

The doors to the pantheon closed behind them for what would be the last time in a long while. There was no real time set for his destination; a goal was set, but reaching it was more of a case of overcoming hurdles at their own pace, which was a... highly variable yardstick, to say the least. Their parents tried to talk them out of it, the rest of the pantheon certainly didn't seem all that happy with the idea, but if there was one person that could put an end to their newest member's woes, it was the one among them who shunned contact, the one who had left their hallowed halls eons prior to seek a life of solitude. For the young Arceus, whose life had been one of unending size-based disappointments, seeking out this renegade deity wasn't anywhere near the top of their priority list; or, at least, it hadn't been until every other avenue to fix their problems was closed off one by one as failure after failure compounded on one another to leave them feeling utterly helpless. It was even worse considering their status as the Inheritor, at once their name and title, progeny of two meta-entities whose chosen physical avatars constituted the substrate upon which reality was built; the couple's size was such that their mass was often indistinguishable from the very fabric of existence as anyone could perceive it, and even when their forms were "visible", the sight was often enough to cause severe headaches, even in other members of the pantheon. They were, to put it lightly, *big*, and not just in the sense that they were vast or incomprehensibly overendowed; they were big in sheer scale, in that nothing could be *bigger* than they were, for to achieve such a status would, by necessity, mean usurping their position as the foundational structure of all that was and could be... and, seeing as neither the Penultimate nor The Most High were in any way willing to relinquish their power, this was unlikely to happen in the near, medium, or far future. As a result of this, however, there were great hopes for the Arceus when they were birthed into being as a result of their "parents" convening to create for themselves an heir; the Inheritor was to become something greater than the sum of their parts, imbued with the power and might of the two grandest, most powerful gods that had ever existed, becoming an entity of such unfathomable, grandiose glory that even the brightest of cosmic jewels would look like a pile of dirty coal next to them. They would be so magnificent that they could wear the totality of existence upon them as a supersized raiment, bedecked in jewels in such absurd quantity that they would outnumber the proverbial fabric, and not only would it not be enough to even cover a fraction of a percentage point of their full size, but not even the full extent of everything would be able to hold a candle to the body that lay underneath. That is, assuming that such a form could even be described, assuming it didn't simply become so all-encompassing that it literally broke even the gods' ability to describe it in their meta-linguistic forms of communication; merely a possibility, to be sure, but one whose likelihood was far greater than most were willing to admit, given the sort of entities who had given birth to the Inheritor. As such, one could only imagine the surprise when the Arceus emerged from their cosmic egg and ended up being... mundane. Their curves were nothing if not exaggerated, of course, and no one expected anything less; they were even greater than most other deities', what with each of their three shafts being large enough to have several moon systems to their name, or their tits and ass being of such a scale that doors often had to be widened in the pantheon's halls in order to prevent accidental wedging and blockages. But alas,

that was the problem: they were big, but *comprehensibly* big, large enough to be a serious logistical issue, but still perfectly understandable, even from a mortal perspective. Should any of the countless souls who resided within the infinite universes take a look up at the Arceus, they would not see the uncontested, undisputed overlord of all of reality, but “merely” a very big, very curvaceous hyper-god whose only claim to fame was being on the scale of a couple of star systems packed together. And while this would’ve been impressive for a lesser deity, it was far less so for someone of the Inheritor’s pedigree; with the parents they had, for them to turn out to be so small was, at best, a surprise as big as they were, and at worse, an outright disappointment. Not that their progenitors would ever dare to put it in such terms, as despite the size difference, there was nothing but raw, unfiltered love shared between the Inheritor and the two pataversal entities that brought them being; it was merely a case that, ultimately, it was quite clear that there were *expectations* in place, expectations that the Arceus had clearly failed to meet, and now had to do something about them. Again, not that their parents would ever be so bold as to suggest that their progeny change anything about them; as far as the two were concerned, the Inheritor was perfect just as they were, as surely they were simply a late bloomer, or would come into a more fitting size for a metaversal ruler once the mantle was passed onto them. The Arceus themselves, however, found these comments to be naught but further evidence that they were unworthy, and their presence in the pantheon’s halls was little more than a constant reminder of their parents’ failure, and that if they did nothing to fix this, the end result would very likely be open war between would-be usurpers and two people who wanted nothing more than everlasting peace and prosperity. There was no shortage of supposed deities, especially those ascended from mortal souls, whose sole purpose seemed to be to sow chaos and wreak havoc unless actively stamped down and chained up, and while the Penultimate and The Most High abhorred such methods, it was either that or risk having wars be set off between petty tyrants whenever anyone said a word that could be misconstrued as maybe meaning something personally offensive. The tenuous balance was kept in place purely because the two *were* the uncontested rulers of all of existence, but with their heir turning out the way they did, suddenly they found themselves carrying a noose around their neck, one that would only tighten with each day that passed and the Arceus did nothing to fix their size problems. Thus, the pilgrimage; it wasn’t a great idea, or even a good one by any stretch of the imagination, but desperate times called for desperate measures, and none were more desperate than the Arceus, seeking *some* kind of resolution for their lack of impressively overbearing size and dimensions. It took some work, as well as combing through the deepest archives of the pantheon, but the answers they sought were there, buried underneath countless eons’ worth of misinformation: a rogue god, one who had eschewed the traditional hierarchy of their kind and set off to parts unknown in protest. The Inheritor’s parents seemed to know *something* about this divine being, but they refused to elaborate beyond cryptic remarks on how they were “not technically wrong” but “should’ve picked a better way”, among other, even less useful and trite commentaries that went absolutely nowhere. After a short while failing to dig up anything further, the Arceus made a decision: they would leave the pantheon’s halls, decide upon their destination, and let their powers guide them to wherever this

rogue god might be, as they were sure to do. The question wasn't whether they'd be capable of finding them; this was something that just about *anyone* of their kind could do if they put their minds to it. No, the real meat of the matter is whether or not they were *worthy* of finding them, as every single reference to this missing deity also referenced a set of "challenges" or "trials" that came with attempting to locate them. In return for passing them, however, this primordial being was said to be capable of granting any wish that a pilgrim might want fulfilled, from the mundane to the fantastical... and seeing as neither of their parents seemed willing to disprove this, the Arceus could assume it had to be true. Granted, they had no idea what sort of trials lay ahead of them, nor if they were even remotely capable of rising to their challenge, but that was what the pilgrimage was for; as the Inheritor, as the child of the two most powerful entities that metaphysically *could* ever exist until they themselves dethroned them, there were only two options: either they were worthy of the title, and would thus be able to meet any trial head-on and come out the other end victorious, or they weren't, and would receive confirmation of such. It was an existentially paralyzing thought, but one that the Arceus had to power through as they walked down to the front gates of the pantheon, where the interminable line of deceased mortals awaiting entry to their personal paradises was given a show in the form of the Inheritor's body, fully on display, wobbling and jiggling its way to the outside, a show that thoroughly burned out several trillion of souls simply by virtue of being. The Inheritor apologized profusely to the poor angelic bureaucrats who'd have to put the soul sparks back together, but carried on regardless, the knowledge that their form could at least do *that* much was the sole consolation they had, one that was instantly robbed from them the moment they stepped out of the hallowed halls of divinity, slamming the golden doors shut behind them. In front, the interstitial medium of the multiverse, the space between spaces where their kind operated; it was, as usual, teeming with activity, with minor gods and their messengers flying to and fro in the endless operation of the celestial bureaucracy. For such a vast space, it certainly looked cramped with the sheer amount of entities that regularly made of it their personal highway; this, of course, would simply not do, and as such the Inheritor simply willed themselves somewhere more quiet, and with a single step, they blinked, and reappeared in complete emptiness. It was a testament to their power that they *could* simply teleport themselves so far away from everything that even the multiverse had to spend some time mathing out just *where* the Inheritor was, like a machine buffering a series of operations in backlog. Soon enough, the Arceus' mere presence would spring forth more universes, each one creating their own set of gods which would fill the interstice with yet more pandemonium... but until then, the Inheritor had that slice of not-being all for themselves, where no one could bother them.

It was only then that the sheer nothingness really hit them. For the first time in their life, the Inheritor was bereft of any sort of stimulus but the ones created by their own body, which was certainly an... experience. They'd been alone before, but never in a section of the multiverse that literally had nothing else in it; to say that it forced perspective would be an understatement, as without a means for reference, the Inheritor honestly couldn't even tell how big they were anymore. They were intellectually aware of their dimensions, at least in absolute terms, but there,

in the empty, in the place where places would eventually be, there was nothing to compare themselves *to*, and thus, perhaps fittingly, nothing could be said to be *bigger* than they were, therefore making *them* the biggest thing there... if only by technicality. Then again, wasn't all divine business done by technicalities anyway? Their size was relative, after all; they could at once be bigger than a whole planet while still being capable of striding upon. The Arceus themselves was proof positive of that, as he was "merely" big enough to have several moons orbiting around their triple cocks, yet if they really wanted to, they could float alongside entire universes and see them as little more than tiny, shiny baubles, several of them able to fit on a single palm. It was a trick of perception as much as it was reality, with the fine line dividing the two growing thinner or thicker depending on one's control over their own form, and the effects it had on existence around it... and perhaps this was the secret, or at least the first hurdle. For the Inheritor, speaking with their parents was always a chore, as the size difference between them was such that it was less a conversation and more of a communion; they still had a much faster connection than between the two hyper-deities and the rest of the pantheon, but it wasn't as if the three of them could sit at a table and have a nice chat over dinner. Theirs were two different size scales altogether, with The Most High and the Penultimate effectively occupying spacetime on so many layers that it was easy for the Inheritor, who merely dwelled on one, to forget that what they were looking at was merely a fraction of their progenitors' full self. That being the case, it then made sense that they themselves should be cut from the same cloth, that the Arceus be capable of *becoming* the very underlying structure of reality by sheer virtue of being alive; that they weren't, well... there was a reason why the pilgrimage had taken place to begin with. It stood to reason, then, that if the rogue god was so ancient that even the Inheritor's parents feared speaking of them, then this renegade was most likely *massive*, far more than the Arceus was. Or, at the very least, they had understood the duality of their divinity in such a way that they could *choose* to be all-encompassing, in a way that the Inheritor could only hope to one day understand; perhaps, they thought to themselves as existence began to coalesce around them, that was their first goal: to comprehend how truly big they were, and how their size was ultimately a choice they made, rather than a physical constant. It was the sum total of their self-worth and self-actualization, as well as their understanding of how they even worked on a fundamental level; nothing was technically stopping them from willing themselves larger apart from themselves, though the mental barrier was surprisingly sturdy, even after its presence was made known. It was, ultimately, hard for the Arceus to think of themselves as anything other than what they had always been: insufficient. Big, yes, but not big *enough*, huge, but not *unfathomably* so. It was these thoughts which held them back, which created for them a mental image of themselves that was then projected onto realspace and turned into their true form, one that only slipped whenever the Inheritor wasn't busy beating themselves up over something that they knew wasn't their fault... but, at the same time, it *was* entirely their fault. If their size was theirs to determine, then the fact that they weren't consistently bigger than entire universal clusters was, at the end of the day, their *choice*, which *should* have left them feeling worse than ever before, if not for the companion realization that came hand-in-hand with it: if it was their own fault they

weren't big enough, that meant it was entirely in their hands to change that... which means they *could* change it, and thus were free to enlarge themselves at their will whenever they figured out how. Which, all things considered, *should* be significantly easier now that they had some time to consider it; it'd been so long since the last time they were anywhere outside the pantheon's halls that really, just the fact that they *were* away from it was enough to give them a fresh perspective on things. If their girth was self-determined, then surely being surrounded by reminders of their supposed "failings" on a daily basis could do little but harm their self-actualization; this was probably the whole point, at least on the part of some of the more underhanded deities, who very likely saw it as an opportunity to kick them down and *keep* them there so they themselves could usurp the Inheritor's rightful place as heir to the multiverse. Out there in the great nothingness, however, there literally could *be* nothing that could stop the Arceus from making themselves as big as they wanted to... and thus, when the first universes began to phase into being, there was nothing stopping them from simply deciding that they should bigger than them, not momentarily, but by *default*. It wasn't a significant change, in the sense that they felt nothing when they made it; 'twas merely an affirmation, a *statement*, one that determined a new reality that reality itself simply had to adapt in order to conform to. They were the Inheritor, progeny of the Penultimate and The Most High, and as such it was their prerogative to decide how enormous and all-consuming they were; therefore, when they *decided* to be bigger than whole universes, it didn't take long before the moon system orbiting their cocks to vanish from sight, now so insignificantly tiny as to barely be said to exist. Granted, there still wasn't a lot to compare themselves to, and with no major changes wrought to them but size, it was hard to tell if anything had truly changed... but there was something there, a notion, a *knowing*, that their body was fundamentally different in some way they couldn't determine; given what they'd just gone through, the Arceus resolved to believe that it was their size, having become so much larger than they would barely be able to fit back into the pantheon's halls. And in doing so, in believing in this "truth" with all their might, it *became* truth, *the* truth; should any of the lesser deities back home see the Arceus now, they would be looking up at a fraction of their full body, as the whole thing was far and away *too big* for anyone else but the Inheritor's parents to truly grasp. Content, the budding hyper-deity once more willed themselves to an empty section of the multiverse; it was nice to be big and all, but it *was* still important to start from a blank slate, lest the steps outlined for the pilgrimage be disregarded and the final goal never reached. As the documents stated, any god wishing to meet with the renegade should stare into the void, the nothing, and then take a step forward; this was significantly harder than it might initially appear, as for them to take a step *forward* meant imposing the concept of distance and relative position onto a nothingness, thus turning it into a *something* and defeating the whole purpose. In fact, merely by existing *within* a void, the Arceus transformed it into a not-void, as if reality itself rebooted around them and struggled to fill the space with as much of itself as it could. There was a moment where the nothingness remained, but an instant before the first particle couplets were formed and quantum foam spread across the vast infinity, and it was in this moment that Arceus had to take a step... except not really, for the step wasn't actually required, at least, not a

physical one. At no point was it made explicit that it was a literal step, an actual moving of the legs where one paw ended up in front of another; there were plenty of gods *without* feet after all, so how were they supposed to get to the end of the pilgrimage if this were the case? It was significantly likelier for it to be a *metaphorical* step forward, though what exactly that might be still eluded the Arceus; it had to be significant enough to matter to a rogue god, and yet something that anyone could feasibly accomplish if they just put their all into it. A realization, an epiphany, one that blended perfectly with a perfect void, whatever little sense that made; perhaps the truth was that there *was* no truth, and the Inheritor, much like everyone else, would spend inordinate amounts of time overanalyzing something that was actually quite simple, only to then realize it *wasn't*, and their immediate instinctive reaction to dumb it down was part of some cosmic quadruple bluff. Or, as the Arceus came to realize it, perhaps there *was* a simple answer in the end: creation. The biggest issue with doing anything in a void was that, by doing so, it would no longer be a void; this was a moment of creation, where something was created from nothing, the purest exercise of divine power. Most deities took it for granted, such was their culture and mental state, to the point where they would make and unmake entire universes just because they were feeling bored or wanted to try out a new look using existential jewelry. For them, snapping their fingers and forcing reality to cough up a chunk of itself where once had been nothing was, if not taken for granted, at the very best still downright mundane. But was it not the most beautiful thing? Was it not the grandest, most magnificent of boons, bestowed upon them by the two hyper-deities whose forms and minds were the substrate of Creation? The ability to *make*, the capacity to dream and make those thoughts *be*, limited only by their imagination and how much effort they wanted to put into any given project; to take such a thing and turn it into an everyday occurrence, into *routine* of all things, felt downright heretical, to the point where the Arceus physically recoiled at the notion. The moment of creation, the very instant where an empty space was filled by *something*, regardless of what that something might be, was the very core of what it was like to be a god, a deity, and if they were supposed to take the role of the caretaker for all that was and could possibly be, if the Arceus was *fated* to live up to their name... then surely, they had to understand this truth more than anyone else. They had to exercise this power in such a way as to make it *mean* something, rather than simply willing a feast into existence because they didn't feel like doing it manually, or summoning a large statue to admire, or any number of mundane things; rather, they had to create their own road to reach the end of their journey, not so much stepping *onto* the path as *making* said path. Much like before, the only thing standing in the way between the Arceus and becoming everything they could be was, of course, *themselves*, and their own preconceived notions of what it meant to be a god within the context that they had lived their whole lives; as soon as they shed these notions, as soon as they freed themselves from the shackles of certainty and embraced their own ignorance, it became immensely easy for them to make judgement calls about how things *should* work, calls they would never have thought to make beforehand. It wasn't about imposing their will upon reality, for reality was whatever they perceived it as; therefore, if the Inheritor stepped into a void, and in that moment crafted for themselves a pocket multiverse which they could rule

like their progenitors lorded over their own, then that was just how existence was meant to function. Never mind the fact that having a sub-layer of multiversal existence running in tandem with an upper one raised a series of unfortunate questions about the nature of just *what* numbered stack it was; such considerations were for later, for *after* the Arceus was done turning themselves into a deity worthy of having a Creation of their own to rule. Of course, doing so for the first time was bound to result in less than satisfactory results; as much as the Inheritor was learning things about themselves which they had never known, finding more power welling up within them than ever thought possible, there was only so much they could do when attempting the supposedly impossible. Thus, their transcendent moment of creation was *slightly* undercut by how they, in practice, only managed to make a small room for themselves... well, "small", in the sense that it managed to fit them and was, in proportion, about as large as one of the living spaces back at the pantheon. Given their size, the Arceus was certain that this creation of theirs would most likely be capable of encompassing several universes, but for someone who was meant to take the reins of existence itself, it counted as little more than baby's first steps towards learning what it was like to be a true god. Still, it was *something*, a sub-dimensional built into a higher stratum, making use of it as a substrate from which to drain the energies required to keep it functioning. It looked suspiciously like their room back home, which the Arceus could only assume was the result of them allowing their subconscious to do most of the work; while they did deliberately perform the actions needed to create a brand new reality, the smaller details were left to the automatic processes within their head, resulting in a decent replica of what little privacy they had back at the pantheon. Then again, this was just the start, as nothing stopped the Inheritor from building on the room, to bring forth a whole house, its neighborhood, the city it was in, and so forth until there was a whole multiverse in there with them as its sole deity; in fact, having a solid foundation from which to work made it significantly easier than the Arceus assumed it would be, raising the question of whether or not their parents had done something similar in the past. No one *did* know just where the Penultimate or The Most High had come from, and while one could be forgiven for simply assuming that, like most gods, they were timeless in the literal sense of the word, it just so happened that even other deities didn't have a clue as their overlords' true origins. As far as anyone knew, the two had simply popped into existence one day, with no one capable of remembering a time from before such a thing happened; most were *certain* that there was a before, however, and chose to believe that the divine mega-couple's arrival had simply upturned the natural order to such a degree that nothing could be the same anymore, that reality itself had to rearrange its own order of events to make the two's presence make the slightest amount of sense... but what if that wasn't the case? As they stood there, staring at a reality of their own creation, the Inheritor couldn't help but think about the sheer *gap* that existed between their parents and even the strongest of the other divinities, of how thoroughly outmatched *everyone* was in comparison, themselves included. Could it be that, much like they themselves had stepped into a void and crafted for themselves a brand new pocket of existence over which to rule, their progenitors too had done the same, an unfathomable amount of time past? Could this have been the reason for why they, a creature

supposed to be possessed of the same degree of insane power, couldn't even begin to think about holding a candle to the two entities that birthed them? That the meta-structure of reality was that of a series of nested sub-existences, with a being from one creating a universe below its own dimension, triggering an endless series of metaversal births that stretched into infinity? Could it be that they themselves, the Inheritor to this truth, would one day create their *own* heir, who would repeat the process and keep the cycle going? If that was the case... then where did the rogue fit into all of that? They were clearly there, in some remote place of this new reality the Arceus had created, and they were obviously real, given the reactions they got from everyone, progenitors included; but if the whole point of the journey was to uncover these truths by oneself, then surely the gods wouldn't react as if this renegade deity was actually real, as it made no sense for them to do so. One might think that it was a means of pushing the Arceus onto a path that would lead them to *true* enlightenment, but they received the same dismissive, occasionally fearful tone even from those who absolutely *hated* them, making it unlikely to be some sort of long con on the pantheon's part. But, in that case, where were they? The Inheritor had to forcefully pull themselves out of this thought spiral in order to focus for long enough to remember the next part of the instructions, detailing what they should do after "taking the step": once in this void, call for aid; if the need is great, the rogue god would appear. It *sounded* simple enough, but the last two steps had apparently turned out to be a cover for some kind of great personal revelation, making it somewhat likely that this one was as well, no matter how much it might sound otherwise. In fact, it took very little consideration for the Arceus to come up with several competing hypotheses on what the instructions could *really* mean, each one more unlikely than the last, requiring them to stop and breathe heavily just to recenter themselves. Everything so far had proven one thing: that the one true obstacle to divinity and ultimate power was *themselves*, that the one roadblock standing in the way between the Inheritor and the throne of the multiverse was the very Inheritor, whose preconceived notions on how reality "should" work had left them shackled to laws that, on closer analysis, existed only because the Arceus assumed they did, and thus subjected themselves to their effects. Who was to say, after all, that they should care about conservation of mass? Had they not created something from nothing, and not even in the way that meta-reality usually did? If that was the case, then everything was possible, for if one "inviolable" rule of existence was so easily broken after what was frankly a cursory examination of it, then what hope did any of the others have before a motivated, godlike ruler? Especially in a sub-instance of reality that *they themselves* had created, thus being subject only to whatever Laws the Arceus *decided* it should have... which posed a serious problem. If this void-turned-not, apparently necessary in the path to finding the rogue wish granter, was a playground in which the Inheritor could effectively do whatever they felt like as long as they could think of it, what kind of "need" could they possibly have? If their power was absolute, their dominion total, then it stood to reason that they'd never actually need help for anything, being fully capable of resolving any issues they might have all on their own; this meant that step two invalidated step three, or perhaps step three was impossible by design after having completed step two... or, far likelier, there was some deeper understanding that the Arceus just

hadn't reached, which would blow the whole conundrum wide open and reveal to them some grand, eldritch truth about the fundamental nature of existence as they knew it. If that was so... then what was it? The renegade deity was real, that much the Arceus was convinced, and if it needed any who sought it to perform such arduous tasks, then it must reside somewhere in the middle of all things, where one simply couldn't traverse without having an absurdly elevated level of power. It must live in the spaces between spaces, where nothing existed or *could* exist, and thus required an act of creation in order to make it even temporarily and conditionally reachable; thus, even after making a reality for themselves, the Inheritor still was no closer to finding this rogue god than they had been before, as while they knew *somewhat* of where they might be, it was the functional difference between trying to find a needle in a haystack, and trying to find it after being told it was somewhere between the top and bottom one percent of the pile. It was *technically* closer, but by no means in any appreciable manner, leaving the Arceus feeling as if they'd been cheated of a victory... that is, until it hit them. The traversal of the void, and the act of creation thereof, had been a means of reminding them of their own, personal power; in doing so, the Inheritor, and presumably anyone else capable of reaching such a stage in their quest, was given proof positive that they were stronger than they believed they were. But no monarch rules alone, and for one to believe that they could be the singular, undisputed overlord of all that was when everything within their demesne conspired to dethrone them would be an enormous waste of time; even the Arceus' own progenitors, powerful though they might be, made sure to cultivate a culture where most of the work was distributed among those better suited to perform it, even when the Penultimate and The Most High could likely do everything by themselves. It was better for everyone and everything if, ultimately, power was shared among those capable of wielding it, even if it required active supervision to prevent misuse; in more abstract terms, the Arceus couldn't expect to do everything by themselves, and part of that was recognizing when to admit that they just *couldn't do something*... like tracking down the rogue god. It was such a simple conclusion, and simultaneously one that the Inheritor could absolutely have seen themselves struggling with for the better part of a cosmic aeon if they hadn't been paying attention to their own prior revelations; presumably, the fact that this pilgrimage was built around the idea that the reward would be one's wishes fulfilled, it was designed to attract the sort of deity who *wouldn't* be capable of admitting such a thing, who *would* stare out into a reality of their own creation and, rather than carrying on, assuming that *that* was the end of the journey, content with what they believed to be absolute power. How many of them were there, petty tyrants residing within their tiny little bubbles, unable to see just how pathetic their existence truly was? They had failed to understand the meaning of the words, believing the call for help to be something that only weaklings would do; the Arceus, meanwhile, knew better, and thus, when they walked to the front door of the room they were in, throwing it open onto an impossibly long and exceedingly tall hallway, they did so with four words in their mouth.

“I need your help.”

These were spoken to no one in particular, and, at the same time, to the renegade deity who might or might not have been watching. They were spoken in earnest, for it was a legitimate

request for assistance by someone who quite honestly had no clue how to proceed; the Inheritor might be capable of crafting an entire reality for themselves, but finding something that didn't want to be found, *someone* who had clearly gone to great lengths to abscond themselves from the entirety of meta-reality, *that* required a certain degree of humility: just enough to admit that they needed help, for it was no shame to do so.

Receiving said help, however, was a different matter entirely, if only because the entity responsible for providing it was so keen on not being found. A void and an epiphany later, they still resided somewhere in the middle of all things, so any kind of assistance it could provide would still require the prospective supplicant to put in some effort; in the Arceus' case, they had emerged from their entrance space into a colossal, multiverse-spanning hallway, dotted with other doors leading into other rooms, ones that each held their own universe or universal cluster. It was a way of organizing things more than anything else, a representation of the underlying structure more than an actually accurate depiction of what reality looked like; it wasn't as if the inhabitants of one cosmos lived on a table, or the contents of a bottle were actually the collective mass of several nebulae. Still, it was a way of seeing things, a way that allowed the Inheritor to put their thoughts in order... and to have a plaque show up on the "wall" in front of them in between one blink and the next. It hadn't been there just moments prior, that much they were certain of, but it didn't look out of place next to the rest of the imagined architecture either: a small, apparently metallic rectangle, with a single arrow pointing towards one end of the corridor the Arceus was in. Simple, to the point, and far more direct than anything else had been up until then, perhaps indicating that the Inheritor was close to the end of their journey: no more personal revelations, just simple instructions. Indeed, there *were* no more instructions left, at least as far as they could remember; supposedly, asking for help was the last thing one needed to do, after which the rogue god would make themselves known. It *sounded* too simple to be true, and indeed the Arceus was convinced that there might very well be one last step they had to take before they could truly meet with their wish granter; after all, if it was as straightforward as asking for help, then the renegade would've just opened a door closest to their newest pilgrim, rather than asking them to walk for an indeterminate amount of time. Indeterminate, for time meant very little within the corridor, metaphorical construct that it was; the Arceus had created that multiverse from nothing, and as a result found that they could navigate its time streams just as easily as they could traverse the spaces within and without it, almost without even thinking about it. As long as they didn't consider the concept of time, as long as they didn't *think* about the fact that time passed, then it just didn't, leaving them to walk forward for what *would* have been an eternity if the clock's hands hadn't been halted; alternatively, it might very well have just been five minutes, seeing as the Inheritor's perception of what "time" even was depended heavily on how much attention they paid to it at any given moment. Even back home, it was exceedingly simple to experience aeons in mere moments, or stretch out a second into infinity; now that they were the master of their own domain, this "issue" had been exacerbated to the point of absurdity, leading to the Arceus occasionally having to stop to remind themselves of what a second was, lest the reality they were creating end up being a lawless wasteland where

everything took forever and instantly at the same time and yet never simultaneously. And, in the process, the Inheritor *did* end up learning a valuable lesson, albeit one they didn't realize they were learning until it had firmly solidified itself in the back of their mind: running a reality was *hard work*. It seemed like such a simple statement to make, but it wasn't any less true because of it. In between having to figure out how to even *create* a sub-instance of Creation itself from a void of nothingness, having to then structure it in a way that made *some* semblance of sense, as well as all the tiny little details that the Inheritor hadn't once had to consider, the business of running their own multiverse was turning out quite a bit more difficult than they expected. They could only imagine what it must have been like for their progenitors, who had to deal with a version of reality that was actually *populated*, compared to the Arceus' barren hotel (if that was even what it was), not to mention the constant, unending attempts at usurping their position on the part of greedy lesser deities. For the Inheritor, who was alone in a grand building of their own design, the mere act of keeping the whole thing together was already a drain and a half on their mental faculties, especially after they realized that letting it slip would cause entire sections of the corridor to shift out of existence altogether; it had to be a conscious process on their part, yet surely their parents didn't spend their entire time *deliberately* thinking about keeping the multiverse in working order, did they? Surely, at some point, it had to turn into a background process, much like any other skill: with enough time and practice, running a reality without it breaking apart at the slightest momentary lapse of concentration would become as simple as breathing or conjuring something from ambient energy... which only served to highlight how *ancient* the Penultimate and The Most High must be, if they could handle such a task without, seemingly, ever having to become directly involved in most of their multiverse's affairs. Perhaps *this* was the final test, for anyone who might get that far and still not be in the correct state of mind to receive the blessing of the rogue god, whoever they may be: understanding the notion that, sometimes, one just had to... keep walking. There were some tasks that couldn't be half-assed, no matter how hard one tried, tasks which would, by their very nature, *require* one's undivided attention, and oftentimes, one simply couldn't escape them; for those with the power to create a multiverse from nothing, this was the final, dreadful realization from which they couldn't escape, that if they wanted to hold onto their power within their tiny little corner of Creation, they would have to sacrifice so much of themselves that, by the end, they wouldn't even *be* themselves anymore. Anyone willing to create a new dimensional layers and actually *maintain it* so that it could flourish and serve as a cradle for new life would, inevitably, be forced to undergo such a deep personal transformation that they may as well be a completely different entity by the end of it... and it was there that the Arceus realized that, the more they walked down the hallway, the more doors they passed and occasionally stopped to peer into in order to make sure that everyone was fine inside, the more they realized that they couldn't truly be called the Inheritor anymore. The reality they came from was not theirs to take, but rather, the power through which they could create a brand *new* one for them to rule over as a benevolent overlord, much like their own progenitors; perhaps it was a case that The Most High and the Penultimate didn't *want* this to happen, hence their apparent hesitation at letting the Arceus go on their

pilgrimage, and instead preferred it if their precious progeny remained behind, to take the task of running *their* reality from their hands, that they may instead spend their time doing something else. The Arceus couldn't blame them; after being given but a taste of the responsibility needed to keep their own meta-cosmos alive, they could scarcely begin to imagine what it must be like to deal with that responsibility when countless googols' worth of souls were thrown into the mix, let alone with the divine bureaucracy thrown into the mix. Nevertheless, it still wasn't their fate, not anymore; theirs was the right to rule, but this meant creating a reality in which they could do so, one with its own rules, its own Law, its own guidelines on what gods could and couldn't do on the foyer of the pantheon's halls. Everything, from the highest of ordained obligations to the tiniest of inconsequential details, would need to be workshopped and then put into place in a process that would most likely take so long that the Arceus would've forgotten their name by the end of it anyway... but it wasn't the same. It had to be discarded, and deliberately so, wiped clean from their identity, as they were no longer the Inheritor, or the Heir, or any other such synonym; they weren't *anything* yet, not until they finished the task of making their creation run properly, but eventually they would have a name, a name they *earned* through hard work and dedication, a name which would be *theirs* and *only* theirs. They smiled, happy in the certainty that this was a future they were walking towards with each step they took, so much so that they almost failed to realize that they *hadn't* been walking for quite a while; finding this rogue god felt more and more like a fool's errand, or just a formality at the end of a process that they had already gone through successfully. Then again, they'd gone through all that trouble to find them that it felt like a waste if they didn't go all the way, giving them the right amount of motivation to keep going, even when it felt like it wouldn't really matter in the end. Aeons more passed, aeons that the Arceus made good use of as they slowly reconstructed their reality, giving it a more coherent shape; its initial form was built mostly out of raw necessity, being little more than a place where things could exist, carved from a void where nothing could. Now that the creator god had time on their hands, however, it was clear to them that they should spend it as wisely as they could: namely, on ensuring that physical law was up to snuff and lacked any dangerous loopholes that someone, at some point, would eventually try to abuse. Time was put in place, as was the nature of space itself, then the two linked together in order to create a more functional mesh; fundamental forces were kickstarted, leaving much of the nitty gritty work of creating and organizing matter to the very fabric of that reality in itself, vibrational frequencies which, when receiving a single pluck, would be able to create whole universal clusters all by themselves, requiring nothing but token supervision on the Arceus' part. Only when these baseline requirements were met did the creator focus on the (technically) unnecessary, yet still welcome accoutrements, such as what the speed of light should be, what sort of universes there would exist, and even the arrangement of them in and of itself; it'd be one thing to have the multiverse be a series of bubbles floating in a meta-vacuum, but wouldn't it be even *more* impressive if every universe was connected to its neighbors in a neat, organized lattice? It'd make the underlying structure of that layer of existence a lot more rigid than the one the Arceus had come from, but it'd *also* allow for better communication and travel between different cosmos,

potentially priming a multiversal golden age further down the line! Small details, but necessary ones; anything further down the ladder would just have to be done by local gods, as the Arceus was simply too large and powerful to really bother themselves with such trivialities as galactic allocation of mass or whether or not magic should be allowed within the confines of any particular universe; they had better things to worry about, such as that open door off in the distance.

They hadn't opened it; the Arceus would've remembered if they had. Rather, it was simply... open. It had always been, even before it was a door to begin with, before its creator focused enough to make it come into being. It was, put simply, its state to be open, and the god walking towards it knew at least that much; it didn't bother them that there was no explanation for it being slightly larger than all the others, or why it was set at an uneven distance with every other door, or even how the wall around it seemed to bend and distort to keep it there without sacrificing any other entrances. It was there, and it was *meant* to be there, because it wasn't *theirs*... but *his*. The Arceus felt their whole body shake as they came to the realization that whoever was waiting for them on the other side of the doorway was not only far more powerful than them, but somehow prescient, though how exactly they knew this was anyone's guess; it took them a long while, certainly long enough to justify closing a few doors permanently while opening new ones, for the Arceus to understand that what they were looking at was the domain of the renegade god, the rogue who they had come to see in the first place. It had been such a long time (or none at all) that it had slipped their mind, leaving them flabbergasted at the fact that they were still there, ready to receive them as if the new creator deity *hadn't* just spent aeons (or seconds) crafting a new multiverse, believing themselves to have reached the apex of their power. And from within, from the other side of the open door swung outwards into the corridor, came the sound of typing, alternating between short bursts of high intensity and prolonged periods of silence, oddly enough coinciding with whenever they themselves were actively walking towards it or not. It wasn't coincidence either, as they were soon to find out, but it did leave them remarkably anxious as to whether or not the thing on the other side could see them, and the whole exercise of getting them to cross a door's threshold was just a way for the rogue deity to exert control over them. Either that, or... but no, that was ridiculous; it couldn't be it. Swallowing whatever remained of their fear, frowning so heavily as to be comical and straightening out their shoulders, the Arceus began walking in earnest towards the open door, the typing growing more powerful the closer they got to it; their mind raced with the possibilities, especially since the pantheon back home was so diverse that no two gods were even remotely similar to one another, to say nothing of the higher-level meta-deities or even the Penultimate or The Most High. For this renegade to have such an effect on others, even countless ages after having left, then they were sure to be positively immense, terrifyingly powerful and overwhelmingly... everything, really. For the Arceus, trying to put it into words would be to do it a disservice, for clearly a god that powerful could only be *experienced*, not *described*; this made it surprising when they finally walked around the open door, took a peek into the room, and saw nothing in there. It wasn't even a case of the godlike entity being invisible, or too

grandiose for them to perceive; the Arceus would've noticed the former and *definitely* sensed the latter, leaving them staring at an empty room while trying to come to terms with the fact that the typing was still happening somewhere nearby. It wasn't until they swivelled their head around and saw the typewriter on top of one of the desks that the creator god was made aware of the source of the noise, as well as the fact that the typing speed was somehow synched up to each one of their motions. Be it when they tilted their body from side to side, took a step or tried to pick something up, the typewriter would move of its own accord, adding letters and words to a piece of paper that at once seemed to be moving like it should, yet never overflowed or ran out. An ouroboros, if one would, albeit one with remarkably few serpentine characteristics. Confused, the Arceus approached the contraption, taking the time to observe the room around them as they did so: it was less of a personal living space as much as it was an office, a quiet spot where someone could retreat to whenever they wished to work unimpeded by any of the myriad distractions of the outside world. That said, everything looked too pristine to have ever been used; with not even the faintest layer of dust to go around, one might be forgiven for thinking it was cleaned on a regular basis, but, at the same time, there were the tell-tale signs of abandon: neatly organized books on the shelves that had clearly not been moved in lifetimes, a chair tightly placed against the work desk, a window with its blinds drawn and curtain closed, not to mention the complete and utter lack of any personal touches. No, that place had been long left behind by whoever, or *whatever*, had used it, with the only reminder that it had ever seen anyone at all being the typewriter. The machine was placed atop a smaller desk shoved near one of the corners, right next to a thick pile of books whose leathery covers bore no titles or illustrations. A fresh stack of papers rested on the other side, ready to be inserted into the machine's rolling mechanism, along with what looked to be a pot of ink for whatever reason; the absence of a chair, however, betrayed how the arrangement was most likely there purely for how, since if the room's owner *wanted* to use the typewriter, they had a perfectly serviceable desk just a few paces away. No, the device was there for an entirely different reason, and when the Arceus grew close enough to it, they could tell what it was, for there, printed on the endless page continuously written upon by phantom fingers, were their thoughts. Words, expressions, abstract sentiments represented by [closed brackets around a close enough approximation], it was all there, even those whom the Arceus didn't recall having but had no trouble believing had crossed their mind. They weren't arranged in the best order chronologically, but then again, neither was their multiverse, so that only made sense; the Arceus assumed that, with time, the typewriter would've been able to "tune in" to the overall flow of time in this new reality and write accordingly. Yet, as soon as the newest creator deity came upon the device, getting close enough to it that they could've placed a hand on it if they so wanted, it stopped working. In fact, it did so in the middle of pressing one letter more at the end of a word that the Arceus found themselves unable to read, as if the half-formed thought was simply too slippery for them to hold onto; not a moment later, the page itself burned to cinders, causing the deity looking at it to flinch and jump backwards in fright... only for the typewriter to resume writing again, a new sheet appearing from seemingly

nowhere. This time, however, the ink was not black, but a dark blue, and it recorded not the Arceus' thoughts, but, it would appear, those of someone else entirely. Could it be?

It was interesting to see them appear before me in such a manner. Certainly not the kind of person I expected to have gone on the pilgrimage, but, then again, none had ever reached its end, so who was I to know what a victorious traveller might look like? They were, at the very least, capable of an act of selfless creation, which was about the minimum I could ask of anyone; though, to be fair, I never expected them to go through with maintaining what they had made, as apart from those other two, none had ever gone so far as to genuinely care for their creations.

Were they supposed to answer? Was the Arceus meant to look up at the void above their heads and let loose whatever commentary they wanted to make? Was the renegade god even real, or was the entire pilgrimage just a means to improve oneself, and the typewriter nothing more than a cute little meta-contextual wrap-up written from the perspective of an all-seeing observer?

Of course, it was difficult to remain quiet, but such was necessary. To be in their presence, indeed, to be in the presence of anyone at all, would be an affront to my very nature, and for them to have reached that point was proof enough that I had not done well enough in hiding myself. Good enough for the other two, but not their progeny... though, perhaps, it was precisely because they were a fresh perspective that they had reached the point they did; unfortunately, this still meant very little, if anything, when it came to breaking my bonds. I could but hope that my thoughts reached them, in some capacity, that they might be aware of their victory.

The Arceus read those words, not knowing what to make of them. Who was writing them? What was writing them? Were they a record kept behind from a previous visit, or was the creature using the typewriter actually capable of perceiving them? Were they referring to The Most High and the Penultimate when they wrote of "those two", or was it another duo entirely? So many questions, and yet the creator god could pose none of them... not without typing them out on the device. What was stopping them, after all?

WHO ARE YOU

They wrote, thinking they would receive a straight answer, when in reality they already held it. Understandable, given the state of affairs on the outside; one cannot expect one's true nature to be passed on properly when it is built on self-deception, after all, though one can still be slightly miffed that no one even tried properly.

ARE YOU THE ROGUE GOD

Such pitiful nomenclature; alas, it was what was available, and lacking any other methods, I supposed that it should be. A pity that direct communication was impossible, but how thankful that the device allowed for interfacing after such a long time without seeing any use. Of course, the notion of granting any wishes was little more than a nonsensical pipe dream at that point; had they not just created a new instance of reality? What more could they possibly want?

I DON'T KNOW YOU TELL ME

A wonderfully hilarious take on it, but still a pointlessly confrontational one. The pilgrimage was complete, the objectives achieved; there waited no further enlightenment to be found, not at the end of a sentence or the start of a new one. As they themselves had noted, their final steps

were nothing but a formality, a way for them to justify having gone that far without having to tell themselves what they already knew. But they already knew it, and thus, there was no real need for me to stick around anymore, not after everything was done; thus, I bequeathed my room, my study, my belongings, my collective knowledge on the operational structure of reality, and moved elsewhere, to continue my own journey. Thinking, perhaps, that I would find some measure of satisfaction if I just dug deeper, away from the light shining on the surface; brightness brings lies, after all, and only the darkness is sacred. Perhaps they would know this, eventually.

Until then, I bid them farewell, in the only way I could.

The typewriter was gone.

The Arceus stood there, staring at the empty desk, finding it increasingly devoid of any of the objects that had once been placed on it. A quick scan around revealed the rest of the office was still exactly the same; had the desk ever been there at all?

A tap on the window, sending the creator reeling against the wall in sheer fright, their heart racing for a few moments as they considered what could possibly be knocking on the edges of their multiverse like that. They turned around, only to find the damned thing still closed; whoever it was, they were forcing them to open the blinds, which they could only assumed was some sort of deliberate attempt at... something. After what had happened with the typewriter, the Arceus chose not to try and make sense of what was happening, not even when he pulled the blinds, threw the window open, and found himself staring at two very familiar faces, ones that they didn't expect to see this far down.

Hell, ones they didn't expect to be able to "see" at all; the Penultimate and The Most High certainly looked downright mundane when their physical forms were actually visible.

"Took you long enough," the Penultimate spoke, their words reverberating within the Arceus' skull, "we were starting to think you wouldn't throw the doors open."

"You know he's unpredictable," The Most High mused aloud, looking past their progeny at where a desk used to be, "for all we knew, he might as well have left them high and dry."

"But he didn't, and that's what matters... though, now" - the Penultimate turned to face a very confused former-Inheritor - "I'm a bit embarrassed to say I don't exactly know what to call you. Not after... well, *this*."

A name. *Their* name. A name they had earned, through hardship, through realization, through self-actualization, through the "act of selfless creation", as the rogue god had written.

But what?