

Prologue

“Today, I will be teaching you about nothing less than the central question of our existence. This question has been asked by the greatest thinkers in the world, so I aim to begin the long and drawn out process of explaining our origins.”

The student asks his teacher, “I thought you told me that we didn’t entirely know how the world was created, that we just had a good idea.”

“That is true, my pupil,” the teacher replies, “but I believe that I have adequately prepared you to begin deducing the nature of the universe on your own. This is my final lesson to you. After this, I will have taught you everything I can. As such, for my final lesson, I will be giving you many possibilities of creation, and I will trust that you can find the truth within the truth, to sort fact from fiction, and truly begin your own study of the world.”

“The first world is known as Tangyria...”

Tangyria

In the beginning, there were the primordial forces of Creation and Destruction. These forces existed in perfect harmony, nothing being created or destroyed. But Creation and Destruction were greedy; Creation wanted his creations to last forever, and Destruction would much prefer having anything other than himself to be non-existent. This deadlock could never lead to anything more, and Creation realized that, so Creation began planning to break the tie between Creation and Destruction. When Creation had fully formed his plan, he splintered himself. He divested his power into a race of creators and warriors, made to prevent Destruction from destroying the world that Creation had dreamed of, as well as making the world as we know it, Tangyria. The Vraniktjar were this race. The thirteen Vraniktjar fought bravely, foiling Destruction’s plans to destroy Tangyria at every moment along the way. This battle lasted for nigh on a millennium. Finally, Morofnir, leader of the Vraniktjar, came up with a plan to banish Destruction from their world forever. They would use their powers of creation to bind Destruction in a prison deep beneath the ground. Morofnir entrusted the design of the prison to his lieutenant, Raknjar, who then created the Miasma.

The Miasma was a mist-like substance that caused whomever it enveloped to forget themselves. Raknjar was clever and realized they wouldn’t have to defeat Destruction in battle if they made a prison that was filled with the Miasma, they would just have to ensure that Destruction made it into

the prison. So Raknjar and his wife Gerda made the prison while the remaining Vraniktjar fought Destruction, slowly bringing him to the center of their world. Once Destruction was in place, Morofnir blew mightily into his Horn of Æons, signaling the other Vraniktjar to help finish the walls of the prison so that Destruction would be trapped for eternity.

But one Vraniktjar, Unna, did not answer his call. Unna was worried that during the ensuing battle, the Vraniktjar would perish without having passed on the will of Creation to another generation of creators. So instead of going to imprison Destruction, Unna stayed on the surface of the world and created what no other being had: humans. Unna gave humans many aspects, but most important of all, she gave them the gift of free thought. When Unna returned to the palace of the Vraniktjar in the sky, she found that none of her brothers and sisters were there. Using her gift of Sight, she looked into the past and saw in the battle that all of her brothers and sisters had successfully trapped Destruction beneath the world, but in the process, had been trapped there themselves. The Miasma within the prison prevented Unna from looking upon her siblings and Destruction, and Unna wished deeply to save the other Vraniktjar, but alas, she knew that if she opened the prison to rescue them, that Destruction would also be released. So, Unna sat in the palace and looked down upon the seven continents the Vraniktjar had created within Tangyria and felt the bittersweet nature of her victory truly sink in for the first time. As Unna sat and contemplated, the memories the humans had of Unna faded into myth, and those myths faded into legend until the legends were forgotten by all and even the names of the Vraniktjar and their own world were forgotten.

Cliffhawk

In the beginning, the Positive and Negative energy were all that existed. When and where they overlapped, all of creation existed, as only through a balance can anything truly exist. Even the so-called gods of Cliffhawk drew their power from one or both of those energy sources. Among the gods, one rose up to take command of the forces of good against the forces of evil. Bahamut, the Platinum Dragon, protector of all that is righteous and just, marshaled support among the good gods to fight the monstrosities of chaos that were created from Negative energy. Chief among them was the devil Asmodeus, the manipulator, the tyrant. Bahamut and the other gods of Positive energy created the earth and water as it exists now, and created the mortal races to help wage war against the forces of Asmodeus and evil.

Bahamut and his forces of good were able to banish Asmodeus and his forces to the lower worlds where they would stay confined away from Cliffhawk. However, this came at the price of many

mortal and immortal lives alike. Seeing this, Bahamut exiled himself to the skies, where he lays, awaiting the time in which mortals will require his assistance again. In his absence, he appointed a leader, Leo the Courageous to serve as the leader of Rifthaven, the largest of the seven continents created by Bahamut and the forces of Positive energy. Leo himself held a small fraction of the power of Bahamut, which itself was only a fragment of Positive energy compared to the total amount in the universe, yet this made him the most powerful mortal to ever exist. For 666 years, Leo and his progeny ruled in Bahamut's absence, until Asmodeus and his forces discovered a way back into Cliffhawk through portals. Once word of this reached Leo, he went alone to the first and only portal that Asmodeus had created. Seeing that he could not fight the forces of evil without the power of Bahamut and the other gods, who were still absent from the world, he sacrificed himself, and converted his positive energy and body into pure magical energy, and used that energy to permanently close that portal, and to make a ward against further portals.

As years drew to decades, and decades into centuries into millennia, the names of those creators and gods are long forgotten, but the influence of them is still felt. The mortal races are united for the ideals that the Positive energy stood for, liberty, justice, and freedom. However, even if it is just for a small number of people for a small amount of time, Asmodeus and his ilk can influence mortals into committing heinous acts of violence and hate. In the end, balance prevailed, and humans and other mortals may create good, but they also create evil in the world, and thus, the fundamental balance always exists in the end.

Skycloud

At the beginning of time as we know it, everything in the universe was created in less time than it takes a hummingbird to flap its wings once. Matter and antimatter were created in equal parts, and existed in perfect balance, annihilating each other, and spontaneously coming back into existence from the energy those annihilations created. Over the span of a single second, the universe expanded to be quintillions of miles wide, and in this time, much energy was lost to the expansion, but still, a balance existed. Then, a power we cannot know caused there to be an asymmetry between the matter and antimatter. It was an extremely insignificant difference, a single drop of wine in an ocean, but it was enough to cause the matter to annihilate all the antimatter.

The same power that created the matter/antimatter asymmetry then created 5 fundamental forces: gravitation, electromagnetism, the strong and weak forces, and magic. These forces enforced a new balance in the world. Now, everything that ever would and could happen was governed by

underlying rules. It was almost as if our universe was a boat, and the power that made the forces set us in a river of time, and that river steered the universe on its own, for the most part.

With the laws of the universe set in place, and the initial conditions set as well, the universe progressed. For millennia upon millennia upon millennia, matter bonded to itself but was much too high energy to form solid structures. The entire universe existed in a kind of soup. A soup of the primal element, fire. As the fire burned, it required more than just the soup to fuel its growth, however. It also needed air, the second element. For a short time, in comparison, the universe was made purely of fire and air. Out of the fire and air, stars formed, the air helping burn the soup into oblivion, replacing it with the next element, earth. Earth began to cling to itself until small rocky planets and moons began forming. As the planets formed, they began to lose even more energy, eventually cooling enough to quench the fires with the final element, water. Once that happened, tiny little animals, smaller than the width of a single hair, began to populate the vast oceans, created by water. As time went on, only the strongest of those small animals survived, and they began to develop new, stronger forms. This process continued for epochs, giving rise to all the plants and animals that exist today, and eventually to us.

Interlude

“But teacher, you’ve told us three stories, and there must be even more that were forgotten, just like Unna was in Tangyria, and King Leo in Cliffhawk. How do we know that our version of the world is the right one?” the student asks his teacher.

“You raise a good point, child,” the teacher replies, “How do we know that our version of the world is correct? There are tools that we use to observe the world. We can take a kind of picture of the origins of the world using magic to observe the past, in glimpses. But still, the astute student might ask, how do we know those pictures are correct representations of our world? We don’t. In the end, we can’t say for sure; all we can do is try to garner a fragment of understanding from the stories we’re told. Our ancestors were much smarter than many would give them credit. As we look across the eons of time, and all the stories told therein, many common threads exist. Quantitative truths, and moral truths which arise from the former.”

“The final story I will tell you today features an issue that people have grappled with forever: fate...”

Helares

The universe postdates one singular being, who held all the power that existed, exists, and ever will exist. He is known simply as Fate. Because Fate was omnipotent and all-encompassing, Fate realized the nature of his existence. He was truly alone, adrift in a sea of nothingness. Upon this realization, Fate began to weave the universe out of himself. Fate began deciding the past, present, and future of the Universe. With his ability to see reality for itself, he began weaving great triumphs into the tapestry of time, but also crushing losses. He created cosmic tales of balance, stars being born and dying, creating and destroying in tandem. Planets which gave rise to life, but were unforgiving to life's mistakes. Gods of good, and gods of evil, to play out the balance on a cosmic scale. Fate was cruel and just in his creations, each good and evil deed is done only to balance the other end of the spectrum.

When Fate realized it was time to let the universe take shape on its own, he wove the last of himself into the creations he had been saving for the end: humans. Each human he made contained a fraction of his own mind. Because of this, humans are the only lifeforms that, to our knowledge, are able to take matters of Fate into their own hands. The most strong-willed amongst the humans realized they could bend the fabric of Fate, if only slightly, at very disparate moments. These humans helped to shape the course of our history. For every great good, a great evil was wrought in unison. As time progresses, and the creation that Fate made runs its course, we realized that every action had equal and opposite consequences. Thus, we each only have one question to ask ourselves: will we change the world, and will it be worth it?

Epilogue

“Our ancestors told those stories to make sense of the world around them, which is all we’re trying to do. That’s all we can hope to gain from our study of beginnings and endings; of creation and destruction. We can only read between the lines, and try to catch sight of harmony. Go forth, my pupil. Go forth and read between the lines of the universe to find your own truth.”