

A Nightmare Trapped

I was born in an instant. Crafted out of the will of beings much greater than me. In the moment after my birth, I was already ancient. I had a history in my mind, an eternity of existing that never happened. I knew that this history was a lie, and yet it is who I am. There was nothing natural about me, my entire being came from the minds of others. I am a lie, I am a nightmare from dreams of those who are real, I am a story. My history came from their minds, from their imagination, written on pages and with that created in truth. But it was not they who birthed me, I knew that. I came from the Three, and I was born for a singular purpose. In my mind I was greater than them, and yet I was so much less than what my story said I should be.

I knew all of this in the instants following my birth.

And as I came to myself, as I remember a history that never happened, I looked around the endless nothingness that surrounded me. It was not the time yet for me to serve my purpose, but the time would come. I remained in the darkness, remembering my past that was a fiction. Yet, for all that it had never happened here, to me it still was real. I understood now, that all creation was just a dream of the gods. Just because I did not come into being in the same way did not make me any less real. My history was written, theirs was lived, different but still the same.

I dreamed of the past, of gliding on the through storms made out of cosmic dust, of whispering in the minds of mortals, of open green fields with sheep grazing upon them. I dreamed of ruling, I dreamed of being forgotten, and I dreamed of making them remember.

I was great and good, and I was terrible and vindictive. I was beyond their comprehension, I was vast and old. Through these dreams, I learned more, for I was an idea, a nightmare that they invented. I was one thing, and many things, different based on the pen that put the words down on the page. I changed, and had many names. Some which were not to be named, others that were known, and the ones that were unspeakable.

Eons passed, or more, or less. Time was not a concern to a being such as I, or the idea that I represented. I knew that there were others of my kind,

those who shared my creation, whose myths were written alongside mine. Brothers and offspring and parents, they too had been given form from the stories of mortals. Nightmares given shape, to tell stories that inspired, that frightened, or just stories to make the insanity of the hand holding the pen lessen.

We were not meant to be understood, to be known, and so, I did not know myself fully. I knew only that which was written about me, for I was a story.

And as I knew that others of my kind were given form by the Three, so I also knew that we had a purpose. That we were to do that which the mortals invented us for. To bring horror and fear, death and an end. I was their nightmare given form. A being beyond their understanding, malevolent and great. Sometimes perhaps, I would be on their side, but it was not in my true nature. I was he who feasted from afar.

Then, something changed, and I was tugged in a direction. My great body, a mass of vast flesh, of tendrils with grips that were made to tear and open and consume, of countless eyes to gaze upon, a form to induce madness in all that beheld it, all of it was pulled. Compressed and pushed in a single point. It was almost enough to crush me, and yet it did not. I passed through and then I saw light for the first time outside my mind.

My body was compressed and changed, I was forced into one of my many forms, a form out of a story that was a part of me, an avatar of my greatness. I found myself limited, small, weak. I moved and knew that I had assumed a form similar to those of the mortals that had invented me. Four limbs, to move and interact, a mouth to speak, and ears to listen, eyes to see. It was... disorienting, and also not. For in the stories I have already done this, many times before. I adapted, and looked around.

I was in a place that was large, a translucent white sky surrounded me and I quickly realized that there was something beyond it. I was trapped inside a dome that surrounded this place. I explored, walked from one edge to the other, a walk that took me time beyond measure. And yet for all of its greatness it was great only by mortal standards. My true form was greater still, and yet I was forced into this small vessel of weak flesh shrouded in a cloak of cloth.

It was all for a purpose, I knew. The Three had a need of me, and I would obey. Even though all that I am wanted to fight. I was imagined as the greatest thing there was, a being that bowed to no one and nothing, but I was just a pale imitation of what the Three were. For they were truly eldritch, truly alien, beyond compare or understanding even to the things that they had created.

I stood in the center of the dome, emptiness surrounding me, until things started to change. Beyond the domain that kept me trapped I saw things come into existence. The formless cosmic dust came into shape, and a world came into being. An endless world, stretching for as far as one could see. The sun blossomed into existence above and then the inside of the dome started to change. Rifts opened up and creatures started coming in. Some I recognized, for they were tied to my own mythos. They looked at me and bowed, before heading toward the edge of the dome, there to begin to beat at its wall trying to get out. Monsters birthed out of the horror stories of mortals. Some took to the sky, and others burrowed beneath the ground, some towered over me, and others were smaller than my fingers. Builders and spawners, hunters and warriors, caretakers and healers, so many of them, and all wicked. They were things out of nightmares. And all wanted to get out, I knew it for I could feel them all. Feel their emotion, and know their thoughts if I so wished.

I knew, then, that they were mine to command, that I was to lead them in fulfilling the Three's purpose for us. The howls of the mad filled the dome as ages passed, and more of them still came. The sky was black with their flying forms, so thick that the sun could not be seen. The ground was covered with them, climbing one over the other, a wriggling mass of flesh. Beings conceived in nightmares and given substance by stories. Created only to serve as tales to frighten, their only purpose to consume and kill. They were not what the mortals had intended, the Three had changed them, I could see and I knew.

Some of them were, like I am, less than what their stories said, others were more. There was a level of power that the Three wanted them to be on.

The only empty area was around me, a small patch where none dared to thread. I had nothing to do but wait and feel their desire to leave, their

hunger, their thirst. They could not die from it, but they felt it. It made them worse.

I did not know when the time would come, but I knew that there were more places like this. Three for each people whose stories gave birth to us, for a total of twenty seven domes filled with horrors. I did not know who held the other domes, but each had one like me. It was strange, remembering things that I did not experience, that I did not know the source of. But all was as the Three decreed.

I was the king of this dome, and the monsters around me were my army. A legion, with enough numbers to blot out the sky and cover the ground as a wave of endless darkness. I did not know what I would face, but I knew that I would prevail.

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For the first time ever, something changed outside. I saw beings, some were mortal, human, but others were strange and unlike what my history told me mortals should look like, they approached my dome. I saw them look, I saw the horror on their faces as they looked inside and saw their doom. I saw the hope leave their eyes and fear seep into their bones. They ran, screaming and weeping from what they had beheld, as they should.

I did not smile, I did not enjoy this.

Time passed, and more came, sometimes a lone person, sometimes a group. They looked upon their doom and always ran away in fear. Once, an army came, and a lone mortal stood before it. He looked like small dragon with wings upon his back, not like the mortals that had given birth to my story. I saw him fight, an armor of resplendent glory appearing around him, his wings sheeted in metal. He fought the army, powers unlike anything that I have seen in my history clashed against one another. I realized that perhaps, my purpose would not be as easy as I thought. The mortals had power of their own, and they would not be such an easy prey.

The mortal fought for days and nights, and in the end he left only blood on the sands. After, he turned and walked to the edge of the dome. Intrigued,

I walked forward as well, the mass splitting around me as I approached. The mortal saw the disturbance, he saw me coming.

Finally I was there, only a hand's width away from the edge of the dome that kept me trapped. And I looked upon the mortal through the slits in my mask, from beneath my hood. I saw his eyes within his helmet, and I saw his fear. Yet, inside of him there was determination and will. He feared me, but he would not run. I smiled behind the mask, knowing that the time would come when I was free, and when my legion would scour across the infinite land, when it would be joined by the legions of the others and when all would turn to night.

The mortal turned suddenly and walked away, leaving me alone with the mindless horrors still trying to get out.

In time, I would face them, the mortals and they will know true horror.

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Mortals came, never close to the dome again, but always there. They watched us, they watched me, and they waited. I knew what they were there for. To prevent someone from letting me out before it was time, and perhaps to watch, to learn the moment that the domes fell and we were released. It was a foolish action, I was inevitable, as was their death.

But as time passed I knew that something was coming, a feeling deep inside me told me that it was soon going to be that time. I raised my head and looked just as a pillar of light split the sky open, and then grew, opening a crack in the world in front of the dome. I saw through it, a light that shone through, that blazed through the tear from the world beyond. I could not see beyond the tear, for the light was too great for even me.

The mortals standing guard and watching over my dome ran forward, heading for the tear, but they were too far away and they were too slow. A being stepped through the tear, and I knew.

The mortal was here to set me free.

Soon, horror and endless night would come, soon, my legions, the legions of Hastur, the King in Yellow, would march across this world.