

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Sequestered off in the far, far reaches of the Milky Way galaxy, situated practically in the ghetto of the cosmos, there once existed the small and unassuming planet of Stygia, the dark and barren home of only a few thousand Stygians. The shadowy planet was veiled in inky blackness, shrouded in starless shade, and so was generally inhospitable to life, all life except those very Stygians who had become well adapted to such darkness (and the resultant cold, though this is a minor detail). Yet, enveloped as they were in miasmic gloom, the Stygians were a happy lot.

They were rather rotund creatures, Stygians, essentially globular with protruding feet and hands, covered entirely in jet-black hair. Some wore their hair short, others long. The only facial features visible through their thick coat of hair were beady little eyes which gleamed black. Needless to say, Stygians did not rely much, if at all, on sight. They preferred to use their other senses, and so preferred the dark environment of Stygia.

They were quite a gregarious bunch, too, those Stygians. They loosely organized themselves into tribes for political purposes, though each Stygian lived alone, or perhaps with a significant other, and maintained a great deal of autonomy. The lands of Stygia were ruled--also loosely--by a philosopher king, an honorable Stygian who was elected by the tribes to serve until death, and who hosted each year an Olympic Games of sorts, wherein the Stygians would compete in a massive marbles tournament (they used themselves as the marbles). They were social beings, those Stygians, and yet practitioners of ethical egoism, and so were free from the vices that plague more familiar worlds.

Indeed, the Stygians were a contented sort. They worked hard, sometimes together, and played hard, most times together. Crime and violence were nonexistent. Free love was in the air (no, not promiscuity--free love). There was no need for sunglasses. Everyone was happy. Essentially, if ever there was a utopia, it was Stygia.

Then everything changed... When the fire nation attacked. While Stygia was alone in its corner of the cosmos, there was one comparatively close planet, so far away as to be a geometric pinprick of light, something as small as could be and yet smaller still, on the Stygian horizon, yet not so far away as to completely rule out contact between the two domains. The name of this faraway planet was Luminia, home to the Luminians, the guardians of light.

Luminia and its inhabitants literally radiated light. The Luminians were a tall and proud people. They rather looked like humans, but with tall, golden bodies, and flowing, golden hair. They were essentially angels, complete with billowing golden robes, halos, and soft feathery wings. Wherever they went, light followed.

These Luminians were a strict sort of folk, with powerful democratic political institutions that acted in the common good, rigid laws and social structures, and well-defined gender roles. They were a people of consistency and stability, a people who championed what they thought to be proper behavior, and who dealt ruthlessly with transgressors.

After millennia of keeping to themselves, the Luminians got it in their heads that Stygia, that dark, disgraceful blip on their bright, brilliant sky, had to be corrected. They were a

backward people, those Stygians, living in darkness like that. Surely they would appreciate it if the Luminians brought light to their impoverished masses, if the Luminians showed them their error, showed them the way to live properly. Not to mention that it would further the cause of light, illuminate yet another realm of the galaxy, increase the net brightness of the universe--always a divine undertaking. The Stygians simply had to be, in a word, enlightened.

Almost all of Luminia took up the noble call, flocking, by virtue of their soft feathery wings, to Stygia. But the light, it burned. It burned the landscape, it burned the people. Whenever a Luminian got near enough to an unassuming Stygian, the Stygian's eyes, unaccustomed to such pure, blinding light, burst into flames, ultimately killing the unlucky creature. As more and more Luminians poured into Stygia, gradually eroding away its inky blackness, the Stygians retreated into ever-receding bastions of darkness, until the Luminians and their light found their way there too. Those of the Luminians with good intentions were incredulous: the Stygians did not want their light! But it ended just as quickly as it began. There was no escaping the perfusive light, and Stygia's shadows, along with those who had dwelled within them, were banished forever.