

*The content of a god's character is molded from a common collective of beliefs. This is why many gods experience such drastic "personality" changes across the eras, and the reason behind their erratic behavior during certain moments in history.*

*Think of people: ugly, undisciplined, mostly stupid, highly predictable, and heavily shaped by our environments. Now understand that these same people, these physically, emotionally, and mentally damaged people with all their collective delusions and ignorance were both sources of lore and essence for miracles upon their deaths.*

*Yes. Very, very messy. But not always, for in the rare cases, during rare periods of history, "enlightened" societies have developed and created gods of their own. And the gods they made were likewise astounding and fascinating.*

*Every culture has a God of War. But not everyone had a God of Democracy, or a God of Tests, or a God of Trade. These gods, though operating under the same theories of thaumaturgy, displayed far more stable character traits, and thus interacted with their peoples with a genuine cohesion toward the future.*

*It is to this end that I must propose a potential, controversial theory...*

*With our current mastery Necrotheurgy, social memetics, and with the aid of our esteemed cousins from the void, I believe that—I know that we could potentially engineer... we could birth Gods of Genuine Good from our culture—*

*Dammit. Dammit all. They'll never listen to this. They'll never listen.*

*-High Agnos Jakuta Ayjayi*

27-9

Awakening

**-[Simulacrae Replica]-**

Awareness solidified within Simulacrae Replica as the bright of dawn lit its gleaming form. The suddenness of consciousness left the Heaven of Reflection stunned, and they found themselves directing their attention downward, facing the one they were bound to.

The war-daughter was standing upon a panel of glass, studying the Simulacrae as well. From her back sprouted wings made by countless guns, and around them was a canvas of nothingness, a place of cold vacuum and torn tapestry.

A faint vessel of fluid white drifted nearby, and the Heaven of Reflections took a second more to imbibe the complexity of existence. **"I... I am myself?"** When the Simulacrae spoke, their voice

sounded as a layered unison, as if echoing down a long tunnel. ***“But I was also you. Are you me?”***

The war-daughter, encased in armor forged from matter analogous to the nearby ship, simply folded her arm and chuckled. *+Doubt it. You used to belong to a real disappointment.+*

The Simulacrae remembered—but recollections of those days were hazy. They remembered reflection a visage of rage using their glass, having their miracles wielded by a host many time the war-daughter’s lesser. But the Simulacrae missed ferrying him all the same. There was now an absence in their reflection; someone that would never traverse their **Liminal Paracosmos** anymore.

Slowly, the Heaven of Reflections turned to take in the world below. The world. The place of its creation. *Idheim*. So vast, yet contained within the confines of the Simulacrae’s polished body. A... feeling built within the Heaven. No. No, they were a *god*. And they had been—at least part of them—a ruler. A master. A bearer of kingdoms within their mirrors.

All lost now, with the content portrayed upon their glass ever-changing. ***“My world has passed me by.”***

Draus, her host and now master, merely nodded. *+Yeah? Welcome to the party then.+*

***“Thoughts suboptimal.”*** The Simulacrae’s attention was drawn to twelve rings of spiraling guns pointed right at them. The Arsenalist. Their master’s other enchained god. Her preferred means of resolving matters. The God of Reflection studied the many weapons bobbing in the void, pointed at their glass-armored form. ***“Concerns are for ephemerals. We have targets. Locate. Lock. Fire. You will assist.”***

***“You are peculiar,”*** the Simulacrae said. ***“I have not experienced anything of your visage within my mirrors before.”***

***“Irrelevant. I am here. You are here. You grant angles and firing solutions. I am the weapon. The Regular pulls the trigger. All is as it must be.”***

The Arsenalist was a simple god. A neat god. But it had so many firearms growing from its structure. It felt good to reflect such a complex array. ***“All is different. But I am here now. And I wish to glimpse the world in myself.”***

*+Well,+* Draus drawled. *+If you want to reflect the world, you might just get your wish.+* The halo lining her mind oscillated, and a sinuous tendril of *death-conducting-thought* trailed over to the voidship moored upon the ceaseless black. A conversation was happening. Of this, the Simulacrae was sure, but to whom and what was being exchanged, they didn’t know.

A second later, the answer came, and it rose out in the form of a sprawling god-of-gods. From a nest of Soulfire, cyclers, trauma, entropy, and thoughtstuff extended twelve limbs that expanded further into their own phantasmal branches. The Simulacrae felt its reflection dip between places, as if it was partially submerged in invisible waters: the world of the mind trespassing into the realm of the material.

**+You are awake,+** the Overheaven said. Overheaven. The one who awakened the Simulacrae. Avo.

**“Yes,”** the God of Reflection replied.

**+Do you want to be?+ Avo asked. +Do you wish to exist.+**

The question was a strange one. ***“Is that a choice? Is there any other way to be? I am the world’s reflection. I am. I am. I am even before I thought of myself. There is no other way to be.”***

And so, without understanding, the reawakened God of Reflections gave their answer.

**–[Avo]–**

One after another, the gods within his cadre were coming alive.

The Bio-Igniter combusted around the Fucktopia, becoming an inferno of forming and dissolving tissue within the likeness of a flaming avian. Chambers greeted it as if an old friend, it screamed at him to make flesh into fire and fire into flesh. Across the way, melodies sounded from Cas, forming a vibrating set of strings with a column of eyes separating them. The father’s awakened divine was wordless, but it sang to him, and on its timbre thrummed notes of building rage.

A scale hung behind Denton as it actively judged the economic value of anything and everything within its vicinity. The spy herself remained blasé about the whole affair, but she did test her now conscious Heaven, asking it to estimate the worth of the Manta.

*{This was a bold decision,}* Calvino said, sounding uncertain. *{What you are doing will remind a great many minds and polities of the Builder War.}*

**+Good,+** Avo replied. **+Voidwatch has been running long enough. War’s not over. Not for you. Not for the Infacer. Not for Voidwatch. I am not the Neo-Creationist. But I will steal their legacy. As I will inherit yours.+**

*{I understand. I just want you to know the ramifications. For what it’s worth, I find what you are doing quite novel.}*

**+Novel. Not good.+**

*{I don't believe that judgement is for us to make. It is for those we govern to decide if our choices are good. For they are the ones that must live under our systems. We are merely its architects.}*

**+True. Power isolates. Power insulates. But we are more than power. We are learning to be the system itself. Even the embodiments of reality will have the privilege of choice in mine.+**

*{It will be a new chapter to note, if nothing else.}*

**+A testament against the end.+**

*{I quite like the sound of that. You should repeat it when you speak to the polities.}*

**+Already planning to.+**

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The awakening was not limited only to the void above. Within the enclave, Avo touched Dice, igniting the divine presence that lurked inside of her. The Runebreaker erupted forth as it shouted its declarations to the world, roaring about each of its symbols at all who would listen.

**“MY STRENGTH IS EVER-GROWING,”** the Runebreaker said softly, voice blasting the roofs off a dozen houses. **“I GAZE UPON THIS CITY, I SEE WEAKNESS. I SEE FEAR! I HATE FEAR! STOP IT! STOP SCREAMING!”**

“You’re screaming them,” Dice said, watching the enclaves flee, diving behind buildings and walls for shelter from the revealed god.

**+It's annoying me,+** the kitten glared.

**“I KNOW! IT OFFENDS ME! CEASE YOUR FEARING! AGGHHHHHHH!”**

The Dogmother gawked up at the chimera-formed god in disbelief. Avo had to support her mind to prevent a mental collapse. “H-how is it speaking? It doesn’t even have a proper head—”

**‘DO NOT QUESTION THE RUNNNNNEESSS!’**

On the other side of the enclave, taking a moment to sip herb tea on a small patio, Essus took in the expanse of the enclave as he considered

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***“You should visit more places,”*** the god of thresholds spoke. ***“Our expeditions are too limited by far, Essus. We must give people the horizon. That is what they deserve.”***

Seated within a sanctuary housing unit, Essus watched the doorway widen and close as if it was a mouth. His Heaven was proving to be a surprisingly good conversationalist, and struck a good balance with Essus, feeding encouragement to blunt its fear. “You have not seen the state of the world beyond these walls.”

***“But through you I do know. And I know there are spaces that can still hold gates between the ruins. You are hurt. You are afraid. But that does not make them false. We are gods, Essus. We are beyond pain. We are beyond fear. Be all I can offer you. Be the path people choose.”***

The former refugee nodded in silence while Avo observed the scene from his mind. The Heaven was not doing this out of a sense of goodness, but rather because they wished to superimpose themselves upon more doorways. But there was also little deception in them as well. A god wanted what they wanted, and they pulled at Essus treating him like they were one and the same.

***“For there is no difference,”*** the Woundmother said, finishing her words with a sigh.

***“Only now are we beginning to the reach of ourselves beyond our believers,”*** the Fardrifter added.

***“We never belonged to ourselves,”*** the Techplaguer whined.

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Back in gutters of New Vultun, as Avo and White-Rab made for SE-7777, every straight edge around them began chattering. The Heaven of Geometry whispered about all the secrets they could glean, and how easy it would be for them to cut the horizon in half. ***“And—and—and, there’s a guy—no, a dog—he’s three hundred meters away there’s another there I can jump into him and cut the dog in half and then jump back and give you all the environmental details and then give you more angles to see from...”***

[Jaus,] Corner cringed, annoyed by the endless stream of words coming from what was his former Heaven. [Didn’t realize it was going to be a talker.]

White-Rab, meanwhile, just sighed and spoke to Avo. “Okay. It just keeps getting weirder with you. Got anything else you’re planning on pulling out of your ass, Avo?”

***+Updates for your Frame.+***

“You got a wonderful ass, Avo.”

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**GHOSTS - [701,122,369]**

**LIMINAL FRAME (VI) - 789,338 THAUM/c**

**UPDATING INFECTION...**

**INFECTION - [4.98%]**

Rendbombs were going off all across New Vultun. People who were thugs, criminals, murders, slavers, and mercenaries awoke as new egos, spent their lives destroying places and assassinating citizens they didn't know existed until just seconds ago.

And across New Vultun, time riposted. Time, wielded by a woman refined beyond all measurements of violence, rivaled only by her mother and erstwhile mother. Time, and signals, and information, and more.

Avo's growing army of cognitive clones were like viruses throwing themselves against antibodies, but Veylis Avandaer was panacea, and her palliative efforts were further focused with the Infacer's aid. The average lifetime of most clones quickly became twenty-eights after the commencement of their runs.

In twenty-eight seconds, the first wave would deliver all the harm they could do on critical objectives, while those that came after delivered direct injections entropy—further added by Avo's **Pattern-Nullification**. But the High Seraph conducted time like a symphony. Currents of gold wielded occurrences across history against agents shaped by mind.

Nuclear blasts were parried by bunkers recalled. Golems were intercepted by precision railcannon shots fired a half-century ago. Critical personnel were drawn into the Paths as various Drauses detonated the bombs they had implanted in their hearts. Similar fates awaited the Corners, the Chamberses, the other Regulars.

The damage they managed to inflict was negligible. But expected. Avo's forces were only growing, and the High Seraph was being forced to respond—forced to battle him constantly. And as she performed her symphony defense, he studied her, watched her, learned from her.

**[She is a master,]** Alysium said, marveling at how she used history as an edged blade. Cognitive clones vanished into the Paths, died on recollected battlefields to miracles recalled and weapons pre-fired. **[But there is a limit to what she knows. And her behavior—there is a pattern as well.]**

**+Yes,+** Avo agreed, watching through the millions of drones he subverted, from the hundreds of millions of loci he captured.

Above material reality, his battle for the Nether was turning quickly in his favor. With the Incubi under his gestalt accelerating toward a full billion, the balance of power in the realm of the mind was turning drastically in his favor.

While Ori-Thaum was locked down and veiled behind their Informational Heavens, Avo woke the Enigmata within him, and listened to it laugh. ***“All ciphers can be broken,”*** the Heaven of Information whispered. ***“Grant me time, master. Time and observation. I will offer you an entry. Their sophistication pales before ours.”***

Of this, Avo had no dispute. He was patient. And more importantly, he had Seeker Shotin Kazahara to wield as well. Ori-Thaum was to be preserved for maximum use in the coming war. They would be contemporaries of a sort; a boon against Highflame. But that didn't make them an ally. When they emerged from their defensive posture, he would see the Nether taken from them, and their presence confined to small islands while he controlled the ocean itself.

The same fate awaited other Guilds. Highflame's N-Sec and N-DEF became tested constantly. Any Godclad who operated without thaumaturgic protections was jacked, nulled, or subverted. Key citizens went mind-dead by the millions, their minds hollowed clean by lurking hunters striking constantly from the dark.

Stormtree, Ashthrone, and Sanctus suffered the worst of this. Their logistical systems were savaged, and their inner intelligence was breached time and time again. Knowledge and secrets flowed into Avo like blood spilling from an open wound, until finally the Massist enacted their own protective postures as well, drowning all critical installations in persistent Thoughtwave Detonations—a behavior they learned from Highflame.

The only two Guilds that remained hard to push an offensive against were Omnitech and the No-Dragons. The Infacer guarded the former by means too esoteric for the Incubi to overcome. They were elite hunters in the Nether, but signals and coding was something else entirely—something Avo was trying to learn as well.

The No-Dragons, meanwhile, shrouded themselves using non-human intellects. Theirs would be a matter of time: Avo's Definement of Empathy was showing him how to meld with these minds so far from human. In time, he would be among the surviving daughters of the Sang, as well.

With three days left before the trial arrived, he felt a building avalanche—so much success, so much failure, so much more to do.

A session triggered within Avo's Metamind, and he devoted an entire submind to receiving the call when he realized Naeko was the one contacting him. The Chief Paladin had returned to Scale to handle matters pending to the trial, and requested space for themselves. Avo was expecting to be contacted, but simply not so soon.

Then again, there really wasn't that much time left for any of them to wait anymore.

**+Chief Paladin,+** Avo greeted.

The man cut him off. *+I'm gonna show you the very summit of Scale. There's an observatory up there. Come in using Kare's mind. I'll be waiting for you in my office. There are... still things I want to talk about.+*

**+Of course. The summit. Was that the last place you spoke to Jaus?+**

**[SESSION DISCONNECTED]**

Avo grunted. The answer was yes, then.