

+PRIORITY APEX THOUGHTCAST INCOMING+

Attention all active Mirrors (classification Convex and Concave). This message is from the Inner Council:

All operations are to be discontinued immediately. All cells are to adapt defensive stratagems. Shuffle your teams. Make your Sleepers go dark. Delete all memories stored within your proxy minds.

Approximately eight minutes and fourteen seconds ago, a series of ruptures opened at once within our districts. We have sustained severe infrastructural and personnel damage in the Nether and the material realms. Preliminary inspections have found no traceable mem-data or evidence left on site. However, existing precedent has detected parallels between the current attack and operations conducted against us by the High Seraph Veylis Avandaer herself.

This information is unconfirmed. You are not to mention or impart these details to anyone else. You are only to collect the proxy minds and mission-related memories from all assets under you.

[DEEPAV MARKER ASSIGNED]

*After gathering all intelligence marked classified, you are to remove all existing memories from the minds of your assets and loci. Thereafter, you must arrive at the designated DeepNav marker within twelve hours and submit your collected details on-site. Failure to do so will have you marked as **[COMPROMISED]**, and will result in an enforced extraction.*

After this, your own memories will be cleared, and you will be made to surrender your current role as well. The suspension of your responsibilities will be temporary. Correspondingly, you will be assigned a personal Heaven of Information for further protection. You are not to inquire about why these measures are being taken. You are not to acknowledge or interact with your assigned Golem in any capacity.

Finally, our prototype Heavens of Culture will be activating across all districts. It is recommended that you all return to your communities and clans in the near future. You are to remain inactive until receiving new orders.

Unity is destiny.

+THOUGHTCAST SESSION LOST+

-Ori-Thaum Inner Council

28-4

Proclamation

–[Avo]–

“They are approaching. DO YOU HEAR THE [CALLS].” The Techplaguer skipped between Avo’s ethereal watchtowers like a fish bursting from the surface of a pond, dipping its antennae into passing wavelengths over and again. Bound to the Heaven of Signals, Avo could indeed hear the broadcasts of the Omnitech Knots.

He already had [4000] golems mem-locked. The evolved **Definement of Synthesis** granted him perfect attunement with minds and matter. His ghosts were now beyond even the metaphor steam—utterly transparent as they slithered across the Sunderwilds.

His **Definements of Empathy** and **Delusion** had merged, becoming the **Definement of Synthesis**. Across the Sunderwilds, his being pooled out as transparent threads, framing all that existed within the context of his memories. His ghosts were more than mere steam now; they were entirely invisible. Invisible until Avo willed them to be otherwise, and then came a tinge of contrast—the void’s absolute black lined by the gleam of a burning Soul.

At Sphere Seven, his influence over reality was grander in scope and vulgarity. Reality was simply easier to bend to his whims. As ghosts casually stretched across out like a web that encompassed continental distances, his phantasmal watchtowers only amplifying his resonance.

He was already pooling over the 4,000 golems he tracked, his mind encompassing their beings—a colorless membrane they would never be aware of. Nonsensical numbers and ordered patterns danced from the Omnitech Knots, their Heavens of Signals speaking to each other, communicating across the tapestry using pulses of unnatural radiation and wavelengths. They were approaching as a concert, their Porters lining the Sunderwilds with easily traversable pathways for the main force to follow.

The vanguard came in from all angles, using the Scar Charts to bypass the geometric hurricane, the unnatural waves of the Shattered Sea, the flesh-infecting light, the matter converting echoes of sound.

They came for both the enclave and the Heaven of Winter, but within Avo’s estimates, they were going to reach the latter days before they ever got to the former. Just as well—they wanted the Sleeper’s fragments and probably assumed it was an easier target to take.

Assumptions had most fatal consequences in war.

REND CAPACITY - 99%

+*How are we playing this?*+ Draus said, already recovered from her overwhelming union with the gestalt. The Arsenalist was already painting firing solutions from each of Avo’s watchtowers. With a few more reflections, she would be able to perform an ambush. With Avo’s awareness and her Heaven and skills, they would stand a chance of destroying quite a few golems.

Quite a few wouldn't do.

Avo wanted to ruin them all.

+I intend to vent,+ Avo said plainly. He was still connected with the enclavers; his subverts; his cadre. He wished to share this moment. For them to be as much a part of this as he was. For the Hell he was about to expand was born of the gestalt, and belonged to them as well.

Sphere Seven.

With each advancement, his nature sank closer to the foundations of reality. His weight displaced more of the patterns, and now, with every act, with every miracle he invoked, there was no place in the world he could keep silent. No like before. But just as well: shadows and subterfuge had served their time. He would continue using them in ways most of his foes could not match, but he was due to face titans—beings of power above power, pillars of metaphysical redefinition unto themselves.

It would take a leviathan to feast off the corpses of giants and civilizations, and so that was what he would become. And the next part to this major apotheosis was simple: he needed a much larger Hell.

It wouldn't do to have himself be inundated by entropy in an instant.

+Kae,+ Avo said.

[Oh, yes! Applying Hell-Test-Canon-Attempt marked four-five-five-two.]

EDICT OF _PATTERN-NULLIFICATION_

**UPDATING HELL [STRIX UPON THE EMPTY]
(CONTINUUM/GRAVITY/DARKNESS/FUSION/TIME/SPACE/CONCEPTUALIZATION) -
SEVENTH CIRCLE**

**APPLYING DOMAIN OF (CHRONOLOGY)/(GRAVITY)
>CANON: PARACAUSAL RETCONTINUITY - THE ARK OVERLAYS A SECTION OF
REALITY USING A CONCEPTUAL SIMULATION. AS SPACETIME IS ALIGNED BETWEEN
THE ARK'S INNER REALITY AND THE BASELINE, GHOSTS MAY BE ASSIGNED TO
SPECIFIC PATTERNS ENCOMPASSED UNDER THE TIMELINE. THE PATTERNS
AFFECTED WILL FIND THEIR TEMPORAL MASS INCREASED UNTIL THEY DEVIATE
FROM THE REST OF PROGRESSING CHRONOLOGY, AND ARE EVENTUALLY FRAYED
BY THE PAST. PATTERNS OF GREATER SCOPE AND LESSER VULGARITY WILL
REQUIRE MORE REND AND GHOSTS TO AFFECT.**

->MORTALITY: ANY INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN THE CONCEPTUAL SIMULATION AND BASELINE REALITY WILL CAUSE SEVERE TO CESSATION-LEVEL EGO DAMAGE.

For anyone else, this counter-miracle would have proven too risky to use. A single mistake, a single inconsistency, and all would fall apart. But the world was grasped within his mind now. He was part of the world. They were unified, synthesized, and the Omnitech knots were anchored within his consciousness. Branches of memory began to fuse over reality. Shapeless threads stitched metaphysical weaving over the material, and Knots continued on, unaware of their encroaching fate.

INCREASING TEMPORAL GRAVITY UPON MEM-LOCKED GOLEMS [4,000]

REQUIRED REND - 99%>93% [CONFIRMED]

REQUIRED GHOSTS - 680,155 GHOSTS

Previously, Avo's miracles could sunder districts. The distances and severity of his effects now could break an entire Sovereignty.

And the most pleasing thing was how much *easier* things felt. Previously, he had to *wrestle* to get the same level of effect, to press and stain himself with Rend for power. His spike in mass had turned the struggle more to his favor. Some patterns folded to his whim without protest, others broke like wooden gates before a flood, and only all-encompassing Domains proved to be aspects of existential contention capable of earning his effort.

But even that was causal when compared to before, for when he unleashed his **Pattern-Nullification**, all it took was an adjustment of his simulations, and parts chronology immediately began to *peel* away.

Wails of trauma boiled the Omnitech golems. Ghosts distinguished themselves, the darkness of the void leaking out from them. The golden filigree of progressing time developed stains of entropy as if spreading mold. These stains splashed over the golems, over the sequences that now encompassed them, over sequences that began to fray as time beyond that which was encompassed by these ghosts progressed at pace, but the Knots just got slower and slower.

A few golems managed a response, striking at their fated cage using their own manifested Heavens. But they weren't within the world anymore, and Avo was in the process of forgetting them, his ghosts the first thing to be unraveled by the nothing of the past. There was no grand moment of destruction, no visual spectacle to behold. The conceptual simulation framed over reality simply shedded like molted skin from baseline reality.

And then it *wasn't* at all.

Avo found himself observing Scar Charts devoid of any presence, found himself wondering what he was exactly doing.

REND CAPACITY - 0%

[Rent Capacity at zero. Overheaven Pattern-Nullification updated.] The Agnos cheered as she scouted the Sunderwilds using Avo's sense. Nothing there. It worked. Four thousand iterations of tests and it worked. She squealed. **[We're going to strip time itself clean. We're going to poison the paths!]** Loathing leaked from her mind, and she thought of Veylis.

A few additional shivers ran from pattern of space. Avo observed the tapestry, and more Domains began to react sporadically in places he could not fully perceive, in corners of darkness, in light, in matter, and more. Additional Knots were likely hidden. Additional Knots that he would not be able to find without devoting additional resources or effort. But they were hiding now, holding in place.

He'd bought himself some time with the feat he just performed. The other Omnitech assets likely weren't sure what he just did, and paranoia would keep them pinned longer than the rest of his defenses. They would probably proceed even slower now. Bring in their own hyper-esoteric Heavens before beginning their engagement.

For now, Avo found himself satisfied and magnified. But he wasn't done. He assigned Kae new tasks, things she needed to work on. The Strix Upon the Empty was an immense Heaven unto itself, already requiring **825,000 THAUMS** to run at only a canon and a Hell. The sheer scope and vulgarity of its miracles were beyond peer, but he had more thaums to assign, and more canons to create.

Veylis was still his superior. Considerable superior. That could not be the case if he desired to win this struggle.

He needed even stranger canons. Something capable of striking across Spacetime—something easy to deploy and destructive on an unfathomable level.

Concepts filtered over from Kae. Presently, she had an idea about converting ghosts into solar fusion. Avo had a great many ghosts. And for an additional Hell... a direct upgrade to his Woundmother's **Breath of the Withered**—a metaphysical sun with its light infused with entropy, capable of fraying matter, force, time, space, and concepts where its brightness reached.

[Jaus,] Abrel breathed, mind going blank at the prospect of facing Avo. There was no hope for her. No hope for her family. Soon, he would stand alone among esteemed company within New Vultun. Esteemed company, and a great power unto himself—made even greater by the gestalt.

His Overheaven's shape began to change in the void. An aesthetic evolution followed his apotheosis. The Strix sprouted free from his Overheaven, and his secret project merged with his growing being. No longer was he merely a burning nest of Soulfire, wards, ghosts, and tattered dragons. No, that was merely the core of his new self—a singular eye burning upon the skull of a vast Strix. Trails of eldritch fire outlined the contours of its being, and its every sinew, every plume and feather was sculpted from an ethereal midnight glow — ghosts embodying the hollowness of the void. From within the dark came tendrils. Tendrils of purest white growing free

from sequences and whips of gliding darkness. The visage of his Echoheads returned once more, but ghoul was long gone.

The midnight rains began to wash over New Vultun once more. As the water fell hard from the higher clouds seeded with vaporous miracles, ugly tears stretched across New Vultun. Scars raked across reality from the Tiers to the Warrens below. Between the fractured seams in existence were flashes of nuclear detonations, were thoughtwave detonations, were spatial thresholds forming battle lines between districts and Sovereignties.

The Guilds were frozen. Left stunned after what Avo inflicted upon them. The Strix had bought him the most valuable commodity of all: time. Time for them to spend entrenched as he worked and shaped every advantage he could for the forthcoming trial. Time before they could properly respond to him, to come up with any of their own countermeasures.

He needed to make the trial count. He needed to steal Kae back while he could—snuff Veylis if he could.

There would never be a moment, an opening like this again.

*{Avo,} Calvin*o said, the EGI's voice echoing across his subminds. *{It's time.}*

He shifted his consciousness to the submind he assigned to Threshold. In the Avalon server, the mists above began to clear as waters rose. Upon a small boat, he kept to his mortal avatar, though it was increasingly a lie when compared to his Overheaven. He and the EGIs were far more than matter. But they still greeted each other this way for the pretense of their polities. For those born of the flesh and saw no further than what their senses offered.

The waves beneath his ship stilled to a ground of sapphire blue, and voluminous clouds around him formed a coliseum, sectioned seating devoted to all the polities. There were millions of minds in attendance, millions of avatars to sift through. Threshold accommodated them presence by adjusting their distances to him in real time. Those he viewed in detail were drawn closer, made to be no four meters away for dialogue. He himself was always at the epicenter of this place, the beast of the hour.

A synthetic dawn made from nanomechanical particulates rained over Avo. Like a crown hovering over his head, Calvin's avatar rippled as they spooky. *{This special assembly has been called to session. Polity minds; alliances; confederations; cultures; remnants, I give you Avo, Operative of Aegis, the Burning Dreamer, now Ark and God of Mortal Origin.}*

Alarm flooded his **Definement of Hysteria**. Alarm. Moments from the past drifted over him. Wars still beyond his comprehension. Shots fired years in advance, traveling for light years before punching through critical habitats or worlds, killing trillions, breaking entities of Soulfire infused within anomalous alloy.

For millennia after, Voidwatch had survived the end of their universe. The end of the old ways. Now, here they were again, faced directly with a god—or something like it—enduring memories of a war that never truly ended.

Avo empathized. He knew what that was like.

+Thank you,+ he said, addressing Calvino. Turning his perception on the gathered many, he sighed, and began his address. This would not be for him, but them as well. Them. Their polities. His gestalt.

And a proper future.

+Voidwatch. Minds. People. Sophonts. I have come to demand your rejection. I have come to command your disgust. And I have come to sever you from hope. I am all that you fear and more. And I am the final legacy of your enemies. The inheritor of their war.+

{Avo,} Kant muttered, firing him a tight-beam hyperwave broadcast. {What are you doing?}

+I am here to make the truth known,+ Avo said, ignoring the EGI. **+And I am here to greet you with honesty. I am not like you. But then again... most of you aren't like each other as well.+** He paused, and a chuckle escaped him. **+You really shouldn't be together.+**