

Men of science once believed it was possible to escape heat death by concentrating enough energy to create a new universe within the dying one. Then another within the created universe, once it runs dry, and another. Always drifting further and further down, infinitely nested.

But you know better. The causal arrow is reversed. The concentration of sufficient energy attracts the inhabitants of previous dying worlds, pulling them endlessly forward. Like the endocopter. A mirror which reflects what is immured.

Our troubles began with a boilerplate Ballardian theosophist cult. Their crowning achievement was the “psychic lighthouse”, a supercharged beacon meant to contact ethereal beings from higher planes of existence, so that mankind might learn from them and live according to their wisdom.

Mt Shasta, 1972. They went fishing in the deep end and caught something big. The line jerked for a fraction of second, then snapped under the weight of the thousandfold starving things that swarmed the scrap of bait that was the dreaming mind of the volunteer.

That second was enough.

WHAT YOU HEAR

They survive successive iterations by tunneling forward into new universes to escape the destruction of the previous, drawn to concentrations of magickal energy visible through the membrane. They don't remember how many trips they've made. They don't remember much at all. There's only so much that can be sent through the gate and certain parts of the soul must be discarded as extraneous.

To feed they extend a probe. The thin rostrum penetrates the weakest part of the skull and injects a solvent. The louched gray matter is extracted in minute quantities and consumed. The victim loses their memory of the incident, left only with an itchy welt like a bugbite. Prolonged feeding causes memory problems. Identity loss. Removal of notches. This is a defense mechanism. When this is applied to a magick user the charges are also drained. The Avatar percentages. They absorb spells cast against them.

They can't be seen with the naked eye. This is a trap to bait sorcerers. In the astral plane they're a thousand times more dangerous. Like hungry driver ants. Like an amoeba that devours anything it comes into contact with.

They use normal people as a beard to stop Authorities and Surgeons from tracking them. The universe's error correction mechanisms home in on creatures from past iterations, rubbing them out to stop the whole place from being overrun with has-beens. They cover their enormous auras with a skin of mundanity like an assassin bug piled high with corpses. Cults accumulate around them, building idols to the thing that takes away the pain.

Below the cultic accumulation is the larder, to store victims drained to such a degree that they're no longer capable of locomotion or speech. Below that, the nest. They collect tubes of glass.

They decorate with broken fluorescents, ampoules. Neons and LEDs lodged in the walls. A habit or reminder from their world of origin. The flashes illuminate them briefly.

You can farm them. The organ they use to detect magick. To extract it. The part that swims forward from one world to the next. It's not hard once you know how. A narrow hole the ego passes through after slimming down. Cut off the fingers to fit into the glove.

But that's how it always is. A sacrifice for power. The universe has an expiration date and there are people who would give up anything to get to the other side.