No one has actually seen the Sleeper, not even most of Omnitech's Chroniclers. What I can say for certain is that the entity seems real and it is giving orders.

But not like a god.

No. I've hunted cults in my time, and embedded our own assets—the similarly named "Sleepers" in cells across the city [NOTE: REQUEST TO REFER TO ORI-THAUM ASSETS USING ALTERNATIVE TITLE DENIED; WE WILL NOT ALLOW OMNITECH TO DECIDE OUR CLASSIFICATIONS] and they operate on assumption, delusion, fate, and falsely perceived patterns.

The Sleeper isn't that. The Chroniclers refuse its requests all the time. The people curse and invoke its name without fear. But more than anything there is respect. And love. My profiling indicates that they view it as something akin to a parental figure. Or benevolent master that provides them with a hierarchical but free-moving society.

Of all the Guilds, Omnitech has proven the easiest to infiltrate but the hardest to maintain assets within. All operatives exposed to their propaganda memetics for a prolonged period inevitably break and turn. And instead of executions, Omnitech promises forgiveness and social acceptance.

We have tried to turn members among Omnitech's Chroniclers and Administrators. Succeeded in a few rare cases. But even they were woefully ignorant of the Sleeper's grand design. Much of what they do and the tasks they are issued seem incoherent and incomprehensible, only that there is a "grand plan" that they are a part of. Something that only the Sleeper can fully conceptualize.

There are, however, behaviors we can still observe. A kind of cultural ethos we can predict.

Their first is their hatred of Voidwatch and standard coldtech. Offering them something that runs off pure informational processing instead of Sprites is a kind of insult in their culture that will not stand. The second is the reconstitution of ancient media—of older histories they commonly dispute the voiders over. Something that saw the occurrence of the Phantom Raids [FOCUS HERE TO ACCESS MEM-DATA] where deniable Omnitech assets launched massive tech-based attacks against Voidwatch's informational systems, but not toward the means of seizing voidships or the countless pieces of trans-stellar weaponry hovering in the dark, but instead information. Media. Old entertainment and news. A million-million years of history.

The fact that they seemed ready to go to war over this matter of "Birthright"--and would have engaged Voidwatch in open combat if not for de-escalation efforts on the part of Highflame and—due to the risk of potential collateral damage—ourselves, hint at something more personal there.

The grievance between them and the voiders is sectarian; it reeks more than a bit like inter-clan struggles.

I think that this will be our key to further comprehension. We have been too... direct in our methods. Our socio-technothaumalogical compositions don't translate. The answer may lay in our voider contacts that can be leveraged to apply the necessary pressures across channels of technology. In this, I am certain our interests are aligned.

-Mirror-Concave Heizu Maguba, Ori-Thaum

19-9 Fractured Ontology (II)

"Hello, Gal-uh, Fardrifter," Kae greeted, her Soul drawn by Avo alongside all the others.

The Fardrifter—a nine-headed equine now with jetstreams of blackened wind billowing from its flowing manes—chuffed at her. "Hail to you, oracle. So soon since your return. Have you come to distort my shape more? Are my winds already too lacking for the master? Does my darkness need to be bleaker? Or perhaps another limitation must be removed to ensure I delve beneath spatial reality for longer?"

"Not anything like that right now," the Agnos chirped. "But you can expect improvements soon. Don't worry, I will do my best to make you the best Heaven possible!"

The colossal steed snorted with indifference. "My being is not my own. My will is nonexistent. Change me. Break me. It doesn't matter. So long as freedom is not mine, then nothing is." A brief pause followed, but the winds hissing from the Fardrifter's body shivered in a conspiratorial fashion. "Tell me then, if not for me or the red one, then have you come finally to silence the poor abomination that burns as our peer?"

"That is already known to us," the Woundmother said, her now expanded ontology a realm of jutting tower. Each word she spoke made her serried heights clash together, clicking as if Avo's fangs. From the narrow crevices between her structures, a single tendril of blood pointed toward the code-made cephalopod. "It exists."

"Hey," Kae said, her frown felt rather than seen. "Don't be mean to your fellow ontologic. There is no purpose in rudeness."

"Bah. Chastisement from a partling elevated above her station by the master. This front of bravado you have constructed would have proven amusing to one of my huntresses. Before they tore it down and made you an offering."

The words of the Woundmother compelled Avo to offer his own response–something a bit beyond "chastisement." Yet, Kae replied before he could, cutting her divine adversary with

words worth weight beyond mere scorn. "This 'partling' can also make sure you are built as poorly as possible for future improvements. Or have Avo replace you with a specially made Heaven of Blood. He has the domains. I have the knowledge. You remain because you are a convenient base, not an untouchable necessity."

"...My thoughts were formed in haste, obfuscating my well intentions."

"Of course," Kae said, turning her full attention now to the Techplaguer.

Nearby, however, Chambers clicked with approval. "Nice one, woundy. That sounded like some shit I would say."

All sense of mock courtesy evaporated from the Heaven of Blood as they regarded Chambers. The fact that he was close to a baseline male—and thus an infant by Scaarthian regards—ensured his station was the lowest of the low in her eyes. "Be away from me, infant. I have no desire to sully my esteem with your ridiculous fixation on your genitalia."

"Okay. That's two Heavens behaving like assholes to me today. You can kiss my ass too, period-queef!"

Avo promptly dragged Chambers over to the Techplaguer and silenced the Woundmother's retort. As amusing as the exchanges were, he doubted he would be entertained by what followed. Chambers would hurl some vulgarity or slurred demur, and the Woundmother would belittle and threaten grievous harm. Such was known, and the flavor was pre-dulled. Best to move on.

With his cadre assembled in the fires before the Techplaguer, the Heaven of Data hung dormant, its cords weaving into the Soulfire as its single antenna pointed downward, ninety degrees from the edge of the cycler. The numbers of its core continued to pulse, but it remained quiet. Unconscious. Hollow. Even when Avo tried to compel it to action.

"Only wakes when manifested," Avo confirmed.

"So it seems," Kae responded. "Hm." Consideration poured from her being as she examined the quiet Heaven as if waiting for it to spring to life and prove Avo wrong. "Well. I do not think any more answers will reveal themselves outside. Avo. If you please."

[CANONICITY REVIEW BEGINNING]

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The erroneous mem-data leaked even further than Avo expected. He couldn't deny his building anticipation of what he might find. Kae was the Agnos here, but he was no less interested in the Heaven of its ability to defy his control.

A wave of numbers and spools of untangling cords spilled over them as the Heaven expanded and Avo inserted himself and the cadre through the threshold.

ENTERING SIMULATED CANONICITY

Dreamlike through the inner worlds of the Woundmother and Fardrifter seemed, they were ultimately sensical, with the composition of the subrealities presented showcasing aspects of their Domains; blood flowing, matter rising; air striding, space turning.

Such circumstances did not apply to the Techplaguer. Instead, Avo could describe the metaphysical organs of the Heaven of Data with a single word: damaged.

The afflictions inflicted upon the Techplaguer were not of the common variety. Materials were not cracked. There were no chasms parting soil or storms lashing down to uproot lands. Nothing burned or drowned or withered. No. The devastation present was visibly ordered, for entire *patches* were missing from the reality–sections of the Heaven's inner existence were just raw chaos. Incomprehensible distortions by every metric.

It was beyond Avo's ability to describe. Chaos wasn't a concept for there was no concept to embody. There was just *madness* there, and the fundamental nature of consciousness—nourished from reality's observable patterns—offered naught for Avo to comprehend. To his eyes, it looked like neat squares had been carved out from the Heaven, exposing surging tides of motion beyond the limits of three-dimensional movement while emitting colors too alien for even Avo to convey.

The stable portions of the Heaven were easily elaborated on. The cadre was standing upon a thick bridge made from countlessly coiled wires of exposed copper, a single massive pylon formed the epicenter of the room, and therefore this subreality. The Heaven's inner structure was that of a spike, the central structure to which countless corded bridges were connected from the mirage of distant Soulfires was veined by sway circuitry. Cube-shaped vents breathed steam out from the inverted base of the structure, while its midsection grew roped with silicon shapes, blinking lights, plastic nodules and knobs, transistor diodes, and burned rubber.

The messy amalgam of matter grew tighter and more compact as the pylon progressed downward. At the very bottom of the space, objects blended into one another, the copper-threaded bridges coiling around the thinning edge of the structure, somehow alchemizing into plates of gold near the very tip from which the antenna protruded.

Beneath the bridges swung cocooned bodies, their faces the only things exposed to the world. The sacrifices Avo devoted to this Heaven and its corresponding Hell were far fewer than the Fardrifter or Woundmother, but a few hundred beings died over and over as electrical currents passed through them, only to be brought back to life by a second shock to die again as a cycle concluded.

Some of the bodies were bifurcated by the patches of undistilled chaos, their visual representations fraying at the edges, the effects expressing themselves as graphical glitches shifting over into existence.

Past the point where shades, shapes, substances, and spaces could be defined, however, Avo still thought he could sense the thaums these deaths represented, the essence that was their will as if hollow spheres of sediment placed along an ineffable stream.

Chambers looked away, giving an audible groan. Dice did the same, though she examined the rest of the subreality with rapt fascination. "Is this… the inside of our gifts?" she asked.

"How some look," Avo replied. They were manifested as simulated avatars, their ephemeral sheaths placed along a bridge at the midsection of the Heaven's inner mythos. At any point, Avo could have transpositioned his cadre anywhere in the space; reset everyone to resemble their Souls rather than their physical bodies.

Instead, he found his attention following Kae's as the Agnos walked along the wire-made bridge, moving to approach a nearby gash where a tile of this warped reality collapsed into naked chaos exposed on the other side. The rest of the cadre naturally followed her, accepting her lead as she possessed the greatest expertise about the matter.

"Dead gods," Kae muttered, somehow able to keep her perception trained on the metaphysical cavity, unflinching even where Draus shook her head in disorientation. "What did Omnitech—ah, it's obvious what they were trying to do. The true question is how is it still working? These missing pieces should have caused a collapse and necessitated a rebuild per the Stillborn's Meta-Fac."

She paused and spun to face the group, face tight with quiet contemplation as she regarded her companions, Avo in particular. "I suppose I did promise you all a lesson on how to build a Heaven."

"We're gonna get a lecture?" Draus asked, incredulous. "Here? Now?"

The Agnos glanced over her shoulder at the marrow of madness exposed just beside her. "Why not? I have a prime place for you to observe the essentials."

Chambers just blinked. "It looks like a big fucking mess to me."

"It is a 'big fucking mess,' Chambers. You are right." Kae was smiling now, nodding as if the half-strand had stumbled upon a treasure trove. "What do you think Heavens do?"

"Make reality shit itself so we can break the rules and have an easier time killin' fuckers?" Draus offered. Her response was rooted in action and material effect. Banished though she was from

the iron and gold that formed Highflame's heights, a Regular she remained, all semantics and philosophizing secondary to the practical applications of violence.

"That is... true," Kae said, though she wore a slight frown. "But the main thing is that Heavens are like... dams and deltas for existence. They change the patterns that reality weaves and the narrowing their structures provide allow specific paths or concepts in reality to be... augmented."

"Paths. Concepts. Domains?" Avo's had a feeling this was what Kae was getting at, but he wasn't sure.

"Yes. But also canons," she said. "Observe. Look into the edges where the chaos stabilizes into the substance of this subreality. What do you see?"

The rest of the cadre studied the borderlines between the incomprehensible wounds and the rest of the Heaven. Eldritch luminosities tinged the edges with a fluxing shimmer, but there was a stabilization of patterns as the crossover began. Things like distance or size meant nothing when starring into the mess, and Avo thought himself looking at everything and nothing at the same time. After a few moments of prolonged observation, he found himself overwhelmed by the countless details and unable to differentiate while fused where and drifted out was what.

Never before had he yearned so for his Conflagration to follow him after death.

"You can read this?" Avo asked, looking to Kae in disbelief.

She just laughed. "Of course not. I don't think even an EGI can do it. We believe that the chaos being expressed here is quite literally everything. And because we are preserved egos fused to a Soul, we can observe it without going insane—"

"Wait, is this why my wards always used to rattle when I looked at golems?" Chambers asked.

"Only because you are perceiving the very edges of the impossibilities leaking through."

"Whoa," Chambers muttered.

"I can tell the problem with this Heaven already," Kae continued. "Omnitech attempted to make their own deep modifications to the Domain of Data itself. Normally, the damage they did her should leave the entire ontologic damaged and non-functioning, but look at the patterns again. See how a few flows oscillate? How the sacrifices here are spaced in a specific order along the bottom of each bridge?"

Avo did a double-take at her words and swept the area with his perception again. True to what Kae said, the hanging bodies beneath every copper-knotted bridge did appear to have an order, and so too did the uprooted panels of ontology. There was a deliberate act they had not

discovered from their surface modifications—deeper symbology imprinted within the metaphysics itself.

"It takes a long time to learn how to decipher the raw 'alignments' inside a Heaven. The main rule is not to look at everything. You focus on a specific part—as small as you can—and ignore all the others. It might seem to be blending in with other aspects of reality—and that is exactly right! You move from pattern to pattern, trying to judge how many conjoining weaves meet to form the base of a Domain." Kae paused, humming to herself as if she noticed something. "Ah. They tried moving some of the pattern pathings on their own, specifically and deeply affecting the Heaven of Data and, by my assumption, your Crown of Virtuality canon. Likely whatever canon it was before that too."

"So, you think what's wrong with the Heaven is connected to that?" Draus asked.

"It has to be," Kae sighed. "This is not the first case of Omnitech trying to 'experiment' on their own. Usually, that's Rapid Rupture Response's duty. Because, well... Omnitech's self-modified Heavens tend to rupture. I never really worked much with them, but one of my mentors—a Sang named Reason-Bearer—used to be a Helltech, and elaborated on a few of her past cases."

"Can you fix it?" Avo asked.

She craned her neck to look at him. "Of course not. I cannot fix anything. But your Heaven can. I just need to identify the right adjustments to make so we can suture stability back onto these gaps."

Avo really hoped he wouldn't need to alter his Crown of Virtuality canon. That was the only thing keeping him from dying instantly when he entered the George Washington or other Nether-unbalanced areas. "Will I need to... replace the canon?"

"Hm? Oh, no, just the Domain." she said.

He didn't really understand, and it must've shown in his expression.

"Ah. Okay. More fundamentals. A Domain is a concept or aspect of existence that the Heaven must channel in absolute capacities. Think of it as major hardware components. Uh, implants, for the divine sheath that is your Heaven. It's why each ontological build exhibits traits from each of its Domain—they are points of expressable symmetry to allow crossover between the Soul and reality. These are signified as sigils within a Heaven. Uh, view those as unified codifications for specific concepts that we can apply quickly in metaphysical formulae."

"And canons?" Avo asked. "They are extensions? Functions of Domains. If Domains are the 'implants' in this metaphor."

"They are capabilities that your Domains can have, yes, but it's also more complex than that," she gestured again to the open chaos beside her. "If one of us was able to remain inside this mythology while your Heaven was active, we would likely see the sudden dematerialization of most of the chaos beyond a few interconnected patterns. The rest? They might as well not be real here. And when another canon is used, perhaps those patterns will cease to shimmer."

Blank faces greeted her and she paused. She adapted the impromptu lecture to include their more tangible experiences. "Let us take Avo's Haemokinesis. There is a central strand of repeating conceptual data in reality's vast tapestry. It is blood. What the culture that created the Heaven understands to be blood, anyway. Regardless, this pattern is still connected to the rest of reality. The miracles arise when blood interfaces with the rest of existence to alter and modify the expression of the rules."

"Like I'm reshaping reality in a limited area," Avo said. "Or jacking into its structure to sequence new changes."

"I... suppose you can view it that way. Yes." The Agnos continued. "Now, the fact that a Domain must bridge with other aspects of existence is the entire reason why there are no single Domain Heavens. Two is required at the very least. And then one involved Domain must also exist in the Hell to serve as a countervailing tunnel for the tapestry rupturing entropy that is Rend. Haemokinesis allows you to move blood. Absolutely. Nothing can stop you from moving blood. This is a foundational truth within your subreality. And so, the number of patterns required to materialize the miracle, along with how many other patterns need to be suppressed, become parts of scope and scale—what determines how many thaums you require to see your canon solidified."

"And the hubris?" Draus asked, never one to forget about a potential weakness.

Kae beamed as if waiting for the question. "Yes... What about the hubris. Recall that I told you to ignore most of the chaos and focus on a very specific pattern if you can. Now, I want you to understand that there is no way we can resolve every outcome, every possibility, every contradiction in a canon. And so we don't. Instead, we locate a major flaw or inconsistency that wasn't considered and we route all the other ones through it. It becomes something of an unformed canon—blunting the Rend of most the other impossibilities. This is also why if you have multiple canons with the same hubris, the backlash will be greater and more severe. Because it will surge across two different points at once no matter which is triggered."

"How are canons formed anyway?" Avo asked, flitting periodic glances into the slurry of sloppy patterns. Even as he tried to focus on a single spot, he still wasn't able to tell which fold of nonsense wasn't another.

"Actions. Beliefs. Histories." The Agnos said. "The mere thought of belief is not enough to condense into worship. Ritual. Feats. Dedications. Sacrifices. These are connectors of will and material within a person. Worship, in a word. The binding of one's will to believe. Your Frame

bypasses this with its... unnatural capabilities, but right now, the reason why there are so many arbitrary differences between your canons in their effective ranges for instance is that, at some point in a Heaven's recorded mem-data, some of its worshippers—or the Agnosi themselves—managed to dedicate specific feats and actions towards gods or Heavens in design. This can be traveling from one mountain peak to another. Or it can be killing five hundred people in a battle, and so you can only instantly affect five hundred people with your strikes per relation to that. It is causing specific pathings along patterns—teaching it to the Heaven as a miracle."

"More fragments of applied culture," Avo muttered. Slowly, he was gaining a creeping suspicion as to why the Guilds were so determined to crush each other histories, why Emotion of the Famines had bestowed upon him the records of old Noloth.

"Yes," Kae said. "It is also why we need to find a point in the Sunderwild and a supply of... expendable subjects. So we can create our own miracles."

The weight of novel understanding settled on Avo's shoulders as he grunted. "Yes. See your excitement now. But we should handle the Techplaguer first."

"Already covered," Kae said. "I have an idea. I might need you to alter your Data canon a few times for us to see the changes. It might also take a few deaths. But yes, I think I know how to stabilize the entity's structure."