***Lassi Isotupa 17a***

**SYNOPHYSIS**

The future looks bright and humanity lives its golden age. Then the apocalypse happens, and everyone has to fight for their survival. But is everything as simple as it seems? Or is there something larger at play? And what shall happen to the world?

***DARKNESS RISES***

**PROLOGUE [THE BUTTERFLY FLAPS ITS WINGS, AND A HURRICANE IS FORMED]**

She ran. Ran as she never had before. Dragging behind her was a small boy of about five years old. The boy followed limpidly as if he were in a trance. The woman yanked the boy to make him run faster, but because of that, he fell. She immediately tried to get the boy up, but a darkish red flashed, and her leg was pierced by a spear made of flame. She screamed horrendously, in agony.

Seeing no alternative, she dragged herself and the boy to a nearby building, completely in ruins since The Collapse. After finding a small place to hide, she looked at her leg. Fortunately – if that even could be said about the present circumstances – the spear had been made of flame, and it had cauterized the wound, thus it did not bleed. However, her left leg was completely useless now and it could only get worse from here.

She then looked at the boy, who had two horrifying scars streaking from the sides of both his eyes, reaching his jaw. These scars glowed faintly with a strange dull red light, making it seem as if the boy was crying tears of blood nonstop. His eyes were dull and hollow ashen, almost lifeless. Her son, the only thing she had left in this world. She brought her hand up to his cheek.

” We are going to be fine”, she said reassuringly, but all she got in response was an emotionless stare. That stare hurt her more than anything, for she might have been able to prevent his current condition, but she had been too afraid to do anything about it. She vowed to herself that she would fix it when they had reached safety.

Suddenly, she heard voices. She took a small peek outside their hiding place and saw three monsters wrapped in flames. They were speaking an obscure tongue that didn't even sound like a language. Then their eyes turned to them.

In that instant, she knew they had been seen. However, she did not panic. She turned to her son, smiled, and simply said:” Live.”

Then she pushed him down a slope formed from the rubble, stretching as far the eye could see. The boy's face was filled emotion for the first time in days; Shock, horror, and sadness. But it was no use. The three monsters lunged, and the boy could do nothing but watch in horror and despair, how his mother – still smiling her kind smile – was torn to pieces.

Seeing the horrifying sight, he broke. His despair and desolation durned into endless hatred, hatred for his father, hatred for the haloed ones, hatred for the flaming monstrosities, hatred for the scared animals and most of all, hatred for his own weakness. Then as his wrath consumed him, he felt an intangible presence and heard an echoing voice, singular yet also plural. As the voice spoke, he could no longer hold on to his fading consciousness and passed out.

*Cursing the world; blackened soul, unyielding faith, arrogance against the heavens!*

*Ancient origin, beginning of time, the peak of existence!*

*Dying stars, darkness swallows light, vengeance against the celestials!*

**CHAPTER ONE [A WORLD ON THE BRINK OF RUIN]**

It was the peak of the 21st century. Humans were at the peak of their civilization, at the top of the food chain. They had harnessed the power of flight, healing and travel. The future looked bright, and everyone thought nothing could go wrong.

Then happened what would come to be known as The Collapse. It was the event that some called the end of the world, when demons and angles rampaged through the Earth. Out of nowhere, without any warning, demons appeared to massacre all, the angels soon following behind them. Humanity was completely paralyzed, its number plummeting to 4 billion.

As the humans retreated, another force came, aligned with the demons against the angels: The Old Gods.

Celtic, Norse, Roman, Greek, Aztec, Persian… Myriad gods came forward, declaring war and vengeance against God. They persuaded many to their side, and the human population decreased again, now 3 billion.

The remaining ones, outside of the supernatural, tried to find ways to survive between the fighting, with poor results. It was only when they found a way to gain these supernatural powers for themselves that they started to see hope. But only 1 in 1000 could gain these abilities. The rest could only curse their weakness and find some ways to survive.

But there was another subset in the 1 in 1000 superhumans, or 1 in 10 000 000 if looking at all of humanity. Those were the ones who could, in addition to gaining abilities and generating energy, also absorb them. This absorption boosted their power to unimaginable heights, making them the Absolute 300.

Through these superpowered humans, now called magicians, humanity managed to pull itself away from extinction. But now they had to worry about living in a world with angels, demons and gods; all of whom wanted something from them.

And so, humanity, or what remained of it, became divided. There were those that worshipped the myriad gods, whose territory was Italy, Greece, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and a part of England, Egypt, the southern parts of Norway and Sweden in addition to Denmark, India, Thailand, Japan, and parts of China and South-America. They were ruled by their gods, all absolute in their decisions.

The next big divide was caused by the groups that followed the demons and the angels. Those that followed the angels were called Templars, while those that followed the demons were called Diabolists. These two factions fought as regularly as their masters, both of their favorite battlegrounds being the Middle-East, Africa and North America.

The angels considered their territory to be Spain, Portugal, Rome, the northern parts of Africa, some parts of North and South America, Central America and parts of the Middle-East and Asia; these included the southern parts of Russia.

The demon-controlled territories were the middle part of Africa, some of parts the Middle-East, America and Asia, the island between Asia and Australia, the western part of Russia

The two remaining groups were both for the humans; the Guardians and the Hunters. The Guardians were formed to protect the people, to be a shield between them and danger, a selfless goal; while the Hunters were founded to grow stronger in a harsh world where ability made the righteous.

It was indeed quite surprising that these two organizations would combine, creating the strongest human force since the beginning of human history. They simply called themselves the Guardian-Hunters, to pay homage to their roots.

The hard-fought territory of the humans consisted of the northern parts of Norway and Sweden, Finland and the Baltic states, Australia, the southern part of Africa, Iceland, a part of England and the Antarctica.

And so, the stage was set, for a hilarious tragedy of bloodshed and misery on the Earth…

**\*\*\***

**-20 years since The Collapse-**

**-In a large ruined building in the middle of a once prosperous metropolis-**

“Please, no more! I can’t take anymore!”

A small imp was held by the throat by a young man of about 20 years. The man had short brown hair and dull ashen eyes, glowing red scars right under them.

“Where?”

“I-I-I d-do-don’t know! I was only…!”

“Die.”

“Wait! Hold o…!”

The imps neck snapped, and its body vanished into the man’s hand, with a slight amount of ashes falling to the ground.

“What trash, only worth this much…”

The man, Samuel Grey, snorted at the now dead small demon, and weighted his options.

He had been tasked to find Diabolist recourses in this city. He knew roughly in what district they were hidden, but their precise location eluded him, and just bombarding each area one by one would only garner attention and unnecessary trouble. Thus, he had tried to (literally) squeeze the information out of a few demons, but they just happened to be lowly grunts, unqualified of possessing such information and in Samuels opinion, life.

That said, despite his troubles, he did not attach any importance to this mission. The only reason he had accepted doing it was because he was bored. The resources he was looking for were mostly consumables; food, water, medicine and the like. Samuel did not need these, and he didn’t care for those that did. He only had slight attention to spare for those who could go long times without sustenance, and those that did not need traditional nourishment. All others were mere trash even worse than the just-died imp, in other words, completely useless.

The fact that he, Samuel Grey, the strongest member of the Hunters, having the natural talent not found even in the special 1 in 10 000 000, one of the Absolute 300 and member of the Royal Trinity, went so far as to search for food for absolute wastes of flesh, showed just how bored was.

As he weighed his options, Samuel heard talking a few levels down, on the street. He discreetly looked over and to his surprise, saw three high ranking members of the Diabolists.

*Elders? No, no elder would be out so openly and expose themselves to danger… I see. They are all direct subordinates of the elders, their substitutes and proxies.*

As he listened to their conversation, a continuously growing grin appeared on his face.

“Interesting!”

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“We are overjoyed to have you here, Exalted Ignaz!”

An old bearded man wrapped in dark red ropes slightly bowed in an excited manner, along with a multitude of other, apparently lower, stationary members. His eyes were looking towards a young, at most 20-years old, man surrounded by thinly clothed women.

“No worries, it’s not a big deal! I can handle something this trivial easily!”

The young man, Ignaz, laughed loudly, holding two of the many women right to his skin, grabbing them from all the wrong places. This did not bother the present people in the slightest, since it was considered to be completely normal.

“We are nonetheless honored to have one of the Dark Trinity handle this most humble matter. Though I must ask, why would someone of your esteemed station come to oversee something so meaningless?”

The old man was very curious, because handling matters of food and such, usually fell to jurisdiction of members even lower ranked than him, so why would the Second of the Dark Trinity, the Cursed Flame, bother?

“I was in the area and my brother asked me to help in this little excursion. Besides, we must take good care of our *resources*, don’t we?”

Ignaz grinned maliciously, clearly not talking about the consumables.

“Aah, of course, how ignorant of me. Then, shall I guide you to the supplies?”

 “Please do. Also, could you show me I good place to have some fun? Some of these girls are uninitiated, you see.”

The old man smiled slightly when Ignaz glanced at few of the girls accompanying him suggestively and responded approvingly.

“Certainly. I know a suitable…”

**\*BOOOOM\***

Suddenly, the sky was filled with thunder and lightning, drowning all thing below it. The heavens churned and sent thunderbolts to destroy some of the surrounding buildings, creating even more ear-piercing cacophony.

“Scatter and vanish! This is an attack!”

At Ignaz’s order, all the present members of the Diabolists started to run into different directions. They knew that anyone who could create a thunderstorm would see all of them together as mere insects.

But before they could get even a few meters away from their original, a series of smaller lightning bolts and swallowed them all. At the same time, a larger one was heading towards Ignaz.

“Curse Seeds, explode and form a shield!”

At Ignaz’s shout, the Curse Seeds he had planted inside the women surrounding him exploded, killing them and extracting energy from their deaths. The newly formed Cursed Marks fused and formed a shield between the lightning bolt and Ignaz. Some of women did not die from this move, since they had no Cursed Seed in themselves yet. But they died no the less, since the shield only protected Ignaz, the lightning consumed them.

When the lightning bolt struck the Cursed Shield, it weakened significantly, but still managed to destroy it. The weakened bolt of lightning then struck Ignaz.

“AAarghaah! Why you… Who dares to wound me?!”

A thundering voice from the heavens immediately answered.

“Ignaz Argyris, pathetic as always, only playing around with women and nothing more.”

“This voice… Samuel Grey!”

Right when Ignaz recognized the voice, a dozen thunderbolts crashed around him, and suddenly, in front of him, stood Samuel. Ignaz was grabbed by the throat as the sky continued to rage.

“What gave you the audacity to say my name?”

“None of your business! Your name is nothing special!”

Ignaz tried to struggle, but somehow found no strength to do so.

“There is something foreign in you… I see, the Beast of Gluttony.”

“Don’t you dare disrespect lord Beelzebub! Guardian deities!”

Growing furious, Ignaz called, and two fly-like demons appeared from his shadow. They bashed against Samuel, forcing him to let go of Ignaz.

“Well aren’t you cute!”

Saying so, Samuel grabbed the to demons by their head and crushed them like rotten watermelons. Simultaneously he dashed forward with his mouth wide open. With a loud ripping noise, he bit Ignaz’s throat wide open!

**\*CRUNCH, CRUNCH, CRUNCH, GULP\***

With a smile, Samuel chewed and swallowed the flesh he had bitten off as he slowly walked towards the gasping and spasming Ignaz.

“Oh you poor thing! Let me help you!”

**\*STOMP\***

“Aaaaaaaa!!!”

With a final howl of pain, Ignaz died as Samuel stomped on his body, crushing his heart. Immediately after his death, Ignaz’s corpse was absorbed into Samuel’s leg. Only slight ashes remained.

“Now this is what my food ought to be! Now, for those supplies…”

**\*\*\***

In an enormous warehouse, Samuel was staring at a mountain of food, medicine and many other things. With but a wave of his hand, the mountain before him vanished.

“At least this damn mission didn’t completely waste my time. Now I’ll just have to deliver these goods and I can finally be free from…”

“*Samuel Grey, we have a task for you.*”

**CHAPTER TWO [THE TEMPLAR INFILTRATION]**

“You can keep your worthless odd-jobs. I got you the supplies that you wanted but that’s as far as I go.”

“*These missions are delicate and require your expertise. We task you to investigate both the Templars and the Diabolists and steal their databanks. How you do this is up to you*”

“Hmmm… Now that sounds interesting! Fine, I’ll do it. Oh, and by the way, I killed the Cursed Flame on this errand of yours. Thought you’d like to know.”

“What?!”

Before he could be questioned, Samuel cut the connection and blocked it for good measure. He had no interest in listening the empty talk of those privileged idiots of the Guardian top brass, who thought themselves somehow important because they had the connections and blackmail materials to stand on top.

*Now, what do… I guess it would be best to look for a good skin…*

**\*\*\***

Near the Templar Headquarters walked a black-haired young man, completely ordinary in appearance. He headed towards the HQ calmly, not paying attention to the many watchful eyes.

“Halt!”

Suddenly, before him appeared two angels.

“This is the territory of the Lord and those who serve him! Leave at once!”

The young man paid no attention to the order.

“I wish to join the Templars.”

The angels’ eyes flashed, and they stared him like nothing else mattered in the world. After a while, the glow vanished.

“Very well.”

The angels moved aside, letting the young man pass.

**-In the Templar HQ, three hours later-**

“So, you wish to join the Templars?”

“Yes, sir!”

“Then wait here. I shall inform the judges.”

After getting confirmation, the young man sat down on a bench, closed his eyes and waited. It did not even take five minutes for his peace to be broken.

“Hey, are you new here?”

Opening his eyes, he saw a gorgeous woman sitting next him on the bench. Shining blond hair and watery blue eyes, buxom and attractive in every way. The woman was smiling at him kindly, her expression best compared with a beautiful summer day.

“Yeah, I wish to join the Templars. I’m waiting here for my judgement.”

“I see. I am sure your judgement will be favorable.”

The woman extended her hand.

“I am Angelica Cropper. And you are?”

“Paul Myers.”

“Nice to meet you, Paul.”

“Same here.”

The two conversed for a while, learning about each other, both greatly enjoying their time. Then it felt like Paul had stepped on a landmine.

“By the way, why did you join the Templars?”

At Paul’s question, Angelica’s face darkened deeply. After a moment of silence, she answered.

“All of my family is dead. The Templars took me in. I could have left, but this place has become my home and I want to help others like the Templars did me. Plus, there is someone I must confront!”

By the end of the last sentence, she was grinding her teeth in rage.

“Who?”

“The one they call Crimson Scar!”

Obviously not willing to discuss the topic any further, Angelica chanced the topic, and the conversation continued. They talked until a man dressed in office clothes arrived.

“Paul Myers, the judges are ready to see you!”

“Might I come as well, John?”

“Angelica? I guess its fine.”

**-Before the judges-**

On three pedestals stood two men and one woman and directly below them stood Paul. Slightly behind Paul stood Angelica and John. John gave orders on the procedure.

“Bow in respect to the three Saints and pray for forgiveness from the Almighty Lord.”

Paul, however, did not follow John’s instructions. He was busy staring at the middle judge. From Paul’s perspective, on his right was an elderly woman wearing large round eyeglasses, on his left was a man with greenish-blue hair and in the middle, a middle-aged man who appeared even holier than most angels.

“What’s wrong? Is there a problem?”

This question came from the elderly woman. In response she got only a murmur.

“I did not expect to see you here…”

 Paul’s power exploded outwards, crushing John and bringing Angelica to her knees. Then it formed a shield to protect against all attacks.

“What is the meaning of this?! What are you doing?!”

The middle-aged judge stood up and shouted furiously, looking ready to kill Paul on the spot.

“Don’t you dare talk like that to ME, you piece of sh\*t!”

As Paul shouted back, a small snake made of lightning appeared next to him.

“**Master!**”

“Reyes, did you get it?”

“**As master has ordered, I got everything!**”

“Good, I’ll be sure to offer you good souls later.”

Turning back to the middle-aged man, Paul roared as his face started to shift.

“The next time I see you, I will mount your head on a pike and destroy your soul, William Grey!”

The middle-aged man’s eyes widened, and all his anger vanished.

“Son!”

Behind Paul, Angelica had managed to get to her feet.

“Paul…?”

As she called his name, Paul turned to her. But what she saw was not Paul’s face! Her eyes widened in horror as she saw glowing red scars stretching from ashen eyes!

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“Father! Mother! Big sis!”

In an empty city squire, a boy was standing atop three mutilated corpses, with an eight-year-old girl running towards him, screaming. The girl collapsed before the corpses and started nudging them in hysterically.

“Father wake up! Mother and big sis too! Please wake up! Don’t…!”

Tears streamed down the girl’s face, her voice reducing to gibberish.

 “Don’t… leave me!”

As the truth of the situation dawned on her, she broke into loud crying. To this, the boy finally reacted.

“Would you shut up! I’m trying to think here!”

Wincing, the girl looked at the boy. Then she looked at his hands, clothes and face, all covered in blood.

“YOU…”

“What? I told you to be quiet!”

“WHY?!”

“You mean why did I butcher your family? They pissed me off, now scram!”

Hearing Samuels answer, the girl’s eyes widened and became filled with hatred.

“I’LL KILL YOU!”

The girl stormed at the boy, but he effortlessly grabbed her by the throat and lifted her up.

“Not only are you not thankful for my mercy, but you threaten to kill me? What ungrateful trash.”

The boy squeezed the girl’s throat and she started to spam violently. His squeeze was not only painful but also very slow. He planned to strangle her to death as painfully as possible.

“Stop!”

A sudden voice descended along with a multitude of blades made of light. These blades formed a protective shield for the girl and struck at the boy.

The boy let go of the girl and dodged raining blades. As he gazed upward, he saw a shining sky filled with angels and the man who had just shouted holding the girl.

“Is murdering innocents not enough for you Samuel?! Now you want to torture a child to death?! Have you fallen for the temptations of the demons?!”

The man amongst the many angels was young, only 18-19 years old. He looked holy and kind, the perfect image of a saint. The only slightly off-putting aspect of him was his greenish-blue hair. He looked in seething fury at the boy, who had just sat down on some rubble.

“Ridiculous. You know how I feel about the demons. Don’t make yourself seem stupid when I know you’re not, Cyan. Or is stupidity a symptom the angels give you?”

“Enough of your blasphemy! You’ve already killed her family, is that not enough? She is but a harmless, innocent child!”

“No need to appear so tough, you don’t stand a chance against me. But fine, since I own you my life, I’ll repay you with the girl. Although…”

As the boy gazed at the surprised Saint and the hatred filled eyes of the girl in his arms, he couldn’t help but laugh.

“I wonder how long she’ll last before becoming demon food! Hahahahahahaha!”

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“YOU!!!”

Angelica’s angelic face twisted fury, making her look like a terrifying beast.

“Have fun with your little delusions, Holy Trinity; Merciful Angel! Hahahahahahaha!”

As he laughed, he lifted his hand and slammed it down. That action brought down monstrous amounts on thunder and lightning, crashing towards the building. The three Saints immediately moved to block the storm, but its caller was already gone. The only thing that resounded louder than the thunderbolts was Angelica’s screaming.

“GREEEEEEYYYYY!!!”

**CHAPTER THREE [THE DIABOLIST INVESTIGATION]**

In a city ruled by the Diabolists, there was a large battle between angels and demons, between the Templars and Diabolists. In the middle of the battle was a man who enjoyed war, Javier Arthur.

Javier was a Diabolist who had fought all over the world and earned the third seat of the Dark Trinity, gaining the nickname Battle Maniac. Now he was faced by the second seat of the Holy Trinity, the Warrior Scholar Cyan Loman.

Javier laughed like a madman as they danced on the edge of death, while Cyan was as calm as still water. Eventually, they both started to get tired, and Javier decided to ask a question.

“Why are you attacking us with such force?”

“We are not, we are only chasing someone who attacked our headquarters and stole from us.”

 “Who could…”

Suddenly, a large explosion sounded in the main Diabolist building in this city. The skies darkened and thunder rained, along with a laughter that could destroy eardrums. From the thunder appeared a laughing man holding a small girl.

“This was far too easy! How stupid can you all be?”

When Javier saw the girl, he panicked.

“Let go of her right this instant!”

Without caring for the consequences, Javier dashed towards the man surrounded by thunder. He received heavy injuries from the surrounding lightning, but still barely managed to reach the girl. He grabbed the girl and immediately plummeted towards the ground.

“You fared far better than that trash Cursed Flame, so I’ll give you your little sister for free. Remember to be thankful.”

With that, the man vanished like a bolt of thunder, leaving the thunderstorm to wreak havoc.

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“Reyes, deliver this information to those idiots of the Guardian top brass.”

“**As master desires!**”

The small lightning snake vanished, leaving Samuel alone.

“Well this was interesting at least.”

As he prepared to go his own way, Samuel sensed a distortion in space.

“What the…?!”

In the blink of an eye, the distortion swallowed Samuel.

When he next opened his eyes, he saw lush trees and small people with dusting wings flying everywhere. The air was clean, and the atmosphere was serene, nothing like the war-torn world he knew.

As he laid on the pure grass, the small people gathered around him. They floated, flew back and forth, studying him.

*What’s this? What’s this? Human? Human? Is it human?*

*It doesn’t smell human? Devil? Angel? God?*

*No! Demon! It’s a Demon? A Demon!*

*Tell the King! Tell the Queen! Let’s tell!*

*The Demon has come!*

**CHAPTER FOUR [THE SEARCH IN THE FAIRY FOREST]**

It had already been four months since Samuel found himself lost in the Fairy Forest. In that time, he had learned a lot about the Fairy race and their ways. Fairies were mostly mischievous spirits, just as likely to help as to harm. Barely any were evil, however. It was simply that they liked to play pranks and that their good intentions did not translate as such in human understanding.

On the 125th day of his exploration, he arrived to what looked like a shrine. The area was oval in shape and felt intangibly pure, even compared to the rest of the forest.

“What’s this then. The shrine of your god?”

“*Something like that.*”

The one who answered Samuel inquiry was pompous looking fairy wearing a crown. Next to him was the most beautiful fairy in existence, also wearing a crown.

“Is that so? And who are you two?”

“*We are the Fairy King Oberon and Queen Titania. If you wish to leave our forest, you must prove yourself worthy.*”

Having said so, Oberon dashed toward Samuel with a sword in hand, and Titania started to chant magic. Not wanting to be outdone, Samuel formed armor from thunder and swords from lightning.

Oberon and Samuel clashed with their swords viciously again and again, while Titania continued to cast healing and attack magic from afar. After fighting for an hour, Samuel started to grow impatient.

“Enough of this!”

Lightning rained down and concentrated on a single point, destroying Titania shield.

“*Titania!*”

Oberon panicked and lost focus, which was exactly what Samuel wanted. Swiftly, he swung his sword of lightning and wounded the completely open Oberon deeply, and then imprisoned him in a prison of thunder.

Looking towards Titania, he saw her emerge from the pit created from the collision of the lightning strike and the barrier. She had a few scars, but nothing significant.

“Will you surrender, or shall I erase your husband from existence?”

“*…You are worthy.*”

Once Titania had given her approval, Samuel let Oberon free of his prison. As Titania was scolding Oberon for his foolishness and healing his wounds, Samuel’s eyes fixated on the sword floating at the end of the oval shaped shrine. The sword was beautiful without compare, and its power was ridiculously high.

“What is that sword?”

 *That sword is beyond you yet.*

At the sound of the unknown voice, Oberon and Titania bowed deeply and left.

“Who are you?”

*I am your beginning, your origin, your father.*

“I have no time for your riddles. Tell me how to get out of this forest or scram.”

*If you wish to know the truth of all, simply touch the sword, it shall tell you everything.*

“…What is your name?”

*I abandoned my name long ago, but if you need to call me something, call me by my title; Tian Xu!*

“And thus, I’ve lost all trust in you. How could I trust anyone with that name? Now lead me out of here!”

*If you wish to leave so strongly, then I shall send you back.*

A portal appeared right before Samuel, and he slight frowned. Why had he been freed so easily?

Deciding to think about it later, he passed through the portal. Just as he left, he heard the voice speak again.

*You shall return… It is your fate…*

**CHAPTER FIVE [THE GUARDIAN-HUNTER CRISIS]**

Appearing outside the Fairy Forest, Samuel immediately got an emergency message.

“*All members return posthaste! The Old Gods are attacking!*”

“The Old Gods? What do they want?”

As he pondered the whims of the Old Gods, Samuel took a step forward. But as that step landed, he was suddenly in another place entirely. He was in his old home, before the Collapse! Panicking, he grabbed a mirror and, in its reflection, saw a small five-year-old boy. The glowing red scars were gone, and the dull ashen eyes were full of life and innocence.

“What is this?!”

 As Samuel grew horrified, he heard a voice that shook him to the very core.

“What’s the matter, sweet heart?”

Turning around, he saw his mother, calmly smiling.

“Mother!”

Samuel immediately ran to her embrace, crying like a just born baby.

“It’s all right, mother is here for you. What is making you so sad?”

“I-I had a \*sniff\* scary dream!”

“It’s all right, it was just a dream, mother is here for you.”

From there, Samuel’s life was full of joy. He spent joyous days with his mother and even got in touch with his father. He graduated from university with high scores and fared extremely well in the working world. He even had a happy marriage with his childhood sweetheart. Now, as he approached his 30th birthday, he was about to have his first child.

In the hospital, Samuel was pacing back and forth nervously, while his mother was sitting calmly not far from him.

“It’s going to be fine, dear.”

“I know, but I’m still nervous…”

“Trust me, it will be fine. Mother is here for you.”

Samuel stopped his pacing and looked at his mother. Then the door opened, and a doctor stepped out of it.

“You can go in now.”

Samuel started to shiver again, but his mother took his hand to calm him down.

“As I said, it will be fine. Mother is here for you.”

Growing some confidence, Samuel stepped into the room and saw his wife lying on a bed, a babe in her arms. Suddenly, all his worries seemed meaningless. He walked to his wife’s side and looked at the baby. It was without any problems, a completely healthy baby. Sighing in relief, he closed eyes.

But as his eyes closed, he suddenly had a thought. Why was he so worried? Though it was completely normal to be nervous in the current situation, it was not a resent thing. He had been growing more and more worried about everything for a long time now, ever since his marriage. Then a memory appeared in his mind, a memory of an old nightmare and a monster with dull red scars, eyes devoid of mercy or empathy.

*Why would I remember that now? Though now that I think back on it, it was quite a ludicrous dream.*

“See? I told you everything would be fine. Mother is here for you.”

That sentence suddenly shocked Samuel more than anything had in the past 20 years. He suddenly started to see a patter he did not want to see.

*…It was just a dream, mother is here for you… It will work out fine, mother is here for you… You don’t have to be scared, mother is here for you… You don’t have to worry about anything, mother is here for you…*

At that moment, Samuel heard a cold voice in his head:

***Open your eyes! Open your eyes! Open your eyes! Open your eyes! Open your eyes!***

Fear filled him as another, warm voice asked:

***Is it worth it? Is it worth it? Is it worth it? Is it worth it? Is it worth it?***

Curiosity eventually won over fear, and Samuel opened his. What he saw was beyond horrifying. When he looked at his wife, she was nothing but a dried skeleton, completely devoid of life. His mother, who was kneeling down at the side the bed, had her throat ripped open, her body mutilated and filled with holes, wearing an expression of terror on her twisted face. And the baby in his wife’s embrace had dull red scars streaming down his face from cruel ashen eyes, staring into his soul.

Samuel stumbled backward and fell on the floor, screaming all the way. As he hit the floor his face was already filled with tears, and he was cackling in pure madness.

“What’s wrong dear? Don’t worry, mother is here for you.”

Samuel swiped his mother’s hand away and rose slowly up on his own.

“More than anything… I wanted it to real…”

As his sorrow slipped from his mouth, Samuel grabbed two pencils and jammed one through his wife’s right eye and the other through his son’s skull!

“What are you doing Samuel?! It’s all right, mother is here for you.”

Samuel took hold of his mother’s head and twisted it while nearly drowning in his own tears.

“Farewell, mother…”

As his mother’s corpse hit the ground, the world vanished, leaving only darkness.

**\*\*\***

**-A few minutes after Samuel took the step-**

“Is he completely trapped?”

“Of course, my illusions are absolute!”

A pitch-black skinned woman with a red jewel in the middle of her face glared at a man surrounded by blinding light. They were observed by a blue skinned boy playing a flute.

“My apologies, I was simply confirming.”

“Hmph!”

“I think that’s enough of your bickering. Baldur, how do things go on your side?”

“As expected, Krishna. My father, Odin, and my brother, Thor, are pressuring the Guardian-Hunters. I trust you remember your part of the deal?”

“Of course. Maya, take care of the Crimson Scar. If we make him our puppet, our strength will grow significantly.”

“As you order, lord Krishna.”

The woman bowed and the boy disappeared like smoke. However, the moment he disappeared…

“DAMNED HINDU GODS! I WILL BUTCHER YOU ALL AND SENTENCE YOU ALONG WITH YOUR FOLLOWERS INTO ETERNAL SUFFERING!”

Samuel had awakened from the illusion, and his wrath twisted the world for miles on end. The heavens started roaring and the earth started shaking; thunder rained from the sky along with burning ice and freezing fire.

“Impossible!”

In the raging sky, Maya stared in shock at Samuel.

“How could you possibly escape?!”

“MAYA!”

In but a blink of an eye, the storm swallowed Maya and grinded her to dust. Maya, the goddess of illusions, was no more. Samuel then turned his gaze at the fleeing Baldur.

“Where do you think you’re going?! Mistletoe, gather!”

 In a few seconds, all the surrounding mistletoe, gathered and formed into many spears that pierced Baldur’s body. Baldur, the god of light, was no more. After these two gods died, Samuel absorbed them.

“To all Guardians and Hunters, this is Samuel Grey. Europe is lost. Destroy anything you can’t take with you and retreat to Iceland. Move it!”

After giving his order, Samuel looked down and saw the portal to the Fairy Forest, still open.

“That damn Tian Xu! He knew this was going to happen!”

As he damned the existence in the Fairy Forest, Samuel stepped into the portal.

**CHAPTER SIX [THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH]**

As Samuel stepped out of the portal, he felt the presence immediately.

Back so soon?

“You knew I would be back. Now tell me all that you know.”

Very well, but first, accept these.

The presence handed Samuel three drops of blood.

“What do I do with these?”

They are drops of pure dragon blood. Keep them with you and maybe they shall bring you good luck. Now, take the God-Slaying Sword.

Complying, Samuel put his hand on the sword, and through it, he saw more than he could possibly imagine, more than he ever wanted to know.

…

The first Civilization that came into being was the Ancients. They were mindful of their own business and did not care about the other, ‘lesser races’. Then came a great change, and the civilization of the Ancients split in three. The members of these three new clans were no longer called Ancients, but Ancient Gods, Ancient Devils, and Ancient Demons. The Ancient Gods were proud warriors and protectors, their bodies being stronger and harder than almost anything in existence. They preferred to live in solitude, apart even from the other members of their clan. The Ancient Devils were nefarious slaughterers, devourers of soul and flesh, masters of assassination, massacre, and darkness. They lived in small groups, not caring about others. The Ancient Demons were wise seers and creators, masters of the arcane mysteries. They lived in large groups, taking under themselves many of the ‘lesser races’, granting them knowledge and protection and in return, enjoyed their worship.

But then came the second Civilization, who called themselves the Celestials. A very arrogant name to claim, but the three clans did not care, both because they only cared about themselves and because they saw themselves as the supreme race.

They would curse their indifference for generations to come, for soon the Celestials expanded and attacked the three clans, killing many of their numbers. Furious, the three clans immediately counterattacked, but they were not as prepared as the Celestial Clan, and thus the apex race was slowly wiped from history. With their victory assured, the Celestials declared themselves the first Civilization to ever exist and announced that they would forever rule all that existed as holy, pure, never wrongdoing deities.

Many years into the future, three men were fighting against one woman. For some reason, Samuel knew them. The warrior who had eight bright stars and one dim and hollow star on his brow was an Ancient God, titled Tian Rou. The howling mad single horned devil with eight stars in his right eye was an Ancient Devil, titled Tian Tu. The calm scholarly man with two large, curved horns and seven stars in his left eye was the presence in the Fairy Forest, titled Tian Xu.

The four fought, until both sides were heavily injured, and an explosion occurred. From that explosion, the woman formed this galaxy and the three men hid. While the woman was searching for them, the three decided to cultivate civilizations to heal themselves. From the Devil were born the demons, from the God were born the angels, and from the Demon were born the humans.

He saw the beginning, development and destruction of civilizations and the passage of time. And then, he saw his own birth…

…

When Samuel woke up, Tian Xu’s presence was gone. Since he had found a successor, he was no more. After digesting all the information, he had just received, Samuel laughed. He laughed, laughed and laughed, until his voice was gone. When his laughter ended, there was a star shining in his left eye!

“So, in reality, we were nothing but pawns…”

After ha had calmed down, he opened a portal out of the Fairy Forest and stepped through it.

“Since it is so, I shall cripple Hell and trample Heaven!”

**CHAPTER SEVEN [CRIPPLE HELL!]**

Hell was divided into nine circles, and on the top ruled the Demon Princes, each given the title of ‘Devil’, given to them by one of the Seven Deadly Sins.

The 1st circle was pure wilderness, untamed and uncontrolled. It held no ruler and was not as dangerous as the other circles. Only weak and lesser demons wandered there.

The beast of ferocity, Beelzebub, was quite literally a giant fly. His large compounded and proboscis were clearly on display, to smear the world with his hideous visage.

The Prince of Gluttony was the ruler of the 2nd circle of Hell, holding his scepter adorned with a skull with flaming eyes of fire. Even his wings were adorned with skulls and bones. He stood on two legs, thus having four limbs to spare. His upper right hand held his scepter, his compound eyes hiding an everlasting hunger.

The circle that he governed, a large, ever expanding city that seemed unending, just like it’s master’s hunger. His name literally meant “Lord of the Flies”.

The Schemer of Avarice, Mammon, would be best described as a towering being of sludge. It was 50 meters tall and wide, smelled worse than a 20-year-old sewer and had a gaping hole in the middle of its frame that worked as a mouth. Its eyes shined like mini-suns and overflowed with endless desire for the material. Mammon’s circle was the 3rd, a realm of hungering marshes and swamps that swallowed all. Its name literally meant “Money”.

 The Lord of the Gap, Belphegor, sitting on his rocky throne, always resting, never moving. Two spiraling horns sprung from his temples, his open mouth showed rows of sharp fangs and beneath them flowed a long, unkept beard. His clawed hand rested on his chin, like it had for thousands of years. His circle was the 4th, the realm of all inaction and temptation by easiness.

The Great Serpent of Jealousy, Leviathan, the dragon-like serpent, ruled the depthless ocean realm of drowning envy. Its domain was the 5th circle, in which it swam endlessly, hungering for all that was imaginable. Its envy had no limits, no boundaries, and it saw everything belonging to it. It had the long, winding body of a snake, the leathery wings of a dragon, a turtle-like jaws filled with razor sharp fangs and four legs, each equipped with three deadly claws. Its name means “Wreathed, Twisted in Folds”.

The Keeper of Lust, Asmodeus, was at he same time a handsome man, an attractive woman, and a hideous monstrosity. His human forms were all mere façade. His true form was blazing red, looking like melted flesh. His head was fused with two enormous horns, each larger than the head they emerged from. Ha had no mouth; in its place the melted flesh had formed a mask from which gaps could be seen sharp teeth. He ruled the 6th circle, the realm of illusions and dreams of grandeur and fornication. His name meant “To Imitate God/To Take God’s Place/To replace God”.

The last two were unique, however…

The angel that rebelled against god split in two. The first was formed from ¾ of his body and his unshakable pride, which he had been carrying within himself since the beginning of his existence. This first half became the opposite of the angel of light. It’s beautiful wings, shining endless light, withered and its divine wings fell like their owner, leaving behind six leathery wings of sin. Its vitality was stripped from it, leaving it to look like a once handsome man, now on his deathbed, and two shallow horns burst from his temples, solidifying his abandonment of God. He was the Lord of Darkness and the King of Hell, a twisted form of the once beautiful angel of morning light, the ever-prideful Bringer of Light, Lucifer.

Thus, Lucifer ruled the 8th circle of Hell, a realm of perpetual ice, reigning as the Supreme.

The second was formed from the ¼ of his body that split from him and his gargantuan rage at God and all his subjects, which had been born during his war with God and when he had been struck down to Hell. But this ¼ of the original body did not satisfy the second half, and thus it used the bodies and souls of a million snakes to give itself its desired form. And warped by its rage, the newly formed body was a perverted image of a snake. It had the enormous body of a snake, a human-like head with seven eyes, six stacked on top of each other on both sides of his face and the seventh in the middle of his forehead, and a mouth that spawned countless rows of sharp fangs, clawed legs to keep the front half of the body upright, six unsightly thin arms and six locust wings on its back, skin as dark as night. He was the Fallen Angel of Condemnation, The Wrathful Judge of Hell, The One Who Questions, Satan.

And so, Satan began to rule the 7th circle of Hell, the realm of ethereal fire, fueled by infinite wrath.

But what of the 9th circle? It was the smallest, but also the most dangerous. It was filled with nothing but darkness, madness and death, for it was the realm of the Devil, the progenitor of the demons! If one wanted to reach it, they would have to go through all the other circles and then have the ability to survive the impossible environment caused by the Devil’s aura.

**\*\*\***

In but a sudden flash of light, the 1st circle was filled with lightning and thunder. Before anyone could react, it advanced into the 2nd circle and Beelzebub moved in to stop it. The confrontation lasted only a few seconds and The Lord of the Flies was swallowed by the lightning storm. The storm then moved towards the 3rd circle. Mammon did not even try to stop it but fled into the 4th circle! But the only thing that changed was that Mammon and Belphegor were swallowed together, without the Lord of Laziness even being able to open his eyes before his demise!

Only at the 5th circle did the storm meet some resistance, as Leviathan blocked a part of the storm. But only a part of it remained behind to tangle with the Sea Serpent, most of it continued on, towards the 6th circle!

The moment it entered, three enormous presences descended!

“What audacity is this, to dare cause such havoc in Hell!”

“Show yourself!”

A gap appeared in the storm, and Samuel casually stepped out. He then stared intently at three demons that stood in his way, Asmodeus, Satan and Lucifer.

“It’s good that you come together!”

The lightning battling Leviathan grew stronger, and the 5th circle was swallowed! More and more lightning gathered, immediately trapping and crushing Asmodeus into dust, and trapping Satan in a cage of thunder! Only Lucifer remained!

Before he had awakened from his shock, Samuel dashed toward Lucifer and severed one of his horns!

“How dare you!”

Recovering, Lucifer counter attacked with simultaneous blinding light and suffocating darkness.

“Dark-Light Rotation!”

The light and darkness started to twist reality, but Samuel skipped trough it, and put his finger on Lucifer’s forehead!

“HOW?! NO, THIS IS THE POWER OF THE DEM…!”

“Extract!”

By Samuel’s command, Lucifer’s soul was extracted, and at the same time, the thunder cage exterminated Satan with a bang. Without wasting any time, Samuel headed for the 9th circle.

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As he stepped into the 9th circle, Samuel saw and felt the madness of the Devil. If he had not gotten the inheritance of the Demon, he would have already died. As he looked before him, he saw a dried-up corpse of a young girl and a man kneeling over it. As the man lifted his lots-in-madness face, Samuel saw the face of the Second Seat of the Dark Trinity, Javier ‘Battle Maniac’ Arthur! At his feet laid the corpse of his little sister!

“I see. So, the Devil used you as his vessel of reincarnation and made you kill your own sister to weaken you…”

The mad Devil roared and bounced at Samuel!

“But the process is incomplete, and you are nothing but a brainless beast at the moment…”

At the Devil closed in, Samuel breathed out green gas that made it spams violently, until it was dead!

“In this state, even this little trick is enough to kill you. At this point, it’s probably best to eat the whole circle.”

After swallowing the entirety of the 9th circle and everything within it, Samuel left Hell. The lightning storm followed suit, leaving Hell in tatters. And so, Hell lost its origin and its leaders, and from now on, Hell would only have eight circles.

**CHAPTER EIGTH [TRAMPLE HEAVEN!]**

As Samuel stepped out of the hell portal, he was sealed in a formation spearheaded by the three Saints of the Templars and assisted by uncountable angels.

“Is this the best you can do, slaves of God?”

“Silence sinner! We shall purge the world of your existence!”

With the order of the old woman, the formation activated and attacked Samuel. Merciful light descended from the heavens to purify the world from sin and flaming swords of judgement descended like rain. But to Samuel, it all appeared extremely slow… and weak!

“Turn to dust.”

At his command, the formation, the angels and the old woman turned to dust, silently, without a sound. The only remaining ones were the First and Second Seats of the Holy Trinity, Cyan ‘Warrior Scholar’ Loman and William ‘Hallowed Prophet’ Grey.

“Cyan, I repaid my dept my dept to you long ago. Now, it’s you time to go.”

Saying so, Samuel swiped his hand and Cyan’s soul collapsed. Turning to his father, Samuel saw only sadness.

“Well? Didn’t you swear to destroy my soul and mount my head on a pike?”

As he looked down upon this now hollow shell of a man, Samuel remembered his interactions with him in the illusion. How they had reconciled and had fun, how he had watched over him as he die from lung cancer. Then he thought back on the things he saw when he touched the God-Slaying Sword

“I did. But after all this time, it no longer seems so worth it. May you find peace in the void.”

Samuel waved his hand again, and his father was gone. Nothing remained of his existence. No soul, no body, no possessions, no memories. Sparing a short silent moment, Samuel stepped to Heaven.

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As Samuel arrived into Heaven, before him appeared seven angels, four of them archangels, the other three holding honorary titles, each holding one of the Seven Heavenly Virtues.

 Michael of Humility, Raphael of Charity, Gabriel of Kindness, Uriel of Temperance, Camael of Diligence, Jophiel of Castity, and Zadkiel of Patience.

“Halt, Son of Man. Through here is the Kingdom of God. The unclean and those of no faith are not allowed inside. Leave at once.”

“How good of the Seven Heavenly Virtues to appear before me all at the same time!”

The following battle lasted only three and a half minutes, three of the nine spheres of Heaven were destroyed, and the Seven Archangels died. This prompted another being to emerge.

The one who called himself God, The Demiurge, Ialdabaoth! It was not at all holy, but an enormous snake with the head of a lion, and it roared in rage at Samuel.

“How dare you, little insect! I shall cut you off from the \*Qguahac\*…!”

Not letting the self-proclaimed God continue its pointless rant, Samuel grabbed by the throat and pushed it through the spheres of Heaven.

“I have no interest in you or your opinion. So, suffer here for all eternity!”

And so, they arrived at the 9th sphere, and there, Samuel crucified Ialdabaoth to a torturous cross!

As Ialdabaoth screamed in agony, another figure appeared. She was the Third Seat of the Holy Trinity, Angelica ‘Merciful Angel’ Cropper! But now, she had a star on her brow!

“So, the God decided to make you his successor.”

“That’s right, and with this power I can finally KILL YOU!”

Angelica punched towards Samuel, but it missed, and its power crushed a few more spheres of Heaven!

“You have good instincts and strength, but that’s all. You are still nothing.”

Suddenly, right in front of her, Angelica saw her family in front of a shining light. Seeing that, she froze for a moment. And in that instant, Samul sliced her head off! The last thing she saw before her death was not her family, but the different colored stars in Samuel’s eyes…

**CHAPTER NINE [THE HANDS MOVE BUT THE MOUNTAIN REMAINS]**

After their embarrassing retreat from Europe, the Guardian-Hunters returned under the leadership of Caine and went to war with the Old Gods, eventually exterminating the Norse gods completely.

After doing so, the ruler of the Guardian-Hunters, Caine, massacred all of India, sparing nothing. And thus, this once powerful country was gone forever.

As time passed, Caine started to appear less and less, until he finally vanished entirely, only communicating with other through his direct servants, the Priestesses of Caine. Eventually, Caine was worshipped like a god by the Guardian-Hunters, and the Priestesses of Caine were seen as his divine messengers and prophets.

After a few hundred years of relative peace, conflict escalated again, as Hell appeared again, this time under their new ruler Belial, the Demon Prince of Dark Flame and self-proclaimed Demon God

Belial the new demon prince of dark flame, the self-proclaimed Demon God. Heaven also soon followed, continuing their crusades.

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On top of a mountain sat a man with red scars on his face, contemplating about his next move.

“So, Hell has a new leader, and Ialdabaoth is beginning to find ways to escape its torture. Perhaps it shall escape in a few years… Not that that could ever happen though.”

Smiling, stars appeared on the man’s face. One on his brow, one in his right eye and four in his left eye!

“All my preparations are complete. It’s time for the end to come!”

“Ancient aura, seal!”

At the spell’s activation, the stars vanished from Samuel’s face as he disappeared from the mountaintop.

**CHAPTER TEN [THE END OF THE BEGINNING, THE BEGINNING OF THE END]**

Samuel stepped into space with a casual step and looked down upon Earth. All over it, one could see the destruction caused by the massive conflict. Pits so deep and wide that they could be clearly seen from space, wastelands incapable of supporting any kind of life and the various oceans streaming inland because of the violent geometrical changes. Even now, it was possible to see various explosions and other phenomenon flashing everywhere, marking new battlefields.

Samuel turned his attention away from that slaughter, looking upwards at the starry sky. The Earth no longer mattered to him. As far as he was concerned, it had but one purpose to fulfill, and afterward? It could go to hell for all he cared. All preparations were complete, and he was ready. Today everything would end, and everything would begin. The past held no importance.

He closed his eyes. For what seemed like an eternity, they remained closed. Then, when it seemed like they would never open, Samuel opened his eyes, and now they gleamed with a terrifying glow. He immediately snapped his head back and roared:

” Heaven and Hell hold no power over me. I exist as the eternal destroyer, the devourer of souls, the end of worlds, the master of destruction, the lord above all things. I meet god, I slay god; I meet devil, I slay devil! Nothing can keep me, force me, imprison me! I have lived beneath the ‘Creator’ for far too long! The time of the high heavens has come to an end!”

“In my name, let Heaven scream and moan, Hell cry and weep, Earth drown in sorrow! Let existence distort and crumble; vanish without remains! Heaven weeps, Earth laments, Hell cries, but I remain! BARRIERS OF EXISTENCE; DESTROY!”

The stars, as far as the eye could see, exploded, their deaths creating a beautiful firework show. Laws began to distort, and everything was destroyed. The galaxy collapsed. Fire swallowed water, wood put out fire, space and time became scrambled. There was no more past, no more present, no more future; no more near, no more far! All of creation was going crazy, there were no more defining laws, only chaos. The galaxy had descended into chaos!

Then, this chaos suddenly cracked. It was small, so small that it could not be seen. But right after it expanded beyond all of space, vast beyond human understanding. Out of the largest crack stepped out a humongous figure. It’s pinky nail alone was larger than the Sun. It was impossible to distinguish whether that figure was male or female, for it had the characteristics of both. It had ten malicious eyes, four bulky arms and gave off unparalleled holiness. It was not the type of holiness that said; “I am merciful, I am good, I am thus right”, but an insufferably arrogant declaration of; “I am always right, thus I am always justified in my actions, no matter what they may be”.

The Giant looked down with its ten eyes glowing, and scowled indifferently: “How dare you upset my established order? Who gave you such unsurmountable arrogance? No matter how big, no matter how gigantic, AN INSIGNIFICANT ANT IS STILL JUST AN INSIGNIFICANT ANT!”

Samuel immediately snorted back: “Mere trash that can’t reach True Divinity even after millions of years is worthless even before that ant!”

The golden figure instantly dashed towards Samuel in seething fury, as if it had never heard such insulting words before, never mind someone talking back to it: “Those words alone are enough for you to suffer a billion years of torture along with all your friends, loved ones, ancestors, homeworld and neighboring worlds!!! ”

Samuel only smiled coldly at the Giant’s rage, drawing the God-Slaying Sword.

“Come then, I will show you how an ant struggles.”

While closing in, the Giant threw a punch. At first glance, it was quite simple, simply a punch, but only a fool would think that. Setting aside the size, which was hundreds of times larger than the Sun, the energy it contained was enough to trump those hundreds of suns, and it had a suctioning effect, meaning NOTHING could get away from it. Nothing except… Samuel. The punch landed where he stood, but it hit nothing.

He appeared behind the Giant and slashed! The sword struck down, but then it suddenly stopped. From the Giants back appeared extensions of light that looked like some kind of twisted wings. It coated the Giant, protecting it from every side.

“What will you do now, ant?”, the Giant laughed, clearly sure of its victory.

“There are always limits”, Samuel commented nonchalantly and disappeared again. The difference was, this time he didn’t appear anywhere else. The Giant remained stationary, still grinning. It simply continued to wait.

However, soon the Giant started to frown. Then it began to grind its teeth and shout: “If you’re thinking of wearing this Celestial down, then forget it! A fool like you could never…”

“Wrathful Amplification, Blessing of Avarice.”

“Aaaarghaah!”

Just as the Giant started shouting, it heard a voice in its right ear, and as it continued shouting, a slash appeared, shattering the “wings” of light and severing its lower left arm. It instinctively retreated and saw how Samuel effortlessly devoured the severed limb.

“You f\*cking piece of dog shit!”

Growing absolutely livid, the Giant started to regenerate its arm, only to immediately realize that it would not grow back in a long time. Shocked beyond compare, it looked at its stump of an arm and then at the calmly smiling Samuel.

“What have you done?!”

In response to its query, Samuel simply flipped his sword and charged forward. The Giant immediately understood where the problem laid.

*The sword!*

For the first time since the start of the battle, it looked straight at Samuel, actually considering victory and defeat.

“Four Arms Lifting The World!”

An image appeared above the Giant, representing the world, and the Giant holding it upon its shoulders. Whatever existed, it needed the Giant! Without the Giant, nothing would exist, for it was supporting all of creation on its back. Right now, the Giant was the spitting image of the Greek Titan Atlas.

However, ¼ of the world immediately crumbled away, because the Giant no longer had four arms, but three! This did not change the fact that it was enormous. The Giant hurled the world at Samuel, and this attack alone would crush Heaven, Hell, and Earth altogether!

“Pride’s Guard!”

At Samuel’s shout, an armor, pure white and shining, but twisted demonically, with sharp claws and spikes all over it, coated him. The illusory world smashed against him, causing an explosion that twisted the chaos.

In the remains of the explosion, Samuel stood, deeply wounded. He had lost his left arm, his right leg and he had terrifying wounds all over his body.

## “To have survived that at all, you impress me.”

Gone was the scared Giant, back was the overconfident Creator, looking down on all. Samuel remained motionless, as if he were dead or had given up.

“Ten Gleaming Eyes of Nefarious Divinity!”

The Giants red eyes started to shine, and it began leisurely walking towards Samuel. Through the eyes came a paralyzing pressure that locked him in place. When it reached him, it grabbed his hair and yanked it back to look into his eyes.

“All you are, all you have, shall be mine!”

The ten eyes shined even more, both disgusting and beautiful. Then suddenly, Samuel grinned tiredly. He stared straight at the Giant's face and mocked: “With just you alone? Foolish.”

Samuel waived his remaining hand, and below them, appeared seven blackish crimson spears, and above them seven silvery white spears.

“The seven deadly sins; Ira, Superbia, Invidia, Luxuria, Gula, Acedia and Avaritia! Pierce and tear apart my enemy!”

“The seven heavenly virtues; Patientia, Humilitas, Humanitas, Castitas, Temperantia, Industria and Caritas! Scatter and erase my enemy from existence!”

The seven sins and seven virtues formed a cage and pierced the Giants flesh, locking it in place and causing it immeasurable pain, forcing it to howl in agony.

”Let me go! Let me go right now, you damned bald monkey!”

”What would be the point in that?”

As the Giant screamed, the fourteen wills pierced and erased its existence. All that remained was its energy.

Samuel absorbed that energy, but his injuries did not heal at all.

Who would have thought that the battle for the throne of the ‘Creator’ would only last a few minutes? Indeed, it could have been a glorious confrontation, the type that legend would be told about, how it lasted a hundred days and a hundred nights. But such a fight did not suit Samuel’s plans. If it had been necessary or would have benefitted him, it could have lasted even longer than that.

As he remained in place, another figure appeared. This one was the size of a normal human, a beautiful woman, exuding charm, surrounded by blinding light, with a smile radiant like the Sun.

 ” To think that a lowly primitive ape would have the potential to barely surpass my avatar… Quite interesting. You’ve been quite amusing to watch.”

The blindingly charming woman looked at him sweetly, eyes overflowing with warmth.

“I suppose you deserve an introduction after all your hard work”, the woman said and performed a curtsey one might expect to see in imperial courts or masked balls.

“This Imperial Queen is named Clytemnestra. Be honored to have learned that name before you die, for very few have ever heard it.”

Immediately after her introduction, Samuel burst into barbaric and volcanic laughter that shook space itself.

” A mere Celestial Imperial Concubine, a plaything of the Celestial Sovereign, dares call herself ‘this Imperial Queen’? The hilarity of it all!”

Clytemnestra paid no attention at all to the insult, because the meaning of that sentence was far too horrifying for her.

“How do you know that?!”

Her identity was known only to a select few. Herself, her fellow concubines, the Sovereign, her clan and…

*No! That is not possible! Absolutely impossible! They couldn’t! They wouldn’t!*

As she was stuck in her momentary horror and astonishment, Samuel made his move. The surrounding chaos stopped, and three seeds appeared. Shockingly, they were Earth, Heaven, and Hell! They had been destroyed, but they appeared again here!

“My Priestesses of Caine, come to me!”

Upon his call, fourteen women appeared simultaneously around Clytemnestra. All were beautiful, but half were holy, pure, glowing; and the other half were vile, evil and seductive.

What had but a moment ago appeared as fourteen weapons were now fourteen powerful servants, each one far stronger than the leaders of Heaven and Hell. They immediately sealed Clytemnestra, trapping her.

Immediately masking her shock, Clytemnestra took a quick glance at the seal.

 “A combination of the virtues and the sins. Impressive for you, but what can you hope to accomplish? I will be free of this momentarily.”

Samuel did not answer but raised his hand towards the three seeds.

Clytemnestra understood the gesture and her face lost all its charm, changing into a beastly countenance.

“You wouldn’t! You wouldn’t dare!”

Samuel leered at her maliciously, grabbing the Hell seed; “Watch me”.

Clytemnestra would not; could not accept what Samuel was about to do, for she had not yet realized that this was exactly why he had wounded himself so gravely. It was to make the so-called Celestial completely confident of her victory and make her lower her guard entirely, all to trap her in the Sinful Virtue Seal!

“I sacrifice Hell to become an eight-star Ancient Devil! The madness of destruction and death shall bring forth the insane soul of the devil!”

As he sacrificed the Hell seed and all the souls inside it screamed in agony as they died a torturous death, he began exuding black mist and his veins started pulsating, bulging as his blood started to turn black. A radiating black horn curved from the top portion of his forehead, and pitch-black markings started to spread all over his body form that singular horn. His aura started to become crazy and bloodthirsty, and dark mist started coming out of the corners of his mouth. In his right eye appeared eight deep purple stars with traces of gold, dancing against a black sclera.

“I sacrifice Heaven to become an eight-star Ancient God! The permanence and divinity of the self-proclaimed Divine shall bring forth the indestructible body of the lord!”

As he sacrificed the Heaven seed and all the souls inside it screamed in agony as they met an agonizing end, his injuries healed in an instant. His skin started to crack and harden, in addition to becoming slightly darker in color. His hair turned pure white, and he started to grow. In but a blink of an eye, he had grown larger than the Giant. He had grown so gigantic that if you stood at the level of his feet, you could not even see his head! In the middle of his brow were eight silver stars, rotating furiously.

 “I sacrifice the Earth to become an eight-star Ancient Demon! The faith and soul of mankind shall bring forth the spirit of the omniscient all-seer!”

As he sacrificed the Earth seed and all the remainders of his humanity and connection to them, he trembled. Two large, sharply curved bronze colored horns pierced from his skull at both sides of his forehead, placing the smaller middle-horn between them. In his left eye danced eight crimson stars against a dull bronze sclera. A greater change happened inside his body, to his spirit. It grew more powerful to accommodate his now enormous body and bolstered his strength ten times over.

Usually, for one to become an eight-star Ancient, they would have to do so with age and a slow process, but Samuel did not need to go through said process, because Earth, Heaven and Hell were made for the express purpose of strengthening Ancients. But be as it may, a problem remained.

If it had been only one or two of the inheritances that Samuel had activated or if he had done them one by one, first getting accustomed to the changes in his body, soul, and spirit, these would have been the *only* changes. But Samuel had activated all three at once and jumped from one star in two and three stars in one, straight to EIGHT stars in all three! And considering that even now, he had not yet completely adjusted to the changes, what happened next was not surprising. But the result was!

 Samuel’s body began to resist the sudden changes and it rapidly started to rip itself to pieces.

Clytemnestra, still in her seal, snorted coldly.

“Hmph! Did you really think that a primitive like you could handle such power? That power belongs to ME, it has always belonged to me! It belonged to me the moment I laid my eyes upon it and decided that its mine!”

After her declaration, she immediately started to pound the seal, seeking to destroy it.

It was at her third hit that Samuel laughed for a second time, this time demonic, devilish, disturbing even to Clytemnestra.

“You think I was not prepared for this? As I have many times said, even naivete and blatant conceit should have their limits!”

At her fourth hit, she felt a rebound force. Her own power attacked her and instantaneously repaired the seal!

“What is this?! No… You used my avatar’s power?!”

To control such tremendous power immediately after acquiring it, and to fuse it with something as complex as the Sinful Virtue Seal… That was only possible for a monster, a freak of nature, a being that should not exist!

“That’s correct, do try and escape from that.”

Even as he was breaking apart, Samuel did not sound like it at all. However, right after, he raised his head and gazed at where the heavens once were.

“I am Caine, the first being in history to fuse the three ancient clans! Little problems like *qualification* mean NOTHING to me!”

“If my Ancient God body requires a million years of slumber in the heart of a planet, then so be it!”

At Samuel’s shout, an enormous planet formed from the surrounding chaos. Right after it appeared an illusion of Samuel as an Ancient God, that dove straight into the planet's core. Literally, in a second’s time, a million years passed, and the planet exploded. Out of the explosion appeared the now stable illusion of Samuel, which immediately fused with the real one, who was still gazing into the heavens.

“If my Ancient Devil soul requires a baptism in the blood of millions, then so be it!”

At Samuel’s shout, a massive army of a billion soldiers appeared around him. With them, an illusion of Samuel as an Ancient Devil, twisted, mad, hungry for massacre and death. It howled and charged at the soldiers closing in on it. Like before, only a second passed, but the enormous army was ripped to pieces. The illusory Ancient Devil returned to Samuel, now complete.

Only one of the three remained. The last one, however, was an exception. On this Samuel would not bend, not even a little!

“If my Ancient Demon spirit requires faith, then forget the faith of lesser being, damned be the worship of others, that is the path of the Celestials! I have faith in myself, that faith shall feed my spirit, and make it last for all eternity! The Celestials disagree? They can go off and die! My command exists above the heavenly law, and I say; Ancient Order, No Celestials!”

With his declaration done, his spirit was complete and stable. An explosive sound resounded, and he saw Clytemnestra destroy the Sinful Virtue Seal.

“You astound me. But you are still insignificant before me!”

“I strip you of the grace of the light! For all eternity, you shall fear the light and serve the light! For all eternity, you shall be a slave of the light!”

As Clytemnestra said so, all the worlds light started to escape and then attack Samuel. It screamed only one thing: *Kneel! Kneel! Kneel!*

“I don’t need light’s graze, if I want it, I shall have it! If light escapes me, if light attacks me, I shall become a black hole that swallows light!”

As Samuel said so, he turned into a mass of darkness that swallowed all light, and the light kneeled to Samuel!

“I strip you of your right to fight! For all eternity, you shall flee from your enemies and fear even ants!”

As Clytemnestra said so, all the creatures of the universe looked with hunger at Samuel, from giants to little micro-organism.

“I don’t need the right to fight! If I want to fight, I will, if I don’t, I won’t! I don’t need your permission! If I want to massacre the universe, I shall!”

As Samuel said so, all the creatures looked at him in terror, and hid into the depts of the void!

“I strip you of your power! All your power belongs to me! As a Celestial Imperial Concubine, I exercise my right to command all things, give me your power!”

As Clytemnestra said so, Samuel’s power started to flee him and head towards her!

“Everything I have belongs to me! Nothing has the right to take anything from me! If the universe wants something of mine, then I shall consume the universe!”

As soon as he finished, he heard a thousand voices inside his head.

“*Cursed be the Abominations, their children too… And their children, forever true… Cursed be the Defilers, their fathers too… And their fathers, forever true… Cursed be the Old Ones, their existence too… And their milieu, forever true…”*

As the chant ended, Samuel’s body began to twist again. This time it was from a curse set upon all members of the ancients. But as he had fused all three its arrival was slightly delayed! But it was not prepared for the fusion of all three of the ancient clans, because for the Celestials, such a thing had never – should never have – existed!

Thus, the curse went out of control, doing this it was supposed to, but also things it was not supposed to! In this moment of confusion, Samuel took the reins.

“You think you are qualified to curse me?! You think you have the STRENGHT to limit me?! You think YOU have the ABILITY to kill ME?!”

“No one is! Not your clan, not your pathetic concubines, not even your precious sovereign!”

The curse started to twist, and in its malfunction, was torn in two! One half to Samuel, the three drops of dragon blood! Its nigh endless energy was absorbed by the blood and Samuel, changing them both.

Samuel started to grow in size again, growing far bigger. At his current size, a light breath could destroy a solar system without any effort! The cracks on his skin became far more apparent, and they glowed blood red, his body growing ever more resilient and stronger. On his brow, a ninth silver star appeared!

A nine-star Ancient God!

His two bronze horns grew larger and more imposing, and his body started to exude bright demonic flames, flashing in seven colors. His presence became distorted and hard to grasp, and if one did not actively look and know, he appeared to be completely inexistent! He became hard to look at and gazing straight at him would cause a headache! In his left eye appeared a ninth crimson star!

A nine-star Ancient Demon!

His black devil horn lengthened, and the bizarre, distorted presence of the Ancient Demon gained a new element. The madness and bloodlust of the Ancient Devil! Now, the headaches would turn into mind shattering explosions of torturous pain, splitting the victims’ minds into a million pieces! The black mist that spewed from his mouth turned into illusory darkness that wrapped itself around him and formed twisted devilish wings of darkness on his back. In his right eye appeared a ninth deep purple star!

A nine-star Ancient Devil!

Through the curse that was meant to seal Ancients, Samuel had reached nine-stars and reached the peak of the Ancients!

Turning back to the form and size of a humanoid, Samuel looked at Clytemnestra, who was desperately trying to escape in complete terror. She had obviously given up hope of victory and only wanted to escape. But then again, who could blame her? Who would dare to? She had witnessed someone fuse within himself the three Ancient Clans, reach eight stars in all of them, resist the backlash of such a hasty action, force the stabilization process by manipulating spacetime, condemn the Celestials to their deaths, the oldest clan in all of life’s history and fight with her over the control of laws.

However, these were not the reason why she drowned in despair. If there was nothing else, she would, of course, be afraid of Samuel, but would only think of him as a nuisance that would die at the hands of the Celestials. After all, the Celestial Clan was the ruler of the universe, they surely had enough resources to kill a member of the Ancient Order. No matter how strong he grew, he could never triumph against the Celestial Sovereign, who ruled the universe like an omnipotent god. And above all else, she would hold complete confidence in her ability to escape.

But Samuel reaching three nine-stars broke her hopes like dam made of sticks.

Her only hope of survival at this point was the Celestial Sovereign. Only by escaping from the seal imprisoning her and reaching the Sovereign could she possibly survive. But secretly, she was even questioning that possibility. She was certain that everything from the beginning till the end had been planned out by Samuel. Now in her panic, she was growing paranoid. What if he wanted her to escape, to lead him to the Sovereign? Was there perhaps something else at play? This uncertainty and confusion ate at her mind and caused her to stop caring about the backlash of her attacks.

Because she did not care about the said backlash, she managed to create a hole in the seal with mild injuries. Just as she saw hope, Samuel appeared before her!

“Leaving so soon?”, Samuel asked, smiling provocatively, clearly taking pleasure in her desperation and anguish.

In her panic, terror and monstrous fear of death, she broke down:

“DIE! DIE, DIE, DIE! DIE YOU DAMNED MONSTER! DIEEEEE!”

As she shouted hysterically, her hands made a bizarre movement, and a cleansing attack began!

“Holy Light of Purification of the Celestial Immortal Court!”

The Holy Light of Purification of the Celestial Immortal Court was a technique that was primarily used to eradicate the enemies of the Celestial Clan, the children of the Fiend Cult and the disciplines of the Heretic Sect. It did nothing to the members of the Celestial Clan, and it did not care whether the target of purification was good or evil. All that mattered was whether the target worshipped the Celestial Clan and The Celestial Sovereign or not!

It was the strongest attack any member of the Celestial Clan could pull off, but no one on record had ever used it on one of the members of the three Ancient Clans. Clytemnestra was the first to try! But sadly, she had chosen her target poorly. For Samuel was now a fusion of the three. He was The Ultimate Warrior and High Lord, The Absolute Slaughterer and Pinnacle Assassin, The Nigh-Omniscient Seer and Creator Sorcerer!

The light of annihilation appeared and engulfed Samuel, seemingly trapping him. But any thought of it actually working would be the perfect example of stupidity, for right as it touched him, the light was absorbed into his body.

Since the light did not harm him, nor had he any interest in using it, he absorbed a little amount for later study and dashed towards the now fleeing Clytemnestra. He vanished, immediately appeared right in front of her, and before she could react, struck his right-hand straight through her chest, grabbing her heart on the way.

As Samuel held her up, he decided to twist the knife in the wound and pour in some salt as well.

“As I have said, naivete and hubris should be minimal once you reach this level. But you were far too arrogant. Did you really think I had no plan? No strategy at all, no tactics, no schemes?”

“When we began, I aggravated your avatar on purpose to make it angry and irrational, so that I could quickly show it the danger my God-Slaying Sword posed for it. Then it would immediately use the strongest attack in its arsenal to defeat me quickly. I then pretended to have been fatally wounded, so that your avatar would drop its guard and try to absorb me. Then I would use the seven deadly sins and seven heavenly virtues to kill it.”

“Being exhausted from my battle, I would pose no threat to you, or rather, I would not have the ability to *run away* from you, for you never believed that I could ever wound you in the slightest. However, you were fooled again. You were trapped by my servants, the Priestesses of Caine, who each hold a portion of my own power and a modified and strengthened version of a virtue or a sin each. I would then use them and the power I gained from your avatar to create a seal that you could not escape without mild injuries, or even if that failed, it would still take you some time.”

“In that time, I would sacrifice Heaven, Hell, and Earth, climbing the next steps in my evolution. I would then stabilize my condition and finalize my transcendence. Then I would use my newly obtained powers to devour you.”

“Me reaching nine-stars, however, was not in my plan. But unfortunately for you, I have quite the luck, and whatever your clan does, it serves to benefit me!”

Having almost finished his explanation, Samuel showed a twisted and sadistic grin.

“I said it when we began, didn’t I? ‘I will show you how an ant struggles.’ Also, you didn’t need to worry about leading me to Sovereign. By devouring your memories, I can easily find him myself.”

As he made sure that Clytemnestra understood his meaning – that he had planned all of this, that she was nothing more than a pig in a slaughterhouse, and that she had compromised the whole Celestial Clan – and savoring the many emotions on her face, he crushed her heart.

“Farewell, ant.”

As Clytemnestra was about to die, her face was buried in tears. She jerked her head to look straight into Samuel’s eyes through her own, tear-filled ones. All that she could muster was a wail, filled with desperation, sadness, terror, resentment, agony, and misery:

“***CCAAAAAAAAAIIIIIIIIIIINNNEEEEEEE!!!!!!!***”

**EPILOGUE [RISING]**

After Clytemnestra died, Samuel absorbed her into himself. As expected from a Celestial Imperial Concubine, she knew many classified secrets of the Celestial Clan, far more than the three Ancients. Secret treasure-troves, cultivation grounds, medicine and herb gardens, hidden dimensions… He could cause quite a headache for the Celestials with this. Even the more basic information was very useful. Precise details of the structure of the Celestial Clan, their techniques and customs, etcetera.

This was the optimal outcome, and Samuel had to smile and pat himself on the back for a job well done. Him turning into a nine-star Ancient was beyond his expectations, and it made him want to jump and hop in joy, but that would make him lose all the dignity he had amounted in the last few hundred years.

“Master.”

Before him bowed the fourteen Priestesses of Caine, heavily wounded, some even missing limbs. Regardless of their present state, they had performed their final duty magnificently.

“You have served me well and are deserving of praise, but sadly, everything must come to an end. My power, return to me!”

The Priestesses bodies exploded, and they were erased. All that remained were the seven deadly sins and the seven heavenly virtues, which Samuel absorbed into himself. His servants, these extensions of his very being, now returned to him.

“The potential of the seven deadly sins and the seven heavenly virtues is nearly limitless, I wonder what they shall give me in the future.”

Thinking about the future, Samuel frowned slightly and pondered deeply.

“I gave myself the title ‘Caine’ when I swore to go against the self-proclaimed Creator; to mark the death of the human and the birth of the rebel.”

“Now, with the Creator dead and the Priestesses of Caine no more, Caine shall die as well!”

“From now on, I shall be known as Tenebris Ortus, the Devil of Darkness, the God of War and the Demon of Wisdom; the Inheritor of the Ancient Order!”

*For now, I need to adapt and get used to my strength. I only got the raw power, not the techniques or spells. I’ll have to spend a few thousand years to learn them all.*

*And the dragon blood… Thanks to the curse, the blood has been boosted and is in what could be called an embryonic state. I’ll have to nurture it for a long time before its ready to be born…*

*Fortunately, in this chaos, I won’t run out of energy for a few million years. Once I’ve learned all that I can from the inheritances and my comprehension, and the dragon has been born, I’ll head for the Celestial Clan.*

Samuel sat down in a meditation position, but immediately he had a sudden thought. It was at the same time both simple, and completely earthshattering! His thought was a question:

*After the ninth star, is there a tenth…?*

NEVER had anyone even thought of the possibility of a star after the ninth. The ninth was the end and the peak, nothing could be beyond it! It was like a mountain climber suddenly having more to climb after the very peak of the mountain.

But Samuel asked, “Why couldn’t there be a tenth star?”

“If there is a tenth star, then I shall reach it! Though that shall be a matter for the future.”

Vowing so, he turned his gaze towards the location of the Celestial Clan.

“Even the strongest of beings was at one point just a weak little brat. No matter how many lies you tell, no matter how holy you make yourself seem, no matter how mighty you grow, it does not change the fact that you were once only a puny speck of dust! “

“So now I, who you thought only to be a fading remnant of a primeval age, who you saw as little more than a trivial nuisance, just another one of your servants, shall drag you down from your shattered throne! If a privileged brat of the Celestial Clan could rise to the peak of the universe, then I, Tenebris, can do it as well!”

“For now, I have to remain here. But when I’m done, let’s see how long you can survive my wrath, the fury birthed by uncountable generations of suffering and death, the rage of an exterminated civilization!”

“And you shall forever curse this day…”

“AS THE DAY THAT DARKNESS ROSE FROM YOUR VANITY!”

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And the Celestials would forever have in their nightmares;

The image of a gigantic figure riding a dragon, with ten stars in both his eyes and his brow…

The horror of the light-swallowing darkness, their clan members burning alive in everchanging flames and their worlds shattering from the power of a single roar…

The sight of their God’s, the Celestial Sovereign’s, numerous desperate struggles as he fled like a homeless dog…

And the name of their greatest enemy, nemesis and boogeyman, The Rising Darkness…

**AFTERWORD**

So, a few final words about this text. When I started writing this, I decided that this should be a fun project. That I would enjoy writing this. Therefore, I apologize if any cruelties in this short story of mine were too much for you. I made an effort to filter anything too graphic, but I must admit that I probably didn’t manage it very well, as my tolerance and appreciation for such things are probably higher than at least for some. But if I had done any more, writing this would have stopped being fun. So again, I apologize if it made you uncomfortable.

As for design choices: (I based a lot of this on mythology) The Princes of Hell, on the seven deadly sins, And the seven archangels on the seven heavenly virtues. Traditionally, there are only four archangels, but for some reason, there are many versions of seven, so I just picked the most appropriate ones.

When I say that humanity’s numbers dropped, I mean those that remained neutral/on the side of humanity. So, when I say that three billion people vanished; some died, some joined the angels or the demons. When the Old Gods appeared, same thing.

I also left a lot of details out, so if something seemed illogical or stupid, it might be that I just left the details untold. So…

If you have any questions, feel free to ask!

And that’s all from me. Thank you for reading my work, and good day to you, where ever you are!

Best regards, ***Lassi Isotupa***

(For the teacher, mainly) …This little project has perhaps inflated a teeny bit too much, or what do you think?