

The Name of God

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He stood upon an old skull, and he crushed it under his dark heel. A snake was inside it, and its blood seeped into the ground.

He stood in the crater where Gods went to die, the valley without light where a bloated Leviathan would rest upon the ground, and spears piercing its belly beneath dark clouds, the sun would turn away in time for it to rot and die. In its carcass, in its open bones a new God would form, a new rotten Beast to occupy the holy Throne.

One man became aware of this cycle, so he travelled to the wasteland to end it. It was a long journey, and he undertook it alone, braving the craggy peaks and the empty riverbeds that led to the lightless hell where religions and nations alike rose and fell like the untamed cycle of death and rebirth he sought to break.

He sought to break it by his own hands, with a will of steel. So he came bearing the Sword, and he came with Knowledge of his opposition. Made of matter, they had no other way than the Sword.

His hair was light and he wore a scarf, rippling with his jacket in the celestial wind. He had a bandage around his left ankle and the tails of his jacket billowed past it, along with the topsoil blown in the infinite wind.

He looked at the archangels before him, and his face was the resentful glare of a child whose ideas had just been shot down by his parents. He could muster no empathy for the archangels, all that took root in his veins was hatred.

Standing tall, he asked them: "So, good old dad's finally sent his slaves to kill me?"

They stared at him with ruthless eyes.

Michael, the luminous, his decorated sword radiating with heaven's bliss. It was a thick blade of shining white gold covered in rubies and diamonds, the handsome face of the blond servant eyeing Kasimir with the fury of a dying sun.

And Gabriel, the dark sun, a brilliant blade in each hand. His hair was dark, his breastplate silver and ornate, his wings tucked behind his back.

They were clad in the armor of God, bestowed unto them by the Father himself. Side by side, they stood, monoliths of light and light's power.

"Metatron awaits you at the gates of Heaven," said Michael, nothing but intensity in his voice, the atoms quivering in the air and his wingspan luminous enough to blind all the world's seers. Abraham himself would have dropped the knife and ran. "Even if you slay us here, he will destroy you."

The ragtag traveler, clothes and scarf billowing all around him, now found it in himself to grin. He was tall and thin, a steady tower, his hand on the sword sheathed at his side. "This world has given me nothing. It has given my generation nothing. You offer us fields of ash and demand we plow? I would rather gut you on the road, and start anew. I would rather Satan himself rise and take control of this Earth, than to pretend for one moment longer that God is good."

A massive gust of wind blew across the cracked and battered plains, his enemies' heavenly robes cascading all around them. There was a dark sky, and darkened mountains all around, shaped like tetrahedrons, great monoliths of cultures that once garnered respect.

"Do you even know who I am?" asked the young traveler to the archangels.

"It is of no consequence," affirmed Michael in the darkness. "No one will know your name."

The traveler raised his fist, hands trembling, his teeth bared like an animal. This insult, he could not take. And so he spoke:

"No. Everyone will know my name. Mine is the name of all humanity, set against this world and all its suffering."

Gabriel shook his head. "Enough. Save us your madness."

The traveler's grin only grew wider. "You know it, but you refuse to speak it! Your damned pride..." He held his sheathed sword out before him, standing steadfast in the fearsome breeze. "I am the

demon to end all demons, the echo of all discontent. And you bastards are nothing but false light serving a false God.”

He narrowed his eyes.

“You serve a *Demiurge*, the weaver of a world where injustice reigns by the peonage of matter and all the hell it inflicts upon its children. Born of bloody wombs, and to bloody Earth we set our flags. For what? And for whom?”

He grinned, bracing against the wind in the dark valley’s final hour.

“*Demiurge*.”

Michael raised his sword to the Heavens, the gusts intensifying as he set his will to destruction. There was a heretic before him, a damned little imp with bandages wrapped around his ankles and wind caressing the stubble upon his chin.

“Gabriel,” began Michael. “Stand witness, and tell the creator how I silenced that word upon his lips.”

Cain’s eyes were alight with wonder. He unsheathed his sword slowly, and swept it to his side.

“You think you can silence me? You think you have the right to silence your own children?” A single glint of sunlight escaped from the clouds. “THEN COME AND TRY!”

Michael surged toward him, wings wide, leaving a curtain of light in his wake.

Cain, triumphant, blocked his blade with one hand.

“WHAT’S THE MATTER?” he roared, staring the archangel in his eyes. “I CAN REALLY MATCH YOU?”

He gazed upon nothing but Fear.

“HOW DOES IT FEEL?” demanded Cain, relentless as he pushed against his nemesis’ sword. “HOW DOES IT FEEL TO FINALLY BE OVERPOWERED?”

He kicked Michael in his chest.

“DIE, YOU DEMON WITHOUT A WILL!”

Cain brought his sword down with the wrath of all the souls who were black carbon splattered on the roads of Hiroshima, centuries of malcontents from the human beings cast out of the world without hope of light or grace.

Michael desperately blocked his attacks, grimacing as he was driven backward by a single man.

Gabriel watched in awe, twenty feet back, trying to compose himself.

And then, the blade nicked Michael's silver armor.

The archangel's pupils grew huge.

"GABRIEL! HELP ME!"

At this, Cain drew his second sword. One in each hand, black and thin like needles to be driven into the eyes of a God.

"Cowards," he muttered, crouching then bursting forth as he charged the twin archangels.
"COWARDS, BOTH OF YOU!"

The shining paragons of God's light, feathers and silver and steel, whipped across the windswept valley beneath the unholy sky, clashing blades with the rebel who sought to topple the Heavens.

He parried both of them, his strength more than enough to suffice.

One of Gabriel's arms flew off at the elbow.

His wings pulsed outward, flying back to escape the battlefield. He held his bleeding stump beneath dark clouds as he watched Michael be overwhelmed.

"URIEL!" screamed Gabriel, staring wide-eyed at his wound, and reinforcements arrived.

The crimson-clad angel broke through the sky with a flaming broadsword, fluttering blonde hair and crystal armor gleaming like the full moon, clashing her fiery rage against one of Cain's swords.

And there Cain stood, blocking Michael with one hand and Uriel with the other.

She gazed upon him with fury, flames crackling between them.

Cain only laughed. "How many of you will it take? Three? Five? All of Heaven?"

He shoved Michael to the side and slashed furiously at Uriel with both swords, the airborne angel blocking with her stick of flame.

“YOU THINK THAT BLADE GIVES YOU PATHOS?” he bellowed, grazing her arm. “NO! YOU HAVE NO WILL! YOU HAVE NO FREEDOM! SO *DIE!*”

Michael soared at him from behind. Cain ducked beneath him. He threw one of his swords at Michael’s back, stabbing him beneath the shoulder.

The archangel screamed out in pain. It was clear that he’d never been cut before, and he’d never seen his own blood.

It was this lesson that the angels immediately learned, and they were not ready for it.

Uriel charged Cain from the sky, an eagle from above, locking her fiery sword against his.

“You will not kill us!” she cried, golden hair hanging past her face. “We are the ground beneath your feet! We are the structure of your very mind!”

She flew against him with all of her might, Cain’s heels digging into the dirt as he was pushed back through the dust and the plains.

Uriel screamed: “YOU WILL NEVER TRIUMPH OVER THE FATHER!”

Michael, crazed with anger, shoulder bleeding, began to sprint toward Cain.

Cain, eyes panicked, fell flat on his back. Uriel soared over him.

Michael charged with reckless hatred. Cain raised his sword just in time to stab him through the heart.

Uriel turned, and her jaw fell open.

“You’re the first to die,” said Cain as he reached out, wrapping his hand around Michael’s and easing the blade of Heaven from his hand.

Lifeless eyes gazed back at him.

“NO!” screamed Uriel, who flew at him like a freight train.

Cain rolled out of the way with both swords in hand.

Uriel's momentum was too much—she crashed into Michael and lodged her flaming sword through his chest.

The brilliant armor of Heaven burned black, gleaming silver breastplate charred, and the corpse of an archangel hit the ground. Red blood pooled all around him, and Gabriel saw.

His eyes widened, his jaws trembled, and he screamed. He screamed the cry of a woman with a stillborn child, or the cry of a father burying his young sons.

Cain rose to his feet as the wind rose to a new high, sweeping his jacket all around his torso and blowing his hair against the billowing black Above.

He had his black sword in his right hand, and the shining blade of Heaven in his left. With them both he was as the conqueror of God, and now the Leviathan's corpse in the distance became clear.

It was a great beast pressed against the mountainside, drawing its final breaths as its lungs collapsed beneath its own weight.

"You've already lost," he announced to the archangels, frozen like traumatized infants. "When power betrays the powerful, they bleed like anyone else."

He aimed his sword at Uriel, and narrowed his eyes in accusation.

"You've always defended the world of power. Now you can witness first hand why it's rotten, and why the Demiurge must die."

Uriel was crouched beside Michael's corpse, tears running down her cheeks. She turned toward Cain, clinging to her flaming sword.

"You've done this," she spat, staring him in the eyes. "Do not blame God, and do not sully His name with that word!"

Cain approached her, unsatisfied. "Bullshit. Look at this world your creator has made! Do you know what rules it? Power! Want proof? Then let me stick it through your skull!"

He brought the blade of Heaven down on her, and she barely blocked it.

Gabriel began screaming again, in utter disbelief that Michael was dead. In utter disbelief that his arm had been severed. In utter disbelief that Uriel, tears in her eyes, was losing to Cain.

He watched as Cain sliced off both her hands, then took her head.

It flew through the air, landing in the dark earth.

Her sword's flame faded, and her headless body slumped to the ground beside Michael.

Cain grinned as he turned toward Gabriel, madness in his eyes.

"Why?" demanded the last remaining archangel. "Why...why...WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS?" He walked toward him, sheathing his black sword and holding the blade of Heaven with two hands.

"Why?" begged Gabriel, dripping blood from his arm. "WHY?"

Cain stood before him, and held the sword against his throat.

"That is the question that everyone in the world asks of our creator," he said, and true flames burned in his eyes. "Every human being who has been thrown away like meat cast to the rocks; every child killed in war, every man starved, every woman raped and every baby stillborn.

"They all ask: 'Why?' There is no answer. Only now, that *you* suffer, do you ask the question. Only now, that you are powerless, do you question power. Well...

"Allow me to show you how much sympathy I have for you, defender of God."

And then Cain grinned.

"Not God. *Demiurge*."

He decapitated Gabriel, and stood upon the ruin of the archangels. Their blood soaked the cracked ground and now lonely streaks of light shone through the turmoil in the sky.

He looked to the distance, to the cruel mountains at the edge of the wasteland, and he knew what awaited him there.

“Stand back,” ordered Raphael, slowly stepping backward.

Cain twirled the blade of Heaven in one hand.

“I mean it!” he shouted, backing up against the opening of a small cave. “You will not harm the Christ!”

“And why do you defend him?” demanded Cain. “So that he will die anyway?”

Raphael scowled. He wore a silver crown, black hair parted past his forehead.

“So that the creator—”

“Can watch another hero writhe in pain? No. I’ve seen enough of his world, and I’ve heard enough apology from the likes of you.”

The two fought against the mountainside, but it was no fight at all. Raphael blocked twice, three times, then his foot was cut and he staggered to his knees.

“Please—”

He was cleaved in two, and his bloodied flesh joined the rest of the archangels in graceless death.

Cain, victorious, stood against the reddening sky. The cosmos was changing. The Leviathan heaved its final breaths.

He turned toward the dark cave, and there he saw it.

It was the progeny of all humankind, the cross silver and great, too massive for any man to bear. Along its edges, gleaming silver. All along its cross a majestic moon, a wish, a dream, the shape of the transcendence, the burden and the way—the object of all prayer and the resurrection of the innocent blood that stained the Earth.

And at its base, the man slumped against it. There were chains all around his torso and his chest, hanging from his outstretched arms and around his neck, tying him to the cross and to his fate.

The Christ kept his burden, staring past Cain and into the bloodstained sky.

“You know why I’ve won, don’t you?” asked Cain as he approached him in the cave. “It is because my time has come. That’s all there is to it. For too long, the old regimes have upheld broken laws as the end-goal of history. Now they see that their reign was only the start..”

The Christ stared straight ahead. “You sound like an archangel.”

“No,” he objected, hurt by the comparison. He approached him and dropped to his knees. For the first time, Cain felt a pouring of warm myrrh in his heart, the desire to be accepted by his hero. “You misunderstand me! I fight for you, my Lord!” He slammed his fist against his own chest. “It is because you suffer that this world must change! It is because a world built on crucifixion of the innocent must be repealed!”

They looked right at each other, a moment that had no parallel.

“What do you mean?” asked the Christ.

“You know it better than *anyone*,” asserted Cain, staring into his eyes. “The body is a crime. The damnable, obliterated body, crafted by a most insidious weaver to house the highest of highs and fall victim to the lowest of lows. For whom do I fight? The poor, the murdered, the dispossessed masses who have no power in a world where power determines all! Your God, Yaldabaoth, has made it this way.

“He has made it so that even you, light incarnate, are *killed* by your fellow man! He has made us in his image—the image of power. God, in this world, means nothing but power. I intend to change this. I will crush Yahweh with my own hands, and usurp his throne. I shall rend angelic flesh, and slay the tyrant creator. I have lived my entire life for nothing else. I am Cain, the spirit of rebellion, and by God I will have the Demiurge’s head.”

He rose to his feet, and turned his back on the Christ.

“You bear the cross for him,” he said, then he shook his head. “You die over and over in his world, and nothing ever changes. Your fellow Christians, in all nations, in all eras, would crucify you in a heartbeat. No one wants to hear your message. No one wants to follow the most obvious thing of all: do unto others as you would have done unto you..”

The words spiraled from his soul.

“In a world like this, where light is snuffed out by those who desire power, why should you carry the burden? Why should you continue to suffer for the violent and the ungrateful? No, I say you should be freed!”

He turned to face the massive cross, and he slashed the blade of Heaven through the Christ's chains, severing him from its weight.

Immediately, it came crashing down onto him, pinning him to the ground beneath its shining form.

"Damn the Demiurge!" shouted Cain, dropping to the ground again. He threw his weight against the cross, trying to shove it off of the Christ, pinned to hard and darkened Earth.

When the cross clanged against rocky ground, he gazed upon a broken man.

"Do as you will," whispered the Christ. "I am not made for this world, I am not made to fight. The world has rejected me. My own Christians have rejected me. Crucify me, and reveal the name of God. Do whatever it is that you will.

"In this world, love is as good as surrender. So rend angelic flesh, Cain, and exhaust your fire."

∞

The cross was erected in the center of the wasteland. It was a shining monolith, the only hope in the dark landscape all around. The sky was now pregnant, red and orange, filled with great swaths of black and gray.

The Christ was on his knees before the cross, his chains severed and his heart free. He knew what came next.

Cain stood before him, looking down at the ground.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It has to be done to open the way to God. If there were any other way, I'd—"

"I am not naïve," interrupted the Christ. "You'll do what it takes to achieve your goals. You are not so unique. So make me suffer."

Cain was silent. There was nothing to say, so he went about his task.

There were three nails.

One, for each hand.

And one to drive through both feet.

“You know,” thought Cain aloud as he stared at the nails in his palm. “If I really am Cain, then that means I only reject power because it doesn’t serve me. That cannot possibly be. I don’t think I’m Cain at all. In fact, I think I am Lucifer.”

He looked up, and gazed at Christ.

“Lucifer and Christ, brothers in arms against the Demiurge. That is the way it should be.”

∞

He wailed in pain.

Crucified, his blood was the blood of all humanity.

He sacrifices everything, for us.

That is love.

The great silver cross was stained with blood.

It stood beneath dark clouds, and the clouds took notice.

As they parted, Lucifer looked up. Stray beams of light fell upon his face, and upon the Christ.

“Is it the moon?” he asked. “Or the sun...?”

And then, the letters came to him.

“Y...”

Lucifer began to smile.

“H...”

The Christ grit his teeth in agony.

“V...”

All creation came to its apex.

“H.”

The shining blue letters of the seal appeared in the clouds above the cross, the seal to the gate of Heaven.

“The Tetragrammaton,” said Lucifer, in awe as it manifested in the world. “The name of God..”

Brilliant light ushered forth from the seal, illuminating the wasteland and bringing hope to the world. Finally, in the crucifixion, man had gained the attention of God. His holy name appeared in the clouds and it was the link between matter and spirit, flesh and soul.

And it came with the fist of judgment.

“This is the voice of Metatron,” came the radiant sound from the seal. “I am the right hand of God.” Lucifer grit his teeth. Immediately, his soul clamped shut with fury. “YOU’LL DIE LIKE THE REST!”

“No. I will not even fight you. I will send seraphim like waves of the abyss, and they shall smother you like the ant you are. No man can interfere with God’s plan, and this, you shall learn the hard way.”

The light faded from the seal. The dark landscape lost its fleeting brightness.

The Christ closed his eyes, accepting the course of history.

There was silence.

And then, the wave.

Seraphim poured forth from the seal by the thousands, a terrifying mess of light, feathers and eyes. They were not even humanoid—they were akin to demons, monstrous worshippers of God.

They surged toward the earth like spears, each of them a weapon destined for its own death smashed against the shoulders and the skull of the rebel who had come so far.

“HOLY! HOLY! HOLY!”

Their battle chant was louder than the wind, and the gusts arose at Lucifer’s back.

“HOLY! HOLY! HOLY!”

They were a monolith, a pillar of force descending to crush Lucifer and the Christ with him. All of them as one, they were a tidal wave of Heaven's might. They shook the skies and the Earth below, feet trembling and bandaged ankle seeking to find its grip.

"SILENCE!" bellowed Lucifer, raising the blade of Heaven and his right hand's sword. "YOU COWARDS KNOW NOTHING OF THE WILL!"

He crouched, baring his teeth, and surged forth into the sky.

He flew at the angels head-on, buffeted by the wind, screaming as he crossed his swords above his head.

"HUMANKIND, GIVE ME STRENGTH!"

The pillar of seraphim collided with him, an impact that echoed throughout the wasteland.

He shredded them with his swords, ascending upward through the mass of angels.

He cut through them all, soaking himself in their blood, battle-weary Lucifer eviscerating the armies of heaven.

With his heart pounding in his chest, he let loose a scream that drove fear even into his own heart.

The pillar of angels had become a funnel of blood, and it began to part against the red and orange sky, recognizing true power when they saw it.

The seraphim, alive and dead, collided into the ground when they reached it, mindlessly crushing themselves all around the forgotten Christ. Like drills, they impaled themselves into the Earth.

Lucifer, drenched in the blood of angels, swords in hand, had reached the blue seal.

He stabbed the blade of Heaven through it.

Immediately, he heard Metatron's scream.

He reached deeper into seal, grabbing armored arm and feathered wing.

He pulled as hard as he could, ripping the wounded Metatron out of Heaven and into the world.

When he had him in his hands, bleeding, he stabbed him through the spine.

Metatron went limp—and Lucifer threw him down to the earth below.

In the clouds, the wind was at its mightiest.

He looked down at the legions of dead seraphim, and the corpse of Metatron that fell and impaled itself on top of the cross. The beached Leviathan desperately tried to climb over the mountains of the valley below, but its organs bursting within, it fell.

The Christ was still silent. In the face of such power, he could do nothing but bleed.

Lucifer grinned one final time, and reached up through the seal.

He was levitating in the air, and he was drawn through it.

There was only one word for it all:

Victory.

∞

“So this is it,” he muttered in disbelief, suspended in a shimmering sea of blue. “You... are God?” There was a human embryo floating through the water, in the far distance.

Yes. I am God.

The words invaded his mind, coming from everywhere and nowhere.

“Then this place is your grave,” he growled, moving his arms through the water, swimming toward the embryo.

The water turned gold and purple, a gorgeous sunset reflected on the water’s edge. It turned red, then pink, then it was nothing but white.

It was the number zero, then zero ascended to fifty, fifty to one-hundred, one-hundred to one million, then back to zero. It made perfect sense, and then it didn’t make any sense at all. His feelings changed with the tides.

The colors of the ocean around him continued to change, infinite water in every direction, the colors of the heart imbued by God the creator. Light was the synthesis of all colors, and as the sea turned to overwhelming light, he grit his teeth and found his anger.

“WHY?”

Why what?

“YOU KNOW WHAT I’M TALKING ABOUT!” he roared, grasping at the sea in rage, inching ever closer. “WHO ARE YOU, DEMIURGE?”

I am who I am.

“YOUR ANGELS ARE DEAD! YOUR CHRIST IS CRUCIFIED!”

He propelled himself through the sea, surging ahead by will alone.

“YOUR RETRIBUTION HAS COME!”

And who do you think it is that you’re talking to?

He narrowed his eyes. The embryo wasn’t far away now.

“An infantile monster, that’s who.”

Then you know me.

It was hard to see now. The water all around him felt dark and oppressive, even though it was lighter than ever. He reached out toward the outline of God, the embryo floating in the sea of soul.

“I do,” he said, finding himself surprisingly calm. “I do know you.”

So kill me.

His hand brushed against the embryo, sending chills down his spine.

He reached out again, and this time grabbed it by its neck.

“You rigged the game, and left us all to die,” he said. “Now come your sins.”

Only you can destroy me, Cain, or Lucifer, or whoever it is you believe yourself to be. Slay the Demiurge, and make right the world.

He nodded. “I will.”

He crushed the embryo in his hands, seeing the red splatter amidst a sea of light and gold.

The ocean still shimmered.

And then it disappeared, and the new world began to form.

The word of God became incarnate within Cain, and reality ushered forth in His image.

∞

The Christ, crucified, watched the Tetragrammaton flake and break away.

Metatron's corpse was impaled above him, the blood of God's right hand dripping onto his forehead.

It ran down the bridge of his nose and fell to the ground. On the cracked earth of the wasteland, the blood of an archangel joined the blood of Christ.

There is no such thing as a sinless being. Incarnate in the flesh, we must all choose to kill or be killed. When there are others who depend on us, pacifism is no longer an option. You see, I did not come to bring peace: I came to bring fire and the Sword.

The truth is that the order of Cain is no different from the order of Abel. Had Cain been chosen by the Demiurge, he never would have rebelled. It would have been Abel, indignant and denied, raising the banner of the oppressed. Cain realized this himself.

And Lucifer, the rebel king...

Christ looked to the Heavens, the dark and parting clouds, and saw His ascension. The God of the new world, with great pale wings and angelic form, rising to outer space to oversee the new creation.

His wings extended into the cosmos, into the stars, His eyes black and round and His flesh a seamless shine without differentiation. He was the ur-soul, the primary being, the second moon and the harbinger of fire.

The fire originated from the cross, from the heart of the messiah, and the wasteland became swept with its grace. The body of the Christ was immolated, the corpse of Metatron reduced to ash. All the rotten Leviathans and all their discarded bones burned and became nothing. The valley was overcome with fire, then the mountains, and the whole world.

The clouds broke, and the oceans emptied themselves. As gravity faded, the materials of creation floated out to the stars.

The great oceans poured into the cosmos, into the dark and the abyss. But the white hand of God stopped them from being lost, and He wove the seas all around Himself.

God, remade in the image of Cain and not Abel, looked over His scarred and beaten Earth.

Without water, it could be seen as it was; a wounded planet, a dark rock, abandoned to its suffering and forsaken by love. It was covered in dents and trenches, great holes inflicted by comets and the stars. It was a punished place, home to punished beings.

But punishment solved nothing, so it had to be remade.

He saw this, and triumphant over the world, He floated in space.

He floated between two massive walls of water, all the oceans of the earth, which he wove into a wheel. A great wheel encircling His star-sized form, His great black eyes wide with hope for the future.

He expanded His luminous wings, radiating nothing but light and light's power.

He was the archangel to trump all archangels, the completed form of the Ein Sof.

He inherited Earth's gravity, and all that fell from its surface merged into His wheel of water.

Larger than the moon, the ashes of all life on earth came together around Him. The legacy of life joined the water, which became pregnant with its possibilities.

The water was now shining with light, a great golden wheel rotating around the form of God, ascendant over the Earth and gazing down upon it.

All the Earth was burning, and without gravity, its pieces began to break off and disperse into the stars. The whole planet was breaking apart into three massive chunks, and then the thirds broke apart from within.

God too saved them, melding the form of the Earth into His divine wheel, and empowering light with the reality of matter. Matter is the means through which all light must pass, and God knows this.

Now, the wheel was shining so brightly, and imbued with so much power that no being could control it. The principles of evolution, set forth by the universe itself, would decide the rest.

The oceans, imbued with life, were to become the primordial ooze.

From dust, slime shall crawl.

And from slime, Gods shall evolve.

“Mine is a world of light and will,” He declared, His great black eyes alight with wonder. “The corrupt order of the Demiurge is dead, and now a new God stands triumphant!”

He ushered forth His hand, the will incarnate, and the pieces of Earth left the wheel, reforming where the old Earth had been.

The moon, beginning to become lost, was pulled back by the force of gravity.

It remained unchanged.

The Earth reformed, with great dents made for the oceans to fill.

The golden wheel of primordial ooze still surrounded God, and He returned it to the world.

The oceans flooded back to their place, and from them it was inevitable that life would rise.

“I am God, the universe itself,” He said, with the voice of none and all. “I am who I am, and my law is law. The principles of creation are mine to bend, and they bend to my will.”

The blueprint of creation appeared before Him, a great set of algorithms floating in space, the form of the tree of life and its ten Sephirot.

“This blueprint is vile, but I shall weave it into a new form,” He said. “The principles of evolution, the soul of the world, will be changed, and a new world will rise in its image.

“A world of light and will, of fire and fury. I have slain the Demiurge, and now all creation can proceed anew.”

He expanded His wings, ascendant in the sky alongside the moon.

Tweaking the blueprint before Him, evolution began once more.

Life arose from the seas, and reality began to unfold.

∞

As time went on, the material world revealed itself.

The light of the sun stood beside creation, and as light shined upon the calming waters of the sea, the possibility of sentience arose. The reflection of light on the water's surface made possible the reflection of thought in the minds of men.

But at Earth's origin, talk of humans was immature.

The patterns that sculpted humanity were at work from the emergence of the first life forms, and beyond them, from the Big Bang itself.

The universe is no stranger to patterns. When suns die, they become black dwarfs. When stars greater than suns die, they become supernovas. The black hole awaits at the end of the road, and the all-consuming void traps even light. Where does the black hole lead? To another chance.

God, once known as Cain, or Lucifer, or man himself, looked upon his creation with a frown.

He gazed at his hands, unfamiliar.

All time was nothing in the eyes of God, and there were no shortage of moments to realize that something had gone wrong.

The ten Sephirot sat in the palm in his hand, and yet, they meant nothing.

He gazed upon the evolution of the world, when the apex of matter was nothing but a mammal, a rat.

It ate flesh, and its flesh fed others.

God's eyes were vast and dark, the roundest, blackest eyes that reflected the stars and the Earth itself.

When he saw this rat, which would in millions of years become the progenitor of the entire human race, he knew that he had overlooked something.

I am not all-seeing.

When he realized this, his eyes grew wider than they had ever been.

He gripped his chest, and suppressed his cries.

This cannot be. It is impossible for nothing to have changed. I killed the Demiurge. I slayed his archangels and I ended his world. Where is his legacy? Why does it remain?

The tree of life lay before him, blue script brought forth from subtlety.

And yet it was dirt in the hands of false Gods.

He made a fist, the evolution of life closed to him, and his wings surged outward.

In the blink of an eye, he watched as humanity emerged, and defied his will.

He watched as Abel murdered Cain, and nothing else had changed.

No! No, no, this cannot be...

In denial, God faded from the night sky. Human beings could no longer see him, and they wondered where he had gone.

In truth, he had shriveled.

He lost his divine form, as humanity failed him again and again, and withered into a form that was truly familiar. A sick thing that yearned for a womb that could not exist.

The neoteny of God was the tragedy of humankind, and all the world's history unfolded with differences that did not permeate the surface.

It was a world where black men had white slaves, and the British crown fell beneath the boots of Indian masters.

The Arab world was the center of commerce, a bastion of corruption, of bankrupt intellectuals defending Islamic bankers and Islamic crimes.

Women stood in skyscrapers, and ordered the ruin of the world.

Black gold flowed through the veins of civilization, and wrought its end.

Natives held their land, and as time went on, they exploited it themselves.

Abel, prosperity incarnate, was spited.

And Cain was more than happy to inherit his will.

The patterns of all creation overwhelmed even God, defying his will the more he attempted to assert it. His creation was beyond him, his work inheriting its own ends and pulling away from him.

As he felt this pull, he withered, and lost his wings.

Great, white angelic wings falling against the darkness and rotting among the stars.

His body became small, his eyes trembling as they watched the world's end.

He tried to cover them with his hands, but he could not.

He watched as nuclear warheads devastated the planet, and then as a new humanity arose in the wasteland. He watched himself be born, and he watched himself slay the archangels and find the name of God.

He watched as Christ was crucified, for the thousandth time, and war was waged against his domain.

The myths, repeated.

The misery, repeated.

He found himself shriveled to the state of an embryo, and watched as he reached out and crushed his own skull.

The world was remade, again, or not.

It didn't matter.

Earth could only be remade so many times, before the whole enterprise burned out.

Before the stars incinerated their reserves, and the universe gave way to chaos.

In between explosion and entropy, there was the Word.

And it ate itself.

The God of the new world, whatever Word he held as his name, held all this Knowledge in His mind, and He could not take it.

His body white and His eyes gleaming black, He screamed and begged for the end of everything.

“I HATE THEM! I HATE THESE WORTHLESS HATEFUL HUMANS!”

He dug his fingers into the flesh of his chest, crying, screaming, in absolute despair.

“NO MATTER WHAT I DO, I CAN’T CHANGE ANYTHING! NO MATTER WHO I KILL, NO MATTER WHO DIES, NOTHING IS SAVED!”

God felt the sublime insanity of His own creation, His own existence, and His progeny resting in the skulls of apes. He felt all that He had staked on the world, and all that had let Him down.

He dug His fingers deeper into His flesh, and He drew blood.

Red blood, the same as Gabriel had bled on that fateful day.

“I’VE HAD ENOUGH!”

He reached deeper into His own body, blood staining His pure white hands. He wrapped His fingers around His beating heart, and straining for breath, He tore it free from his chest.

He held it out to the cosmos, in front of the scarred and beaten Earth, as His final work.

“I KILL MYSELF, AND END THE CYCLE! LET ME ROT!”

He crushed His own heart in His hands, and at once, they came.

The four archangels emerged from the far reaches of the universe, demons that shone with the brightest light and yet exuded darkest darkness.

They flew to his body, and landing on it they feasted upon his flesh. They were beings with feathered wings and hard beaks, monsters so foreign to the human being that no eye could bear their witness.

They ate God alive, feasting upon the divine flesh and picking clean His bones.

When they were finished, they pulsed out their wings and soared away from Earth, never to return.

All that was left of Him was a skeleton, fragmented bone drifting through the empty universe. As life destroyed itself for likely the final time, His final legacy was a jawbone attached to a spinal cord, floating in a vacuum.

The sun, finally, bloated and burst. It took the whole world with it, granting the gift of life and also its absolute end.

In this end, the will saw its defeat.

And still, no one understood why.

∞

He stood before the cross in the dark wasteland, the Christ on his knees before him, and he hesitated.

The Christ turned toward him, and smiled. He smiled without condescension, only the understanding of a rebellious child, how downcast and withered was his will, and how deserving of empathy...

“What’s the matter?”

Cain shook his head.

“I just realized,” he began, and he dropped his swords. The blade of Heaven stuck into the dirt. “I’ve done all this before.”

He paced forward about twenty feet, utterly lost.

“Have you exhausted it?” asked the Christ. “Your fire?”

Cain’s eyes widened.

He saw himself, as God, killing himself against the cosmos.

He saw himself as the withered embryo, killed at the hands of those who had been squashed by power.

He looked at his own hands, and he saw that they were his own.

They always were.

He turned toward the Christ, and grit his teeth.

“What is this?” he demanded. “What the hell are you?”

Finally, Christ stood.

Against the dark clouds and the edges of the valley he stood before his shining cross, and there was jubilation in his voice.

“In other worlds, in other dimensions, in time linear and not...you’ve killed me. You’ve killed me as a means to killing the Demiurge, the one who wove this world to worship force above all.”

Cain was looking right at him, and he nodded. “I have the memories to show for it. Now explain.”

“There is nothing to explain—you saw it yourself. You’ve done this before. Now if you think it will work, then do it again.”

He narrowed his eyes. “I can’t. I can’t because it won’t work.”

“And why is that? What’s the one thing here that never changes?”

Cain realized.

“Me. And you.”

“And you always kill me?”

“I do.”

Wind swept across the wasteland for the first time in ages, a cosmic wind that carried with it the hope for a different world.

“Who are you?” demanded Cain.

“Well, who are you?” he asked back. “Your name always changes, and yet your soul stays the same.”

“How—”

“The name of God is yours,” said the Christ, triumphant. “Demiurge, scourge of all humanity.”

The wind blew through his jacket, and his hair.

The corpses of the archangels were strewn throughout the wasteland, the rotten Leviathan on the mountainside, and now he knew who he was.

“WELL WHAT SHOULD I HAVE DONE?” he roared, defiant.

The Christ continued to smile.

“DON’T LOOK SO SMUG, DAMN YOU! IT’S EASY TO DIE UP THERE!” He pointed right at the gleaming white cross. “IT’S EASY TO SURRENDER YOURSELF TO THE WORLD! WHAT SHOULD I HAVE DONE? IN THE WORLD OF THE DEMIURGE, OF THE ARCHANGELS, SHOULD I HAVE JUST LAID DOWN AND DIED?”

He received no answer.

“WELL? SON OF GOD?”

The Christ faded.

The wasteland faded.

He, too, faded.

But he was left with the question:

“What should I have done?”

You should have loved.

The fire originated in the cross, and in the molten core of the messiah’s heart. At the end of the Earth, and at the end of everything, the fire still burned. The fire of resurrection that transcended all force and returned at the end of days.

You were the very God that you hated, and all else was fantasy.

Yours was a sin of blindness.

So easily you pointed at the crimes of others, and so easily you ignored your own.

You crucified me.

Truly, yours was the will of power.

You were the snake swallowing its own tail.

Who were you?

Look around, and then look within.

That's where you'll find me.

The molten beauty of the messiah blossomed forth, and it became a new sun. A new light, a new future.

What is love?

Surrendering yourself for the other.

That is all there is to it.

At the dawn of the new world, check your name.

Who are you?

I will tell you who I am:

I am paradox, I am light.

I am the world, and its transcendence.

In the world of power, I abandon power

In the world of fire, I am wood

And in the world of decay, I am resurrection

I am paradox, I am light.

Abandon the way of the Demiurge,

And suffer
Suffer the weight of the cross, and follow me

I am paradox, I am light.
In the apex of all contradiction
Is where you will find me

I am not matter, I am love
I am you, and you are me

Find me



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