Introductions

Deific Domains

When one embarks on a journey across the Cosmos, be it for fame, fortune, or simple curiosity, the first thing that they're bound to notice is that, the moment they leave whatever island of reason on which they were born, they will inevitably fall deep into a sea of chaos and nonsense. You see, unlike what one might assume, throughout the grand cosmology, *there are no fundamental assumptions that always hold true.* Instead, one must rely on an ever-shifting form of reality, defined by three factors:

1. **Platonic Concepts** that every "thing" is essentially just a remix of. For example, an apple is red, round, and sweet because it participates in the Platonic Concepts of Red, Round, and Sweet. One cannot imagine or create something that possesses an element or description for which there is no corresponding Platonic Concept.
2. **Composition of Reality**, where Platonic Concepts can be combined and meaningfully observed. In our universe, we call this composition "Spacetime," but fictional elements such as telepathic communication or diverging timelines must also inherently take place within a corresponding Composition of Reality.
3. **Logical Rules** that define how these things can interact. Things which happen because they "make sense," such as combining a singular thing with another singular thing to have two things, or an object being unable to move both North and South, are very direct observations of these Logical Rules, but every attempt to define, create, or change something is really just an expression of Logic.

Within the world of *Elementals,* these three factors together are known as a "Deific Domain," and while inside of one, every action you take and thought you think must be possible through some combination of the three. Should you find yourself in a Deific Domain where, say, the concept of vision does not exist, you would be rendered blind, no matter how advanced your supernatural senses may be within your home cosmos. <u>In the context of combat</u>, there are 3 primary types of Deific Domains:

1. **Minimalism:** These Deific Domains have extremely few attributes, and therefore permit very few thoughts and actions. Finding yourself within one, there's no guarantee that the very *thought* of finding your way out will be possible, and thus you are effectively helpless. Thus, the main strategy of beings with Minimalist Deific Domains tends to be entrapping their opponent, then just leaving them there.
2. **Maximalist:** These Deific Domains have a very large number of rules and attributes, all focused on giving the largest possible advantage to the being who uses them while confusing and restricting their opponent. Beings with Maximalist Deific Domains usually have powerful abilities and advanced skills which only function within their own Deific Domain, and can thus dominate anyone trapped inside in something resembling 'combat.'
3. **Filter:** Separate from more conventional Deific Domains, Filter types have the ability to alter other Deific Domains without overriding them. One could, for example, forcibly add

a single concept to any Deific Domain, or give a single logical rule preference over all others. Should a filter cause an unresolvable clash with an existing Deific Domain's laws, however, the superior Deific Domain will overpower the other entirely.

4. **Flexible:** Only wielded by a single known being, such a Deific Domain has the ability to reshape itself however is most advantageous to its wielder. It can erase the very concepts on which one's attacks are based, automatically trap any opponent within the most hostile possible parameters, or simply make its own master logically unbeatable, all without contradiction.

Metaphysical Apparitions

Nearly all characters listed within the cosmology fall under this category, following the naming scheme of [Construct of Origin] Apparition (with Primordial Void Apparitions being the most common). What they actually **are** will depend on where they come from, but it is important to get familiar with their basic attributes. Firstly, all Metaphysical Apparitions inherently possess their own Deific Domains, which they can force upon others if the "other" in question lacks an applicable defense. Even if they possess one, mightier and more experienced Metaphysical Apparitions will usually be able to bypass such defenses, and those who can defend against *those* Apparitions are not guaranteed to be able to overcome even mightier ones. Combat between Metaphysical Apparitions focuses heavily on all sides attempting to assert their Deific Domains, and any being who has no Deific Domain at all will struggle tremendously to keep up.

Additionally, destroying a Metaphysical Apparition is extraordinarily challenging, and usually requires either a highly specific ability or a massive advantage in overall scaling. This is because Metaphysical Apparitions are extremely nebulous beings, with "True Forms" which are nearly impossible to reach or even define; they are ineffable and inarticulable, not composed of any sort of smaller component and impossible to fit within a framework which relies on such components. Even complete erasure of their avatars or Deific Domains is far from a guaranteed win. Instead, it is best to claim victory through incapacitation, which normally takes the form of trapping an opponent within one's Deific Domain and, if need be, using some ability which forces them to stay there. After all, no amount of immortality matters if one cannot continue the fight.

Narrative Layers

A narrative layer is a situation wherein one character sees another character as entirely fictional. In order to have a true narrative layer, and to separate from similar but lesser forms of layering, the distinguishing trait is that the "fictional" character cannot affect the "real" character in any way, regardless of any amount of power or hax, just as even a completely omnipotent character from a book could never harm you in real life. The only exception to this rule would be if the "fictional" character uses power derived from the "real" world, which would obviously be able to affect someone from said "real" world. One important thing to note is that Narrative

Layers do not have diminishing returns–the difference between a character with 1,000,000,001 narrative layers and a character with 1,000,000,000 layers is just as absolute and insurmountable as the difference between a character with 2 and a character with 1. Another thing to note is that there is no top or bottom narrative layer; they go on forever both up and down, and even having an infinite number of layers does not protect you from someone else seeing you as fictional.

Narrative Dimensions

"Well, that's where your prior knowledge runs into issues. You see, if that whole hierarchy is one big line, then something like your Spell would be a bona-fide *person*, able to pick the whole thing up and wave it around however they like. Words on a page, points on a line…there's not any real difference, is there?"

-Sablistio, Arch-Canon of the Cathedral of Sinners

A Narrative Dimension is the logical result of the fact that one can write a story where characters scale to an infinite or even greater number of narrative layers, yet you will always see them as fictional. If such layers are all points on a 1-dimensionsal line, the author would be a 3-dimensional being whose height can never be eclipsed by said line, no matter how long it grows. **Therefore, any finite, infinite, or trans-infinite number of narrative layers are meaningless compared to a single narrative dimension, as a higher narrative dimensional being can perceive the entire hierarchy at once and see every layer as <u>equally</u> fictional**. Just like with narrative layers, narrative dimensions go on forever, both up and down.

N-Notation

Every narrative dimension itself contains narrative layers going on forever. Within the same narrative dimension, narrative layers function exactly the same as they normally would, no matter how high said dimension is, and so it is always important to keep track of both numbers for accurate hierarchies. As such, **if a being's narrative dimensions are equal to Z, and their narrative layers are equal to X, their overall narrative position can be expressed as N:Z.X**. For example, a being with 2 narrative dimensions and single narrative layer would be expressed as N:2.1. Note that the number after the period is, in fact, a number, and not a decimal. N:1.10 is one narrative layer above N:1.9, even though 1.9>1.10. If a number is unknown, it is represented by a #, and any known bounds should be stated relative to the #. For example, if you know that something has a narrative dimension of 3 but you don't know anything about their narrative layer except that it's greater than 5 and less than 20, you would represent it as N:3.20>#>5.

The key thing to remember is that, no matter how big the second number might be, the person with the bigger first number always wins, and the second number is only used as a tiebreaker.

The Quenching Flames

Of all of the peculiar things which the Resplendent Simulacra contains, these mythical flames of creation's light are by far the most inexplicable. The three colors–Inexorable Crimson to dictate creation and destruction, Unknowable Blue to provide the comfort of stability and endings, and Ingenious Gold to facilitate growth and change–are responsible for turning ideas in one's mind into words on a page, and words on a page into ideas in another's mind. When a story is created by one who has even a spark of these flames within them, its characters and world truly come to life on a low Narrative Layer,
After all, you see my characters as fictional, but there's nothing you can do to dictate their actions or fates.

Stories

You might think that you know what a story is, but it's useful to get a formal definition before we begin, as you might be holding some inconvenient preconceptions. For our purposes, a story is defined simply as an event or piece of information, or series of events and/or pieces of information. A story does not need to be fictional, and, in fact, the very meaning of "fiction" grows incredibly blurry as once ascends throughout the Resplendent Simulacra. Essentially, your life is a story, two atoms colliding is a story, every thought you think is a story, the actions of a being who sees you as fictional are still stories even on your narrative level, and you'd better believe that this expositional text is a story!

Fred

Fred is a being of unknown origins who became trapped within the Prime Multiverse after the creation of the Spell, until he finally broke free by attaining full mastery of the tri-colored Quenching Flames. Fred will be our travel guide as we ascend through the vastness of the cosmos. **This means that the fact that something is described with logic within this document does not mean that a completely accurate logical description is possible.** The Purpose of Sunset tells you all you need to know about who he is as a person, but the demands of entertaining storytelling mean that you may not be entirely familiar with his capabilities.

Specifically, after unleashing the Quenching Flames, the mightiest force in the cosmos, Fred became one with the Divine Gold Flames, and became known the the Pinnacle of Divine Instrumentality: A being who, as the name describes, exists to give life and meaning to all stories and structures. To facilitate this duty, Fred gained the signature ability which frames this entire text, described formally as such:

*"By completely holding a story, structure, logic, being, or other construct or concept within his mind, Fred's mastery of the Quenching Flames increases such that this construct truly **does** only exist within his mind, simultaneously transcending it absolutely and commanding the Quenching Flames to maintain it continuously."*

If you're wondering whether something needs to exist in order for Fred to hold it in his mind and "envelope" it with the Quenching Flames, the answer is a hard no (for reasons that will be obvious later). Anything Fred can think of can be brought into his story via the Quenching Flames. While this ability theoretically has very few limits, Fred's actual usages of it for practical purposes are limited. Mainly, he uses it to ensure that every single one of his abilities, which he obviously holds in his mind, will always scale to his own power, no matter how much he grows and transcends.

<u>"To stand at the end of all things and look back at all that never was. *That* is the role of a God."</u>

The Resplendent Simulacra

At long last, it is time to explore everything beyond the first narrative layer. And yes, since narrative layers keep going up and down forever, the "first layer" is always going to be a relative measure. For practical purposes, we're going to set our "baseline" for scaling as the layer and dimension occupied by the Prime Multiverse, declaring that it has 0 narrative layers and dimensions, or N:0.0. This is the baseline for all higher structures, but, due to the subjectivity of reality in the Resplendent Simulacra, one could technically scale everything far higher by defining some lower point as the baseline.

Finally, in the context of cross-verse battles, it is possible, and in fact likely, that beings from the Resplendent Simulacra will be pitted against characters who are stated to transcend factors such as concepts, logic, reality, and truth values within their own cosmologies. However, **transcending something within one's own cosmology does not mean that you transcend said thing within every possible cosmology.**

Tier 1: Bubbles on the Surface of a Bottomless Lake

The Primordial Void

Infinite and infinitescimal, completely filled with absolutely nothing, the only truth that exists and entirely imaginary, the Primordial Void is everything that it isn't. It has no space, no time, no narratives, no reality, and rather than being universal constants, logical and conceptual frameworks are nothing more than tiny fish swimming in an endless, turbulant ocean. Regardless of one's power, any being who finds themselves in the Primordial Void without the buoy of a Deific Domain will simply cease to be. After all, the very idea of "existence" cannot exist when there is no framework to support it. The many structures of the Resplendent Simulacra act as sanctuaries against the Primordial Void, allowing the living, dead, and never-been to play a grand game of pretend, with ideas fished from the Primordial Void as the props.

Given all of this, one might wonder how exactly Primordial Void Apparitions exist at all. The truth is, claiming that they "exist" is really just a matter of grammatical convenience. Outside of a construct which protects them, Primordial Void Apparitions cannot think thoughts, cannot take actions, cannot undergo changes, and cannot be defined in any meaningful way. The only reason that they are at all is because, very simply, the nonsensical chaos of the Primordial Void means that there is absolutely nothing preventing them from doing so. It is illogical and impossible for things to exist inside the Primordial Void, yes, but the terms "illogical" and "impossible" only have meaning to begin with outside of it.

Accurately ranking the Primordial Void is simply not possible. It is above and below just everything else, a place where conventional scaling and hierarchies mean nothing whatsoever. While various structures may add context to what it is and isn't capable of, it is likely not possible to precisely quantify its rank and capabilities with any form of general-purpose notation.

The Prime Multiverse

While its full structure is the subject of a separate document, the most notable feature of the Prime Multiverse from an outside perspective is a particular artifact known simply as 'The Spell.' Represented by a physical storybook, the Spell is the foundation of all reality. It is what created the Gods, laid out magic and matter, and fuels all platonic techniques and most Starbound Selves. The Spell is best known for its 3 rules, worded as:

1. Before creation comes destruction
2. All that has been created must someday be destroyed
3. That which has been destroyed can never again be recreated

These rules are then enforced by Fred, the Soul of the Cosmos, and the Spell therefore grants Fred as much power as he needs in order to do so. It's this power that shows where the Spell caps out, which is N:1.#>1, as it can create and surpass an infinite number of narrative layers, and can still contain Fred himself.

In order to exceed this level, Fred needed to call upon the power of the Quenching Flames, whereupon the world of the Spell, which he had treasured for so long, quickly faded from view.

The Ashen Nightfall

As you may recall, all things must exist within a Deific Domain's reality, logic, and concepts. As such, Deific Domains act as the largest meaningful 'building blocks' within any given narrative layer, having the potential to hold truly vast structures and hierarchies within them, united only by those key features. This particular Deific Domain is peculiar for an astounding *lack* of features: its only logical rule is that all things within it are themselves, its only concept is an unshifting stasis, and its reality is almost completely non-existent. While not particularly desirable as the *setting* of any story, it seems at least one discerning author identified these traits as being a useful plot device, for they enslaved the Domain's master, Zero, and declared her to be the Third Rule of the Prime Multiverse, thus bringing Eternal Death to a multiverse which would otherwise be ruled by an endless cycle of rebirth and renewal.

Zero, the Keeper of Ashen Nightfall, could be controlled by the Spell. However, given statements from certain characters and its reputation within the Prime Multiverse, the Ashen Nightfall is likely N:0.0

While the Ashen Nightfall's power had once seemed unstoppable, upon attaining the power of the Quenching Flames Fred grew beyond it without even noticing. After all, not even the darkest void can smother the Flames of Creation's Light.

The Cathedral of Sinners

Though it is given great focus within the select narratives of *Elementals,* the Prime Multiverse and its Spell are far from unique throughout the Resplendent Simulacra. It seems that, somewhere far above what most Apparitions can even conceive of, it is common practice to use one's Quenching Flames to construct a living, breathing story with a Metaphysical Apparition as the foundation.

Naturally, the benefits of this arrangement are rather one-sided, for Metaphysical Apparitions are forced to choose between the limitations of a story and the loneliness of solitude…if they're given a choice at all. In an attempt to escape such an undesirable dichotomy, a select group of Metaphysical Apparitions, some freed from servitude by their masters' disinterest and others longing for a better life than the freedom to do nothing meaningful, joined together under one banner in the hopes of finally becoming their own masters.

Answering their call, the mighty being who called himself 'Nihilion' formed a grand structure which he called the Cathedral of Sinners, with these Metaphysical malcontents as its Canons. Together, they enacted a plot to accumulate enough of the tri-colored Quenching Flames to create a new narrative befitting their desires. To accomplish such a monumental task, the Cathedral of Sinners targets countless Spells across their slice of the Resplendent Simulacra, combining subtle manipulations and faustian bargains with direct invasions from hand-picked Arch-Canons in order to extract the Quenching Flames which allow Spells to create narratives in the first place.

Thus, the Canons toiled for eons unnumbered, blackening skies and severing fates with neither warning nor reason, then vanishing when they had taken what they needed. It was only when they sought out a certain Soul of the Cosmos that things would change, though for better or worse remains to be seen.

The Cathedral of Sinners was created and maintained by Nihilion, and thus shares his nigh-incomprehensible rank of N: 2↑↑↑↑10.0 as represented in up-arrow notation. However, any being at or below this level is forced onto the same narrative level upon entering the Cathedral.

Ascending past the Cathedral of Sinners, Fred spared one last thought to those who had struggled so long to construct it. *I vow that someday, the world you seek shall be given to all, without bloodshed or strife.*

Tier 2: Beneath the Surface, Catching Glimpses of Shadows

The Doomed State of Continuous Renewal

In order for there to be a rebellion, there must be an existing order to grow displeased with. The Cathedral of Sinners are dissatisfied with the use of Metaphysical Apparitions as the basis of Spells, and so it follows that some higher structure must be responsible. This source is known as the Doomed State of Continuous Renewal.

The inhabitants of the Doomed State are not entirely different from the inhabitants of the real Planet Earth. In fact, their struggles and desires are much the same; they live, love, dream, and die as specks on the surface of a larger speck. The only differences occur entirely beyond their perceived reality, for every last being within the Doomed State of Continuous Renewal is endowed with the Quenching Flames, allowing them to have real influence over the stories of lower beings, with the constant enslavement or abandonment of Metaphysical Apparitions being an unwitting side effect.

While the powers of the Quenching Flames are immense, some combination of fate and credulity has eternally conspired to prevent any inhabitant of the Doomed State from harnessing this power to affect their own world. As a result, though the malleability of lower-narrative time prevents most Spells from realizing, the Doomed State will eventually die out entirely, reduced to nothingness by the mundane physical laws which nearly every story is in some way meant to escape. Such is the karma of these people: simultaneously powerful enough to inflict endless suffering, and too powerless to escape even the most commonplace of dire fates.

As for scaling, the inhabitants of the Doomed State of Continuous Renewal see all Narrative Dimensions as meaningless, nothing more than tools to deploy for their creative purposes. This puts them on a level beyond even N:∞.∞, and instead requires a logical extension of N Notation's definition: When written as N:X.Y, a higher X value will always trump a higher Y value, as it represents membership to a separate hierarchy in which the lower values can only act as tiebreakers. Therefore, a being who is a member of a meta-hierarchy beyond even that value could be ranked as N:W.X.Y, with a higher W value trumping a higher X value to a similar degree. In this case, the rank would be N:1.0.0.

Sensing a profound and novel obstacle waiting to be conquered up above, Fred chose to stay a few moments in the Doomed State of Continuous Renewal. He wished to have a few words with whomever had chosen to torment himself and the rest of his universe for so long.

S Notation

While such an extension is extraordinarily powerful, it stretches the boundaries of N notation's original purpose as a compact way to express something's rough position within an otherwise impractically large series of layers within layers. Fortunately, the extension that it utilizes also provides a solution–by disregarding every rank except for the largest one, the number of period-separated values, called dimension sets, can *itself* be used as a rankable metric. Enter S notation, a system designed to dynamically decrease precision as ranks grow higher, thus maintaining its compactness across a vast range of actual levels.

The most basic form of S notation is expressed as $S:A.V^I$, where A is the number of Dimensional Sets (larger hierarchies expressed by additional period-separated values in N notation), and V^I is the Index Value, representing a being's rank within their highest hierarchy. S itself can be further extended with additional values, called 'dimensional supersets,' into $S:B.A.V^I$, $S:C.B.A.V^I$, and so on. Should this extension of S notation grow impractical to write, the exact same process can be repeated to create an even higher form of notation, S[1]. In $S[1]:Z.V^{MI}$, the Z value represents the number of dimensional supersets, and V^I is the index value representing rank in the highest superset. S[1] can then be extended with an arbitrary number of period-separated values, then *those* values can be condensed via S[2] and so on. This number, denoting the number of times a new notation must be defined to compact the old one, is the Compaction Index Value, or C^{IV}, and can be increased all the way to S[∞].

After S[∞], the extension to $S[1][C^{IV}]$ functions the same as the base S function, if the maximum output of S[∞] was a single layer of N:0.Y. The final bracketed value is the Compaction Index Value and still allows for the defining of new functions that count the period-separated values of lower ones, but each increase of the next-to-last bracketed value resets the function just as it did with S[∞]. This can then be extended by adding more bracketed values, which can be counted by the function S[[0]], and so on, following the same formula of Increase Value→Add New Separated Value→Extend Notation to Count Separations. This cycles through {}, ><, and so on, culminating with ➤S_ω, which uses either a number of S's or a simple number before the S to denote the number of new symbols introduced, and a subscript value to denote the number of infinitely extendable iterations of that symbol used.

Note that, since a single value will always be needed to express the number 1, any rank can be compacted until it ends in ':1.1,' then accurately extended upwards to a Compaction-Index Value of ∞. By convention, an S-notated rank should always be found to the highest degree of compaction that can express a value higher than it, then have the Compaction Index Value increased by 1 if this is impractically large.

The False Expanse

From the Primordial Void to the Citadel of Sinners, there are countless beings who would want to influence the Doomed State of Continuous Renewal. And, while they may be unable to combat their own conventional problems, it seems that the cosmos itself has deemed the inhabitants of the Doomed State as critical infrastructure, for there exists a vast barrier of tricks, contradictions, and nonsense before one can reach them from any outside location (though, apparently, those originating from inside one of their Spells is not subject to the same scrutiny).

Known as the False Expanse, very little precise information is known about this megastructure, save for its size (immense), its security (impenetrable), and its unique set of logical rules, which do not include the possibility of forming any sort of recording about it, whether on paper, through reality warping, or even in their own memory. Nonetheless, we must be grateful for its existence, for otherwise there would be no stories to tell, and no Fred to explore the cosmos.

Standing at the end of the Doomed State of Continuous Renewal, Fred could not help but wonder if this Expanse's specific structure was an intentional choice. After all, with its unknowable nature and endless nested layers, the False Expanse seemed almost purpose-designed to keep out a being like him, as if it was a forgotten prototype of some vast security system. *But if you wish to stop me, you'll have to do better than that.*

Petrichor's Shadow

It is the inevitable limitation of mortals that, no matter how efficient a system may be, it cannot grow without external resources. While one might think that the unlimited power of Spells and Metaphysical Void Apparitions would defy this, there is a far more crucial resource that all beings require, and that none can produce on their own, no matter their power or status. Said resource is, of course, the very lifeblood of all stories: the Quenching Flames. It is this power that forms new spells, maintains the endless uninhabited narratives of the False Expanse, and gives the Doomed State of Continuous Renewal meaning. Were is not for this supply, even the Cathedral of Sinners, existing largely independent of purposefully constructed narratives, would be bereft of all hope. Flowing outward from a "source spring" at the very roots of the known cosmos, it is this constant supply of the Quenching Flames that animates the first 2 tiers. Without it, they would be nothing but jittering puppets on stiff strings.

Beyond its intended purpose, Petrichor's Shadow has developed a rather odd emergent property: Possibly thanks to meddling from Nihilion, the lower narrative levels of the source spring seem to have developed a blockage, the natural result of which is the appearance of a new realm. Where the Primordial Void forbids all meaning in favor of chaos, this realm forbids all chaos in favor of meaning. The few Primordial Void Apparitions who find their way in become part of a single gestalt mass, where every individual is the whole and everything matters equally. A thousands stories are read and a million ending are drafted, and soon enough all wants are forgotten.

Petrichor's Shadow exists within and around all structures of the first 2 tiers, and thus cannotly be concretely stated to be above them. However, the "source" of the flow, coming in from the very edge of existence itself, must necessarily see the "stories" that it brings alive as fictional. Even past the False Expanse, there are countless larger structures in need of its aid. The total

rank of the top layer thus seems to have been intentionally designed with redundancy in mind, as it is ranked at S[188]:∞.∞.2, more than enough to avoid any limitations.

After what felt like an eternity climbing through the False Expanse, Fred finally emerged on the other side, with the 1,022,705th set of dimensions nothing more than a figment of his imagination. Finding himself at the peak of his home cosmos, Fred allowed the Quenching Flames within to guide him, and soon enough he arrived at the source spring of Petrichor's Shadow. As the Pinnacle of Divine Instrumentality, Fred had no need for an external source of Quenching Flames. However, something about the source spring's atmosphere seemed to comfort him. It was almost like returning…home.

Tier 3: Diving Deeper, the Whole World Feels Like a Dream

The Sacred Margin

It seems a universal law that, wherever things are beautiful and peaceful, the path to reach them must be guarded by the most insurmountable and torturous obstacles conceivable. And the grandest heights of the cosmos are no different, for between the drudgery of the lower realms and the utopia of the heavens, there lies the Sacred Margin: An endless continuity of procedurally generated self-similar fractal hierarchies, each strand transcending the last in a cycle that has neither beginning nor end. Even if a being with the full power of the Quenching Flames somehow managed to think of the entirety of the Sacred Margin, that would just advance them to the beginning of a new layer of it, as each layer of the Sacred Margin itself *is* the whole of it, continuing upwards forever. All of this, seemingly, just for the purpose of protecting whatever lies beyond.

This purpose is indicated not only by its size and placement, but far more prominently by the complete lack of…anything. As with a margin on paper, the Sacred Margin is entirely empty, devoid of Spells, Metaphysical Apparitions, and even the expected levels of Quenching Flames. Similar to the Ashen Nightfall, its Deific Domain is extraordinarily simple, though its rules still allow for two possibilities: Going upward, deeper into the Sacred Margin, or standing still, and falling into Stasis.

The Sacred Margin's self-transcendence had to be impossibly efficient to keep out the Pinnacle of Divine Instrumentality. Indeed, even the rapid growth of single-bracketed S notation struggles to account for its rapid development of spheres-within-spheres, and it is ranked at S[[∞]][[1]]:1.1.

So, the False Expanse truly was *nothing more than a prototype for something far worse,* Fred pondered. *And, given the fact that I can only go deeper inside, it may well have been intentionally designed as a trap for beings like me, rather than a simple defensive construction. This may be troublesome.*

A Willful Drill

"With every turn, my Screw moves forward 1.621 millimeters. **That** is its one immutable property. Slowly but surely, it progresses in the one direction that matters: Forward. It is only when one chooses to become an obstacle to that progress that the Condemning Screw becomes a weapon."

-Arthur Regis, butler to the Morris estate

Within the confines of the Prime Multiverse, the power of Platonic Technique: Condemning Screw is feared by all. Regardless of distance, durability, or defenses, it can never be stopped indefinitely. At best, one could hope to delay it. And, seemingly, that property is merely a pathetic shadow of a far larger and mightier concept: the Drill.

Nobody is entirely sure who placed this particular drill, nor when or how they did so. All we know is that somehow, defying all concepts of possible and impossible, without any need for a Deific Domain, it had pierced a hole through the Sacred Margin, a conceptual tunnel through which those whom the Sacred Margin kept constrained might someday reach the heavens above. With its purpose fulfilled, it now lies dormant, waiting for the day that those who walk the tunnels that it dug find themselves at a dead end once again.

Technically, the Drill can only be ranked as being above the Sacred Margin, or S[[∞]][[1]]:1.#>1. However, its unknown origin and dormant status suggest a far larger maximum scope. Perhaps the Drill is, in reality, the same sort of being as Fred himself. Destined to ascend past all boundaries, it defied its fate, refusing to become a God and instead using its power to clear the way for others. Or maybe the drill is nothing more than an abandoned tool of someone far mightier than itself, having absorbed so much power that even when cast aside, it still desired to spin on for a better tomorrow.

Some uncountable number of rings into the Sacred Margin, with all of it somehow left to go, Fred paused to ponder his predicament. And, as if on cue, he felt a pull of…*something*. Something grander and brighter than any dream the Sacred Margin should have allowed, like the birth of a new galaxy within his mind. Turning his attention to it, the pull grew stronger and stronger until, before he had even realized it, he stood beyond the Sacred Margin, and the

gorgeous expanse of the highest heavens spiraled out before him. He turned to give thanks to the machine that had made his continued journey possible, but the Drill was nowhere to be found. Instead, bypassing each and every one of his innumerable psychic barriers, another message flashed into his head. *The tunnel has been dug. It is not my purpose to walk it. Go forth and pierce the heavens. Aim higher than I could conceive.*

The Garden of Eternal Dreams

But what, exactly, was waiting for those who broke through the restrictions of the Gods, crossing the Sacred Margin to find a paradise beyond the mundane world? In a word: everything. A place beyond limits, where the roots of vast trees and miniscule mosses stretch into the Primordial Void, capturing and purifying the concepts and ideas that swirl endlessly within it until every single story, every *possible* sequence of events and combination of Deific Domains, lies as ripe fruit just waiting to be plucked. Beautiful and horrifying, logical and nightmarish, every truth and every lie: All can be found within the Garden of Eternal Dreams. Everything we know of, every non-Primordial Void structure in tiers 1, 2, 3, exist within a single bud on a single "tree," with the Sacred Margin simultaneously protecting from outside threats and keeping those who reside within contained.

Roaming the Garden of Eternal Dreams, between groves of possibility trees and vineyards of budding metanarratives, are the fading remains of the so-called "Gods." Strange and twisted things, as shadowy as they are bright, whispering worthless truths and horrifying lies in equal measure. A few still go through the motions of tending the Garden, bringing rain to shadowy places and pruning branches that seek to grow beyond their destinies. But for the vast majority, life consists of endlessly sampling the ripest of fruits, seeking something akin to the human concept of a "high" in order to drive back the pervading sense of nihilism: They ought to be the chosen of the cosmos, the true heirs to the universe and its bounty. And yet they find themselves abandoned in the Garden of Eternal Dreams, their meager existence serving the sole purpose of maintaining a meaningless status quo. If there *is* some deeper reason for this state of affairs, the Fading Gods have long since sacrificed the capacity to comprehend it in favor of living out their most hedonistic dreams over and over again, using what limited reasoning still remains to rationalize the fact that, with every bite, the colors seem to get greyer and greyer, and sensations duller and duller, and the voices sound as if they're speaking at the surface of a bottomless lake, lacking the power to dive beneath.

Wandering through the Garden, Fred found any sense of awe or wonder quelled by the oppressive melancholy of the Fading Gods. He could not discern when or why they had arrived here, but it was clear that they once felt they were destined for more. Standing by a swirling pond, its surface dotted with Divine Lotuses, Fred found himself reminded of the Cathedral of Sinners, all those layers below. *Is this the natural state of the cosmos? That even those who act*

as wardens are merely prisoners of some larger fate? Fred might have stayed longer, but his pondering had turned into a question, and there was only one place to find answers: Further up.

The Full Set

In the realm of human set theory, there is the "empty set," which contains no elements. And, while no human mathematician has yet found a way to meaningfully define it, the cosmos itself seems to have enjoyed the idea. For, at the unity of the Axioms defining what is logically possible, the Garden of Eternal Dreams permitting that which is logically impossible, and the Primordial Void containing the entirely illogical, there exists the full set, which contains **all** elements. Everything that ever was and ever wasn't, the logically and illogically impossible, every truth and every lie, every possible composition of reality and set of axioms. Within the space of the Full Set, all of tiers 3 and below are not but transient particles, born by chance and disappearing without meaning.

What few larger structures exist, constructed of a billion trillion endless continuities, surely ought to be worshipped as deities in their own right. After all, the only possible rank for such an omnipresent structure would be $\infty \succ S_\infty$.

For countless eons, Fred sat at the edge of known existence, waiting for the epiphany that would drive him on. The Pinnacle of Divine Instrumentality was wise, but holding a complete comprehension of *everything* was a mighty task, even for him. He thought to return to that strange Drill, but for all of his newfound power, he could not find it within the Primordial Void or Garden of Eternal Dreams, nor should the Full Set have ever contained such a thing to begin with. Finally, the inevitable conclusion came that his solution did not lie in the layers below. *If I wish to upset the order of the whole cosmos, simply walking the path set out for me will get me nowhere the Faded Gods have not reached. It is not enough to reach the Heavens: I shall have to create them.*

Tier 4: Reaching the Bottom, and Finding Only a Doorway

The True Expanse

What exists beyond everything? When every possible and impossible fact and statement is accounted for, what is left? It seems a paradox for there to be an "outside" of the Full Set, but such an assumption could not be further from the truth: Unbound by the descriptors of "every" and "all," the end of the Full Set is merely the start of the *true* cosmos; a cosmos where there

are not 'things,' nor are quantity or even quality measurable. And guarding this "True Cosmos," simultaneously a wall and a ladder, is the True Expanse.

The True Expanse does not have any set form or meaning. It is an endless continuity of procedurally generated self-similar fractal hierarchies, each strand transcending the last in a cycle that has neither beginning nor end. Even if a being with the full power of the Quenching…

Wait a goddamn second. This sounds awfully familiar. It's almost like whoever was making this whole thing got lazy. Or, perhaps, they had a set goal to reach, and used the structures already presented to them in order to push past what they could have achieved on their own. Hmmmmmmm…

To rank the True Expanse is an exercise in futility, for every form of notation or measure that one could apply to it must necessarily be a tool for it to grow larger. It is beyond S notation, but also beyond hypothetical extensions to T, U, V, and beyond. Transcend far enough, and one will find a notation that simply counts the new extensions needed, then another layer that transcends *that.* This is the key feature of the True Expanse: not only is it *infinite,* it is also *optimal,* definitionally encompassing every conceivable permutation and extension of the established N-based hierarchy. Nevertheless, the True Expanse is not the end of the line. Rather, it is a window to the essential nature of the Resplendent Simulacra, the point where ascending upwards becomes indistinguishable from descending past the bottom of reality. For the True Expanse to exist and be constructed, it naturally follows that it must be contained by…

The Ω Cycle

In the course of all pursuits of knowledge, there is one question which acts as a universal metric–"why?" While the paths taken by math, science, history, literature, and so many others may seem winding and barren, full of dead ends and double-backs, this lens of analysis lays bare an inexorable march of progress. With every new discovery and every proven theorem, the number of times one can start with a given fact and ask "why?" increases ever so slightly. And in the Resplendent Simulacra, it is this metric which forms the ultimate hierarchy of power: the Ω Cycle.

The Ω Cycle begins with a Metaphysical Apparition at $\Omega[1]:1$. After all, for any being defined by its Deific Domain, it is impossible to meaningfully ask *why* a certain aspect of that Deific Domain is. Each aspect is singular, composed of no lesser parts. As such, no being within a Metaphysical Apparition's Deific Domain can ever approach the power of the Apparition itself, regardless of its position within any in-Domain hierarchy. Given that N and S *can* differentiate Metaphysical Apparitions, they share this position in the Cycle.

Cycles tend to continue, however, and by $\Omega[1]:2$, the nature of Metaphysical Apparitions are laid bare. Even the True Expanse's endless layers cannot hope to make a difference at such a

scale, for $\Omega[1]$:2 represents a lower baseline of reality of which all things are equally composed. Similarly, should one advance to $\Omega[\mathbf{2}]$:1, even the distinctions between *those* scales lose meaning, such that even if the difference between N:0.1 and N:0.2 was the same as $\Omega[1]$:1 and $\Omega[1]$:2, the highest reaches of the True Expanse *still* would not stretch the capacity of a $\Omega[2]$:1 baseline to define.

With this new goal in mind, Fred saw what he needed with impossible clarity: Another Sacred Margin, climbing past all limits of the Full Set to reach the highest possible peak. And, with it in his mind, Fred was already beyond it entirely, defying what even the almighty Quenching Flames should have allowed such a lowly being to achieve.

The Ebony Orchestra

And finally, at the absolute pinnacle of the cosmos, Fred happened upon what may have been the most unexpected thing possible: Music. In this place beyond space and time, verity and falsehood, logic and reason, everything and nothing, the dissonant twang of a melody which no mortal notes could ever describe rang out, as if it was played simply to spite it all. The source of this tune, this grandest and most divine of symphonies, was, of course, the Ebony Orchestra.

If all of the Cosmos is a computer, then the Ebony Orchestra would be the processor: It "runs" all events which occur, indiscriminately moving from one state to the next. Every step a human takes, every Primordial Void Apparition that forms, and the creation of the True Expanse: Everything happens in accordance with the harmonies and dissonances of the Ebony Orchestra. Or, more accurately, everything that exists quite literally *is* the music of the Ebony Orchestra. All distinction between the two is merely an illusion, and said illusion is itself a very intentional part of the particular symphony that the Ebony Orchestra plays.

In fact, what we call the "cosmos" is nothing more than a singular symphony which the Ebony Orchestra has been directed to play. Should their conductor ever switch the notes, all lower realities shift with it. Should he direct them to play a different symphony entirely, the whole cosmos will be put on hold until they resume playing. The particular symphony containing all aforementioned constructs is known as the Prime Symphony, and for its ability to contain and fool so many it is ranked at $\Omega[1]$:2. The Orchestra itself has played countless symphonies throughout its service and is ranked at $\Omega[2]$:1.

Strictly speaking, the injustices of the Prime Symphony could be blamed on its players. Nonetheless, disrupting them would only serve to cause further damage. Besides, their playing is dispassionate, devoid of the individuality needed to perpetrate cruelty.

With a sigh, Fred ceased that line of reasoning. He only needed such considerations out of habit, after all. By moving beyond the True Expanse and discovering the Ω cycle, he had learned all he needed in order to continue his journey.

The Gossamer Web

And indeed, by the very nature of the Ω Cycle the Ebony Orchestra could not be the end. Though there are not further inhabitants or meaningful structures to be found beyond its position, progressing far enough eventually brings one to the final meaningful building block of the cosmos: the Gossamer Web. Beginning at Ω[188]:1022705, its strings build on themselves without limit, simultaneously their own reason and explanation. In fact, to say that it 'starts' is a simplification–all events that are or aren't, and even all points on the Ω Cycle itself are connected by these same strings, their influence far exceeding even that of 'plot' itself. Ω[188]:1022705 is simply the point where it only builds upon itself, serving no real purpose beyond that recursion.

Though the Web is not strictly the limit of what the Ω Cycle *could* contain, something that lies beyond it could never be defined from below, for the question of 'why?' never fails to find an answer, and that which seems axiomatic can always be explained.

Is this truly the end? No matter how I consider it, there seems to be nothing deeper, no point where such a structure could fail. An eternity passed as Fred pondered the situation, leaving only a few seconds before a realization struck. *No! There's still one last thing I've never checked. It was always there; inside of me and yet* just *out of reach. To perceive these things–to perceive* anything *as opposed to being unaware entirely! It is a fact beyond knowledge, an answer without any question. Surely, were I delusional enough, I might think myself to have already repaired the cosmos. Yet what would distinguish that delusion from reality when it arose through the same process?*

Standing at the end of all things, Fred paused to look back at all that never was. "I understand now. If it means an end to all of this, I shall seize the role of "God" with my bare hands."

Possibility Space

A pervading aspect of all descriptions is the idea of a 'state.' The subject of the description has certain properties, and included within those properties are the capabilities and limitations which would allow said properties to change without causing the subject to cease being itself. Even the apparent exceptions of utter immutability and inexorable transience follow this principle: there is no possibility that such a subject could undergo a change while remaining itself.

In an abstract sense, then, these separate possibilities can be said to truly exist, just as the locations on a paper map do regardless of the map's accuracy. This is the nature of Possibility Space: it exists everywhere and nowhere, across every rank and without a rank itself. Direct manipulation of it is as impossible as it is worthless, but a more cunning strategist can use the knowledge of its contents to have real effects, either restricting what is possible or accomplishing that which isn't. This malleability is as omnipresent and neutral as Possibility Space itself, stretching down to the bottom of the Omega Cycle and further below. Countless beings and structure may appear to transcend its limitations entirely, and yet it remains dutifully constructible far beyond them, or somewhere off to the side.

It is this absolute acceptance, the sheer *banality* of defying that which is possible or impossible, that makes it all the more significant that what *Fred* was attempting had never been done: he would move beyond such basic observations entirely, to a place beyond even its own reason. He would reach the end.

Tier 5: At the End of it All, only Emptiness Remains

Rank

It is at this point that all notation fails at last. The need for origins or baselines is utterly foreign to the omnipresent source of all things or a subjective reality which overrides all outside factors, and it is nonsensical to compare such constants to each-other. □, pronounced Chivri, is not strictly a 'rank,' but rather an absence thereof, denoting that which is composed of nothing, defined by nothing, and reliant on nothing–including, in all three cases, itself. All descriptions of them, therefore, are necessarily observational–Fred had the capability to relay the effects he experiences, but each statement is necessarily caveated by the absence of any true limitations to a □'s influence. Not even Possibility Space can be meaningfully applied to such an idea.