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English 323

**Inevitable**

The first thing she hears is the gentle caress of wind, then the dull roar of waves. She breathes in, and her vision clears.

Several feet away, someone’s bent over inspecting the ground. The figure lacks any discernable features—a dark veil obscuring what’s within, though it’s someone like her. She walks toward the figure unafraid, some instinct telling her the figure is someone she can trust.

The figure pauses and turns in her direction, no doubt having heard her approach from the sound of her footfalls. She pauses, her breath leaving her lungs as she chews on her lip. The mysterious figure stops a few feet in front of her, lifting her veil.

“I have waited a long time for you.” The woman says, her smile warm like a mother seeing her child for the first time. Her eyes shone like galaxies, a stark contrast to the impossibly dark ebony of her hair. “It is good to finally meet you Life. I am Space, the being of beginnings and creation.”

As if sensing her confusion, Space beckoned her over to where she had been standing previously. A small plant, no bigger than her pinkie, fluttered in the breeze.

“You are the soul and the life force of living things. The universe, while already thousands of years old, is barren.” Space looked up to Life, her eyes filled with pride. “You are an extension of myself—of creation. Go forth and spread Life where you feel it is needed. Know that if you ever uncertain, that I will be there to guide you in your time of need.”

Space pulled the veil back over her face and faded into the unknown.

Over the next thousand years, Life spread her gift on the planet she had met Space. She had visited other planets Space had created for her and sowed the seeds of life in an abundance of star systems, but Life was particularly fond of this planet she had been born on. Creation held a special meaning for her here, and she spent the most time on the planet she lovingly called Earth.

The land was filled with flora of indescribable beauty and the ocean spectacular coral reefs. The sea had captivated her heart from the very beginning, so Life created her most intricate specimens beneath the ocean blue. They were tiny, microscopic things at first, but they grew and evolved under her tender care. The animals she was most proud of were docile and playful creatures she called dolphins. While they couldn’t speak, they showed a level of intelligence she had never seen before and soon the species dominated the ocean.

Life returned to Earth one day after visiting another star system to find her precious dolphins washed up on the shoreline. She cradled one, seeking the deep thrumming of its heart. Tears cascaded down her cheeks at the hollow emptiness that greeted her, a shriek of sorrow and pain escaping her lips.

Lifting her eyes, she saw hundreds of prone dolphins dead along the shoreline. Their emaciated bodies telling her that their food had run out. But how?! She had made certain her creations had enough resources to survive whenever she left Earth. How could this have happened?

She placed the dolphin back onto the sand. Life rose with unsteady legs and tremoring hands clasped in front of her face to muffle her distressed cries.

“It was inevitable.”

Life turned to sound of the voice. Near the edge of the beach, where sand met forest and hidden under the canopy of trees, was a boy no older than herself. He was dressed in black robes with untamable hair and eyes darker than obsidian.

“What?!” Life screamed, running over to him. “What do you mean, *inevitable?* They were my precious dolphins and they’re *dead*. I gave them life—”

“And I took it away.” The boy said, his tone neutral and face devoid of any emotion. Life’s face contorted into horror.

“You did this on purpose? Why!?”

“It is the natural way of things. Though I suppose I should introduce myself.” The boy bowed his head and closed his eyes. “I am Death, emissary of Time.”

Space had told her about Time before--her opposite in existence. Time was destruction incarnate, or finality. Time was the end of all things, and Space the beginning of all things. An eternal stalemate until Life had been created and the scales had been tipped into Space’s favor.

Now, it seemed she had finally met her counterpart.

“You didn’t have to kill them,” Life sobs, broken. “They were intelligent beings and you murdered them!”

Death remained unfazed. “Just as you have a job to do, I do as well. I’m sorry that it causes you grief, but I hope you take comfort in knowing I have no intention of doing this to harm you.” Death sighed, his expression softening a bit. “It is simply the way things are.”

Death melted into the shadows, leaving Life to descend in despair.

After what happened with her precious dolphins, Life was determined to be a part of her next creation for all eternity. She never showed Space her precious dolphins, but after what happened with Death, she wanted to create something perfect.

Life created humans—a species created in her own image and they worshipped her as a god. She gave her precious humans the gift of healing magic so they would never know loss. They built temples to worship her and schools to teach the youth. The humans were capable of thought and language like Life, but they all possessed an innate uniqueness that sometimes led to disagreements. Most times, they never lasted long. If there was struggle or disagreement, they sought Life’s counsel and accepted her verdict without rebuttal.

Eventually, a group of humans grew dissatisfied with her and took to the woods. They didn’t want a god determining every aspect of their life. Life allowed them to leave and told them they would be welcomed back if they ever wished to return.

Years later, the forest surrounding the village began to die and wither and the food supply with it. Life tried to create animals for her precious humans to eat, but the animals perished. Her faithful humans began to doubt their god. How could a god of life fail to provide for her people?

The group of humans that had seceded returned with plans to overthrow the city, only now they smelled of decay and rot. As they paraded through the center of the village, the mangled and half-eaten corpses of animals and humans alike crawled their way forward. In the middle was a carriage made of bones flanked by her precious humans. The air in Life’s lungs vacated as she collapsed to the ground.

“Not again!” She screamed. Life tore her way through the parade with a flick of her wrist, sending the abominations into the growing crowd in an explosion of vines. Death calmly exited the carriage and stared at her from afar.

Life’s chest rose and fell with each sharp inhale. Magic crackled in her palms. “Get *out!*” Life shouted, barely able to keep the despair out of her voice. “Leave, and never return!”

Death simply stared at her. “I cannot do that.”

Raw and unbridled fury coursed through her body. She couldn’t restrain her hatred for *him*. She rushed forward and cocked her hand back, prepared to slap him across the face when he caught her hand and twisted it.

“That was uncalled for,” Death held her for a moment. “We can talk about this like civil people, Life. You don’t have to resort to such tactics to make your thoughts known.”

Life scoffed, “No matter what I say to you, you won’t change your mind.”

“I cannot change something outside my control.”

“I hate you.” Life states, “You have to ruin everything. You take everything from me!”

“But I don’t hate you,” Death says, gently releasing her. “Life, your job is just as important as mine is and I don’t fault you for what you do. It is the way things are.”

Life’s arms moved to hold herself. She couldn’t stand look at Death’s void-like eyes.

A fight had broken out between the necromancers and her villagers. Both were equally strong and fell quickly to each other. No amount of magic could fix this—Life didn’t need Death to tell her that. She slowly sank to the ground and buried her head in her hands as the crackle of magic sounded around her.

“Just leave,” Life said, no louder than a whisper.

Death wordlessly retreated through the city’s gate.

Life cried once more.

From the ashes of her civilization, Life began anew. This time she distanced herself from her creations. She would not be responsible for anything beyond their creation, lest Death return again unwelcome.

Life wandered the cosmos, never interacting with her creations or Space. Maybe this time Death would leave her poor creations be if she didn’t tilt the scales too far to her side.

She checked up on her humans once every thousand years to see their progress. Life was proud of them—they had invented machines to fly in and remarkable medical care that saved a great deal of lives. However, their lives were short. Few lived more than 100 solar revolutions, but Life was okay with this. The desire for their legacy to continue after death was inspirational, even if sad. Without her magic they would inevitably die—one of the few things she had come to accept. She didn’t like it, but so long as her human persevered, so would she.

While tending to some flowers on Gaea, Life felt a sense of wrongness overwhelm her. Somberly, she stood up, and made her way toward Earth.

She arrived just before the first bomb dropped. It was a beautiful, albeit terrifying, technological feat. Her humans had gone to war again over some trivial matter, and they had finally gone too far.

Life sat calmly in a meadow overlooking a city full of tall skyscrapers. It was the most populated city on Earth, with countless millions nestled in their beds under the night time sky.

“Hello Life,”

Life made no motion to acknowledge Death, instead staring at the sky. He placed a hand on her shoulder, his eyebrows drawn in confusion. “You okay?”

“I’m fine.”

Death regards her silently. “No, you’re not.”

“Why do you care?” Life says, shaking her head. “You take everything from me.”

“I cherish everything you have given me.” Death looks at her fondly. “Your creations are beautiful—extravagant even. Because you exist, so do I.”

An object enters the atmosphere, burning brighter than any star.

“But nothing is meant to last forever.”