

An Invitation to Elaborate Further

A Story of the Creatia Wars

by Michael Zeigler

Ko Teth perceived - through both his own spirit and the pneumatic-limiter Sleeps' had made for him - the path of the negation, and slipped sideways to avoid it. *If my ancestors knew how I was using the Walk-About*, he mused, *they'd set the Serpent on me.*

His shehai sliced through the automaton, ending the fight.

Through the vibrations of his plenary-ontology, he turned back to the woman. "I'll never get used to it, no matter how many times I see it," she said.

Ko Teth looked at his hand, could feel the shehai ringing within him. "It's one of the oldest techniques of my people, the forging of the soul into a weapon. Both meditation and violence, but tonally aligned for peace." He thought back over his long training, and smiled. "A thing of beauty."

"That's not what I meant," Copper-Ishhara said.

He sometimes forgot the visual manifestation of his millions-fold Being. Normally the limiter would have given him the face he'd worn in Morrowind thousands of years ago, but it was oscillating in combat tier. He dialed it back, resolving himself into a middle-aged Redguard with short, dreaded hair.

"It comes with the territory," he explained.

They packed up their camp. Neither of them had expected a Dwemeri presence this far out in the Void; what the King could want with the Temple was a mystery. But then the King only wanted one thing: negation.

As they walked towards the Temple, Copper said, “Wha’s it like, bein’ all them people at once? It’d give me a ‘ed-ache, it would.”

“Says the woman who is part of a Choir of Nine.”

“Pret’y sure i’s not the same, luv. Y’uv got millions of Bein’s buzzin’ around you. We’re more a community of like-minded ‘n’ such.”

He nodded. “That’s your misunderstanding. I do not have millions of Beings ‘buzzing’ around me. We’re all One: Nerevar come again.”

Copper barked out a laugh. “Right. So y’er sayin’ y’er also the Amaranth, eh? Why not Dream us a new ‘verse outta this mess?”

“That’s...not exactly how it works, I’m afraid.” The path, such as it was, bent out of view around the curve of the hill. Far above was the There/Not-There of the Temple, and above that, the stars and Void. “I do feel him, though. And I remember him - the Amaranth - our love for Ahnassi, when we killed Vivec - and married her. When we went to Akavir and found the truth of Tosh Raka...but also it’s confutation.”

Copper had shifted to Copper-Ishhara. “How do you keep it all straight in your mind?”

“You might ask Kalas the same thing. He’s lived as many lives as We.”

“Most of his Whens collapsed with the return of Alduin.”

“True. But he still Remembers most of them. I suppose you could say it’s like seeing all the Ways your life might have gone, all at once, and knowing each of them to be true.”

“Fehking hell,” Copper spat. “I need some serious mead if we’re gonna talk this shite.”

“You’re the one who asked.”

“Wish I hadn’t!”

They walked in silence for a time. Ko Teth had learned to listen to and silence his Many-Selves in perfect synchronicity-harmony, and so avoided the more treacherous spots on the path. He had the balance of a Khajiit acrobat, the litheness of a Dunmer assassin, and the instincts born of nearly infinite lifetimes - in sum, at least.

“Wut I don’ get,” Copper said behind him (she’d fallen back slightly). “Is how y’er ‘ere and not Dreamin’ away some new ‘verse?”

“But I am.”

“Fehk me.”

He laughed, not in mockery of her, but celebration. “You are very refreshing,” he said. “Most of my acolytes would be questioning me deeply on all these points. I’d need a century just to explain the simplest fundamentals.”

“We ain’ got that sorta time, luv,” she gestured ahead.

The Temple towered above them, seven spires hewn of pure mnemolichite glistening beneath the Void. “This isn’t going to be easy,” he said, drawing his shehai. “And probably painful.”

Copper-Ishhara stood next to him, scimitar in hand. “I am accustomed to pain.”

Even with the pneumatic limiter dialed down he could hear the Memories of her father flowing within her. *The Father is a machine and the mouth of a machine*, he remembered. *His only mystery is an invitation to elaborate further.*

Ah, my wife, he lamented. If only you were with me now.

The whine of temporal confutation reached them as they neared the towering doors. It would not be long before more automatons emerged from impossibility. “Let’s elaborate further,” he whispered.

Copper checked the charge of her pneumatic accelerator. “This is th’ part I love.”