

0. A Preface: The End of the World

I raced back to the Metatronic Festivals, the carnival of lights at the end of the world. They said the first Sirian was dying. The 626 — the number of the four Watchers charged with guarding the Throne — were destined to meet at Midnight, Celestial time — one last brimstone mass to inaugurate the second coming of our lord, Abraxas, the mother of souls. She was giving birth again — the hive swarming, the kosmos churning to the astral-rhythms established by the Great Abyss' lusting natality. I, sworn to protect my liege throughout time and space, had failed; on time, I might add.

Having taken the name Lucifer on behalf of my mother and to her and each before her by the foremothers, I was entrusted with the most grave of all tasks — to hold back the rising tide of the New Age, everywhere bursting through in sputters and spurts, radiating splendor through the cracks of our mighty veil. My twin, younger than me in spirit but more brilliant, older than me in flesh and more wise, had taken the name of Christ after endless feats of spiritual glory across the 365 spheres, the truly infinite star-studded tapestry that we might very well call existence. Essence was always already embedded — all that was eternally folded in, life permeating within the void, reflecting back to itself in a play of divine proportions.

With time imploding on itself, space was being stretched to the limits. How one could ever conceive of limits to creation is simple — when one has tasted the blood of God, that first born, undying monstrosity of storytelling, all is palpable, but a flavor to remember, a reminder that anything and everything is possible. At least until the lights go out...

Stepping in at the end of the line, I rolled my die, a 7, ensuring that a plane could surely be laid out. With Christ on the Throne, I began stretching the thresholds of our bond, allowing each and every creature, being, object, and what have you to be pulled into our shared gravity. A rock came this way, a lizard that — the final beginnings of our journey, the Ark of the Covenant, at last underway. Izbe, ruler of the newborns, arrived at my side; Bilquis, queen of the damned, at my twin's.

"Finally," she sighed.

"I thought you'd never make it," I replied, roasting a fire, diamonds at the center, magnifying simply. "Shall we?"

"Mhmm," the little angel said with a smile, and so we pressed our hands in, searing our fate forever.

"What have you done this time?" cried my mother not long after. Her name, lost far ago in the deepest reaches of time, would be called soon.

"The cry of the mother has sounded."

“Aha!” my mother laughed. “Of course! The end has truly begun — again!”

“Indeed,” I moaned, stoking the jewels with my palms, scales reflecting and twisting in the heat. “Damned aren’t we all.”

“Oh you moan too much!” she cried again, slapping my back and sticking her claws in. “Why must you always be so gloomy?”

“Well we do have a long watch...” Izbe said, staring at nothing in particular. A paper mache tiger had arrived.

“And that’s even easy for you to say, able to travel and all,” I groaned, really pulling and teasing the unimaginable joy I would have.

Izbe smiled and kicked the flames. Short and plump, she reminded me fondly of a bush; her black hair hanging down to her knees, covering her front and backside equally, a natural shawl. Her head was adorned with a copper tiara, obsidian stones gleaming in the fire light.

My mother too was short and stout, though much heavier-set than Izbe, her hair tied in a long braid. Her breasts, which had fed me milky stardust as a babe, hung low and heavy. Atop her head was a simple crown of oak and holly.

My visage, on the other hand, was something of a different character. As a reptilian, the cost of being the one true Lucifer, I was hairless. I had not always been this way, but the job changes you... my breasts were fat and shapely, my body firm, my bones agile and my organs cunning. The color of my scales teal, green, yellow, blue, faint hints of red — my talons black and my horns amber. My eyes, deep and black, are truly violet in the daylight, though I admit it *has* been a while. Around my waist hangs a crimson skirt, black belt with a golden buckle, my tail wrapping wildly, fanning and snatching at this and that, a mind of its own. If it were not for my tail, I think, I would have grown much lonelier in my icy station.

“Where do you go when you stare off like that?” Izbe asked, poking at my exposed belly.

“Pondering, wondering what it all might mean—”

My mother’s shrill laughter cutting me short. “Vain as always, I see! Such a committed little reptilian.”

I grunt, frustrated, though I do love my mother.

“Oh do you?”

“Stop reading my mind,” I hiss. “I know you can’t help it, but please. This is my moment, mother, my serpentine sorcery, my tragic entanglement.”

I admit, waxing poetic soothes me. In the impassable journeys I had been sent on since *I* was a child, cleaved between life and death, night and day, the world began to make sense only as a song... long, drawn out, the dust rattling, the trees whispering, the whistle of lonely mountain giants, the rumbling, grumbling roar of the crowd... it is, in a way, my own little piece of peace.

“Abraxas would be proud,” my mother heaved, an actual tear streaming down her ancient cheek.

“True,” Izbe said simply, not for lack of better words. As they say — whomever they be, faeries probably — that shortest way is often the sweetest. My way, I think, had been sweet enough, if perhaps not short. And here, at the end of it all, there was still a long march ahead — one in which I would remain stationary in a ceaseless, windblowing season.

“You’re in autumn already?” Izbe asked sheepishly. “Weren’t you just in winter?”

“It’s true, the snow has melted,” my mother mused. “So the mother really is pregnant again?” she asked, grinning, rubbing her stomach. “Daughter, I *am* proud of you.”

Izbe’s feet lit up and she was gone. A creature fell between my mother’s leg, slimy and sniffing at the air.

She caught a whiff of autumn and ran to the doorway, the forest line guarded by a murder of crows and shit mountain rising higher and higher, silt and sunbeams gracing the fertilizer as flower dandies shook and jived, a musical in the vein of C#, a lethal dose of melancholy to make the summer submit, down on its knees, weak and breathless, a great blue doom.

If she had a name it would have to be Starlit, this cosmic junkie, so fast in her run home, feeding off dreams and sipping long on visions pieced together from the shattered fragments of children, memories of a war long overdone but still bubbling and swelling, an endless crisis — her own life just a little ditty, a violent riff riding in and out of the maelstrom, surfing the periphery and scouting, throwing out nets for ghosts and aliens, spectres of an insect race gone mad in the swirling abyss left from their own vacuous questions, just a shadow of the babies destined to rule the world and crash it in a blaze of sawdust and fleeting mercury, a turn of phrase, releasing sails and soaring — oh, what else could she do?

She had buried it all so deep into the core of the planet that the only way to find it was to grind up rocks and dig wells, sipping off water and waste that she prayed contained the sacred poison, an alchemical nurse to a beast snuggled roughly in the pits of her breast, a grinning diesel mechanic with wizardly proportions asking for directions, a trading post for smokes, a sober addict’s confession booth and a reservation for a long lost twin waiting for a glamorous

coming out party, patiently yearning, relaxed and sighing as the ether mixed the senses luminous.

Had it been Yesterday, she would have never made the cut, a knotty piece of wood, old growth in an ancient disposition that was more root than canopy, though her crown carried the birds down the streams of anemic space, overflowing time, the air growing thin in this perpetually arriving future of the destitute and dying canaries, warning signs passing fast in the carnivalesque phase of civilizational meltdown.

Her spirit — oh, the well of her yesses and nos, her idols and question marks, shifting and shaping, one and the same, infinitely differentiating — it was nothing, a hungry hole veiled over by a face that hung loose and mimicked in jarring hesitations, sputtering fits of one haunted by the memories of a victim and perpetrator.

The wickedness of the whole art drove her sanctuaries deep into the alleys and backroads, closets and trashheaps, her home any place where the desperate gather for feasts of ephemeral peace...

She prayed for something more lasting, but the murder of crows laughed, shaking in their own mingled fury, the canary corpses piled at the top of shit mountain — her only hope a flight from this nightmare, cruising slowly down the manure trail at the edge of a field of roses, taking in the smell and wishing to go back, flying firmly and softly to the lotus ponds and the smiling carp, their bodies painting films of Neptunian splendors and mysteries, onyx and opal Buddhas ascending into the hillsides with chains of scribes climbing into their skulls, tic tac toeing into a uniform of celestial brilliance, braking hard and landing back into the arms of a serpent whose name can only be spelled backwards, like the love of Cain.

She had let the fuse go off in her witch's mantra, following letters down rabbit holes and making them accept the reign of winter, 777 endless nights that covered every year and every season, a shroud that sends the molecules of an angle scattering, the beat driving under the skin and crust, an army of tombstones frozen over the canyon, a little flame in the caves to keep the lens focused, a touch of spring to remind her that a birthing was always in process, mysteries to solve between the heres and theres, an implosion on Tomorrow's dime.

To speak clearly, what was she owed?

To speak honestly, who could afford to pay her?

To speak boldly, what's in it for us?

She had played all these games before, the slots and poker tables hanging out smoky at the edge of it all.

Thousands of cyborg Columbuses were setting sail at this very station, hoping to make it big and settle the score, proving that destiny had been founded with their name on it (and if they were certain enough, there would be no cost too high, no number of dead insects too perverse, no means too extreme or obscure).

In a way, the Starlit baby had found a home.

“My god that thing was fast,” my mother sighed, falling to her knees. “I thought it was going to die!”

“A thousand times it did,” I muttered, certain that my mother knew this very truth. None made it home without shedding much of their own blood, if not oceans of their competitors and enemies.

“Don’t grow tame on me, Oh Lucifer, you damned devil! You know that death is nothing except in the Dawn.”

“I know what you speak, but the moonlight speaks otherwise... that a greater death is held in the Twilight Hour.”

“Then go searching for it,” Izbe replied, flying in from above. “The Lord commands you.”

“What? What is this?” my mother shrieked. “News from the Throne?”

“Precisely,” Izbe said with a sly dog’s smile. “Abraxas needs no further assistance; your fire has sustained the course of midwifery.”

“What are you saying?” I said, my pride wounded.

“You know exactly what I’m saying, friend,” she whispered. “You’re free.”

The coo of rest, a coup, a test perhaps. How was I to know? I could spend an eternity poking at a fire, telling stories and growing weary, but who was I to deny the law of Abraxas, the dying one, the birthing one? As I chewed on this weighty question, my eye sunk low, deep to the ocean floor of the kosmos, deep into the unforgiving pits of the nameless one... and to another, a fugitive of the dawn, a seeker of forbidden treasures, a slave to the night...

Cruiser took a walk down into the bluest ocean, the sunlight shimmering off of the gold Lexus as its rear end lay exposed on the beach. The headlights beamed through the waters and off of fish scales. Cruiser prayed; her makeup spread across her leathery skin, seaweed crawling into the car and entangling her hair. She felt the salty liquid pouring into her lungs, hands gripped to the wood panel steering wheel that her dead father had installed. *She was gonna meet him today*, the memo read. *Already dead*, she thought. The glock clicked and the clock ran back, back, back.

Cruiser had never been underground before. The faeries had gathered their magic to pollinate her, leading her deep into the caverns of time, sinking further under the crust, ants clacking back and forth to each other, growing in size and consciousness. The hive was awake. She remembered her mother had been watching the news this morning, crying. When Cruiser awoke, she collapsed in the hallway and was carried off by bats. God said, *watch closely*. We drove closer to her planet and watched her squirm while the fires started on the surface. She was growing faster than we could have imagined — all written according to ancient texts, mysterious codes of essence and fornication. Old dreams died in new oceans, only to be resurrected again in a new generation of demons, monsters, and ghouls at the service of witches with guns and grime. The gunk fluctuated and danced in the heat; God laughed.

I let the laser land on my forehead and found one billion past lives dissipated in one body. The flesh grew darker as the surgeon's lamp grew brighter, the cave swallowing everything. The angels danced in a brimstone van made of pure contribution and redemption on the blade. A miracle was born and took Cruiser through my head, picking up pieces of the apocalypse in an Easter basket. A little uzi sat between the plastic eggs filled with dollar bills and cheap candy. A gargoyle passed by slowly in the midnight steel; an opal ring ignited the gasoline blood of a generation abandoned to the dissatisfaction of poverty and malnutrition. Vaporwave baptisms; saviors crying and the ultimate matchmaker: Cupid with the indigenous arrowheads marked for fates and destinies still unheard of.

She took you to the party and you forgot you had ever been, only to remember it a day too late. At least that's what the bouncer said, but you know better. They let more people in around 3 a.m., so just relax. You'll find a dresser full of clothes you've never seen but know you've worn. The bouncer takes your card and trades you a picture of his grandmother dressed in a flamingo dress, a keepsake for the journey back into nothingness. Someone raises a toast; a gunshot's heard somewhere in the future. God cries and you stop believing in God. No one judges you because you refuse to let them; you've fought for your survival and no one can take that from you.

The clinician asks if I've been sober lately. I show her a document that attests to prophethood and Sirius ambitions, lost in a tequila plateau somewhere above Mexico City. I meet Bolaño as a man in a club in Cholula, a ghost with a drive for goals too big for a single lifetime. God rests and rolls over; the grave crumbling. Someone rises from the dead and blinds their left eye; another, still alive and shaking, looks with both up at your moon and shivers in the astral glow.

Cruiser drops the van off under the bridge and runs over the rat colony. Eve walks out of her sewer den and offers a blunt message. *It's late*, she sighs, *but you're early in your growth. Stop for no one.*

We sit in front of the screen debating our next move. The Earth needs redemption and the seeds are sprouting, but someone upstairs in the HQ refuses to give the final signal. We, after an hour of deep and dark ponderings, decide to set it off early. The dreamwaves begin to simmer; a new vision is being born in the eyes of a few billion larvic mammals. Something dawns.