

**“Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life...  
these pages must show.”**

**David Copperfield**

**For my love.  
She tried desperately to make me understand the nature of  
the female human mind. I confess that I can only pretend  
to understand.**

**Blue Dragon**

**Birthei silvatras eth chimatras  
Manerai uth inith eth jominis**

**Silvara 'th chimara  
Filerai uth nitrith eth jominis**

**Bird of creation and destruction  
Mother of One and None**

**Creator and destroyer  
Daughter of Two and None**

## Living

To the perception of mankind Gods act in mysterious ways. Sometimes they seem kind, sometimes they must surely be cruel. From the little that we have seen of them and from the little that we have understood, we must guess and invent the rest. Most of their divine world remains at present unfathomable. Sometimes their thoughts are made clear to us, or at least as clear as they can be to our simple minds. We dare not question these undeniable Godly truths, but when they are proven to be false, we have to conclude that the impossible and the unbelievable can't be anything else but the truth. Could we but begin to understand that Gods are also living beings, which live and die on other realms of existence! Perhaps they have created us. If so, then maybe some of them have forgotten us, as we sometimes forget them. Suffice it to say that they too have been created, though be it with another sense of time and space!

## The Games

*“In honour of the Great Player...Let the new games begin!”*

The sharp, hollow voice of The First boomed across the colourless arena of new universe. The enthusiasm of the gathered spectators swirled and roared into the void, flooding the contestants of the new age with their cheers. They had all gathered here for these games, travelling from various realms (or *dimensions* as some scribes erroneously tend to call them).

Thor smiled and inclined his head towards Reorx, attempting in vain to yell above the deafening noise. Reorx shook his head frowning and with an indifferent shrug he pointed at his ears. His lips spoke the words “I can’t hear you!”

The seven contestants of the new universe turned in silent impatience towards the tribune where The First presided and waited for the cheering to subside. Gradually the rumble lessened and the multitude settled down in their seats. In eager anticipation they watched the tribune where The First still remained enshrouded in darkness.

*“Thou hast been chosen amongst thy peers to compete in these here games of the new eternity. To the ultimate victor will be granted the title of Creator.”*

The First came forward from the shadows with his arms stretched out towards the spectators in a magnanimous gesture. He was old and looked it. His long grey hair hung down like tangled vines and you could see his one eye burning behind. Where his face shone through, it showed sickly white. Although his body seemed feeble, his voice remained clear and strong.

*“Hast thou chosen thy hero?”*

*“Aye!” the crowds yelled in unison*

*“Contestants! Receive thy force!”*

*Training had been arduous, but to the victor would belong the spoils. However hard the tuning of their skills had been, they had also needed to grovel for the favours of their would-be supporters. No contestant in the games could do without these favours. At last they would harvest the fruits of their seemingly unending, obsequious politics. Or should it be called bootlicking? True, personal skill was important. But what’s the use of throwing a comet with perfect skill, if you’re not given the magical power to create life afterwards?*

The chosen seven stood in the empty arena as the force of creation surged into them. There was no floor or ground beneath their feet, only nothingness. Colourless marble pillars circled around them and supported tier upon tier of huge black marble benches. Here sat their supporters. Most of the enthusiasts had already chosen their favourite hero, but as always a few tried their hand at cheating. They waited until the very end and tried to add their force to the contestant that seemed the most popular with the crowd. Their hunger to be on the winning side grew deep. Even too deep! If their champion won, they could expect gratitude in return and with it their share of power and glory. After all, this was what the games were all about. Every god knew that the champion would come only second in power to The First. The winning fraction would dominate the new eternity and would rule supreme.

The flow of the force ebbed to a trickle and stopped. As always a few culprits had doubted too long. One could not remain a spectator without participating. Such was the Dogma and their destruction and banishment to the Netherplanes was

quick and irreversible. They would be gods no longer. Perhaps some of the stronger and more fortunate would survive somewhere as demons, vindictively torturing the weak and unfortunate.

Reorx felt nervous and disappointed. He knew he had the skill, but his cold, proud, haughty mien had cost him dearly. He had hoped to receive superior Force, but the popular Thor had been luckier. Comely Aphrodite started second, but he wasn't worried about her. Pretty as she was, her skill was but average. He was worried about Thor though. His pitching skills equalled his own. This battle would be ferocious, but as his hand brushed across a cunningly hidden pocket in his uniform, he smiled slyly to himself.

*"It'll be alright... no matter how this goes..."*

Thor had already wished all his other opponents the best of luck during the contest. As he approached, Reorx turned his back on him sneeringly. Recognising the ruse to try and make him lose his temper, Thor kept his otherwise impetuous nature in check.

*"Nice try, Spinks. You'll have to find a smarter way to get me disqualified."*

Reorx fumed at the degrading nickname, but dared not show his anger. He had liked his old baggy shorts, because they provided him with a cool and airy feeling. The fact that they were pink was more or less a coincidence. He had already made up his mind to have a word with his mother about this. That Thor had found out about them completely by accident was just plain bad luck. Ah... well... It was no use crying over spilt mead. Reorx had burnt these pink shorts immediately, but the damage had been done. Ever since that moment he had been dubbed "Spinks, God of Shorts". He had vowed to get

even for the constant abuse that he had had to put up with. The start of the games had come and his hunger for revenge had not diminished.

*“By the way...”* Thor continued - the congenial smile still on his face. *“We are all here to win! Whomever the Great Player pushes towards victory... let the best god win.”*

He offered his hand but Reorx ignored it blatantly.

Thor’s subtle use of the nickname had shattered Reorx’s concentration. Suppressing his boiling anger, Reorx desperately tried to regain control of his emotions.

Lightning flashed seven times and accompanied by the blaring noise of trumpets the seven contestants turned to face the tribune of The First.

A pompous-looking herald dressed up in the required purple ceremonial attire called out their names one by one.

*“Thor of the Northern Realms of Aesir”*

In response Thor struck his right fist to his breast forcefully and raised his hand in salute towards the tribune:

*“Hail the First! I am prepared!”*

*“Aphrodite of the House Aphros”*

Aphrodite, the only goddess among them, struck a little less forcefully. Even a goddess’s breast tends to be somewhat sensitive.

*“Hail the First! I am prepared!”*

*“Neptune of Atlantis”*

*“Hail the First! I am prepared!”*

*“Kadori of the Renegades”*

*“Hail the First! I am prepared!”*

*“Halye of the Floating Realms”*  
*“Hail the First! I am prepared!”*

*“Kashima Ssuki-Jomi”*  
*“Hail the First! I am prepared!”*

*“Reorx of the House Spinks”*

Thor hissed through his teeth with a sharp intake of breath, startled at the obvious public humiliation. The others glanced nervously at Reorx. What would he do now? Never had such a breach of the Dogma occurred.

Reorx however had reclaimed his concentration and seemed not to have heard, although he must have... His face was pale and drawn, but his composure remained relaxed. The spectators had not heard as they were beyond hearing; their eager anticipation was focused on more important things to come.

*“Hail the First! I am prepared!”*

The inauguration ended and a tangible hush fell over the arena... One female voice suddenly shouted out loud in the stillness: *“Thor, I love you!”*

The tension broke and the arena burst with laughter. Thor’s eyes gleamed in his efforts to refrain from smiling, but he succeeded in keeping his cool.

*Quiet, please!*

The noise subsided to a murmuring whisper. The First tallied no longer. In accordance with the Dogma he kept his ancient face carefully devoid of any emotion, but nodded nevertheless approvingly at the group. They all seemed extraordinary contestants, but Thor had begun to stand out as his favourite. He liked the jovial young god and his own spying ministers

had confirmed time and again that he was a suitable candidate to become his right hand. Thus The First had felt that it was his divine right to join in the attempts to sway the public opinion in favour of this young Thor.

The First pointed his right arm upward toward the olympus. His black velvet sleeve slid down, revealing a pale, thin, age-worn arm. Tensing his fingers backwards in a clawlike grip a black egg seeped from his palm draining its power from his mind and body. Lovingly he caressed the egg with a tired left hand. He hesitated; loathing to let the object fly. His own power poised in his fingers, ready to fall down into the pulsing object or to flow back into his arm. He was one with the egg and letting it go would sap his strength completely. Gritting his teeth he braced himself for the inevitable exhaustion that would strike him. There was no shame in falling. From the corner of his eye he saw his aides move towards him. They would be ready to catch him if his legs would not support him anymore. For a few more moments more he kept up the suspense. Suddenly he launched the primeval egg towards the centre of the void in the arena. The egg grew as it sped on. To the spectators it looked like an enormous black hole. Growing and growing, the power trapped in its dark prison pulsed and vibrated. As the black hole neared its destination, he pointed a finger at the receding target and spoke a single word of command. With a big bang the captive forces exploded into an expanding radiation of nebula, stars and planets of all colours and shapes.

The theatre of the games was set. The seven stood unmoving as the swirling blackness and dots of light around them slowly receded toward the distance. Gone were all those hours in the antechamber with their minds full of anticipation. Relaxing had been virtually impossible and some had spent quite some time in laxation. The moment of truth and daring had arrived.

Prove your worth in the game of creation and create life from nothing!

*Little did they know that this would be the last Games!*

—

The young Gilean had been appointed scribe of the games. As he sat there scribbling down his description of these events, his face seemed chiselled of marble and he kept his grey eyes devoid of any emotion. Books were his one and only passion. This unique commission as scribe and historian had made him extremely happy, yet he would rather die than show his passion. Even as a child he had been a bookworm; a “*god of nerds*”, blessed –or perhaps cursed- with the gift of all-seeing. Somehow he was aware of all events everywhere as they transpired. An adult mind in a child’s body. As a child he had suffered dearly at the hands of his puny peers, because they could not understand how the rush of time affected his mind. Even adults had treated him as a freak. Vague rumours went around about one particular incident involving his mother and father. Ever since that day he seemed without emotions. Why? Nobody really knew. This mystery was better left with Gilean himself? He had found comfort and even happiness in written solitude. Nobody had ever really cared much about this loner, except for the Great Player himself. He had been impressed with his scholar’s devotion and had granted him free access to all the other godly planes – or dimensions as Gilean called them jokingly.

This “god of nerds” didn’t care in the least who would win these games. The seriousness of his task was all that mattered... was all that would ever matter to him.

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Scribble... scribble...

*“Halye is up next and moves to the pitcher’s hill. He walks to the olympus and chooses an easy comet. He is nervous and pitches too hard. His comet misses its mark completely. The trail of ice and fire continues on its way towards the end of eternity, doomed to swing forever back and forth through space.”*

Gilean pauses his writings to calculate the trajectory of the runaway comet. Frowning he jots a note on the margin of the page:

*“Prediction:*

*Aphrodite’s Earth, a small blue planet she has managed to imbue with life. In the Fifth Age of the Solus the comet thrown by Halye will pass too close to this Earth. The heaviness of the comet’s mass will disrupt the balance contained in the planet’s core. Most of the life forms living on land will be drowned in the ensuing floods.”*

—

The games continue slowly. A few pitches fail, but quite a few achieve orbit around a planet and become permanent moons. Of those only a very small number release their life-creating magic.

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An ancient, lonely dragon stood on the tundra, grievously hurt and weary to the death. None had ever reached such a blessed age, but he knew that finally his hours were numbered. His lacerated back throbbed painfully. Three days ago the attacks on his herd had begun. Three long days they had managed to fight off the gang of predators that were pursuing them. Their flight towards the warmer southern plains had seemed endless, but now the escape through the narrow mountain pass was

drawing near. How he had struggled to keep up with his herd! Never sleeping... always watching... So far all attacks had been repelled, but despair sat heavily on his mind. Now, when finally their escape was imminent, he felt his strength give out. He had started to lag behind and the prowling raptors didn't take long to catch up.

Twelve of them surrounded him now. A quick glance showed that his herd had disappeared from sight. Perhaps they were already safe. This would be his last stand. He would die here and buy as much time as possible for his family.



A whining grew in the distance. The noise quickly turned unbearable. He glanced up briefly towards the roaring glow that distracted him and realized too late that he had made his last and fatal mistake. The raptors were all over him in the flash of a second. The thump of his enormous body drowned in the roaring explosion as the crashing comet hit the mountains behind him. Fire blasted outward in an ever-growing deadly circle of destruction. Here... all life ceased. As the storm of fire and dust swept onward, the light of the grieving sun hid behind billowing black clouds of dust and ashes. His death had been swift... others would be less fortunate.

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An unfortunate throw... A few in the crowd laugh and jeer, but many of her supporters sigh. They had voted for Aphrodite with their hearts or perhaps too much with their eyes. The pretty Aphrodite had been extremely lucky so far. She had known in her heart that such luck could not last, but with the rush of the adrenaline hope had begun to pump through her veins. Waving half-heartedly at her supporters she leaves the arena.

*"...The showers run icy water, but she hardly feels. The water drops hide her quiet tears. They will lighten her disappointed heart."*

Gilean turns his mind's eye away from the girl and continues to write as the games draw towards their conclusion.

### **Deus ex machina**

Reorx's pitch would be his last and also the last in these games. Only he and Thor remain in the finals with their score a tie, but Reorx has this one throw left. He turns around and glances at Thor. Enmity had turned to tolerance. Tolerance had grown towards respect. Respect had bred mutual admiration. They were still far from friendship, but these past ages during the games did what words and rules could not.

Thor winked smiling. Reorx acknowledged the silent praise with a slight nod. This was his moment of triumph and revenge - and cheating - was far from his mind.

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Scratch... scratch... roars the quill on the parchment.

*"An icy silence hangs in the arena. Reorx walks up to the olympus to retrieve the last comet, a fiery red one; he stops for*

*just one moment and looks up at the crowds. His eyes glint as he picks up the burning comet. He knows that he will win.”*

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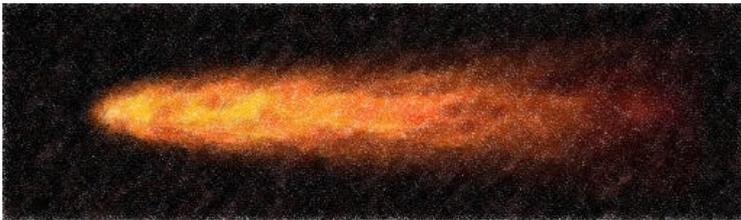
*“Steady now. Clear your mind.”*

Slowly and deliberately Reorx turns away from his target. The hot ball almost burns his cheek. With a powerful sweep of his arm his body arches forward into the pitch.

*“Hullo. My name is T [REDACTED] f [REDACTED] t. I hope I...”*

(For some reason Gilean seems to have deliberately erased the name from the document.)

During one fraction of time Reorx’s mind and body freeze as seemingly out of nowhere a kender suddenly stands in front of him. The comet leaves his hand on its long journey across the universe. Movement slows down. The stadium roars to silence as his mind races away locked lovingly to his streaking comet.



The quill perpetuates...

*“His heart beats frantically and skips several beats as he fears disaster. But his aim was perfect enough. Reorx is the new Champion. The unexpected appearance of the kender has not affected the result...”*

Gilean stops writing and his eyes follow the kender’s hand wandering through Reorx’s pockets – apparently doing what

kender are expected to do. Gilean returns to his writing with a small headshake and adds the word “yet” to his last sentence.

*“The kender had not intended to arrive here. The object that has transported him to this place seems to have misguided him. His small hand is already transforming this travelling device for a quick departure”*

—

The kender continues his interruption...

*“...I didn’t startle you.”*

Reorx’s mind skids to a halt. Open-mouthed he and Thor stare at the small unfamiliar appearance. The kender on the other hand feels immediately at ease in these unfamiliar surroundings. He grabs Reorx’s hand and they shake hands... or rather the kender shakes Reorx’s hand in true kender-fashion. This means of course that his other hand continues to search Reorx’s pockets for something interesting.

*“Dear me...I almost didn’t recognize you! Last time I saw you, you were hiding behind a tree on that island where those unfortunate people had suffered such an interesting fate. You seem to look a lot younger...”*

Hesitatingly he adds:

*“... and you are not a dwarf...”*

The brightly coloured clothes contrast heavily with the kender’s complexion. Lines of sorrow mar the kender’s brow. His wrinkles and the topknot of greying hair betray his old age.

*“I have already been to the future once... Maybe I’m there again. But then you wouldn’t look so young, would you? That’s it! I have gone back to the past just as I intended, but*

*why did I land here? I don't want to be here! Not that this is not a nice place, but I really have to be somewhere else."*

Adding to the confusion the kender's mind starts to wander off.

*"Say, have you been to the Queen's Place yet? Or doesn't it exist yet? I've been there twice, you know. The second time you were there too... or rather will be there too. Dreadful place! Not at all like this place."*

The kender pauses to take a breath and looks at his feet. Very carefully he stamps his foot.

*"This is really wonderful standing here on nothing. Why don't I fall down? This doesn't feel like flying. Haven't you got any dragons here? Did you know that they love to fly me around?"*

Seeing the startled look on Reorx's face change to a wondering frown, the kender decides to quickly change the subject. *"Clearly they are far from ready to hear me tell about their own mistakes, let alone my own!"* he thinks.

*"Is Paladine here too? I would sure like to meet him again and talk about old times...or should I say future times."*

The kender sighs while his fingers continue to transform the sceptre he is holding.

*"This time-thing is very interesting. Well, it's not really a thing; since you can't put it in a bag or such. And you can't drop it on the floor. Maybe if you could find a way to freeze it...but that would probably take a frost dragon. I have met one some time ago and I don't particularly care to meet one again. I seem to be forever trying to get where I want to. One should think that a wizard would have made time travelling a bit easier. It's all very confusing. I seem to have travelled back in time, but I'm*

*not where I want to be. This device... I know I promised to give it back. I just borrowed it for a few days and it keeps dropping me off in all these strange places. And then it met C█████n in the future and he died, and now I have to get back to the past to save him.”* (Again Gilean has scratched out the name he had originally written)

*“Maybe I wasn’t supposed to think about you Gods and what a strange game you play with us mortals, but I couldn’t help it. I promise not to do that anymore!  
Forgive me for leaving you so quickly. I’m sure you would like to chat some more, but I have to go and save my friend.”*  
And the kender disappears.

—

Gilean adds a small remark at the bottom of the page:  
*Although this small humanoid is a kender, I know nothing else about him. I have to conclude that what he says is true, that he really is a creature from the future. Inadvertently he has already changed his and our future. Knowledge of his existence should not yet be known to us. I cannot see what consequences this will have. For what it’s worth, I have decided to cross out the names as I recorded them. In all likelihood this will not help to avoid the future from being influenced.”*

—

*“Oops. That wasn’t very polite. I should have said goodbye. Ah well, too late now. I’m sure that they will understand”.*

From long habit the kender absentmindedly rummages through his purses, checking to see if everything is still there. His hand encounters an unfamiliar object.

*“Jeepers, how did this get into my purse. Reorx must have put it there by accident, instead of into his own pocket. I had no idea that Gods would do such a silly thing. I’ll have to go back and give it back... eventually.”*

The object appears to be a soft lump of clay that is warm to the touch.

*“This is curious. It’s warm.”*

Tass checks his purse but finds nothing that could have warmed up the clay.

*“Wow. It’s the clay itself that is warm”.*

He carefully prods the soft matter with his finger, but nothing happens.

*“It’s definitely not alive.”*

His finger digs a small hole into the clay...

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*“Scratch... scratch...”*

Gillian claps his book shut. Nobody notices how hurriedly he leaves the arena.

His last sentence reads:

*“And thus God War I commences!”*

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A small rift in the fabric of space appears directly in the path of Reorx’s comet. A giant finger seems to prod through the hole, but disappears just as quickly as it has appeared. Was that an eye that peeped through?

The comet hits the rift and seems to be swallowed completely. Only a tiny broken-off fragment continues its journey. The chasm closes as if a giant hand has kneaded it away.

What caused that comet to disappear? Who cheated Reorx out of his victory? The Dogma decrees that The First must declare the winner if the contest ends in a draw. Is it justified that he chooses Thor as the victor of the games?

The gods grow angry. They see the shard bore into a planet and destroy the surrounding city and lay waste to the surrounding countryside. Their anger burns to rage and the universe trembles as it feels the anger of the gods warring amongst themselves.

Where did the rest of the comet go? Hurling on through another dimension it strikes a small bright star and explodes upon impact. The magical energy that is released wreaks havoc, but to every action happens an opposite reaction. Destruction turns to creation. Reorx should have won the Games, but none bears witness to this exceptional magical wonder. Agreed! It's not just Reorx's doing. A kender has had a very small finger in the result...



Twin suns are born from the cataclysm. One shines bright; the other seems to draw all light into its blackness. The planet Nuit had no moon and was barren of life. Five moons now circle this lonely planet.

And then there is life...