

## Chapter 18: Origin and Cause

Upon hearing Klein's question, Dunn looked out of the window toward the corridor that led to Chanis Gate. He took out his pipe, stuffed it with some tobacco and mint leaves, and held it to his nose. He took a deep whiff as his voice turned reflective and drifting.

"Only at home can I enjoy the beautiful flavors of tobacco mixed with mint leaves without any worries... Klein, do you know about the creation myth?"

"Of course, when I received primary education during Sunday school, we learned to read using The Revelation of Evernight. Among them, the Book of Wisdom and the Letters from the Saints mentioned the myth of creation." Klein attempted to recall via the memory fragments of the original Klein. He slowed down his tempo and said, "The Creator awoke from Chaos and shattered the darkness, creating the first ray of light. 'He' then fused 'Himself' completely into the universe and made up all of existence. 'His' body became the land and stars. One of 'His' eyes became the sun, while the other became the crimson moon. Some of 'His' blood rushed into the seas and rivers, nourishing and nurturing lives..."

Klein subconsciously paused when he said that. Partially, it was because the relevant memories were a blur and that the creation myth was very similar to the Chinese creation myth of Pangu.

The imaginations of people from different worlds shared something in common with their myths and legends!

Noticing that Klein was having 'trouble,' Dunn smiled and added, "His lungs turned into the elves; His heart turned into the giants;

His liver turned into the treants; His brain turned into the dragons; His kidneys turned into the feathered serpents; His hair turned into the phoenixes; His ears turned into the demonic wolves; His mouth and teeth turned into the mutants, and His remaining bodily fluids turned into the sea monsters, of which the essence was Naga. His stomach, His small and large intestines, and the evil parts of His body turned into devils, evil spirits and various kinds of unknown maleficent existences. His spirit became the Eternal Blazing Sun, the Lord of the Storms, and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom..."

"His wisdom gave birth to humanity. That was the first Epoch, the Chaos Epoch." Klein finished the last sentence for Dunn, but he found it funny and ridiculous.

As a keyboard folklorist, it was the first time he came into contact with a creation myth that was 'arranged' in such great detail. It was so detailed that almost every prominent race corresponded to a particular body part of the Creator.

*It's like a children's song with children sitting in a row and eating fruit...*

Furthermore, it was not only mentioned in the canon of the Evernight Goddess. The Churches of the Lord of Storms and God of Steam and Machinery also had similar descriptions. None of them alleviated themselves or devalued the other gods...

*This either means that the creation myth is real or hints that the few Churches had undergone a long period of strife before compromising before the Fifth Epoch...*

With this in mind, Klein suddenly had another question. He asked with a frown, "It feels problematic. Why are the Eternal Blazing Sun, Lord of Storms, and God of Knowledge and Wisdom born directly from the Creator's spirit, while the Goddess isn't?"

In the Revelation of Evernight's prehistorical records, the Evernight Goddess had only awoken at the end of the Second Epoch. Together with the Lord of Storms, Eternal Blazing Sun, and other gods, she blessed and helped humanity survive the Cataclysm. It was also known as the Third Epoch, the Cataclysm Epoch.

It was during that time that Earth Mother and the God of Combat appeared as well. As for the God of Steam and Machinery, whose original name was the God of Craftsmanship, He was born only in the Fourth Epoch.

In that sense, the standing among the gods seemed self-evident.

The ones who were more ancient were more orthodox. It was extremely clear!

This also troubled the believers of the Evernight Goddess.

Dunn Smith held his pipe with another hand and instead of answering, he returned with a question, "Repeat the Goddess's full title."

Klein immediately felt like he had stabbed himself with a knife. He racked his brains and tried his best to recall.

"The Evernight Goddess stands higher than the cosmos and more eternal than eternity. She is also the Lady of Crimson, the Mother of Concealment, the Empress of Misfortune and Horror, Mistress of Repose and Silence."

Thankfully, Klein's mother was a devout believer of the Evernight Goddess. When she was still alive, she would recite

this every evening at dinner. Even though the memories of the original Klein had fragmented, not all was lost.

“What does the Lady of Crimson symbolize?” Dunn asked with a guiding tone.

“The red moon.” The moment Klein answered, he immediately understood.

“Then which part of the Creator did the red moon come from?” asked Dunn with a smile.

“A single eye!” Klein and Dunn smiled at each other.

This was no way less impressive than the Lord of Storms who was formed from a third of the Creator’s spirit!

As for the Churches of Earth Mother and the God of Combat, they likely had similar explanations. However, the God of Steam and Machinery had been born too late to find a reason; thus, their church had been weak in the past thousand plus years. It was only with the invention of the steam engine that they seized the opportunity to truly be on par with the other gods.

Dunn stroked his pipe gently.

“Humanity was born out of the wisdom of the Creator, so we have clever and extraordinary brains, but lack other magical powers. However, from the creation myth, we can form a simple but clear conclusion. Everything stems from the same origin.”

“Stems from the same origin...” Klein repeated the last few

words.

“According to this conclusion, humans who are protected by the gods were able to resist the giants, devils, and the mutants. Gradually, they figured out means to obtain the power of the Beyonders. That is by using the corresponding parts of the evil spirits, dragons, monsters, magical trees, flowers, or crystals and combining them with other materials to form potions. By consuming and absorbing the potion, one will gain different powers. This is common knowledge among mysticism studies.”

Dunn did not elaborate in detail and only gave a brief introduction. “In this process, our ancestors relied on painful lessons to discover that if they were to consume high-grade or extraordinary potions, it would easily lead to tragic consequences. There are three possible outcomes.”

“Which three?” pressed Klein curiously.

“First, mental death and the complete breakdown of a body. Every piece of flesh would become a terrifying monster. Second, their personality will be changed by the powers contained in the potion. They will turn cold, sensitive, irascible, cruel, and indifferent. Third, well...” Dunn put down his pipe and picked up a porcelain cup and took a sip. “Fermo coffee from the Paz River Valley is bitter, but very fragrant. It leaves a splendid aftertaste. Do you want one?”

“I prefer coffee from the Feynapotter plateau. Of course, I have only drank it a few times at Welch’s place.” Klein politely declined. “What’s the third outcome?”

“Mental disorder. Turning crazy on the spot, becoming more devilish than the devil. This is what it means by losing control.” Dunn emphasized the words ‘losing control.’

Without waiting for Klein to say a word, he put down his coffee cup and continued, “After a long period of experimentation and exploration, together with the birth of the Blasphemy Slate, humans have finally perfected the potion system. We formed a tiered system that chains into stable progression paths known as Sequences. The lower the number in a Sequence, the higher the grade of a potion. At this point, the seven major churches each control at least one complete Sequence. Besides, there are also incomplete ‘paths’ that they have gathered over the past hundreds or thousand years.”

“Blasphemy Slate?” Klein sharply noticed the term.

At the Gathering, The Hanged Man had also mentioned it!

According to The Hanged Man, the Blasphemy Slate was the most critical factor of a potion’s system formation and completion!

That seemed to contradict what Dunn had just said.

“Those were things created by some evil gods. As for which era it appeared, what it contains or what’s so special about it, I am unsure as well. If you discover any clues, you have to immediately report it to me. It deserves the highest level of response,” said Dunn vaguely. “I mentioned one of the types of losing control. I’ll now tell you the remaining four.”

“Alright.” Klein pushed the question of the Blasphemy Slate to the back of his mind and listened attentively.

“Although humans have clever minds, they lack extraordinary powers, it is not absolute. There are always a few lucky ones; perhaps I should call them the unlucky ones. They are born with relatively higher perception. Well, it also means the ability to

sense spirits. They can hear voices that others cannot hear and see things that others cannot see. They have partial characteristics of Beyonders.”

While Dunn spoke, he looked at the empty air around him and watched Klein shudder in fear. “In other words, if they are half a Sequence 9 Beyonder and have fixed characteristics. Oh, Sequence 9 is the lowest grade in the ‘chain...’ In short, they can only choose a corresponding, fixed Sequence pathway. If they consume other potions, the effects might range from mental disorders to a loss of control, or even worse, death.”

“Got it.” Klein nodded slowly.

“The third kind is similar to the second kind. Once you choose a Sequence chain, you will be forced to go down that path. There will be no room for regret. If you were to consume potions from the corresponding Sequence of other ‘paths,’ there will be a high probability you will get mixed, unusual and warped powers. But it is almost certain that you would be in a semi-deranged state; sensitive and irascible, cruel and bloodthirsty, and silent and melancholic.

“And there is only one such opportunity. After that, regardless if you consume the potions from the original path or potions in the present Sequence, the only result is a loss of control. The outcome could then be mental death; alternatively, the body breaks down into monsters or even transforms into an evil spirit.” As Dunn spoke, he lifted his coffee cup to take a sip.

Klein, who turned alarmed and fearful after hearing this, fell silent for a few seconds before asking, “What about the fourth kind?”

“The fourth kind, heh heh. That is the most common problem. When we consume potions to gain powers that originally belong

to extraordinary beings, we undergo an unnatural transformation. Therefore, we would more or less be affected by the remnant spiritual powers. While perhaps the symptoms might not manifest and are undetectable to others, it will definitely lurk in one's mind. If one rushes to consume the corresponding potion ranked higher in the Sequence before fully grasping the extraordinary powers the potion brings and eliminating the subtle traces, the madness will accumulate, increasing the chances of losing control..." Dunn suddenly fell silent.

After a short pause, he said with a sigh, "As per the internal rules of us Nighthawks, even if a teammate were to make a great contribution, they must have consumed the last potion three years ago and be examined before they can be promoted. Even so, there are still many who lose control every year."

*How terrifying...* Klein drew a gasp as he asked, "Then what about the final kind?"

There was no trace of a smile despite Dunn's curved lips.

"The fifth kind is the most common reason for a loss of control. For Beyonders, one's spiritual perception would be enhanced more or less. The smaller the number in the Sequence, the more enhanced their perception. Therefore, they would hear what others cannot hear, see what others cannot see, and encounter things others would not encounter. They are constantly met with mysterious enticement and illusionary bewitchment. Once they are overstimulated or have greedy desires, they will slowly go down the path of losing control."

As he spoke, Dunn looked straight at Klein, his gray pupils reflecting Klein's figure.

His tone turned bleak as he said, "The founder of the

Nighthawks, Archbishop Chanis, once said, ‘We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness.’”