

All things considered, getting rid of the one constant source of nourishment he had easy access to *was* a bad idea; on the other hand, it wasn't as if his hunger would ever abate, and it *would* eventually lead to him devouring a whole planet anyway, so best if he did so on his own terms rather than by letting the proverbial clock run out. Even still, as he floated there, staring at the stark white sphere he had left behind, the snow leopard couldn't help but wonder where he was even supposed to go next; he had breached his way into that dimension as a means of lording over it after his last one grew too cramped for his liking, and yet now found himself in much the same spot as before: colossal, eternally ravenous, and looking down at a small world that wouldn't even begin to scratch that itch. All he *could* do was effortlessly crush it between his fingers and swallow it in one go, his belly rumbling as he did so; it was large, sure, but it wasn't so big that he could actually feel satisfied with it... though, thankfully, there were plenty of *other* planets around him that he could pluck from their orbits and throw into his gullet, even if it did need him to move around a fair bit in order to reach them. By the time he was done with the entrées, however, he had already grown large enough to be able to reach for the local star, taking care not to burn his hand too much when he pulled it closer to him; it felt downright pathetic compared to what it *should* be like, given that he was about to consume a stellar-sized ball of plasma and yet couldn't bring himself to find any wonder or whimsy in it. Perhaps in another life, another Cookie would've stared at that sphere of light and thought to himself how utterly amazing it was that he could hold it in his palms, that he had grown so much that he *could* just cradle a whole sun... this Cookie, however, could think of no such thing; rather, the one thing in his mind was how *hungry* he happened to be, how *deep* the pit in his stomach was, and how much he needed to fill it with whatever he could possibly find that stood even the slightest chance at succeeding at what nothing else had before. He still had to grow a bit more before he could snack on the star, of course; as much as he was effectively indestructible at that point, the snep had no inclination towards taking chunks of plasma off that thing when he could just swallow it all. And it was here, when he allowed his form to burgeon outwards as it fed on ambient starlight, that an idea occurred to him: everything else existed. He had formulated that thought before, of course, in the back of his mind where half-formed ideas remained until he wanted to pluck and actually workshop them into a meaningful form, but it didn't truly hit him until he began drinking in the light coming from every direction around him. The universe was vast, yes, so enormous that it would take him a while to get to the next star over, even with his body growing at the rate that it was; but being vast, it was also filled with delicious food for him to delight himself on, cosmic snacks who might once have been something else, but were now little more than tiny little checkpoints on Cookie's eternal journey towards fulfilling his ravenous need to consume everything in his path. Not that anything would ever make him stop, but that was hardly important; rather, what mattered was that he have *something* to eat, *something* to devour, even if this "something" grew in scale over time. If he had begun with just other people, similar in size to what he used to be, and was now staring at an increasingly-tinier star being held in his growing hands, then he *would* eventually need to eat through the underlying fabric of reality, but that was *fine*; just as long as there *was* a fabric to devour, he would do so, gladly and

gleefully. For the time being, however, he had a star to devour, which he did with a level of gusto that could be charitably described as “painfully average”; it was no longer an achievement for him to do something that physical, living beings should never be able to do, much less something he would actually be proud of. It had become a fact of life for him, that he could just eat a star and be done with it, as if it wasn’t an event on such an apocalyptic scale that if any civilizations were looking at him by then, they were most likely drawing up contingency plans for how to deal with this universe-destroying entity. For Cookie, however, this hypothetical pseudo-threat was just as material as a fart as far as he cared; let the little ones think up a variety of different ways to put an end to his rampage, for at least then he would have something to do: prove them wrong. Others had tried to stop him before, and they had not only failed completely, but ended up padding his body just like everyone and everything else; and the bigger the grew, the more he consumed, the more unstoppable he became, until he eventually reached a point where he would quite literally be *impossible* to hold back. In fact, looking at himself as he was then, several times bigger than a star and already having broken through the relatively thin layer of icy asteroids around where the local stellar system used to be, Cookie couldn’t help but wonder if he hadn’t already reached that point; after all, he *had* just devoured a whole sun, and if that wasn’t a hallmark for indomitable perfection, he didn’t know what would be... beyond, of course, further dominance of reality itself. He had, ultimately, come from elsewhere in order to impose his own rule on this universe, his own Law, regardless of what had been there before; his hunger knew no bounds, after all, and as a result he required constantly escalating quantities of fuel to keep himself going. But an interesting corollary to this was that, if he was to become the new, undisputed god of that cosmos, then surely he should start acting like one, and in far more ways than simply eating whatever was in front of him; just about any destructor deity could do so, hell, anyone big enough could easily crack open a planet and consume it like it was a piece of candy. It took a true deity, someone who truly understood the power they wielded, to become a *real* god, or at least a creature of enough strength that they might as well be called one. And Cookie, for all of his hunger, for all of his incessant need to be physically and immediately satisfied, knew that if he just exercised some patience on his part, he’d be able to reap the benefits from it tenfold later on; after all, if he blew his load all at once, it would certainly *feel* great... for about ten seconds, before the hunger came nagging back and he found himself without anything else to sate it, forcing him to look outside of his reality once again. No, there had to be something else he could do, something that was more substantial than just crunching down on whatever planetary body happened to be closest to him; while it was certainly entertaining to think about how would eventually be able to pick up a whole galaxy like a pizza so he could take a large bite out of it, the fact of the matter was that, ridiculous as that sounded, it was nothing more than a change in *scale*, in quantity rather than quality. Ultimately, he was still just eating things, and while that certainly did work to stave off the yawning abyss growing inside of him, it had never been enough to make it go quiet for any meaningful amount of time, in fact, the more he ate, the hungrier he became, which could only mean that he was doing *something* wrong... but what? He was hungry, so clearly he should eat, that much was a given; but his body had grown far in

excess to what it should have if he was merely absorbing nutrients, so obviously he didn't really *need* the additional nourishment in order to become ever more powerful. But he still *felt* hungry, so clearly there was something missing, and he just didn't know what... unless, of course, what he wanted wasn't exactly tangible, or even physical. It could be that his hunger was for something else entirely, a deeper and more psychological requirement for divinity that was merely translated in a way that his mind could understand. Looking back, Cookie could at least remember that the times where he felt the most satisfied were also the ones where he had someone to lord over, or at least people to look at him and marvel at his own magnificence; these were also the times where he was regularly fed snacks in order to sate his need for consumption, so he could understand how he had made the wrong connection. Perhaps, as he thought to himself when he looked at the stars all around him, what he truly needed wasn't physical nourishment, but rather the continuous adoration and subservience of everyone around him; what he *required* was less the literal devouring of all souls that existed, and far more a metaphysical one: for him to become so powerful, so undeniable and inevitable, that by merely existing he imprinted himself into the minds of all those who lived, that through his *very being*, every soul in existence would instinctively turn to worship him, and him alone. No sooner had he constructed this thought than he felt the void in his stomach seemingly shrink; it was just a momentary relief, certainly nothing to write home about, but it had never happened before, not without him directly eating something in order for it to happen. That it should take place right when he came to that conclusion could only mean that he was onto something, or better yet, that he was *right*, and what he *truly* desired was not souls to devour, but souls to subvert to his own worship. The question of "how", however, still remained, given that he had no real idea where to even start. Were there even other civilizations out there, waiting for him to show up and impose himself onto them? Were they even in the same galaxy he was in, or would he have to travel far and wide before he stumbled onto any of them? Worse yet, what if they refused to turn to worship, and instead saw him as some kind of freak of nature that had to be fought against at every waking moment? All of these questions and more blazed through the snow leopard's mind in an instant, before he quite deliberately brushed them aside and resolved to stop *thinking* and start *doing*; he wouldn't get anywhere by staying there angsty over what *might* happen when he had so many better things to do if he just took the plunge. After all, the next star over was still a while away, and with billions upon billions of individual twinkling lights, he needed to get a good head start if he wanted to find anyone at all! It was a blessing that his body still grew, regardless of how little mass he actually consumed; perhaps all he truly needed was starlight and self-actualization, his divine self more than capable of improving upon its own design purely by virtue of *being* divine in the first place. Cookie certainly liked to think so; it made things far easier if that were the case. Now, the issue remained that he still didn't know what *exactly* he was meant to do in order to satisfy this new urge. Being merely hungry was easy enough: all he needed was to open his mouth and shovel copious amounts of prey into it in order to have them wriggle their way into his warm, inviting stomach. But wanting something a bit more insubstantial opened up the menu quite considerably, which unfortunately left him with so many choices on what to do that

the snow leopard found himself paralyzed and unable to truly decide; he could literally do *anything* that universal Law allowed, perhaps even more if he put his mind to it, extending the possibilities to such a ludicrously high number that just trying to consider it made his head spin. Things were so much simpler when all he needed was to physically scarf down snacks that, for a moment, he wondered whether he shouldn't turn back and give in to his baser desires... but, no, that wasn't it, that wasn't the answer; he hadn't come all that way just to give up at the very end, not like that. There was something there for him, and as he came closer to the next star system over, Cookie began to realize just what that might be: his own size. To be more precise, while the snep realized and understood that he was quite large, it didn't dawn on him that he wasn't just *moving* towards the nearest star, he was *growing* towards it, which was a subtle, and yet very important difference; he wasn't merely getting closer, but bigger overall, which meant that, by the time he actually *did* reach the shining little light, it was indeed a shining *little* light, so tiny that he could hold it between his thumb and index finger and it barely even registered with his touch. The planets surrounding it were, of course, far too small for him to even see anymore, and the more Cookie stared at the diminutive plasma ball between his fingers, the more he came to think that it looked... familiar. He'd seen something like that before, back when he was still at home, though not with literal stars; it took until he moved it closer to his face before it dawned on him, and from there, a wide smile spread across his face as the cosmic-sized god's thoughts were finally placed in the correct order. Those weren't stars: they were *gemstones*. Metaphorical ones, of course, but still the same thing in practice; rather than fusion engines several thousand times bigger than the planet he had just left behind, they were actually *decorations*, pretty glittering baubles that he could use to wrap and hang around himself, not only giving his resplendent glory a more literal aspect to it, but also covering his body up in a way that in no way actually contributed to his modesty. It wasn't about hiding himself, of course, but rather displaying his power in a way that was inconceivable for most people, but *perfect* for the new hunger he had developed; after all, what could be a greater display of his utter dominance than him literally altering the very structure of the universe itself, plucking stars from their orbits and arranging them in long strings, held together by dark matter strands with hydrogen clouds coiled around them? What could possibly be a better indicator of just how mighty he was than him being able to take the very cosmos itself and *wear it* on his person? Sure, it would end up seriously disrupting the stability of everything else around him, but that was hardly important when compared to his ongoing need to validate his own divine power; it was, at the end of the day, *his* universe to play around with, not anyone else's, and if he wanted to turn it all into glittering jewelry, then who was going to stop him? Hell, stability issues didn't really matter when the entirety of existence was just *on him* anyway, so if anything, he had plenty of reasons to move on with his plan, since at least then he could guarantee his own eternity... and that of everyone else. It hit him, the realization that he could actually make other people last as long as him, that he could *force* the universe to keep going long past the point where it had any right to; he was, after all, its new god, and by rearranging it at his will, by turning the very stars and galaxies into accoutrements for his physical form, then he was effectively dictating when and

how things were supposed to end, or even if they were supposed to end *at all* to begin with. He could decide, on his lonesome, which stars lived for how long, which galactic and supra-galactic structures were allowed to be, and just to what extent the universe could be inflated in order to make room for him... and, at the same time, ensure that whatever sources of worship he could find would last forevermore. That alone left him feeling so tingly that it was unsurprising that he underwent a growth spurt immediately afterwards, one so much larger than every other that he accidentally smushed the star he'd been holding just a moment prior; if his hunger was one that could only be sated via worship and supplication, if what he *truly* craved was for others to see him as the god that he was, then surely he should want to keep that going for as long as possible. He had the ability to take every proverbial battery in the universe and make it last forever, so, well, why shouldn't he? That way, he could ensure that he had a constant supply of trillions upon quadrillions of souls, all happily dedicating their entire lives to looking up at the fraction of his body that they could see, heaping praise upon him until the very end of time and beyond; he would stretch it out, force existence itself to continue being for as long as he felt like it should, until such a point as he grew bored and moved on to the next one to continue the cycle. He would feed upon the worship, gorge upon the adoration, and feel as his form continuously grew, bloated, swelled, became ever more powerful and splendidous as more and more of the cosmos itself was turned into something that he wore, mere decorations upon his physical avatar. As such, Cookie figured he should get started as quickly as he could, at least while he could still see the stars he was meant to be using; granted, after a certain point he'd have to move onto larger objects, but until such a time, he might as well make do with what he had. Plus, it made for some wonderful entertainment, being able to stretch out his arm and use his hand to grab an entire constellation, bringing it close enough to him that he could *sense* whether or not there were people living somewhere in that cluster. Most of them were, sadly, devoid of any life whatsoever, but every once in a while, the snep felt it: attention. The eyes of countless souls, all wondering what had just happened, all panicking that their planet and star had just been radically shifted around, yet somehow they hadn't been wiped from existence because of it; they would eventually look up, and either through the blanketing haze of sunlight, or the deep black ocean of stars, they would see him: the snow leopard, off in the distance, his frame just barely visible as light bounced off of him in odd and unnatural ways, looking more like a background element painted onto the sky than he did an actual person. Some would think of it as a sign of the end times, others would correctly identify him as a deity of sorts, but in the end, they would all reach the same conclusion: whoever that feline was, they were in charge now. And while said cat seemed unwilling to actually give them any instructions (in fact, he hardly seemed aware of them at all), the little ones figured they should get busy worshipping if they wanted to avoid being squished into oblivion... and that, *that* Cookie actually felt. It was better than any prey consumed, more refreshing than any drink could be, more filling than a million planet-sized meals; it was glory, it was *power*, and it was *right*, it was for *him*, and nothing else could ever remotely compare. He was, for the first time, being prayed to, and though much of it was born from fear, he didn't care; he *couldn't* care, in fact, for to do so would be to lower himself to the

point where he tried to empathize with his living worship batteries, rather than merely accepting their devotion as a given, thanks to his divine nature. Instead, all he had to do was... be. By simply being, by merely *existing* as an entity worthy of worship, Cookie made himself the focal point for every civilization he brought into the fold; by refusing to pay attention, and instead merely taking the minimal steps needed to ensure the safety of those he hijacked to turn into stellar jewelry, Cookie all-but guaranteed that, eventually, those many little ones would see him not as a destructor deity, but as a *savior*. When they realized that their planet wasn't being destroyed, but rather being turned into yet another piece in a long line of glistening cosmic gemstones adorning the physical form of a literal god, they would know that they had reached heaven, *true* heaven... and, in turn, direct their adoration towards the great big snow leopard in the sky, the one whose form grew larger and more incomprehensible with every passing day, with every new stellar cluster that was brought into the fold, with every new civilization whose continued worship fed Cookie's endless hunger even more. For once, the god-snep actually felt *satisfied*; not just sated, not just momentarily stuffed, but well and truly *full*, overflowing even, as he allowed himself to listen to the background chorus of countless voices offering him their prayer and adoration. It was better than anything he could physically consume, and indeed, he kept his mouth shut for fear that he might accidentally end up devouring a noticeable chunk of his worshipper base, thus making the rest think they were next. He didn't *need* anything else, not anymore; just as long as he could keep bringing stars in, just as long as he found yet more sentient life to turn into active supplicants, then Cookie was finally happy... but not yet truly finished. He might've found his true calling, but that didn't mean he was going to end there; to have a goal and reach it was one thing, but to just stop and not set an even higher one was borderline heresy for someone like him. He had proven, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he *could* take the universe at large and physically manipulate it into being whatever he wanted it to be: his body was already being covered by long, glinting strands of stars held together by both regular and exotic forms of matter, little more than necklaces, braids and bands that hung from his body in various ways rather than anything resembling actual clothing. In doing this, he had gifted these stars, and whatever planets might be around them, a perpetual spot next to him, and in doing *that*, ensured a continuous stream of worship from whoever might be living on them... but that was hardly enough. He'd barely gotten through a galactic *arm*, much less the whole galaxy, and there was a whole universe for him to take; why, he'd barely even started, let alone gotten anywhere near the end of his task!