interesting.

I felt a bit of power flowing up to me from the Fae as the worship continued; they were giving me an extra bit of the power they themselves made, moreso than through our innate connection. It wasn't much, not even enough to call it a drop in an ocean, and wouldn't be for a while yet, but the fact it was happening at all was confusing.

Gods didn't really gain power through worship as far as I was aware, and it most certainly didn't fuel their immortality like had been common in stories on

Earth. Was this because the nature of my universe was different than I was used to, or was I missing something?

I wracked my memory for something to help explain what was going on, but the best I could come up with was that I just hadn't been aware of it before, maybe? I'd never been close to the power of what could be called a god in my old universe, and yeah, taking responsibility for the actions of humans I'd been watching over helped fuel my personal growth, I'd never had anyone really *worship* me before. Even still, with the amount of power I was gaining from worship now? It was a surprise, maybe even a pleasant one, but personal growth would likely always trump anything I gained from worship.

Oh! And what's this? I focused a little harder on one tribe in particular, spotting the first two Fae I had created – my Adam and Eve – together in one tribe. Were they...courting one another? That's adorable! Maybe they'll make a red string of fate? That would be too cute, to see my first two Fae become my first two fated lovers. I sighed fondly. I could still be a sucker for romance, even after all these years.

"Well, I must apologize, Father, but I think I need to leave. The cycle of reincarnation needs attending to now that mortals are here – I get the feeling adjustments will have to be made." Alexander said, voice distant. I raised an eyebrow at him, noticing how he, too, was slowly succumbing to 'enlightenment,' and gently pushed him away, into the Spirit Realm. Watching him enter his realm was like watching him sink below the surface of crystal-

clear water; if I looked with just my physical eyes then he appeared distorted and distant, separated by a water-thin boundary.

“Go. Have fun.” I said, and he swam off to chase his own enlightenment. Cracking my neck I leaned back, creating a comfy armchair and a glass of white wine in one hand as I settled in to keep an eye on the Fae. I may not physically go down there to intervene, but for the next decade or two I would definitely be aiding a little bit. “Now, where were we –“

Suddenly a spike of pain shot through me, radiating from my chest. I shot bolt upright, power flaring as I sought the source of the pain, the cause – only to freeze when I found it. A young soul was entering the cycle of reincarnation. It wasn’t the first, a few Fae had died over the past three years to accidents, but this was by far the youngest. I couldn’t even go to it, as the sheer weight of my existence would crush the soul.

Down on Cradle, a boy had just died. He was young, maybe only two years old, among the first to be born rather than created, and he’d been killed by a falling rock. It was truly an accident; a mountain goat had knocked it loose as it walked along the top of a cliffside, sending it tumbling down to strike the kid in the head. The parents cried over his corpse, the father looking skyward and cursing my name.

“Damn you.” He had said. “Damn you for stealing our son from us.”

The words hurt. It hurt far more than I expected. I had expected to be cursed by them, hell, I'm surprised it took them this long, as mortals will be mortals, but this took me by surprise. No god would dare curse me. Most beasts were too simple minded to curse me for the nature of the universe, and I hadn't designed things to be cruel. But conflict and chaos was the nature of the physical, it was what inspired growth and change, for mortals to try and overcome limitations and challenges to become something more. I just...

With a heavy sigh I closed my eyes, allowing my mind to touch theirs, tapping into their emotions and memories from a distance. Not to influence them, just to...feel. I was the Mother, crying over her child. I was the Father, cursing my creator in sadness and in rage. And I was the child, running happy and free, playing with a bug at the bottom of the cliff, only for everything to go black in an instant. I experienced everything from their perspective in excruciating detail, from the torrent of emotions to the physical touch. It reminded me too much of some of my past lives. That it was an accident, a true accident, only made things worse.

"They know not what they say," I whispered to myself, opening my eyes and touching my face, surprised to find wetness there. I shook my head, wiping my face on my sleeve as I hardened my resolve. There was only so much I could do. Direct intervention on my part would do more harm than good, in far too many ways. Including for myself. Yet still, even as I turned away, resolving to send divine incarnations out to continue to guide and watch over things even

as my main body continued to observe, I found myself turning back toward that one little, innocent soul.

And a single teardrop fell in the vastness of space.