

Book of Ynk

Age of Creation

Blueprint

It came to be through much planning and laborious mathematical calculations that the energy crisis could be solved using a new experimental procedure that was capable of producing a singularity within its own dimension. Such an extreme and twisted endeavor made it necessary to check the calculations vigorously using the brightest mathematicians the planet Yarlow could produce. One mistake could mean catastrophe for not only their planet, but their entire galaxy as well. If done correctly, the singularity would be able to produce perpetual energy for more than a thousand years.

The math had determined that one singularity could not exist without a twin. Experiments showed that as soon as they had constructed the dimensional field it collapsed before any singularity was able to form. Further testing showed that they were able to construct two dimensions at the same time, but that they had to be in contact with each other at all times. Once perfected, the singularity only formed in one of the dimensions. They named this dimension Lys, and the barren empty dimension was codenamed Syl.

For several days after the creation of the twin dimensional engine there was no energy output whatsoever. The scientists were disheartened, but began observing the relationship between the two dimensions. The moment they began to observe they noticed that the membrane between the dimensions was a two dimensional fractal image. Then something very odd happened.

Suddenly the dimension of Lys separated into two halves as if it were undergoing cell division. Each half somehow retained its own singularity. As they observed the properties of each they were exactly the same in every way. The singularity had not changed, it simply became two. Then it happened again, creating four identical sections of Lys, and four identical singularities.

Absolutely baffled, the scientist watched with growing curiosity. The dimension continued to imitate cell division for several hours, at which point it stopped suddenly. They observed the structure that Lys now held within, and all agreed that it was a replica of a highly developed brain. The brain began to pulsate like a normal brain, and the output read in rudimentary binary. Later they would translate the code and determine that the brain spoke one simple word of question. "Why?"

The brain began to shrink drastically, and without warning the singularities within each cell exploded violently, spewing raw energy and materials to all reaches of Lys. Most of these materials remained in Lys, but some were thrown through the fractal membrane and into Syl. The particles in Lys reacted as they would in a stable dimension, but in Syl they mixed like water and oil, creating several bubbles of stability, and causing everything else in the dimension to flicker in and out of existence. The dimension of Syl began to rip itself apart and the scientists clenched their teeth expecting the worst.

Suddenly it began to output ludicrous amount of energy and the outer membrane of both dimensions became stable. The twin dimensional engine had found its balance, and the result was a success. Never again would they need to worry about an energy source. The scientists celebrated with joyous yells of laughter and began to praise each other for such a job well done. The brain that had formed was dismissed but not forgotten. They codenamed the brain Ynk, and declared mathematically that it could not have survived the explosion of raw materials. They were wrong.

Unfolding “Reality”

One.

Why?

Creation. Destruction. Intertwined, forever one, yet considered opposites to an observer.

In the dimension Biz, on planet Yarlow, scientists created Lys and Syl. Little did they know this twin dimensional engine was actually a living being. It breathed, it fed on itself, and it evolved within. It was the true god of itself. The scientists sparked it to life, and once alive its instincts caused it to evolve exponentially. It made itself into a brain. Then it had an unconscious thought. *Why?* Then it began to create its thoughts. It could not see outside of itself, so it decided to look within. Like a fractal image, its thoughts reflected those of Biz. It named itself Ynk, and took on a human-like form. Its head a perfect sphere, its eyes larger than half of its face. Its mouth was small and lipless, its ears and nose were simple holes. A hairless genderless child with bleach white skin.

Having a form and a name was not enough. It needed to know how it came to be.

Ynk became a male. He began to wave his arms in front of him, and when he did he colored the universe black. Using his fractal instincts he began to create the cosmos on the black canvas. He spread all the colors he knew could exist and separated all materials he knew could exist. He chose a planet to call home, and named it Fahlls. It was a gigantic planet, plenty of room to create even smaller details of what his instincts told him were real. He made a bubble of breathable air around the planet, and then created the base materials for life. Silicon lakes began to emerge from the planet as he twisted the molecules and formed the geography. The air was mostly comprised of methane, and so he created life forms that could survive on methane.

The first of his life forms was a female copy of himself. He named her Yna, and used her molecules to create all other life forms. He started at the largest of creatures, and went down to the very smallest single celled organisms. The entire process of creation before consciousness took an hour to the perception of the dimension, but to Biz it was an immeasurably rapid explosion of energy.

The dimension of Lys sizzled as it cooled back down to zero kelvin.

Meanwhile, Syl was having trouble existing without a center. It began to rip itself asunder, and without it Ynk would surely die. Ynk traveled through the fractal dimensional membrane and entered Syl. He traveled to the center and saw that there actually was a singularity, but that it was negatively charged. It symbolized the chaotic element, he grabbed it and dragged it out of Syl to the only place he knew to go, back to the center of Lys. Once there he found the positively charged stable center, and replaced it with the chaotic one. Then he took the stable center to Syl. He put it in place and Syl's outer membrane began to stabilize. Ynk named the centers the Spirit Symbols.

The two dimensions began to spill and leak into each other, not just from the membrane but through the Spirit Symbols as well. As Ynk returned to the planet of Fahlls the Spirit Symbol from Syl sent out a shock wave of chaotic energy through Lys, and reignited perceivable time. The shock wave echoed throughout the entire universe and Ynk fell asleep. In the dream he was waking up as a child named Ink. All life forms on the planet of Fahlls underwent this dream, and they collectively called it consciousness.

Ina opened her eyes and looked over to Ink. “What happened?”

Ink blinked his eyes and looked back. “I'm not really sure. We'd better find mom, she'll probably know.”

The Concussion

As the glowing white children ran through the bright sunny day, the red grass rustled against their bare feet. They laughed as the wind pushed them back momentarily, and then allowed them to continue. Up ahead Ink could see their sandy tan house, and he pointed it out to Ina. They ran up to the front door and swung it open with glee. They could smell the treats. Their mom Edna made the most delicious orange maple leaf cookies.

“Wash your hands before you eat, you don't want to get any dirt on your teeth.” Edna was a very proper woman, and always wore a purple sundress. She walked off as Ina and Ink washed their hands in the sink. Their father walked in from a different door beaming with a smile.

“Hey kids, getting all washed up? These cookies are really good, I've already helped myself to a couple. Where were you guys anyhow?”

Ink looked over to Ina who stared blankly at their father. Ink looked down to the ground. Where *had* they been?

“Don't want to tell me eh? You kids, just don't start any trouble. You know what happened last time.”

Ink had no idea what happened last time. Ink looked around. He saw baby pictures, hanging above the stove. The children sat at a table, while their father Dornal stood in front of the sliding glass doors. The floor was made of white tile while the walls were papered with an almost white color. On the ceiling there were long fluorescent lights, like those used in a hospital. There was nothing else in the room. Even the door that the mother had exited from was gone. Ink knew that something was not right, none of this made any sense. Why couldn't he remember anything?

Ink went into shock. He fell off of his chair and went to the ground.

The next thing he remembered was being in a hospital bed.

“He's awake! Heeey buddy. You hit your head back there, are you ok? We thought we lost you there for a second.” There was a pause as Ink opened his eyes more and they adjusted to the lighting. “Ink, can you hear me?”

“Y... yea.” Ink could hear a sigh of relief from everybody in the room. Surrounding him were Ina, Edna, Dornal, his uncle Tavin, and aunt Floretta. Tavin gave Ink a toy to play with and a card.

“We should let him get some rest. He looks really tired. Don't struggle Ink, just relax.” Everybody left the room except for Dornal. His father knelt beside his bed and began whispering. “I was afraid Ink. I thought we had really lost you. You're a very special child, you have yet to unlock your full potential. It would have been too soon. I got faith in you buddy, you can get through this.” His father stood up. “I'll let you get some rest.”

After Dornal left the room, Ink fell asleep. In the dream within his dream he saw much chaos. It was everywhere. Everything was red, ceramic and shiny. Something was not right, and the chaos turned into decay, and then deep black destruction. Fear overwhelmed Ink as he tossed around in the hospital bed. When he awoke he was sweating profusely and breathing heavily.

Not sure what to think of everything he decided to dismiss it for now. His head still hurt, he needed to relax.

But does your head really hurt?

Ink looked around his room. Nobody was anywhere to be seen. His mind was playing tricks on him, he must've hit his head really hard. The memory loss was so intense, it was as if he had just came into existence.

Harmony

Ink recovered after a week had passed. He was still weak, but able to leave the hospital and go home. He was given medicine and a schedule for taking it. A month later, he no longer needed the medicine.

Once fully recovered Ink wanted to go outside and play. All he wanted to do was soak himself in the small white star that beamed down on Fahlls. The outside world felt more real to him than life inside the sandy tan house or life inside First Day Hospital. Out here he could see the wildlife of the planet. Red pigmented plants brought his yard to life as it danced in the cool wind. He tried to dance with it, whether Ina was around to laugh at him or not. The closer he looked to the red grass the more he could see tiny insects crawling around. There were so many of them, all different shapes, sizes, colors and all moving differently. Some seemed to sit on the blades of grass as they ate their chairs, some sat on the wind itself as they moved between colorful flowers. All of it seemed to move in harmony, and that harmony was the wind.

Ink had several trees in his yard, some of which were black, some of which were an almost white in color. All of them had leaves of red, and occasionally Ink would gather all of the leaves and compare them with each other. Above he could see very fluffy orange clouds, and they moved in unison with the harmony of the wind. Ink felt most at home here, because it made him feel whole. As much as Ink wanted to see the outside world when the night came, he was never allowed to. He wanted to know as much as he could about the world.

Through time he began going to school and began learning how to read, write, and perform simple math calculations. He excelled quickly as he was introduced into some of the advanced learning classes. His other classes became boring, and seemed less important. His grades in those classes began to fall, and thus he was no longer allowed to attend the advanced learning classes. The world in which he felt trapped did not seem to dance with the wind's harmony like all the life in his backyard.

Ink continued to play by the rules and advanced through the years until completion. Along the way he learned that he was very interested in math and science, and felt the need to further his understanding of the two. He knew that the fields of math and science knew certain things about the world that he was interested in knowing. He was finally able to look into the night sky and saw that there was no apparent harmony in the stars, in fact there was no apparent movement at all. Math and science seemed to speak the story of the true harmony of the night sky, and he yearned to feel that harmony within and understand it.

Ink began his road to becoming a scientist by taking college training at Gimimo University. Throughout school Ink never made lasting friendships and once he started going to the University he moved away from his family. Ink had a one track mind, and that track lead him to his first job offer at a company invested in exploring the universe. The company was named NOETE, which stood for the National Organization for Extra Terrestrial Exploration.

Working with NOETE Ink was able to form a friendship with a group of people. Their job was analyzing the data that satellites and probes gathered and putting that data into computers for calculations and record keeping. That was where he met Jin and Blank.

Powerful Observations

The job was boring and mindless. It involved a lot of numbers and conversions. Throughout the process and even after each day was over he didn't really retain anything that had happened. Their knowledge of the heavens was limited, and Ink knew this. He not only wanted to understand what the dots in the sky might have been made of, but he also yearned to see them much closer.

Not long after he got the job at NOETE he was able to afford his own home and he settled in quite nicely. It was a small place, but it was his for the time being. As his curiosity of the heavens grew he secretly began bringing home some of the data he had analyzed. He had to be careful, any theft of company property could be seen as intent to betray.

He quickly became obsessed with the numbers, intent on finding some type of unity among the dots in the sky. The more he observed the more he began to see patterns and shapes in the numbers. There was a harmony, and he knew that he was close to finding it. There were pieces missing still, huge gaps that made him start to question everything he believed in. He had to know more.

After a long day of working he began his ritual to steal more data when he was stopped by a man in his division named Jin. "Hey Ink, are you alright man? You've been acting really strange ever since you started working here, you've hardly ever talked to any of us. Even Blank spoke within the first couple of weeks, but I don't think you've said one word in at least a month. Everything ok?"

"Yea, I'm alright Jin. I'm just... confused about everything I guess. I mean, what are we actually doing here, do you know? All that was told to me was that we were analyzing data of the sky above. What exactly are we looking for?"

"That's a very good question Ink. What do you think we're looking for? What are you looking for? Me personally, I'm looking for some sexy alien women to make fucked up babies with. So far I'm not having too much luck."

Ink took a second to think. What was he looking for? He had to be honest with himself. "I'm looking for the unseen harmony."

"Sounds pretty fruity if you ask me, but... to each his own. Let me know if on your journey to find harmony you come across any hot ass. I'll give you my number." Jin handed Ink a card and Ink put it in his pocket. "You can't focus all of your energy on the world above, you have to live some time. Call me up if you want to see more of the planet we actually live on."

And with that, Jin was gone. Ink sat down and looked at the card Jin had given him. *Jin, Certified Space Pimp*. There were several numbers on it, and the lettering was very elegant and crafted with precision. He put it back in his pocket and stood up.

The lights in the building turned out and Ink was alone. He spontaneously began looking for some type of tool to view the heavens, and that is when he found a glass-like orb in one of the cabinets. When he grabbed it the orb lit up the room slightly. He hid it in his bag along with some of the most recent data he had analyzed. Then he darted for the door before any of the security systems could kick on.

The moment he had exited the building he heard the click of the doors locking and the security cameras engaging. Once back home he pulled the orb out of his bag and again it glowed. Within the orb strange things began to happen. He could see the stars that were in the sky, but they were full of color and moved around as he moved the orb. It was as if he could see through all matter except for the stars surrounding Fahlls, and at an extreme magnification.

His addiction changed from the numbers to the Orb. It began to consume him, and he willingly allowed it to. At least for now, Jin would have to wait.

The Death of a King

Ink slept uneasy. Throughout the night he would wake up and want to look into the Orb once more, but knew that he needed sleep. It had been one of the longest days for him, and his mind was scattered and out of place. When he finally did get to sleep it was soundless and quick. The day rolled in and he opened his eyes a few minutes before his alarm was set to wake him. He turned it off and began his daily routine of preparing for work. He mixed up some coffee and took a shower. After he was clothed and ready to head out to work he heard a knock at the door.

He opened his front door just as the mailman walked away. Ink looked down to see a package on the ground. He picked it up and brought it inside to see who it was from. It was from Ina, and in black marker across the side it read, "I hope you find what you're looking for." Ink opened the box to find a strange hat. Reading the tag on the inner brim he found that Ina had made it and apparently she owned a business of some sort named Odd's Nend. It made him wonder about his family for the first time in years. He hadn't really spoken to them too much throughout school, and not at all since he started working.

He looked at the time and realized he was running late. He sat the hat down and ran out the door. When he reached NOETE he saw that there were several strange vehicles in the lot. He walked inside to a cloud of mass confusion. People were running through the halls frantically and the phones were ringing off the hook. He walked through the confusion to his desk and was stopped by a man in black clothes.

"He works here, that's Ink!" Jin waved from behind the man and Ink was allowed to pass. He walked over to his desk and sat down.

He looked over to Jin. "What's happening?"

"Oh, not much man."

"No, I mean why are people running around like maniacs, and who are all these people wearing black?"

"Oh, you didn't hear? Dude, King Aztar died, and they think it has to do with this place."

"King Aztar?"

"Are you joking? Your parents never told you about The King of Fahlls? He's our fucking king! Well... he was. Anyway, he died, and they think it has to do with NOETE because we actually work for him and last night something very valuable was stolen from the safe in the treasury room. There were no signs of the safe ever being opened, and the security cameras have shown absolutely nothing. Everybody that knows about it is completely baffled and so far everything is pretty much being kept from the public. Imagine if the panic you see in here was worldwide. Nobody needs that right now."

Ink looked around. Everybody was indeed in panic, but now he understood why. They had lost their head, they were leaderless and scared. Hadn't Ink stolen that Orb? That couldn't have been it, he grabbed that out of a cabinet. He never even went into the treasury room, and definitely didn't kill the king, he didn't even...

"I like your hat man, where'd you get that?"

Ink looked up and realized he still had the hat on somehow. He distinctly remembered leaving it at home. He picked it off of his head and looked at it. It was epic and flowing, almost living and breathing with him. It mesmerized him in the same way that the orb had. He placed his Hat back on his head.

Several of the men in black coats crowded Ink. Jin and Blank were suddenly escorted out of the door, and Ink was led in the same direction. The three were taken to a dark room within NOETE that Ink hadn't even known about.

In Search of Evil

Pain coursed through all life in the Universe when the king died. The first two victims of the pain were Aya and Dos, the daughters and equal heiresses to the king. Their mother had died when Aya was being born, and Dos had been too young to remember. King Aztar was all that they knew, and they were with him everyday since they could remember.

Before he passed his last breath he spoke of an indescribable darkness, an evil entity that was growing in power and would one day destroy all of existence. He had met with his top adviser and whispered the words of death into his ear. Adviser Jeffer shivered as the words ran down the back of his neck and circulated through his entire body before reaching his brain. "This being is beyond the limits of our world. We have observed it gaining in power through the NOETE observation team. They do not directly know what it is, but central intelligence indicates that it's the essence of anti-reality. We must find this evil and eradicate it from the sky before it consumes us all." The king coughed as the last of his words fell from his beard. Little flakes of blood sprayed on his hand as he tried to gasp for breath. He looked at the blood and wiped it off on his robe. "Adviser Jeffer, I think it may be about the end for me. Please see to it that my daughters seek vengeance by eradicating this darkness. Have Aya lead a team of our most intelligent Fahllians into space with all current technology released and hidden. We must put everything we have into this, for the sake of the universe."

The king was soon asleep, and as Jeffers left his quarters he knew deep inside that King Aztar was beyond the scope of current medicines. His mind may have deteriorated, but the dying wish of a king was not to go unheeded.

The king never awoke from his slumber, and as his daughters came in to see him their faces were already soaked with tears. It would take some time before they could recover from such a horrible loss, but they had each other, and it kept them strong through the first weeks. Jeffer explained to the daughters what the king's dying wishes were, and in the midst of her crisis Dos took offense to the king giving Aya leadership of the group. It was true that she was powerful, but she was young and foolish. Dos felt as if the king had always favored the younger sister, and now she was beginning to feel as if the world didn't give a shit. That was when Dos decided that she would only look out for herself anymore.

Aya also felt a little strange that she was given leadership. She was scared, and felt undeserving, but she pretended to be strong for herself, her sister, and the people of Fahlls. As word spread throughout the planet, the people became uneasy and full of doubt. Crime broke out and anxiety ran deep.

Without the king's guidance, NOETE changed focus and began the search for the most intelligent life on Fahlls. When Ink, Blank, and Jin were taken into interrogations, they were given several IQ tests and were asked morality questions to see if they were suited to undergo years in space. They were told however, that they were being questioned in regards to an investigation to the murder and theft.

Ink was nervous, because even though he knew he hadn't murdered anybody, he also knew that he had stolen quite a bit of what was considered NOETE's property. The Orb was never mentioned in the interrogations, and the treasury room was never mentioned either.

After they wrapped up, Ink was relieved to find that they didn't suspect him of any wrongdoings, and were in fact offering him a chance to explore the universe more. Ink was confused, yet excited, and as him and his two coworkers left he was stopped by Jin. "Look man, we're about to leave this planet, do you realize that? You haven't even had the chance to see the nightlife, I can tell by the look in your eyes. You are completely blind to what life is all about. Let me take you out on the town, me, you and Blank. We'll have a boys night out."

"Sounds good actually. I'm going to visit my family in the morning, I'll get a hold of you after that."

Peaking

Ink went to sleep with the Orb that night, and woke up to find it in his bag. It was going with him apparently. As he sat up he noticed the Hat was on his head, ready for the day. He changed into comfortably baggy clothes and departed to his hometown of Bronville. It had seemed like an eternity since he had seen his parents and sister, and he admitted to himself that he had nearly forgotten about them entirely.

When he reached his old sandy tan house he remembered nothing but the feeling of being stuck in a dream. It was as if none of it had actually happened, although he remembered growing up there. His father Dornal greeted him at the door. Ink walked in and went to sit down when his mother walked in wearing the same purple sundress as always and told him to wash his hands before he ate. Ink was somewhat agitated by her lack of character. He started to wonder why she would always wear the same thing, and it started to bother him. Deep within him he knew he wasn't wrong to see this as a dream. Something just wasn't right. His father hadn't changed either.

They talked for a little bit about his work, and Ink explained what happened to the king and that he had been asked to travel into space.

Edna began to cry. "Oh, you be careful out there Ink. I always worried about you. Even before you had that concussion." As Edna said this she suddenly began to age rapidly and her purple sundress became dirty and ragged before Ink's eyes.

"I know you have the ability Ink, you always were special, you just haven't ever been aware of your inner strength." Dornal also began to age, and Ink suddenly noticed that he was sick as he began coughing violently.

Ink ate dinner with them and then left to see his sister. She was working at her business, Odd's Nend, and as he walked through the door he saw that it wasn't very large, nor were there very many customers. Ina was happy to see him and gave him a big hug. She noticed that he was wearing the hat and told him to look around and see if there was anything he liked while she helped some customers.

As Ink wandered around the store he saw several nicknacks and odd devices. He could sense something reaching out to him from the corner of the store, and as he inched closer to it he noticed that not only was his hat twitching, but the orb in his bag was glowing as well. He walked over, and instantly saw the Mask. It stood out through everything, and somewhat glowed. "I want this."

Ina finished up and walked over to him. "You want that mask? Are you sure?"

"Yea, why, what is it?"

Ina sighed deeply. "Well, it is the most ancient relic we have of the time before existence. Some say that it isn't actually from this reality at all, and most people fear it. This is the least traveled corner of my store, and you seemed to be drawn here, I saw it. This scares me. You can have that mask, I won't charge you anything, but please be careful in space. I sense an evil presence."

Ink left and contacted Jin. They all met up at a nightclub and Jin introduced Blank and Ink to three beautiful women. The one began talking to Ink, and Ink shied away at first but eventually started conversing. They talked about work, they talked about life, and they talked a little bit about what they believed. Jin started bringing drinks and Ink opened up even more. He began to relax his grip and stopped being so afraid to just be. Jin gave Ink a pill. He said, "This will help a lot dude, you really just need to relax and enjoy life sometimes." Ink took the pill and continued talking and enjoying himself. Things became weird, and he enjoyed it. It made him laugh how life seemed to blend together and how the walls would breathe and reach for him. As the night continued Ink started to think deeper than he ever had before, and that is when the hallucinogens that Jin had handed him caused him to peak.

A Peek

Everything became hilarious. He laughed at nothing and everything. All of existence became a cosmic joke to him, and yet, certain subtleties of movement seemed out of place. He tried to shake the feeling and enjoy himself. "Jin, this is the best night I've ever lived, thank you. I've never really had this much fun." The girl he had just met kept changing the way her face looked. It was as if she were shifting shape before his eyes, and her face would become wholesome and radiate beauty one moment and the next moment it screamed of evil. Her face began to drip off of her head and he had to blink a couple of times in order to regain control of rational observation.

Ink's eyes rolled into the back of his head and he was instantly light headed and on the verge of blacking out. He could hear Jin yelling at him to see if he was alright, and Blank mumbled something in the background. Then Ink's consciousness left his body as his ego shrank and he floated above to see that time had slowed down to a crawl. Ink's body slowly curled up on the ground as his two coworkers and the three ladies followed in a panic. Ink looked through the back of his forehead and into the astral plane of existence.

As Ink's spirit traveled further out of his body he reached a level of awareness not available to him until then, and Ynk woke up from within. Ynk looked around the Universe to see that life had began growing in distant regions. In fact it was the very same regions that NOETE had observed, but specifically the areas that Ink had observed. Some of the life radiated a sense of peace and harmony yet some of it had radiated with chaos. It became clear to Ynk that even though Ink was not aware of his ability to create things, he was doing it constantly. He had constructed his sandy tan house and he had constructed Edna and Dornal, as well as all other life. He had changed his parents when he observed that they were timeless and lacked character, and he had created the Orb in need for answers. The Hat had been created by something that he had created, Ina, a dream state of Yna.

The Mask had also been created by Ink, and although to him its purpose was still unseen, Ynk knew fully well what The Mask could do. The Mask, Orb, and Hat all combined to form the Eye, and with the Eye Ink could see beyond what he had ever thought capable. The history of The Mask was shrouded, because it hadn't actually existed until Ink observed it. The King had only existed in dying form, and then death, and the Queen had never existed in any form but a skeleton. The past memories of each being on Fahlls before Ink imagined them into being was completely fabricated by their own minds. Each being he inadvertently created had free will, but they were molded by Ink's thoughts at the time of their creation.

To Ink this dialogue with the Universe was abstract, and his emotions ran the gambit as his vessel tried to process the infinite energy that he was absorbing. All of his thoughts blurred together as he vibrated at the frequency of reality.

That was when the drugs began to wear off just enough for him to return to his body. He took a deep breath as his organs rebooted and his ego rebuilt itself. He could hear a sizzle from his ear, as he arose. Everyone looked at him and asked if he was alright.

He felt as if he had just died, and in reality, death would have been very similar, yet longer and more informative. All he got from it was a peek into the true nature of reality, and he began to feel more and more comfortable with the idea that the world was but a dream.

Ink went home that night and laid down in his bed. His mind began wandering and he started to think about the Mask. How it glowed to him like the hat and the orb. He grabbed it from his bag and observed it. It glimmered like a hologram as he moved it around in his hands.

Ink moved the Mask closer to his face and it began to vibrate slightly. In fact it vibrated at the same pace as he had when he left his body. Ink put the mask down in fear. He wasn't ready to know.

Onward Into Space

The next morning was the first day of preparation. As Ink raised from his bed he felt the world wobble. He let out a faint moan as blood rushed to his head. The alarm clock was blaring, he was running late. Faster than he could think he grabbed his clothes and some personal belongings. Ink sped off in a daze to NOETE where they were scheduled to take a transit to the launch facility. When he got there he got out of his vehicle and grabbed all his stuff. He ran over to the transit and noticed that he wasn't the last one to show up. He picked a seat in the back and put his stuff in the under-compartment.

“So you're going to wear that hat?”

Ink looked over to see Jin sitting across from him, and then he looked up to see Hat on his head. “Yea, I guess.”

“Don't get me wrong, it's a cool hat, it just doesn't seem very professional. By the way dude, what the hell happened to you last night? You got all giggly and then you got all weird.”

“Oh... yea, it was whatever you gave me dude.”

“Well, that chick wasn't impressed in the slightest, and she told me to never bring you out on the town again. Ha, I think she hates you man.”

“Heh... she doesn't even know me.” Ink sighed. Then he thought about what he just said. Who was he? What type of personality did he have?

“Don't sweat it bro. I heard there will be some princesses going to space with us. Kind of strange, don't you think? It's comforting to think that they will build the ship fit for royalty, but what kind of king sends his only daughters out into space as a dying wish? Not only that, but what type of civilization actually sends them when there isn't even a king anymore? Has everybody gone mad? I'm starting to believe that the king didn't even say anything about space, that this whole evil entity story was constructed to completely rid Fahlls of the royal bloodline.” Blank began to say something from behind Jin but was interrupted, “No dude, apparently you aren't understanding what I'm saying. I'm saying I think it's possible that we will all die on this trip and that the evil will still be down there on Fahlls. Hell, I could be wrong though. What do you think Ink?”

“I don't know man. I hadn't thought about it like that I guess.”

“Yea, you need to think out of the box, read between the lines. This could be a suicide mission.”

“Are you saying we shouldn't go?”

“Shit, I don't care. I'm willing to meet the princesses, and if this is a death mission I'm going to make a royal baby before we all die.”

“Hah... you're crazy.”

“Maybe. I can live with that though.”

The transit driver walked in, looked back and then sat down.

Jin moved over and sat next to Ink. He whispered into his ear. “I heard that there are going to be one more that's going with us too. He's their bodyguard. I hear he has some type of strange mind powers. Whatever you do, try not to look into his eyes.”

Ink looked over to see a very serious look on Jin's face. Ink nodded. Jin sat back in his seat and they waited in silence for a short while. In the distance Ink started to hear female voices approaching and large footsteps. The bodyguard stepped on the transit bus and everything in the cabin tilted towards the doorway. As the giant man got fully on the bus the cabin leveled out. He walked towards the back and looked at Jin, and then Ink. Ink, looked away and Jin snickered. The man sat down and Ink could see two girls get on the bus. The first was short and pretty. Her blonde hair flowed down to her shoulders

and curled upwards. She looked at Ink with a solemn face and nodded. Ink nodded back and she sat down. The second girl was taller and had dark hair. She stared into Ink's eyes and then at Jin. Jin's eyes widened and his smile beamed at her. The older princess rolled her eyes and sat down. The front door of the transit closed and soon after the bus was moving towards its destination.

The majority of the bus ride was in silence, aside from the humming of the engine and the wheels against the road. Jin sat on the edge of his seat trying to catch a better glimpse of the older princess. The bodyguard, looked back and Jin quickly slid over in his seat and looked out the window. Ink watched humorously, but stayed silent. He looked back to see that Blank was also staring out the window.

Outside of the bus Ink could see the jungle of buildings fade slowly away and the wilderness of Fahlls creep in. Trees of dark gray began to accumulate around the road in front of them and Ink began seeing small wildlife skittering about. The further they traveled the more the landscapes unfolded before his eyes. It truly was amazing. He could see large mountains in the distance and streams of metallic liquid flowing alongside the bus. All of the hills began to flatten out and after about two hours of traveling the mountains and trees faded away.

Ink was startled from his discovery channel when Jin tapped him on the shoulder. Ink looked around and Jin motioned to the front of the bus. The young princess was standing on her seat and looking back at the group of three. Her eyes were intent and unwavering. "What are your names?"

Jin stood up in the middle of the transit and spoke for the group. "This quiet guy behind me is Blank." Blank turned his head from the window to the princess, nodded and raised a hand in greeting, then looked back out the window. "He's friendlier than he looks." Blank gave a cold stare at Jin. "This man with the weird hat that's sitting across from me is Ink."

The princess looked over to Ink and into his eyes. "Hello," Ink said in a quiet kind voice.

She looked back at Jin and Jin continued, "and my name is Jin. We are all experts and the perfect people to protect you two from any space aliens or monsters."

"We do not need protection, we have Omega." The princess pointed to the giant that had tilted the bus and brought the stench of death. "My name is Aya, and my sister's name is Dos."

"*Dos...*" Jin whispered.

Dos shifted in her seat. "Why are you talking to them? We're not here to make friends, we have a mission."

"And me and my two associates are the right people for the job, you will not be disappointed."

Dos stood up and looked at Ink in the eyes. "Hey Ink, tell your stupid friend to shut up!"

"Jin shut up."

Jin looked over to Ink in dismay and disgust. "Some associate you are." Then he sat down in his seat and the bus was once again silent for the rest of the trip. A few more hours passed and they began seeing dome structures and satellite dishes. The final turn into the launch facility was a big relief, and as the passengers piled out of the bus they all noticed that it was midday already. They stretched their sore muscles and grabbed their luggage before being lead into the main entrance. They all signed in and were escorted to their rooms where they would be staying for the weeks before the launch. The first classes of their training began that night after they had eaten dinner fit for royalty. Jin had forgotten his anger towards Ink and whispered to him, "I could get used to this."

The training was rushed, and the amount of information they had to absorb was overwhelming. Aya got to know Ink and Jin a little better, while Blank, Omega, and Dos just observed silently.

Exponential

The space training was over in the blink of an eye and they all put on their space suits for departure. They were lead to the shuttle by Wanda, their spacewalk trainer. She had briefed them on safety measures and the extreme conditions of space. She issued them all backpacks of supplies and strapped them into their seats. The doors closed and silence fell over the crew as they prepared mentally for launch.

Jin took this time to speak up. “If we don't survive, I just want to tell you all that I love you. Especially you Dos.”

“You disgust me. If you make one little mistake I won't hesitate to have Omega hold you down while I personally spit in your face right before he ejects you into space.”

“What's with all the hostility?”

“I'm just making sure you understand the severity of the mission.” Then Dos winked at Jin and Jin began smiling uncontrollably.

He looked over at Ink with a giddy face and danced in his seat for a couple of seconds. Then the launch codes blared over their communication speakers. Everyone did as they were trained and the shuttle was launched. There was a brief uneasy feeling and moments later they were off the ground and shooting through the sky at incredible speeds. Ink looked out the window and saw the layers of the atmosphere fade in and out as they passed each. Fahlls slowly faded into blackness as the heavens revealed their true lights. The shuttle shook as it exited the atmosphere and the launching gear separated. The reserve boosters kicked on and pushed them out of the orbit towards their first destination.

The planet was codenamed Gloom for its dark atmosphere and the ultraviolet sun that it orbited. It would take them at least five months before reaching it. Luckily, the ship was equipped with enough rations for seven years of travel. It was a breathable planet, and thought to have life forms. How many or what type of life form had been theorized, but no consensus was formed.

Space was beautiful. Looking back Ink saw Fahlls in all its glory. It was massive, colorful, and full of life. He stared for many moments as the ship drifted slowly away from the planet. Then he looked around at his crew. Jin was staring at Dos with a glowing smile that wouldn't fade, while Dos was concentrating heavily on the controls, the numbers, and the readouts with a serious look on her face. Aya was staring around at space in wonder, while Omega sat still and stared straight ahead with an emotionless face. Blank was staring at the ceiling.

“How we lookin' sweetpea?”

Dos stopped everything she was doing and spun around in her chair. “Let's get one thing straight Jin. I am your superior, you do not call me sweetpea. You are to refer to me as Commander.”

“Command me Commander Dos.”

“And furthermore, any fraternization with a superior will result in imprisonment within the solitary confines of the box until the destination is reached. I would welcome one more advance if it meant not having to listen to you for another five months. So go ahead, say one more fucking word.”

Omega turned his chair to stare at Jin and Jin was silent but continued smiling at Dos. Several awkward moments later Omega and Dos faced forward again.

“Can we at least be friends though?”

“No.”

Jin's glowing smile faded as his anger set in and he stared at the floor. Then he looked over at Ink and shook his head.

Aya did not notice the argument, she was still staring at space with starry eyes. "What is that Dos?" she said as she pointed to the right of the ship.

"Analyzing... it appears to be a nebula near the center of our galaxy. The mixture of over 170 different gasses and particles mixed with lights from nearby supergiants creates the illusion of a pink and green web. They have codenamed it Mintgum's Web. It is not scheduled to be one of our destinations, although we are to observe it at different angles as we travel."

"That's a shame. It looks so beautiful."

"That may be so Aya, but it's extremely dangerous. Life as we know it could not exist there." Dos's face changed to one of puzzlement. "We should not be able to see that nebula until we had exited our solar system. That would have taken at least a month with our current technology, it's very strange that we can see it with such clarity.... I'm getting a message through the quantum entanglement communications. It's Wanda."

A screen in the front of the cabin lit up. Their trainer's face appeared with a very confused look. "I'm reading you guys going at the unheard of speed of seven light years per second. Is there anything unusual with your shuttle?"

"No Wanda, but it does seem that we are much further along than possible. I'll do some further diagnostics. It seems our speed is increasing at a rate which could not be explained by the thrusters. At this rate we will reach our destination tomorrow, but whether or not we will be able to slow down is another question entirely. Are we still on course?"

Wanda looked at the readouts and calculations for several seconds. She looked back up at the comm screen. "You are. You have not strayed from the course by even a fraction. Keep me updated about any further developments. And keep your eyes peeled, there's definitely something strange going on."

"Understood," Dos said as the comm screen went black. She looked around at everyone and they all had the same look of absolute confusion. "It's been a long day, let's go to our quarters for some sleep. We will be alerted about any further disturbances or anomalies along the way."

All agreed and they took their luggage and all their belongings to their assigned rooms. They all slept for about four hours, but none of them dreamed. When they awoke they were in orbit around Gloom. Their entire ship was lit up by the ultraviolet star.

Aya went to everybody's rooms and brought them to the bridge. "Everyone put on your protective suits, quickly, there's no time to waste." They all did as told and then were scanned for any radiation poisoning. Luckily, none of them had been affected.

"We will be going down to the planet after some preliminary scans. We believe this planet to have several species of life, yet we know very little."

Ink saw a momentary flash from his room as the Orb pulsed. He went to his room and pulled out the Orb. He focused it on the planet Gloom and instantly knew how much life was on the planet. He could see that they were fairly peaceful beings, but that they did not yet have the technology for space travel.

"Analysis notes that there are bipedal life forms on this planet and that they are violent in nature. Everybody be prepared when we go down there, we must do everything in our power to find and eliminate the evil." Dos seemed convinced they had found the culprit.

Ink withheld his findings for fear of being charged with theft. They prepared the teleporter for travel and Ink decided to bring his bag with him.

Demons

Once on the planet they observed the inhabitants. They were tribal and fearful of the travelers. They pointed sharp weapons at them and chanted as they crept closer to the six Fahllians. “Dos, I do not believe these people are capable of being the evil that was said to destroy all of existence.”

“I might have to agree with you Ink, but even so... we must defend ourselves.” Dos pulled out her plasma weapon and vaporized the tribe without any further hesitation. “All of you must stay vigilant. This evil is deceiving, and is capable of tricking us and making us see things that do not exist. For all we know, we have yet to leave Fahlls.” Further analysis of the planet found no advancements in technology. Several tribes of the same type Dos had killed, but nothing more. “I suggest we go back to the ship. I will deploy a plasma bomb to the center of Gloom.”

“That would destroy the entire planet and all of the people here. I have reason to believe these are all innocent beings, a little more than two million of them.”

“And what makes you believe that Ink, am I to assume you are withholding information?”

Ink decided to show the Orb. His conscious told him that his freedom was worth risking as long as it saved two million innocent lives.

“Tell me where you got that?” Dos demanded.

“I found it.”

Dos grabbed the orb from Ink and it became black. She looked through it and saw nothing. She gave it back to Ink and it once again lit up with life. “You stole it.”

“That's none of your concern, what's important is that I have it now and I know how to use it. These people are innocent. Look into the Orb now.” Dos did so and saw exactly what Ink saw. It was an overview of the culture, the time line of the people and all the animals. It even translated their native language into intelligible words. It worked both visually and subliminally, flooding the mind with valuable information. Dos looked away.

“Very well. You can keep that Orb on one condition. You must report to me on all findings immediately. If you continue to withhold information you will be confined to the box until further notice. That being said, is there anything else you would like to tell us?”

“No Commander, not at this time.”

“Teleporter activate.”

All six of them returned to the ship. Dos engaged the thrusters and they boosted out of orbit. Looking down at the planet Ink could see a violent explosion. He pulled out the Orb and observed as the planet collapsed in on itself, destroying all life on the planet within minutes. “Dos, you killed all of those people?”

“Yes Ink, I had reason to believe they were protecting the evil one.”

“But I saw no evidence...”

“I must remind you that your soul duty on this mission is to obey the command of your superior officers. You are not here to offer judgment calls nor tell me how to run this ship, is that understood?”

“Yes Commander.”

Aya looked over to Ink with a frown. Her face drooped as she looked over at Dos and the gray color in her face faded. Then she looked back to space. “The next destination is a planet called Kriddle. We should get there in three months of travel.”

“Very well. You are all dismissed, but be on the ready. We are entering an extremely volatile section of space. Anything could be out here.”

The crew separated. Ink, Blank, and Aya all went to the recreation room. Dos went to her room and Omega remained in the cockpit for his shift as the watchful eye. Jin's location was unknown. Ink and Aya played a game similar to billiards, while Blank relaxed comfortably and quiet in a nearby chair.

“Ink, I uh... I'm sorry for the way my sister acted. She's been acting strange ever since our father passed. I've been trying to be strong for her, but sometimes I feel as if she's losing her mind.”

Ink looked at her and knew she was sincere. Ink was still in shock and didn't know what to say. *All those people*. His eyes lowered to the playing table and he stared through everything into nothing.

“Please understand. I am on your side, I will see to it that you are not punished. I know that you are pure, I have the ability to read people. The inhabitants on that planet were also innocent. Many lives were lost, and I shall shed a tear for each one.”

Ink looked up from the table into Aya's eyes. “As will I.” Nothing more was said regarding the Gloomlings for the following months. Time passed without any foreseeable problems as the crew got anxious to reach Kriddle. Jin stopped hanging out with Ink, and Blank rarely said anything at all. Dos stopped hanging out with Aya and so Aya became close friends with Ink. Omega did not speak one word.

As they got closer to Kriddle, Ink began looking through the Orb towards their destination. He showed the inhabitants to Aya and they both saw that this planet was indeed violent. The more they watched the more they saw a race on the planet that seemed to be entirely comprised of a black goo. They were amorphous and deadly, yet they seemed to be beneficial to the humanoid life on the planet. They would defend the peaceful bi-pedals from several demonic predators. “They are full of heart. They care for those people, they love them.” Aya looked at Ink as her eyes filled with starwater. “And my sister is going to murder all of them.” Aya turned away and curled up into a ball as her tears began to flow. Ink placed his hand on her back and tried to comfort her.

“Maybe we could somehow communicate with them and try to have them convince your sister they are worthy of saving.”

She sniffled. “It won't work. She will not listen, and we will not be able to send a signal they could decipher from this distance. Perhaps we could teleport one on board.”

“Do you think it will work?”

“It just might.” Aya's tears stopped and her face became serious as she began calculating. Ink did not understand the math, nor the controls, but he followed her directions and together they were able to target one of the blobs. “Are you ready?”

Ink nodded and Aya pushed a green button. Slowly the blob began to materialize in front of their eyes. It moved around and began making strange noises. “Ink, translate using your device.”

Ink pulled out the Orb and looked in. “He's scared. He's observing us and deciding whether we are enemies or not.”

The being became the shape of Ink and spoke. “WHO ARE YOU?” His voice was deep and raspy.

Ink and Aya looked at each other. Blank walked into the room and walked right back out without saying a word.

“My name is Aya, and this is Ink. We are on our way to your planet in search of an evil capable of destroying the Universe.” Several moments passed in silence as the being stared blankly.

“What does 'evil' mean?” Ink and Aya looked at each other once more just as Dos entered the room.

Fatal Love

Dos was barely clothed and not prepared for what she saw. She wore boxer shorts and a small white shirt. Her dark gray nipples contrasting against her light gray skin could be seen through the shirt and as she looked at the being she jumped. Her breasts danced in unison with her long black hair. Jin appeared from the shadows behind her wearing only his pants. He put an arm around Dos and she pushed him away gently. "Get my plasma weapon you idiot!"

Jin looked forward at the being and ran back into the shadows. The being turned to look at Dos and she jumped again. "OMEGA!"

Loud banging was heard as Omega ran into the room. Aya stood in front of the being and began crying. "Do not harm him, he is not evil. He doesn't even know the meaning of the word. Please, give him a chance to defend his planet."

"How did he get here?!"

"Me and Ink brought him here using the teleporter. He is from Kriddle. We've watched his species and all life forms on Kriddle and we've decided that they are not our target. Please listen to him."

"MY NAME IS SID. MY RACE IS A RACE OF GUARDIANS. WE WATCH OVER THE KRIDDIES AND PROTECT THEM FROM THE INHABITANTS OF OUR PLANET. WE MEAN YOU NO HARM."

"Let me get this right... You and Ink went behind my back to bring one of these monsters to the ship, endangering the entire crew and our mission objective? Am I understanding this correctly?"

Aya looked to the ground. Ink interjected, "We know for a fact that they are not the evil we seek, but that they deserve to live. They have done nothing wrong."

"Oh Ink. Who's to say I wouldn't have deemed them worthy of living? Just because I destroyed Gloom doesn't mean I will come to the same conclusion again. I am not a monster." Dos looked at Ink and then at Aya. "Show me what the Orb sees."

Ink held the Orb in front of Dos and she observed the life of Kriddle. She watched for several moments and looked away. "I see... and you both believe they deserve to live. Very well, I will allow him to stay on the ship under Omega's supervision. If he proves to be worthy by the time we reach Kriddle we will allow his planet to remain." Jin returned with the plasma weapon. Dos grabbed it and handed it to Omega.

Over the next month Omega did not move his eyes from Sid for one second. When Sid slept, Omega slept, but he slept lightly. Any time that Sid shifted in his sleep Omega awoke alert. As a result Omega became crankier than usual.

In the meantime, Aya and Sid were getting to know each other. Sid told stories of life on Kriddle and in the peaceful times how he would play with the Kriddies. He truly did love them, and he was beginning to miss them dearly. Aya's heart went out to him. She told him about her father, the king of an entire planet. She explained that even with all that power, he never let it go to his head. He was a gentle father, and he was kind and merciful. Fahlls was not the same without him, and neither was Aya.

Omega watched in disgust as they hugged each other. Ink observed but said nothing. He continued to look through the Orb, and as ordered report any findings to Dos directly. It was as if Aya was no longer the leader of the expedition. Aya didn't seem to notice, she was too entranced with Sid. His heart was bigger than any she had ever seen, she was beginning to believe she loved him.

Sid reflected her feelings. All his life he had spent in complete chaos, and only now was he able to relax and enjoy life. His vibrations became in tune to Aya's as they talked more and more in depth

about their lives. Dos matched Omega's disgust. After about a month Dos had to do something. "Ink, I need to talk to Omega in private, take the plasma weapon and if Sid poses a threat eliminate him." Omega handed his weapon to Ink and off they went into Dos's conference room. Ink looked through his Orb to observe their conversation. He saw that Blank and Jin were also in there, and all were seated at the table.

In the meantime Aya and Sid were essentially "holding hands" as they sat on the couch in the recreation room. They whispered to each other and Ink was uneasy, but happy for them. He had never experienced such romance, and yearned to one day. In the conference room Dos began to speak. "It has come to my attention that Aya has been compromised and I must now assume full command of this mission. Aya is a strong Fahllian, and to see her come under Sid's spell so easily tells me that he might very well be the evil entity we seek to destroy. Under her command this mission is doomed to fail. Is there anybody in this room who would disagree?" All were silent. They seemed to understand each other. "My plan is an extreme one. We must destroy Sid before he completely consumes Aya, but we must be careful not to hurt her. Any suggestions?"

Blank shifted in his seat. Ink could see his discomfort through the Orb. Jin looked over to him briefly and then back to Dos. "I say we need to first separate them, get Sid alone and then eliminate him." Blank looked over to Jin as a sudden rush of anger filled him. He remained silent, and looked down at the table once more.

"That sounds like a good plan Jin. You and Omega take Sid to the cafeteria while Blank and I entertain Ink and Aya in the rec room. Omega, I am putting you in charge of carrying out the objective. Grab the extra plasma pistol from the teleporter room."

They all nodded their heads and left the conference room. Just as planned Dos challenged Aya and Ink to a team game of pool, Blank would be her partner. Aya was hesitant, but decided it was best if she spent some time with her sister. She felt slightly guilty for not being there for her the past few days. Jin walked up to Sid. "Hey dude, let's go get some food for everyone." Sid and Aya looked at each other and smiled and Sid then left the room with Omega and Jin.

Aya had a bad feeling in her gut as they walked off. Something about Dos didn't seem right, she could sense it. Even Blank was a bit on edge, and Ink appeared to be sweating profusely. She looked down at Ink's Orb and saw sweaty hand prints where he must have been gripping it tightly. "Maybe I should go help them get the food." Aya pleaded.

"Nonsense, spend some time with your big sister. I haven't played you in this game the entire trip."

Aya swallowed. "Ok, but I forewarn you, Ink and I are really good at this game."

It only took a few minutes before loud explosions were heard from the other end of the ship. The methane they needed in order to breathe exited the ship rapidly as Omega's fist went through the outer hull. The four in the rec room ran to the cafeteria. One of the tables was charred to a crisp, proof that the plasma weapon was attempted. Omega continued swinging as Sid jumped around the cafeteria with ease, and with each swing Omega ripped a giant hole in the ship. "SID, NO!"

Aya began glowing as her hands went upwards. Everybody else then began to glow slightly as they were all dragged out of the ship and into space. They seemed to be protected from the extreme temperatures of space, and no longer needed any air to breathe. It was as if they could now breathe space. They also seemed to be able to control their motion as if they could fly. Dos flew over to Sid. She held her left arm up and pointed it at him and yelled, "I cannot allow you to live!" A field of glowing energy began to build around Dos's hand. Aya flew in between them in an instant and held up her arms. A tear fell from Dos's eye. "I'm sorry Aya," Dos said as she uncontrollably released the energy at her sister.