

+*Fuck it. I'm with the weird godsdamn bird-whatever thing. Fuck it all. Fuck the Guilds. Fuck paradise. Burn it down. Burn it down. Burn it down...+*

-Asgard Saldur, FATELESS

28-11

Children of Broken Legacies (II)

A rapturous emanation of power exploded forth from the Gatekeeper, no longer suppressed by Avo's presence. With Veylis's closing her time-wrought wounds, the Gatekeeper's microcosm of a galaxy enveloped the entire court.

Walls and surfaces were unmade; stars bloomed from singular motes of light, caressing the atmosphere in a comforting ambiance. Swirling paths of nebula glided from person to person as every single conscious being within scale found themselves adrift next to planetary bodies.

The concept of distance became irrelevant as all found themselves able to behold the High Seraph and the Burning Dreamer. Every ounce of the Gatekeeper's power drifted away from the Instrument, the Elder, and fell upon the only two that truly mattered. Avo and Veylis were as if clashing singularities, their sighs immense, facing each other upon the accretion disk of a black hole turned pedestal for this most metaphysical debate.

"Citizens and subjects of New Vultun," Veylis began, ***"I greet you in submission to the Gatekeeper's miracles. Witness its power over me, witness my wounds sealed, witness as I stand testament for all I believe, for all I intend, and understand that what comes from me now will be truth upon truth, truth to truth, with lies certain to consign me to banishment."*** A subtle smirk crept over the High Seraph's features. ***"And with the mention of banishment, I hereby demand the invitation of New Vultun's once-master, the Exiled City of Noloth."*** She regarded Ava with a glint in her eye. ***"If we are to be judged for our legacy, then let me not be judged alone."***

"Agreed," Avo said without any hesitation. He was looking forward to this. The hungers were weak, several pockets of resistance festering inside them like tumorous growths. He had no desire to hide his past anymore. ***"Let them be present, their sins stand greater than any of yours."***

Heating the accord between the High Seraph and the Burning Dreamer, an oscillating wavelength swept out from the Heaven of Truth. As a ripple passed over this galaxy, the darkness above them began to clear.

At first, it seemed like a reflection was looming above; however, the astute could see that the parted realm above was composed of sequences rather than galactic arms. There, at its very core, descended a massive shape—nests of dragons, each biting into each other, golden ichor leaking from their many wounds, spilling over into the deepness of the Nether above. Their eyes

blinked between parted scales, and along crenelations, the lights of an eternal city shone. But rather than glory, only an oppressive bitterness descended. The Strix Upon the All-And-Empty regarded its forebearer with a mocking laugh. **"You've come fast. Surprised you've come at all."**

To the Hungers' further credit, they ignored his jab, focusing every ounce of their perception on Veylis instead. **+Daughter of the Betrayer, you are bold to call upon us.+**

"No," Veylis replied, **"you possess no power, so I cannot be bold. This instead is an act of calculated cruelty. And you are no agent here. No more than the Elder you wielded, or the Instrument I intended to sacrifice."**

The views and callous cog-feed continued to spike, and Draus' finger twitched, her thoughts absolutely silent, her instincts fine-tuned to violence. Murmurs and thought-casts were exchanged among the masses in the court. Some among the Paladins even began to back away, overwhelmed by the sheer amount of metaphysical force. Their retreat was halted as Naeko's palm manifested around him, a reminder that there were powers upon powers present here, further amplified by a joyous clapping sounding out from a corner of this galaxy.

Veylis turned, and a momentary widening of her eyes occurred when she noticed the Stormsparrow—three heads, each sporting a rictus grin, her many hands slamming together, expressing boundless glee.

"Oh," Veylis sighed, **"Ying. You are here as well."**

"Oh, come now, older sister. You must know that where there's a stage, there will be a performer. Don't tell me you didn't anticipate my presence when you peeked across the paths?"

"I always do," Veylis said with a monotone voice, **"and I always hope I'm wrong when it comes to you."**

"Now you're welcome to try and remove me anytime," the Stormsparrow said, holding out her hands.

"Later," Veylis said, **"later, when the charade of diplomacy finally implodes upon itself. But for now, it is time for us to use the violence in her words."**

A synchronous snarl of outrage detonated from the Hungers. **+What purpose does this theater hold? We all know where we stand. We all know what we want.+**

"Do we now?" Veylis and Avo said at once. The two didn't even need to share a glance; they were of a mind about the Hungers. For whatever future comes to pass, Noloth could never be allowed to reign.

Veylis shook her head, and the singularity within her chest quivered. Streams of time expanded from her being, creeping across every Saintist Sovereignty and district. Avo beheld her

expansion from his countless copies, the Gestalt feeding him insight. It was sweeping over the world, her manifestation, external architecture built upon the foundations of time. The Burning Dreamer, meanwhile, read like an idea from within, and between them, reality and humanity would experience the most esoteric friction.

Before Veylis continued further, she made a quick gesture towards Abrel and D'Rongo. The girl was still weeping, struggling to keep herself composed. The Elder, meanwhile, shivered and shook, unmoving, her mind ruled by nothing but fear. She was as if a lamb lost in a den of monsters.

"Away with them," Veylis said, calling to Naeko. **"The lures have lived up to their use, and with the Burning Dreamer's revelation, there is no more worth to them, not in present capacity, anyhow."**

Vaporous hands formed over Abrel and D'Rongo, drawing them back. Across this realm of truth, Avo could feel Uthred trying to get to his daughter, straining and struggling to move, but he could not. The Gatekeeper decided the relative position of all, for this was not a place of matter. This was a place of ideas, a space where fact became divine. It mattered not how much a father's heart ached, only that it was true and not a lie.

"Now," Veylis said, **"let me state my position. My father screams the fate he suffered. Such was my doing. I also share fault in the displacement of the latter. I share failure in the damnation and the unfortunate fate experienced by Agnos Kae Kusanade. I am guilty of a great many things, but above all else, my greatest sin is one of weakness. I should have stopped my father before that instant. I should have forced him to choose strength."**

The surrounding galaxy trembled, a pained boom came from the Gatekeeper. "Truth," it said.

This surprised Avo. For a such a statement to be received as objective fact held implications beyond subjectivity.

"Why?" a voice from the audience intruded. Shotin glared at Veylis, the hate in his eyes embrittled. "Why, godsdamn you. For what? The Godbreaker? Your own father? He gave you everything. He gave us—"

"He was going to take it all away," Veylis said.

Once more, the Gatekeeper resounded. **"Truth."**

"Look upon the Gatekeeper," Veylis gestured towards the Heaven of Truth. **"Understand that this was to be our new owner. Not yourselves, not freedom for mankind, but rather our ownership."** She stopped speaking then, allowing silence to make her point.

"Yes, my father did break the pantheons. My father did free us. As the years passed, as he spent more time experiencing possible futures through the path, even his iron will could be eroded. For the hearts of men are fickle." A trace of hate and judgment leaked over

into her words. ***"Every path ahead presented a future of damnation, of ruination, of collapse. The peace would not last. It could never last. And so, after all my father sacrificed, after all my family gave, he decided, he succumbed to the pain dwelling inside his heart, and he slowly began to dream of a final future and an end to eternity.***

"The latter is a supernal structure. It will surmount this dying husk of an existence and allow us to reshape the next one, to convert all that remains, chaos and order, into a new design, a design determined by whoever masters the latter."

"And Jaus refused to be that master," Avo said, ***"because Jaus feared what he saw at the heart of men."***

Veylis scoffed in response. ***"My father wanted all to find joy and actualization. Such was his greatest hope. Such was what poisoned his heart. I want all to know now, allies and esteemed enemies, that though you may despise me, though I may have killed billions of your kin or preserved your culture from certain destruction, though I may have transgressed in these very halls, with me there is a paradise. A paradise and a promise. A promise that we as people, as humans, can surpass the divine. That we can shape our own destiny. That we can create something of a utopia."***

She held up her hands, all of them, limbs composing the inner rings of her torso, clasped each other, a symbolic display of her philosophy. ***"Our will. The will of ascended humanity. The will of post-humanity. The will of legacy perfected. Blessed be the worthy. Never again to be enslaved."***

A slight shiver passed through Naeko's person.

"I know all of you have your own desires, your futures, Massists and Saintists alike, but know this: if my father's will was made manifest, there would be no Godclads. There would be no Heavens. We would answer to singleton masters, mimicries of the minds that rule our distant cousins. We would find ourselves little more than pets, unimportant, no longer the captains of our own soul. And after a period of peace, a final sequel will follow the war that was as our cultures fragment and disintegrate. And a final end would be our fate as reality unravels for the last time."

The Gatekeeper trembled and spoke: ***"Truth."***

"Hey, half-strand," Chamber said, standing just below Avo. "I hear a lot of big talk about captaining your own soul, of being the person to decide everything. Well, I got a question. What about the guys who, uh, kinda had shitty dads? You know, most people who weren't the offspring of some psychotic, god-slaying maniac and the literal god-damn savior. What about us?"

"You," Veylis said, taking in Chambers with a slight flinch of disgust. She noticed the Fucktopia flexing behind him, but unlike Zein, made no comment. Instead, she accepted it and moved on. ***"I pity you most of all. You are fate-damned. We are shaped as much materially as we are***

conceptually, metaphysically, mentally. In my world, you would not be, Chambers. In my world, only the best aspects of you would remain. And your father, creatures like him, will never exist. I am not blind to the indifference and cruelty of existence, but only by my hands can I eradicate said indifference and cruelty. You are the detritus of probability, Chambers, an avatar for how much humanity can fester, how much a man can sink. And not even because his own fault. Your nonexistence from the world to come will symbolize its healing."

"***Lie,***" Avo said. Strix Upon the Empty flared with a deafening emanation of thoughtstuff. Veylis fell silent as she regarded the Burning Dreamer.

And then she chuckled. "***Don't tell me you're actually fond of him. Have you actually taken a liking to this curiosity?***"

"***It is a pity that you do not appreciate him,***" Avo said. "***It is a pity that so many judge him. I hear your words, hear you speak, wax about your philosophy, you and the guilders. But these are only your feelings. These are your perspectives. Chambers is not detritus. Chambers is not degenerate. Chambers is. He just is. Chambers is shaped. Chambers survives and Chambers changes. You speak of a promised future. He is a promise in the progress of eternal realization. He is an absurdity that you've brought before me, a sideshow to a circus. He is part of a world you created. All of you."***

Avo's words echoed loud, spreading through the Court of Truth, across all of New Vultun from each of his copies. "***Blind yourself, willfully or not, be ignorant, by choice or not. You all speak of futures, utopias, yet here you are, casting your own feelings in place of reality."***

"***That is power manifested,***" Veylis said, words spoken like a mortal, desperate for control.

"***Tell me, as you have lived countless futures, as you have shaped trillions of destinies, have you taken a moment, a single second, to experience the world that it is? Have you looked beyond your own mind, rested upon the patterns of existence? Have you realized yet that there is no utopia possible?***"

"***Gatekeeper,***" Veylis said, looking to the Heaven of Truth, expecting it to support her.

Avo realized what she was trying to do: She thought she had caught him in a lie, but the Gatekeeper said nothing, and Veylis looked at it with curiosity.

"***You mistake your subjectivity for fact again. You are blinded. Blinded by all the power you possess. You drown in your own perspective, Veylis. To espouse the virtues of human will is a choice. But human will is bound to human want. Human want is bound to human consciousness. You impose what you feel, what you perceive on existence, and so you will fail, for you cannot even comprehend the minds of those like you and existence. Existence is not consciousness.***

{Not yet.}

A static, confused voice spoke back to Avo.

"Infacer," Avo said, **"Why do you not join the conversation? Why do you only lurk?"**

{Fuck off, ghoul, I'm trying to deal with your Famine problem.} Avo only laughed. It was good to have reliable enemies sometimes.

+Bastard!+ the hungers growled. **+Traitor!+**

The Strix simply lifted its head and spoke one word in rebuttal. **"Failure."**

"It seems that the Burning Dreamer wishes to speak again. Very well. I have given enough words." Veylis lifted a hand towards Avo. **"Before you speak, I would like to call on Voidwatch's representative. It would not do to make this christening of the Tenth Power official without our most esteemed partners."**

From beyond, the wren wrought dark, and at her compulsion, a single presence materialized, drawn forth by the Gatekeeper. A veil of static clung around them, and an unassuming man, strange of hair and apparel alike, was brought before the gaze of trillions.

Kant had arrived in the guise of his avatar, and he regarded everyone with brief bows.

{EGI Kant Was A Prick. I will be serving as the party's collective representative for today. I hope that I can do you all justice on this most contentious of occasions. And furthermore, beg for your aid.}

"Aid?" Veylis said, looking curiously at Kant.

{Yes, aid.} The EGI's avatar pointed towards Avo now. **{Voidwatch is under attack.}** Some surprise mutters spread through the crowd, but most were already informed. They knew battles were happening in the Deep Void Beyond, that a winged creature resembling the Strix upon the Empty was locked in conflict, the few hundred thousand Void ships. **{The Strix Upon the Empty, representative of the newly declared polity of Symmetry, has launched an egregious and unjustifiable assault on Voidwatch's territory and citizenry. We would like to invoke the full powers of the Articles and call upon the aid of our planetary partners in the pursuit of subduing this rogue element of power.}**

With each passing second, Veylis looked between the EGI and Avo and smirked as she gave the Burning Dreamer a knowing smile.

"I see. But for such a sudden crisis I would have expected an emergency broadcast for aid."

Kant faced the High Seraph with an apologetic expression. **{We, of Voidwatch, prefer to handle our own issues and not burden our terrestrial partners with undue problems. It is a... terrible**

thing to make habit. However, it seems that we have underestimated the scale of this...} He looked to Avo, *{...threat.}*

"A common mistake," Avo said, building on his mythos further.

{One that should be rectified as soon as possible,} Kant said, injecting a tone of severity into his voice.