

Part I: The Beginning

In the beginning, there was nothing. Neither space, nor void, nor time. Only one thing existed in the beginning. A single being. Yet, to label such a manifestation as a mere *being* would be considered a massive understatement. In the boundless expanse of nothingness, all that existed was Nhil. From the nothingness came a thin, barely visible strand as thin as a hair. It elongated and expanded chaotically as if fighting to become a new shape. In what seemed to be an abrupt explosion that could echo throughout infinity, if such a concept existed, spawned the physical form of Nhil. Nhil's eyes opened instantaneously with a hint of confusion yet subtle familiarity. Nhil was small and slender. His body looked nearly emaciated. Long white hair draped in front of his face, concealing his large, piercing eyes that seemed to occupy at least half of his face. The hypnotic nature of his gaze was made more alluring by the seemingly infinite rings that extended from his pupil to the outermost edges of Nhil's eyeballs. At that time, Nhil had no arms or legs. He was merely a disconnected series of parts. A torso floated several meters from his face. His torso. Legs were floating around him as if simultaneously drawn toward him magnetically, yet slightly repelled. Aimless in their direction. Nhil's skin was as black as the void of space itself. If one were to set eyes upon Nhil in the void, perception would be nearly impossible as Nhil's skin seemed to almost be one with the void itself. The only thing one would be able to see were two large spirals floating gently. Staring back. Unblinking.

At this time, there was no up, no down, no sense of direction—only an infinite void. Yet, immediately within Nhil, an urge surged. A relentless need to create. Where did this urge come from? Not even Nhil knew for sure. At this time, the origins of Nhil were incomprehensible even to Himself. Nhil's purpose--completely unknown. How long had Nhil even existed? He had questions but couldn't conclude any sensible answer. Nhil's torso and legs instantaneously snapped together and merged with his head. Immediately, from his torso, hands shot out and began to hover around the vicinity of Nhil's newly assembled body. He raised his hands high above his head almost in shock and amazement. And from those hands, a series of tissue, sinew, and veins formed arms from his hands, which instinctively connected to Nhil's torso like tendrils sprouting from either end and intertwining. And from those hands, His fingertips began to glow a blinding white light that illuminated the colorless void of existence. And from His fingertips burst stars, their light piercing the infinite darkness of the void. Immediately, Nhil arced his right hand in front of Himself in a gentle yet decisive motion. And with this movement, planets exploded into existence spontaneously. Each one, unique. Brimming with potential. Though, at this time, the planets were dull and lifeless. Each massive rock was a monochromatic sphere or egg of various sizes simply hovering in the void of space rapidly. Many had been colliding with each other and began to take strange shapes as a result. Large chunks of rock flung from many of these planets, flinging in every direction. "This isn't right", Nhil thought to himself. Nhil held his hands in front of him, commanding everything to stop. The planets slowed down to a very subtle creep. Their movements, so slow that they almost appeared paused.

Nhil could sense something was missing on each of these planets. But what? With a snap, atmospheres stretched across each of the planets. Then, in rapid succession, Nhil split the

rocks and pulled water from between them. Within moments, deserts, tundras, forests, jungles, and any other imaginable ecosystem cloaked various sections of each created planet all at once. Like wildfire, tiny buds began to form from newly created ecosystems in an instant. And, not before long, those buds matured into various black and white creatures of all shapes and sizes. These creatures, while distinct in size and scale, looked similar. Unremarkable. They appeared almost as blobs crawling around the planet. Barely distinguishable eyes and what could vaguely be considered hands and feet could be identified. These creatures slowly slumped along the land. Their pace was cautious. Their expressions, hopeless. It was almost as if their very existence caused them immense pain and agony. Despite this, these creatures had no mouths to emit sound. They also had no destination. And so they simply crawled pointlessly. Nhil looked upon what he had made thus far. Something was missing.

Nhil continued to work. For an unfathomable duration of time, He created. And created. And created. He could not determine why he was creating. It felt instinctual. It was almost as if he was recreating a familiar setting. Still, as Nhil worked hard, he couldn't help but ask himself, *Why?*

As the cosmos flourished, Nhil surveyed His labor with a slight sense of pride. Though He was no closer to learning about His origins or purpose, an ember of what could best be described as joy filled the mysterious being. Draped in the darkness of the cosmos and gazing at all He created, the contentment that was recently present in an instant vanished. An inexplicable emptiness gnawed at Nhil. A void within that the brilliance of His creations could not quite fill. Nhil still wondered: *What was His purpose in this grand design?* He'd float for what could be considered at least ten thousand years, pondering this question. Alone.

Part II: The Trinity

Alone. Floating aimlessly, Nhil felt lost. He had been in deep contemplation trying to consider where he came from and what his purpose was. But every scenario he considered proved fruitless. No answers came to greet his mind. There were no revelations. One day, sporadically, an idea came to Nhil. It was as if a voice called out to him from far away. Nhil had never felt this before. Up until this point, he'd mainly been acting instinctively. He snapped in a sudden burst of excitement. Perhaps other beings just like Him could help ponder his origins. Alone, he could only ponder an infinite number of ideas. But with more beings like him, pondering alongside him, the infinite ideas could be multiplied by another infinity. Surely, this would lead to a solution, rationalized Nhil.

Without hesitation, Nhil took his right hand and ripped a chunk of his own flesh. It pulsed and emitted a bluish-gray smoke from his body. Without hesitation, with his left hand, he began reaching into the void of the cosmos. From the void Nhil grabbed a dark mass of what seemed to be a mixture of galaxies--a collective of planets and stars, which he managed to compress into a dense ball-like substance. He smashed the two together and twisted them in his palms, molding them together like clay. He mashed a multitude of these spherical galaxies with so much force, they dissipated into dust. The dust began to disperse around Him. Then, he swiftly shaped the dust together into a cube. He compressed the cube, and then molded it like dough.

He manipulated the substance over and over and over again until suddenly stopping. Something felt right. It was perfect. Nhil then firmly, and after a brief moment, pulled the mixture apart like into a long string-like clay.

Stretched into existence was a tall, frail being with thick white hair, black eyes with crystal pupils, and large wings that seemed far too large for its body. The being looked at its hands, feet, and wings calmly. It was not shocked. It was not surprised. It almost seemed to expect this. It was as if this creature had anticipated its own creation. Its long, bony hands caressed its face curiously. There was no surprise. No curiosity. No happiness. No sadness. This being simply looked upon Nhil with a neutral expression from its withered, aged, unblinking face.

Nhil spoke aloud for the first time as he gently smiled at the creature. The voice of Nhil caused the void itself to shake and rattle violently. "My first creation. Made with my powers and in my image. You shall be known as Adonis". Nhil's voice carried the weight of all things at once. The voice was childish yet wise and aged, all at once. Listening to Nhil was similar to listening to at least fifty different voices speak the exact same words all at once. However, each voice carried a slightly different tone. A slightly different cadence. A slightly different resonance. Each voice could be individually identified and plucked from the others by the ear. Yet, none of them were distinct enough to be known as a single voice.

"As you wish, Lord Nhil", sternly replied Adonis without blinking. Nhil weakly smiled and looked over as the cosmos continued to rattle. A high pitch echoed back from nowhere and an arm tore wildly through the hole like an animal trapped in a bag, desperately trying to escape. Another creature rolled through the void rapidly, whizzing between Nhil and Adonis, seemingly unable to grasp how to float in the void. It kicked and punched violently at the air. The creature was youthful and feminine in design. Panicked, breathing heavily, and with large surprised eyes, the small, technicolored, and voluptuous being with one emerald and one sapphire eye frantically asked, "Who are you? Where are we? Who am I? Where did I come from?"

Questions spewed from her mouth like rapid-fire. In the span of seconds, she asked at least seven hundred different questions relating to where she came from and who she was. Her sudden existence was a shock to her and she was struggling to comprehend anything that was occurring at the moment. The being was both intrigued and terrified all at once. However, silence abruptly arrived. The creature looked at Nhil.

"You created me. And I'm a part of you...aren't I?" She calmed herself and her wild mannerisms suddenly dulled.

"So you understand, Eva?" Nhil gave her a semi-smile and seemed happy by her question.

"Yeah. Kinda. I'm still a little confused. Why is everything black and white?"

Adonis looked at Eva curiously. While the concept of *black* and *white* seemed to stun him, Eva's ability to shift from one topic to a completely unrelated topic was what truly caused his face to take a new form. This was possibly the first major expression ever worn on his face.

"Black and White?", replied Nhil. He had a partial smile but a subtle look of confusion. Suddenly, it appeared as though his creations were teaching him things that he had somehow never considered. Perhaps this decision to create partners would pay off as desired.

"Yeah! Everything's too similar. It's sooooo boring. We need a bit of *color* to spice things up. Like this!" Eva arced both of her arms exactly as Nhil did when He first woke up. A stream of color burst from Eva's hands and instantly enveloped everything created by Nhil. Suddenly, the planets, the deserts, the forests, every ecosystem, and the creatures that inhabited these ecosystems seemed more lively. The stars seemed to shine just slightly brighter. The water, the skies, and the grass suddenly had a new sense of life and vibrance to them. Even the slug-like creatures, now a variety of incoherent patterns and colors jumbled together, moved with more purpose and slightly bore a grateful expression in their eyes.

"See! This is way better", exclaimed Eva with a massive and proud grin on her face.

Adonis looked around at everything, expressionless. Nhil grinned, "So, it is. Marvelous". "Lord Nhil, before we get too distracted by Lady Eva's creations, I believe you were about to create Sir Lilianus". Adonis spoke with hesitation at the mention of Lilianus. It was as if he was cautious to voice his concern. Adonis had a strange voice. It was like a whisper that permeated the mind. While he appeared to barely be speaking, his raspy voice was clearly heard by both Eva and Nhil to the extent that it could be considered telepathy more than speaking. Nhil was slightly taken aback at his creations. Eva managed to fill reality with color, effectively changing his creation entirely. Albeit, for the better. Adonis was also demonstrating a unique ability. It was almost as if He and Adonis shared the same mind as Adonis intuitively understood that Nhil had intended to create one more creature and name him Lilianus. "You are right, Adonis. And this is why I made you with such incredible perception".

Nhil focused on a specific location where a cloud of dust from his body and the void had pooled and clumped together. He then formed his arm into a blade-like shape and sliced open a narrow cut into the void. Before He could finish the follow-through of the cut, arms reached through and quickly tore the hole apart. Out stepped a tall muscular creature with long platinum blonde hair and a mild amount of pepper-color facial hair. He appeared mature yet young like a middle-aged man who was aging extremely gracefully. As he exited the hole, armor and clothing began to simultaneously appear around his previously naked body. He was the first of the four to clothe himself.

It was as if Lilianus wouldn't dare be seen bare even around his own siblings and creator. He stepped out proudly, stood directly in front of Nhil, and bowed upon seeing him. "Finally, I am here. Thank you for your generosity, Nhil. What service do you request of me?" Nhil looked

slowly at the three beings he had created. They were intelligent. Each had his powers. But each also had a key piece of Nhil that differentiated them from him and each other. Adonis, the eldest son, was extremely perceptive and wise. Next was Eva, the second creation. She was spry and immensely creative. She was an embodiment of both freedom and chaos. Finally was the proud Lilianus. He had immense intelligence and ambition.

Nhil spoke, "I have a request of you three. Unlike you all, who have seen their creator and have been given a purpose, I know neither my creator nor my purpose. I've created you three as counsel and have instilled each of you with my power. To help me discover my purpose and find my creator. Adonis, with your wisdom and foresight. Eva, with your creativity and freedom. And Lilianus, with your intelligence and relentless mind. I ask of you three to help me carry out this task, which I have struggled to accomplish myself since I first awoke an eternity ago".

The three creations immediately bowed. "As you wish", they all said in unison.

Part III: The Meaning of Life

Eons passed and the three pondered Nhil's existence and purpose. They each spent ample time individually and collectively with Nhil to see what solutions they could come up with. However, their efforts were met with no luck.

"Adonis.", mumbled Nhil in a melancholy tone. "Despite your powers of endless wisdom and the ability to perceive all potential outcomes simultaneously, have you discovered no clues?"

"Lord Nhil, I apologize for my incompetence. Despite all that I've seen, all that I can perceive, and all that I can imagine, I cannot fathom where you may have come from or what your true purpose may be. However, I have come up with a partial solution. If I may share, my Lord?"

Nhil nodded.

"Perhaps your existence has no objective meaning. And perhaps your search is a fruitless one. For you see, despite you creating us and giving us a definitive purpose, we cannot seem to fulfill it. However, we've managed to enhance your creations and add our unique talents, which were gifted for your benefit, to benefit your creations instead.

Since our inception, Eva has reshaped your creatures, which were once formless husks. And she has made endless varieties. Lilianus has also contributed immensely. He's provided weight to a once weightless world and he's cast a degree of order to what the creatures you've created were capable of. Even I have contributed where I felt necessary. Upon watching the creatures you've created, I've come to realize that they'd wander eternally with no sense of direction. No goals. Much like yourself, they too seemed to lack purpose. To give them purpose, I stripped them of their immortality, giving every construct you've created a definitive sense of beginning and end. Once I did this, I noticed more activity from them. They became motivated. For they no

longer had an eternity to meander. And because time was finite for them, every action they engaged in became exponentially more meaningful”.

Nhil listened closely. An unsettling feeling caused him to look down with uncertainty. “Do you suggest that I, too, live among my creatures and subject myself to the restriction you three have placed upon them?”

“No, Lord Nhil. I do not believe that is the best scenario for you. However, I do suggest that as a creator, perhaps you must create your *own* purpose as you see fit. Much like we, as your creations whose purpose is to enhance your existence by helping you find your purpose, have found solace in enhancing the beauty of your creations”.

“I see, Adonis. I appreciate your suggestions. You leave me much to ponder”. Nhil’s face perked up a bit at Adonis’s suggestion. But only a bit.

Adonis bowed gracefully to the Nhil. His presence quickly faded away, leaving behind a trail of what could best be described as a combination of white dust and thick smoke. Nhil was intrigued by the sentiments of Adonis. Could one find purpose by simply giving oneself a purpose?

It was both a simple yet complex question to consider. Nhil consulted Eva shortly after. He found her hovering above a group of creatures on a separate planet. These hairy creatures had large bodies, large horns, and a thick coat of fur. She enjoyed watching these creatures and, as a gift, gave them horns very similar to hers. The creatures were bashing their heads into one another. Each clash of their skulls thundered a hollow echo throughout the forest where their battle took place. As Nhil approached, Eva excitedly turned and quickly bowed to greet Him. Instantly, she returned to her amusement. Before Nhil could even question her, she explained that she gave the creatures the ability to feel compelled to mate with each other. She referred to this feeling as *love*. And, to her surprise, the male creatures began to compete with each other to win the affection of the female creatures. “Thy Nhil. Imagine my expression as these creatures began to clash right away. How entertaining. It’s as if they want to prove which is most fit to have the affection of the lady creatures watching the conflict”. A metallic sound quietly clanked behind Nhil, which slightly caught Him off guard.

“Lilianus!”, exclaimed Eva with her youthful and large sapphire and emerald eyes opening wide. The handsome Lilianus appeared instantly, tearing through the fabric of reality itself to appear to Eva and Nhil. “You’ve arrived right in time”, Eva said cheerfully. “Watch as these creatures fight”! As Lilianus glanced in dismay at the creatures, a single collision between two of them followed by a bang and then a snap pierced the air. One of the creatures dropped instantly as if his body had lost all function on impact. Many of the other creatures continued fighting with each other. However, the victor of the collision between the two creatures stepped away from the now-deceased one. He slowly walked over to one of the female creatures and the two of them walked off without a second thought. “Such pathetic creatures”, whispered Lilianus. “This is why we reign supreme over them”. “Introduce a new emotion or concept into their lives and they

manage to simultaneously distort it. They've killed one of their own". Lilianus looked at the creatures with a bit of disgust.

"Eva, do you ever wonder if what we provide these creatures with is for their *benefit*? Or is it for their own *demise*?" Eva's usually cheerful face quickly morphed into one of shock and confusion after hearing Lilianus's question. "Think about it, Eva. You provide these creatures with claws and fangs. And yet they use it for conflict. Even Adonis, The Wise, decided to limit the lifespan of these creatures. His intentions were pure as he believed that understanding the brevity of life would create a sense of urgency in these creatures. And yet, many of them still lounge for most of their lives. Never achieving anything. Never creating or contributing anything. We spend endless hours trying to make the planets a more comfortable setting for them. And this is how they repay us? By wasting the gifts we've given to them? Perhaps...should we begin anew? Perhaps we should learn from these mistakes and create something far superior. A new reality in which its inhabitants appreciate their gifts and worship us for all we do for them."

Nhil contemplated what Lilianus was saying. Throughout the countless years, he'd watched over his creations and seen the changes made by Adonis, Eva, and Lilianus. Consistently, He'd feel a sense of unease and uncertainty. Many of his creations seemed pleasing to him. They'd constantly fill him with a sense of amazement as He'd watch the life his creations would take and how they'd progress and adapt over time. It was like a father watching the growth of his children. He'd witnessed this with the mountains formed and how they'd steadily yet slowly grow throughout time. Or how the creatures placed on the planets seemed to adapt to the conditions gradually, almost becoming entirely new creatures. He'd witness how even the trees would slightly morph and change over time even if He or Eva had no direct influence.

He was pleased with how His creations bore a life and will of their own. And yet, a feeling in His gut at the sight of certain attributes would concern him. He'd witness how creatures would, at times, use other creatures for their selfish desires or sustenance. Sometimes these acts would seem unnecessarily cruel. He'd witness how the flames or floods that He, Adonis, Eva, and Lilianus created would often go rampant--again, expressing a will of their own--and devastate the homes of other innocent creatures with no warning. It was as if the elements expressed delight in random devastation. Lilianus's words rang in Nhil's mind. *Should I start over?*

"No!", shouted Eva in anger. Her emotions rattled the ground around them. Nhil was slightly shocked at Eva's sudden display of negative emotion. Llianus stood firm with no change in expression. It was as if he was used to Eva's emotions and the effects they had on the area around her. "Why should we undo the beauty that we've already created? If we were to start over, what would change? Our new creations would end up this exact same way. Then what? We start over? Again!? When does this process end? I think your perspectives are flawed, Lilianus. You believe that there's a certain path that these creatures should take. But what if the path they *choose* is the correct path?"

Nhil listened intently. He watched as Eva lashed out at Lilianus with a degree of anger and passion not typically seen in the jubilant sprite. What Eva suggested was very similar to the conversation Nhil had with Adonis not too long ago. This concept of carving out your path and

creating meaning from your own actions resurfaced.

"I see, Eva. So you prefer we allow these creatures to suffer through all of eternity? Rather than allow them to live a life of bliss?" Lilianus looked at Eva with disdain and a mild face of discontent. His tonality seemed to indicate a sense of disappointment in her reasoning. "What is pleasure without pain, Lilianus? How can one live in a world of bliss without any suffering to give the bliss meaning?" In a huff, Eva turned away from Lilianus, looked to Nhil, offered a slight bow, and began to melt into the ground in a vibrant mix of colors that quickly dissipated into the air.

"Nhil. What do you think about this conversation? Do you think it best to wipe away everything and start anew?" Nhil pondered the recent conversation. He had mixed feelings about what occurred. Both Eva and Lilianus made compelling arguments. On one hand, wiping everything out likely wouldn't solve a problem. It would just create a similar issue that would inevitably develop in the future.

And the juxtaposition of pain and pleasure was valid. How could these creatures conceptualize what bliss was as Lilianus prescribed it without suffering existing? Sure, hypothetically Nhil could put every creature into a blissful sensation at the snap of a finger. But to do so would mean simultaneously dictating their lives. Because for bliss to truly remain, its opposite counterpart must also exist simultaneously. Nhil took a moment to debate these stances in His mind. Lilianus, growing slightly impatient, broke the silence. "Perhaps Eva is correct. Starting over might not be the best strategy. After all, look at your creation, Nhil. Look at the work we've put into making the universe great. Perhaps just because there are a few negative incidents that occur sporadically doesn't mean we should rid ourselves of the good". Lilianus suddenly looked at Nhil curiously.

In truth, Lilianus found Nhil's beliefs and mindsets to be deplorable. How could a being with infinite power and influence at his fingertips struggle to understand a world that he created? Lilianus spent many years stunned by Nhil's search for purpose. Because of this, he contributed very little. As someone who was created with massive ambition and intelligence instantly installed, Lilianus believed that his purpose was clear. It was to gain dominion over everyone and everything and mold the world to do as he pleased. Lilianus saw His place as clear within the hierarchy of existence. He should rule over everything and everything should worship Him. While externally, it would appear as though Lilianus might slightly assent to the beliefs of Eva regarding wiping away living creatures, He secretly believed that if He had Nhil's power, He could create a perfect world in which pain, suffering, hunger, and death wouldn't exist.

In Lilianus's mind, absolute control was the *only* purpose a being as powerful as Nhil could hope to strive for. As Nhil pondered the debate between Eva and Lilianus, as he pondered how he should advance in the world, and as he pondered just what he was, where he came from, and his reason for existence, Lilianus realized that Nhil was as flawed as his very creations. And because he was so flawed, perhaps it was not his creations that should be wiped away, but rather Nhil Himself that needed to disappear forever. Lilianus immediately deduced that in order for the world to be as perfect as he imagined, He'd need to eliminate Nhil from existence. But

how does one eliminate a being with infinite power that can control all things with a mere thought?

Part IV: The Deception

A thick fog quickly passed by the grassy peak where Lilianus and Nhil stood. Spawning from the fog, Adonis appeared. He took a glance at Nhil, still thinking deeply about what had occurred moments prior. He then glanced at Lilianus, who stared at Nhil with discontent. Lilianus's gaze didn't break. Not even for even an instance. Much like Nhil, Lilianus was so immersed in thought that he didn't even notice Adonis appear. Adonis, being endowed with immense wisdom, knew intuitively that something was wrong. He could sense the ill will seeping from the mind of Lilianus like a foul odor gripping the throats of anyone who dared to come within ten feet of the source.

"Lilianus...", loudly exclaimed Adonis as he towered over both Nhil and Lilianus. His raspy voice seemed far louder and clearer than normal. Lilianus broke free from his hypnosis and turned to look up at Adonis. "Hello, Sir Adonis. I didn't notice you there".

"Interesting. I tend to find that nothing ever manages to catch you off guard, Lilianus. Perhaps you and Lord Nhil were lost in thought? Trying to contemplate the purpose of Nhil's existence, which is our purpose as I recall?"

"That is correct, Sir Adonis. Not only were we debating Nhil's existence, as always. We were also debating if we failed in our creation of life on these planets."

"So I've heard. It is my understanding that you and Eva engaged in a debate. On the other side of the galaxy, I began to see sparks and various colors illuminate the void abruptly. The planets near her began to turn rapidly. And, in a panic, the creatures of those respective planets began to scatter. It appears as though you've upset her. You, better than anyone, should understand how devastating Eva being upset can be to the galaxies and life within those galaxies, correct?"

"Perhaps. But we both know how Eva can be. Her creativity isn't limited to her constant change of appearance but her moods seem to change just as rapidly, wouldn't you agree?"

Adonis said nothing in response to Lilianus's statement. He slowly turned to face Nhil. "My Lord. Could I have a word with you? In private? I have an idea that I believe you might be interested in. Perhaps it'll help you decide if your creations are worth resetting and offer insights into your purpose". "Yes. Let us have a discussion", Nhil replied with intrigue. Lilianus took a few steps back before turning. He glanced back, staring directly at Nhil. His face seemed filled with negative intent and a bit of disgust. He made no attempt to hide how he felt. Despite this, Nhil was blind to Lilianus's expression. "I should be leaving anyway. I'll check on the creatures that have begun to scatter and calm Eva down. We wouldn't want her creating too much of a stir, now would we"? Lilianus opened his right hand and a beam of light crashed down from the sky

like a bright yet silent bolt of lightning onto his open palm, conjuring a large sword. It was instantaneous. Without hesitation, Lilianus sliced through the air itself which opened a massive hole. Lilianus stepped through, still grimacing at Nhil from over his shoulder as the portal slowly closed around him, obscuring him from view.

Nhil didn't react to this. In actuality, Nhil was very naive and had absolute trust in his creations. Adonis, however, could clearly see the ill intent in Lilianus's eyes. He was perspicacious enough to tell that a plan was forming in Lilianus's mind. What could the plan be? Adonis was unsure. However, he could imagine that it involved a negative outcome for Nhil. "What would you like to speak with me about", inquired Nhil. Adonis quickly thought of a strategy to counter whatever plan Lilianus might be concocting. Adonis, with his endless wisdom, was able to see into nearly infinite possibilities all at once. However, he found it difficult to reasonably perceive a manner in which Lilianus could harm Nhil, who had infinite power and absolute control over reality itself at His fingertips.

Lilianus was smart, however. Adonis was fully aware of this. And if there was even a slight possibility that Lilianus had a plan, it would be favorable to take this possibility extremely seriously. As a means of countering any potential idea Lilianus could come up with, Adonis discussed that Nhil should share some of his power with the creatures. He proposed that Nhil compress a portion of his power into a type of essence that can be shared with the creatures. Those that harness this essence will have a better means of surviving. Adonis convinced Nhil that the weakest creatures could use this power to minimize the violence they encounter. Additionally, the power will be a means of maintaining balance, which Adonis believed would prevent the elements from being overbearing or the wild creatures from being too lethal.

Nhil, who had been thinking about how unbalanced and unfair his universe could be, liked this idea. He agreed to give up a portion of His power--his divine essence--to Adonis for safekeeping to allow him to share it with the inhabitants of the cosmos that most needed it. Without thinking too deeply about it, satisfied with the explanation given to Him by Adonis, He sliced off a portion of his thumb. As quickly as the thumb was sliced off, it grew back on Nhil's hand as if no damage had ever occurred. Nhil optimistically presented the thumb, which had now taken a new shape as a purplish-black nebulous form, to Nhil. Unknown to Nhil, however, was that Adonis was lying. Partially, at least. Adonis did intend to use the power for the sake of the creatures. However, he had a more indirect strategy than what he explained to Nhil. In order to keep his promise to Nhil, Adonis sprinkled a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of the dark mass, Nhil's essence, to the creatures of every planet they created. For some of these creatures, nothing changed. Their fangs and claws remained their primary tools. Creatures with these weapons at their disposal continued to use them over time and never changed. There was no need for them to change. However, the weaker creatures began to tap into the essence of Nhil. Over time, their prowess progressed. Soon, creatures began to adapt alongside the elements themselves, almost forming a symbiotic relationship with them. Some creatures began to find themselves immune to and even direct manipulators of the flames that would previously hunt them down. Others would find themselves immovable to the tides of the waves that would once crash upon them. They too would be able to control the flow of the waters and use it as they see fit. The

elements became direct allies with some of the creatures who inherited the essence of Nhil. This change in creatures occurred gradually and took generations to see the effects of Adonis's proposal.

Nhil was pleased with this outcome. As He watched over all he created, He felt a sense of delight. While suffering was still occurring, there seemed to be a new sense of balance. The creatures with fangs and teeth no longer overwhelmed those without. With the elements, other creatures could defend themselves and fight back. And yet, their control of the elements was not so powerful that the clawed and fanged creatures posed no threat. Adonis was satisfied with his decision to share some of Nhil's essence. However, this was only a small part of his strategy. He understood that Lilianus was planning something. Although what he planned was unknown. Adonis recruited Eva, who at this point would spend the majority of her days watching the creatures of the universe engage in their day-to-day affairs. Occasionally, she would share new concepts with the creatures such as art and music. She had no particular reason to do this other than to see what the creatures would do with her ideas. Adonis proposed a project for her that only she was capable of. The goal was to create an object of sorts. Imperceptible to nearly everyone, especially a divine being like Lilianus. An object that existed directly between space and time that could only be accessed under extremely precise conditions. An object that was as practically beautiful as it was conceptually incomprehensible. Adonis explained that with this object, he planned on trapping the core essence of Nhil within it. This would prevent Lilianus from ever truly gaining an uneven amount of power and influence over the creations of the universe. Eva was somewhat indifferent to the reasoning. She had no concern over whether Lilianus had negative plans for Nhil. Nor did she particularly care what Lilianus had intended for the creatures or planets. In her mind, as long as Lilianus didn't wipe out everything she created, how he influenced them would be another added variable worth observing. Adonis explained to her that he's been unable to truly predict what Lilianus would do. However, he expressed that there's a high probability that Lilianus would seek to wipe out all of reality as it currently exists and rewrite it in his favor. That would almost certainly involve disabling the freedom of creativity and will that Eva seemed to favor.

Still, while Eva wasn't extremely enthusiastic about opposing Lilianus, she did take an interest in the thought of creating such a nuanced object. She pondered the thought of such an object. Something of absolute beauty yet imperceivable to most people. Could such an object truly be considered *art*? Could a creation truly exist if no one can see it, touch it, or know about it? With a bit of convincing, Adonis explained that the creatures would be able to perceive it if they could discover the secrets. Emphatically, he described his idea as a puzzle of sorts--an object that can only be found if you know where to look for it and if you have the right keys to access it. He encouraged her to not only create the object but also sprinkle pieces of information that the creatures could find. This would enable them to hypothetically find the object. And seeing them go on such an adventure would be entertaining, or at least that's what Adonis proposed to Eva.

Excited, she agreed to create the object. And before long, she constructed a *box* that simultaneously existed on all planes of existence. Some creatures could sense it but could not touch or see it. She also added extra tools that could act as hints to find and use the box. But

Eva added an additional, special touch to the box. She imparted two particular creatures at random with a trait akin to the divinity of herself, Lilianus, and Adonis that allowed only them and their descendants access to open the box.

In silence and with patience, Adonis watched Eva create the object. He carefully watched her process. Time seemed to be still as she excitedly created her masterpiece. She waved her arms wildly through the air. Surges of light and electricity erupted from the imperceptible object she was crafting. A faint screech periodically pierced through the air as the object, only slightly visible even to Adonis, abruptly turned moment by moment with each gesture made by Eva. It was as if she was thoroughly inspecting her creation. Adonis had never quite seen such a look of bliss and determination on Eva's face. This might just be her favorite creation ever created. Adonis watched carefully in silence. While the box was meant to be a deterrent to whatever plan Lilianus had in store, it could only serve as a true deterrent if one could find it. For this reason, Adonis took note of the object and how she created it. He understood that Eva wouldn't be bothered to share these details by the time she finished due to her apathy toward Lilianus's plans. By the time she finished her creation, Adonis understood how to access the object should the need arise. But what exactly was so special about the essence of Nhil that would be locked away? How exactly could it prove to be a foil to whatever plan Lilianus could manifest?

Nhil, the powerful being He is, has infinite power. Even a fraction of a fraction of a fraction could be enough to maintain balance. This minuscule amount of Nhil's essence, in the hands of literally any creature, could elevate that creature to possess power as great as Adonis, Lilianus, and Eva. Realistically, it could elevate them much higher. Adonis understood that gaining access to this power would be extraordinarily close to becoming Nhil Himself. And this was the point. In an event in which something was to happen to Nhil, either Adonis or someone else could use His power—his essence—to nearly replace him. A creature could be convinced to seek this power and use it to become a lesser version of Nhil, assuming they had the desire and motivation to do so. Deep down, Adonis saw this strategy as a last resort. Realistically, he understood that Nhil's essence could potentially fall into the hands of someone with bad intent—someone similar to Lilianus. However, that was a risk he was willing to take if it meant delaying whatever strategy Lilianus had in mind.

"I did it!", exclaimed Eva. "I'm finally finished. It's so beautiful". Eva's eyes lit up as she stared into the sky. She was extremely pleased with her creation. This was slightly unusual for Eva because most of her creations focused heavily on the external appearance. However, this item, invisible to the naked eye and obscured by layers and layers of space and time folding and wrapping around it guaranteed that nearly no one would ever find it. She was pleased with her creation simply for the sake of its existence rather than its function. Adonis, also breaking his usual demeanor, wore a slight grin. He did his best to forcefully retain his default, somewhat somber face. But he couldn't help himself. He was enjoying Eva's enthusiasm.

Part V: The Sleep

Nhil stood alone in the void of space. He vacantly stared at the planets. The universe. The galaxies. All a product of his desires. No, not his desires. They were a product of his intuition. Nevertheless, the results were as perfect as they could be. A symphony of design and beauty that expanded infinitely. This outcome was unanticipated. But something about it made sense. There was harmony in the outcome of his design. And yet, he still lacked internal harmony. He pondered his purpose. He pondered what Adonis, Eva, and Lilianus suggested to him over a few infinite years. He began to have a sense of fulfillment and contentness as he reflected on his life. While he felt no closer to understanding his purpose than when he initially woke up, he did have a deeper sense of satisfaction. In a sense, he realized that the satisfaction came primarily from creating his children and seeing them aid him.

“Nhil. A word with you?”

Lilianus appeared instantaneously behind Nhil. He was incredibly close, merely inches away from Nhil. Nhil turned slightly to his left to look up at Lilianus who hovered above him. Standing so closely together, it was easier to see the difference in size and stature between the two. Despite Nhil being exponentially older and more powerful, having existed an eternity before creating Lilianus, he had the physique of a frail 11-year-old boy. He was scrawny. He looked nearly emaciated. This contrasted significantly with the exceptionally tall Lilianus who towered over Nhil. Lilianus looked down on Nhil with a serious and stern face. There was a hint of discontent lingering in his expression.

“Lilianus. You’re great at sneaking up on me. What would you like to discuss?” Nhil spoke softly. He was a bit uncomfortable with how suddenly Lilianus appeared and how little distance there was between them. He couldn’t detect anything unusual in Lilianus and simply looked up at him with a slight smile. Nhil perpetually looked exhausted and his somewhat vacant expressions highlighted this aspect of him.

“I think I’ve discovered a solution to you finally discovering your purpose,” Lilianus spoke straightforwardly. His expression remained unchanged.

“Really? That’s excellent! Please share.” Nhil seemed a bit more excited than usual as his voice escalated slightly above his standard tone.

“I believe your inability to find your purpose stems deeply from your fatigued state. While you are infinitely powerful, have you ever once considered resting?”

“As you mention it, I haven’t. From the very moment I initially woke up, I’ve simply pondered my existence and watched my creations. I can’t recall what *rest* even feels like. To be honest, I’m unsure if I’m capable of such an act”.

“Exactly. You must try something you’ve never done before in order to achieve the results you’ve yet to discover. Wouldn’t you agree? And why would you be incapable? You, Nhil, are capable of anything and everything.”

“You’re correct”. Nhil’s face widened into a wide enthusiastic smile. He was elated to hear this idea. His exhausted eyes opened wider than ever before. Despite the solution seeming so simple, Nhil had never considered stopping to rest. “So you’re proposing I sleep? For how long?”

“As for the duration, I have no definitive answer. I recommend resting as deeply as you need to. Wake up when your mind naturally feels clear and when the answers fill your mind. I’ll guard you here as long as necessary until your slumber ceases”. Nhil began to immediately try this tactic proposed by Lilianus. Nhil began to prepare himself. He began to lay on a large bed adorned with flowers that Lilianus constructed for him.

Lilianus’s plan was straightforward but time-consuming. He had been gathering energy since his last encounter with Nhil generations ago. He had concocted a plan to rid himself of Nhil. His intent was to fling him back in time. Far back in time. As far back as his energy would allow him. Could Nhil simply return to the present the second he was cast back? Absolutely. Lilianus understood that Nhil’s power was effectively infinite. Nhil could exist at all times if he wanted. To decrease the possibility of Nhil returning, Lilianus planned on wiping away his memories. Perhaps if Nhil was alone at the beginning of time with no recollection of how he got there, he’d simply wander in the void eternally, never catching up to the present. Ultimately, no longer existing.

However, Lilianus also understood that Nhil was naive. Despite having infinite power and the ability to do anything he could perceive, his naivete, in itself, was his major weakness. Even Nhil doubting if he was capable of sleep demonstrated this complete lack of self-awareness. He literally had all the power in the world but lacked comprehension of this fundamental truth. But simply sending him back in time was too risky. Lilianus also knew that erasing Nhil’s memories and putting him into a deep sleep wasn’t enough. There was a chance Adonis would realize where and when he was. He’d surely retrieve him. Because of this, Adonis would need to be distracted long enough for Lilianus to truly gain power. But Lilianus, despite his high intelligence, hadn’t thought of a great plan to neutralize Adonis. Instead, Lilianus believed that if he managed to send Nhil far enough back in time, it would prove difficult for Adonis to track him. Even in a scenario in which Adonis did decide to search for Nhil, this would allow Lilianus just enough time to shift the power dynamic favorably.

Lilianus understood that without Adonis, Eva would be easy to manipulate. Her emotional outbursts at the critique of her creations had become predictable. With her creating chaos from a tantrum, Lilianus would assume absolute control over all of the creatures. He understood that as long as he could prevent Nhil from regaining his memories, a task that would prove difficult

even for Adonis, he would be unstoppable.

“Let us begin, Nhil. The ritual that will allow you to sleep deeply and discover your purpose”. Lilianus extended both of his arms in front of him toward Nhil. His eyes glowed a blinding yellow color. Everything around both of them became distorted and fuzzy. Color began to drain from reality itself. Lilianus had been preparing to use this technique for quite a while. He’d been stockpiling energy for countless years, waiting for this exact moment. Time stood still. Nhil began to morph into a glowing, white, sphere-like object, which was then stretched thin and long.

“Lilianus!”

Adonis appeared through a crack in reality itself. “What do you think you’re doing, Lilianus!” Adonis’s voice bellowed throughout the land. This was far louder than Adonis, who typically spoke in a slow, raspy, and calculated manner, had ever spoken. Adonis had plenty of time to consider every perceivable strategy that Lilianus could come up with. Even with so much time to ponder, this outcome had caught him completely off guard. Despite Adonis’s intervention and his attempt at stopping Lilianus’s plan, he was too late. In an instant, the thin wire that existed as the final remnants of Nhil, vanished. Popped out of this reality and flung back in time before anything existed.

Adonis paused, his breath catching up to him as he faced Lilianus across the void. For a fleeting moment, they simply stood there, locked in silence, their gazes unyielding. Adonis knew, deep in his core, that he was too late.

Lilianus’s expression was radiant, his triumph palpable. Adonis could see the satisfaction glimmering in his rival’s eyes, a silent declaration that his plan had succeeded. Adonis’s mind raced. Even if he left now to find Nhil, it would take too long. The instant he departed, Lilianus would seize enough power in his absence to bring whatever twisted scheme he had devised into reality.

This was exactly what Lilianus wanted. He baited Adonis into a no-win scenario.

Adonis held Lilianus’s gaze, his intense stare unwavering. Then, something unexpected flickered across his face—a faint, cocky grin that seemed entirely out of place for him. With calm certainty, he spoke: there was no need for him to leave.

“Lilianus,” Adonis said, his tone confident and steady, “you’ve failed.”

He went on to explain what neither Lilianus nor anyone else could have foreseen. Adonis and Eva had removed fragments of Nhil’s essence and dispersed them across every living creature. A piece of Nhil now existed in everyone, though some carried more than others. But that wasn’t all. Adonis revealed that they had also divided Nhil’s core aspects—his essential qualities—and

hidden them in ways so intricate and elusive that even they, the ones who had hidden them, would struggle to uncover these remnants.

“If you want Nhil,” Adonis said, his grin widening, “you’ll have to search for those fragments yourself. But I’d warn you—solving that puzzle could take an eternity. And an eternity is plenty of time to bring back Nhil.”

Lilianus responded with a hearty laugh, a sound brimming with both amusement and admiration. He looked genuinely pleased, as if the stalemate itself was a kind of victory.

It dawned on both of them at that moment: neither could act without altering the scales of fate. If one left, the other might triumph purely by chance.

For Lilianus, there was no hope of relying on Eva to interfere. She was, as always, frustratingly neutral, preferring to watch the balance unfold rather than pick a side and directly intervene.

Time seemed to stretch into infinity as Adonis and Lilianus stared at one another, locked in a silent, unyielding standoff. The two unmoving, like statues juxtaposed perfectly across from each other in an eternal staredown. The stalemate weighed heavy, and yet, neither could move. Generations continued. Even the ground where they stood began to feel the effects of time as it weathered away, leaving valleys around where they stood yet maintaining two individual footholds for both of them so as not to interfere with their staredown.

Then, without warning, something changed. Their forms began to shift. Slowly, their bodies started to dissipate, fragmenting into particles that shimmered like glass and swirled like dust in the air. Adonis felt the truth settle over him like a heavy shroud. Without Nhil’s essence in the present time anchoring them, their existence could no longer remain stable. They were creations born of Nhil’s body, and without Nhil’s body being present, they could not persist as they were.

The realization came to both of them simultaneously. They had no choice but to fragment themselves like Nhil once did to create them, dispersing their own essence into the world to ensure some part of them would endure.

Adonis and Lilianus each released fragments of their essence, scattering it among the living. Some of Lilianus’s essence became the monsters that roamed the land, embodiments of his ambition and hunger for power. Other pieces fused with a variety of different types of creatures, embedding within them a relentless drive for dominance and control in those who carried it. Adonis, in turn, imbued the creatures with fragments of his own essence—creating individuals who sought balance and harmony, destined to stand as perpetual foils to those marked by Lilianus. Thus, the battle between their wills would continue, echoed through the hearts of mortals for all time.

Even Eva, who had always maintained her distance, could not remain untouched. Her own existence began to destabilize. In her final act, she remained vigilant in her desire to create. She created new creatures. An amalgamation of ideas she never dared to make into reality. While

she usually had no favorites when it came to her creations, these sporadically created ideas were the exception. Splitting her essence, she gifted it freely to all living creatures, infusing them with creativity and the boundless ability to perceive reality in countless ways. Unlike Adonis and Lilianus, her essence showed no discrimination—it intertwined with life itself, inspiring beauty, innovation, and endless variation in all it touched.

Thus, the three immortals dissolved, their essences forever woven into the fabric of the world. From that moment on, the struggles and aspirations of life would carry on their legacies, endlessly replaying the balance of power, harmony, and creation.

Part VI: The Genesis

As time passed, other beings known as Protalians began to inhabit the planets. They appeared as a direct inheritor of the combined spirits of Adonis, Eva, and Lilianus. In truth, they were the first of Eva's creations that she made before her dissolution. This group of beings was among her most beloved when it came to all of her creations. Through their image remained glaring traces of Nhil. It was clear that Nhil was a direct inspiration and among them, the treasures of Nhil came to be revered as sacred relics—a symbol of divine balance. Legends whispered that it held the power to challenge reality itself and grant any wish its wielder could possibly conceive of. Yet, over the ages, the true purpose of Nhil faded into obscurity. His whereabouts were forgotten, and the method to unlock His secrets or the secrets of his essence became veiled in mystery, wrapped in the haze of time.

Thus, Nhil never returned in any form. He remained a myth, whose origins and locations became manipulated and contorted in as many ways as there have ever been seconds. Nhil drifted from the consciousness of His creations. His true intentions remained shrouded in secrecy, though His ambition and touch rippled beneath the surface, subtle yet insistent.

The Protalians carried on, their lives shaped by the myths surrounding the sacred treasure. Eventually, they too would evolve and cease to exist. And still, the legends surrounding the essence of Nhil endured. The details were blurry. But aspects of existence continued to remain. And though the true history and location remained unseen, its legacy loomed ever-present, waiting for the day when it would once again be called upon to restore the balance. To this day, descendants of Nhil would contemplate their existence as Nhil did. Where did they come from? What was their purpose? They'd hope to discover the truth by going as far back to the beginning of time as they could conceptualize. *What was the beginning like*, they'd ponder.

In the beginning, there was nothing. Neither space, nor void, nor time. Only one thing existed in the beginning. A single being. Yet, to label such a manifestation as a mere *being* would be considered a massive understatement. In the boundless expanse of nothingness, all that existed was Nhil.