

FANTASCIENCE

"We knew our science understood the cosmos, but then we found out our cosmos was not the cosmos. We had grasped the cosmos, but it had become a phantom.

And now here we are. Is this another phantom? Is it phantoms all the way down, through, and beyond?"

—Ilion Anno, *Xanthoria: Oral Diaries*

The priest clambered off the prayer machine and carefully dusted off her holy anti-static overalls with the red and white brushes. All as prescribed in the *Right and Proper Methodology of Saint Adom*.

"There, another week's worth of confessions sent up into the nimbus, another week safe from divine wrath. Now, novice, pass me the breathing mask and we shall go into the void-room to store the sacramentals."

Done as indicated, the priest and the novice wend their way. As they go, the elder urges the younger to practice the chants of the phantasmic science of this Given World.

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Fantascience (*fan'ta-sai-əns*): 1. (ed) methodical pursuit of systematically deduced, adduced, and proven knowledges of this phantastic cosmos of ours. Compare: *NATURAL SCIENCE*.

—New Frank Conceptual Dictionary, 3.b. Ed., Dwarven Clay Archive

The duke clambered off the war machine and stomped carelessly through the churned red soil and white bone. The living machine city twitched, but death was coming for the feral entity.

"Sir, another urbi-seed confirmed destroyed," saluted the half-golem lieutenant.

The duke gazed at the young soldier. Her human face still showed emotion. A few more years of hunting down the mad city seeds trying to convert plains and forests into parking malls and tooth salons would take care of that.

The duke sighed and raised her eyes to the Moon Mountains. An idiot builder-factory had woken up. Or glitched. Or maybe this was part of the Maker's plan. Or some god had decided to punish them. The details were above her pay grade.

"Send the confirmation to the cogflower. But first, get me the recon teams. We need to be sure nothing else germinated."

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"Physics. Metaphysics. Paraphysics. Cacophysics. Look, I'm sorry, I want to tell you we're going to figure out the natural laws of this *place*, but they're rewriting themselves as we look!"

—Excuses 5:16, *The Rotten Seed*, Violet Archive of Antiquities

The archivist clattered down the stairs, wailing as his spidery limbs bent and cracked on the smooth stone stairs.

"Please, masters, I cannot give you answers I do not have!"

"Wretch, lying synth, this is the archive of light! You have the keys to the phylakes eyes! The book proves it," the angry inquisitor waved their ancient godskin book like a badge of office.

The bulky sthagga, the inquisitor's passionate protector, marched in front, grabbed the archivist's old plastic body and lofted him up like a bundle of firewood. Impassive, the sthagga squeezed the archivist until his old joints squeaked.

"Please, please, oh it hurts!" wailed the synth.

"Yes! Yes, the light of truth must hurt! Now, give me the keys and the hurt will stop," shouted the inquisitor. Spittle struck the archivist's carapace.

"Lord, please, we are not immune to the jubilee! It eats our archives, scrambles our knowledge, corrupts our keys. We have not had those keys for over four centuries!"

At a gesture from the inquisitor, the sthagga tore out one of the archivist's antennae.

Once the screaming stopped, the synth wailed, "Your book is out of time, its flesh body resists the jubilee better than our records."

The inquisitor looked bored now, "You continue to lie and choose the hurt. Get the answers out of his head."

The sthagga smiled without aggression or anger that would trigger a guardian angel. It smiled with the simple pleasure of a human child about to dismember a fly.

MAKER

As above, so below. As before, so tomorrow. The cosmic mind, the absent creator, the prime mover.

Majesty be unto their existence. MBUTE.

Or perhaps, majesty begins under their existence. MBUTE.

Or perhaps, maker be up there eating. MBUTE.

THERE IS DISAGREEMENT

1. There is no maker. The cosmos has always been. Always will. The technosophists are not alone in this.
2. Nonsense. Of course there is. And they are present, here, now, active. So say the sisters of the seed.
3. It is obvious from our cosmic existence that there is a maker, but they are absent. That is why we have our hierarchies.
4. The maker is the cosmos, we are all the maker.
5. Pansophic heresy! The cosmos is blind, we are the maker's eyes.
6. The maker is, was, always will be. All we see is the work of its emanations, the builders.
7. Shush, don't talk of the maker or the shadows will eat you up. M.B.U.T.E.
8. The maker has cooked our cosmos as a dish, now the complete precursor waits for us to cool enough to feast.

A SAFE DISAGREEMENT

While both scholars and the sewer-dwellers may argue about the nature of the maker, one thing is commonly understood: the maker does not care what they think or say about her or him or it.

Perhaps this is why the maker is such a popular object of faith.

HA, KA, BA

The theophysics of this made cosmos give us the observable fact that it is constituted of three levels of matter. The substances of hyle, pneuma, and psyche. In the arcane builders' language; the ha, ka, and ba. In the low dialects, body, soul, and mind-stuff.

1. **Ha, hyle, body.** The underlying substance, devoid of qualities and form, but capable of any quality and form. The stars of the cosmos above, reflected in the bricks of the polis and the flesh of the citizen, mirrored in the mass of the earth below.
2. **Ka, pneuma, spirit.** The superior substance, the rarefied body, the fire of creation. The active, generative principle that organizes the world and the individual.
3. **Ba, psyche, mind.** The unique formal matter, extant through space and time, the lived material trajectory of a consciousness. Each mind is a shard of the great mind, each sentient being is an eye of the cosmos watching itself. Its relationship with its world is each psychic body's relationship with itself.

RESURRECTION IMPOSSIBLE

It is a dirty secret among most reanimators and portal engineers that a destroyed sentient being can never truly be brought back. Whether that sentience is a mosquito or a mushroom mycelium or a man, their individual sentience is embodied in space and embedded in time, a perfect coherence of ha, ka, and ba. Once those components are decohered, that entity is ended.

Even if those components are recombined, the result is not a continuity. It is a new-birth or rather new-creation. A new individual is formed, shaped to resemble the one who was before, but not precisely the same.

When a traveler is translated through a null-portal, they dissipate and a new them takes their place in society. When a warrior dies in battle and is rebuilt in a reanimation vat, that new warrior is a copy who shares their memories and specific skills.

Among lay society, pretending this is not so makes life more tolerable. And the convenience of fast, easy, painless travel and return from the dead is so alluring.

And yet. Once an individual returns to the cosmos, they are of the cosmos for their eye has closed and a new one must open.