

Universal Endings

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Prologue

The universe was ending. Nothing could prevent that now. One by one, the stars faded out. Humanoids could survive for another hundred millennia on the last habitable moon that revolved around a large manufactured gas planet. This structure circled the last man-made sun that orbited the last remaining super massive black hole. Without a new energy source as strong as a sun, there was little hope. Dark energy's entropy stretched and destroyed the fabric of space. How the universe would end was no longer a question: it would end in a cold whimper.

Mankind needed to find a way to reverse dark energy. But how? After all, the Big Bang was the perfect example of a starting point that contradicted every current theory. Even though humanoids had made tremendous intellectual strides as they struggled to understand physics, troublesome knowledge gaps remained. Mankind's remnants desperately sought answers in these final millennia. Lifetimes that spanned many thousands of years were now common because it was possible to place one's inner self within perfect robotic entities that duplicated every human function. Mankind had long ago solved the riddle of aging.

What they needed, if rewinding time was impossible, were gravity and hydrogen. Hydrogen was the most efficient fuel source because it was the lowest atomic element. From hydrogen, one could fuse all of the heavier molecules. The main problem now was gathering enough hydrogen and gravity.

Going anywhere in the universe had been possible for quite some time through warp technology that broke relativistic speed restrictions. Warping technology allowed travelers to bend the space directly in front of their ships and then return space to its original configuration behind the ship. By bending and returning space to its normal distance, a ship could travel through bent space and move faster than the speed of light.

As the fabric of space wisped away, it became harder to accumulate hydrogen. Black holes, once feared as mass destroyers, were now embraced by humanity because their outer periphery was the best and easiest place to create new stars. Black holes were used as cosmic centrifuges. They were fed with hydrogen in order to create new stars using the tremendous heat generated from radial acceleration. That creation process and some warped space nudging of the newly formed stars preserved humanoids . . . until now. The critical problem mankind faced: insufficient hydrogen. Without hydrogen, there could be no sun, and without a sun, there could be no people.

Some scientists postulated that black holes were the opposite phenomena of the Big Bang. If they could understand the inner workings of these gravity beasts, they might be able to find a way to solve the hydrogen problem threatening human existence.

Starting Point

Born with no working limbs, Henry had made the leap to his robotic body before most. Instead of viewing his own creation as a curse, Henry had unusual faith coupled with an innate sense of what was right and wrong with the universe. His mental strength and self-will gave him

a sense of control over his body that was stronger than most, and his sense of humor had attracted his girlfriend, Sarah.

Henry believed that black holes held the secret and was willing to risk his life on it. To get closer to the black hole, he wired his ship's navigation directly to his mind through a navcom helmet. He merely visualized a course in his mind, and his ship responded. His ship featured the latest and fastest warp equipment as well as peta-class computers, not that there was anywhere to go. He already lived next to the biggest clump of matter left in the universe.

There were only 30 humans left now. The rest had long since passed and trusted their DNA essence to a peta-class computer in the hopes that someone would find a solution. The fewer mouths to feed, the farther the remnants could stretch their limited resources to solve the universe's "Big Rip" problem. Many left willingly; in fact, life had become so mechanical that many viewed death as a way out. Those who lived put their trust in the last remaining scientists. Henry was among them.

One of Henry's most bizarre theories involved deploying a ship at maximum warp into the heart of a massive black hole. If he could combine the black hole's ability to stretch gravity with his ship's crushing space warp, perhaps a hole could be punched into space where new matter or energy existed. If this were not possible, then, to Henry, black holes seemed to be a total waste of unharnessed energy. His ship was rigged to measure pressure, temperature, numerous EMR (Electromagnetic Radiation) bands, and whatever particle effects that it could during that most minute time span; it was unlikely he would acquire any meaningful measurements considering that the event duration was infinitesimally small, but he had to try. They counted on him.

The only thing holding Henry back was Sarah. He dearly loved his lifetime girlfriend. They had been seeing each other on and off for a few hundred years and planned to wed during the next solar season. Because they both lived in robotic shells now, their DNA sequences had been deposited into a bank if they choose to bring a new life into this desperate place. Henry tweaked his sequence to avoid quadriplegic offspring.

Sarah watched Henry rummaging about his ship through an open hatchway. It rested within an ancient moon crater. She peered out of their basic ranch home, which was made out of clear ceramic composite. It was a fine summer day as the terra routine maintained the weather and crops. His firm, muscular body took her breath. Instead of tending to humanity's crops and energy packs that powered their robotic shells, she cooked a healthy breakfast with her boyfriend and hoped to dissuade him from venturing out. As they consumed her freshly made salads and eggs, her favorite daisy flowers rested in a central vase decorated their breakfast table. There were some basic humanoid desires that technology could never simulate, despite man's best attempts. It soothed them to have these ancient reminders when hope still drove man's exploration of the galaxies.

"You're not going out there?" Sarah tilted her head to the left. Her pretty blue eyes and spring flower perfume warmed Henry's heart. He loved playing with her golden hair. Their robotic bodies were every bit as detailed as their original, prime bodies which had disintegrated centuries ago.

"It's only for a few days, Sarah. I'll be back as soon as I gather enough data. It may be our only way out of this situation."

"Don't get too close. I worry about you. You know that thing will gobble you up if you venture past the event horizon." Sarah folded her arms to get her point across.

"Don't worry. I'll be back. I promise."

Sarah unfolded her arms, and her stern expression melted into one of love and adoration.
“I love you, Henry.”

“I love you too.”

She kissed him hard on the lips—hard enough that he would yearn to come back for more.

Impulsive Thought

Henry boarded his ship and headed toward the last massive black hole that remained in the center of the last galaxy. He took careful aim at the periphery of the black hole and gathered his gravity readings on every possible EMR band possible. He stared at the data and shook his head. There was nothing new in the data. Nothing. Forgetting that he was wearing his navcom helmet, his mind strayed for a microsecond on his pet theory. That was all that it took. He had forgotten that he had disengaged the safety device that prevented his ship from lunging forward with every wild thought. Normally his mind remained focused, but in a moment of desperation, his mind slipped. His ship instantly lunged toward the middle of the black hole at the highest possible warp factor. A tug of war occurred in which the black hole stretched space and slowed Henry’s aging while the ships engines worked harder and harder to bend high gravity space. Henry barely remembered the faith that he had placed in his theories when he passed out.

The Gathering

Clouds lightly swirled and enveloped Henry. He found himself in a functional human body clothed in an ancient Roman tunic and sandals. Weird. These weren’t the clothes he had been wearing earlier nor was this his robotic body. His feet stood on a raw clay surface. Stranger still were the strange creatures surrounding him. He recognized some of them, but a few were so alien that he had not imagined their existence.

A voice called to the alien creatures and Henry. “This way, everyone, I wish to address you.”

Henry found himself being guided into a Roman stadium. At the base of the stadium stood a very old man dressed in a long white robe: the Elder. His pure white hair and long white beard nearly touched the ground. Many of the roughly thirty creatures murmured amongst themselves. Henry was the lone humanoid. The Elder walked to the center of stadium and faced his audience.

The Elder said, “Quiet please.”

The creatures continued to murmur.

“QUIET!”

His voice vibrations shook the entire open-air atrium. Everyone grew quiet as they feared the Elder’s power.

“You will be more respectful. Now that I have your attention, I wish to congratulate you for making it to the Neverworld. Many who have tried have failed. It is your task to start the next universe. You have three thousand days to understand the theories of your fellow beings, to form bonds with each other, and to create the next universe wave. If you fail, the Neverworld’s tidal forces will crush you. My advice to you is to work together and discover the great secrets of time

and space. You all share part of the secret. Only together can you unleash the full magnitude of the effect. Remember, each of you managed to get here, and all of you should respect that fact. Lastly, I must tell you that your former universe is gone. I'm sorry if you left loved ones behind. Mourn for them if you must, but please concentrate on the task before you. There is a library located in the center of this area. Go there and learn each other's ways. I will check on your progress in a year. There is plenty of food and places to rest, but don't spend too much time on idle reflection. To make you more at home in the Neverworld, this environment simulates a day on your world. To ensure you get to know each other, every afternoon you will play sports together. If you don't participate, I will remove you. This is not a vacation. Until we meet again." With a short, wry smile, the Elder vanished.

Henry covered his face with his hands and wept. He would never see his beloved Sarah again.

Forming Bonds

Henry was quick to form bonds with ten squid people who floated through the ether, the rhino-horned leathery-tough people, and the finned aqua people. Lizard men and the gray beings seemed friendly enough, but they kept to themselves. The two groups he had the most trouble with were the beautiful winged people and the plasma beings. Their arrogance drove others from their presence.

Shaitean was a male winged being who gave Henry the most trouble. He half snarled at Henry, "So how did *you* get here?" Henry felt the derision and animosity dripping from Shaitean's voice as he asked the question. The other winged and plasma beings stood back as Shaitean, their leader, addressed the newcomer. A stream of hot air seemed to rise from the plasma beings.

"I wired my ship for direct mind control and momentarily dwelled on my pet theory to combine my ship's energy and the black hole's energy into a massive energy burst. My ship headed directly into a massive black hole at maximum warp. Moments later, I found myself here."

Shaitean put his six-fingered claw under his chin. "That doesn't make sense at all. Did you account for the transmutation of the gamma rays or the hypergluons in the hyperfractal space? If you didn't, you should have been crushed by your spacecraft's warp field, pulled into spaghetti by the black hole, or pushed elsewhere into the universe."

"Might I ask how *you* got here?" Henry smiled.

A stern look crossed Shaitean's face, but his words were calculated, cold: "With an extreme and exotic energy combination. You, on the other hand, are extremely lucky to be here. Your theory is without merit. I don't see any need to spend time with you since we won't learn anything new." Shaitean turned away from Henry. "Winged and plasma beings, come with me as we formulate our plan."

Three creatures remained behind with Henry. Swoosh, one of the aqua people, spoke, "Don't feel bad, Henry. Shaitean's group doesn't respect our theories either. Just because they got here first, doesn't make them right." One of his fins twitched as if Shaitean's statements irritated him.

Henry responded. "I would welcome your company. Maybe we should understand where they are coming from before we judge them. There has to be a reason why all of us got here. "

Library Visit

The Neverworld's library resembled the ancient library of Alexandria with a large column entrance, stone block appearance, and many scrolls that came equipped with touch control and holography features. Henry and his new associates visited the library and began to peer into the theories of the winged and plasma beings. The library housed all of the history of each of the Neverworld beings and even some history of other alien races. The winged and plasma beings' theories were remarkably complex. It would take several years just to understand the mathematics behind the theories, let alone what the theories meant from a logic perspective.

Growing frustrated, Henry said, "Does anyone get this?"

Swoosh responded. "No, we don't understand it either, but it is intriguing. I've never seen hyper fractal calculus expressed this way." His fish lips turned down.

Feeling overwhelmed with these new thoughts, Henry sought the winged and plasma beings. As proud as they were, some of them might be willing to provide their thoughts on the matter. That group met on the opposite side of the library and discussed their own unique plans to restart the Universe. Henry approached them.

"Would one of you be willing to teach us? We're curious about your technology and want to learn more."

Shaitean replied, "We don't have time to bring you up to date. These books", Shaitean pointed to two library shelves full of books, "contain our knowledge; read them if you want to learn our ways." Shaitean flapped his wings to repel Henry.

Henry returned to his group.

"That didn't go well." Henry looked down.

Ick, the squid being leader, replied, "What do you mean? At least he addressed you. We couldn't even get that response. We hoped he would be more tolerant of you." Ick shook his head. "Maybe they deserve our praise; they did get here first."

Play Time

"Ouch."

Henry rubbed his head where the water polo ball had struck him. Swoosh laughed after hitting Henry's head for the third time. It was part of the game. If you weren't ready to field your position, you weren't supporting your team.

"Very funny, fish face."

Swoosh snickered like a dolphin receiving fresh food.

Before Henry knew it, the squid gang pelted him with balls from every direction. They laughed harder than Henry ever heard them laugh. Finally Henry shouted, "Enough!" The last four balls transformed into daisies and fell into the Olympic pool water.

Shaitean looked down with downturned lips and a straining lined forehead. "Who did that?" He flapped his wings and gathered the flowers. "Who transformed the balls into flowers?" He looked at his colleagues. "Did any of you do this?" They shook their heads. Shaitean focused on Henry. "Was it you?" His eyebrows drew closer to each other. He tilted his head and became

suspicious of Henry. He wondered which creature had performed this minor miracle. As far as Shaitean knew, only his winged people and the plasma beings were capable of such a feat.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Henry exited the water and grabbed a towel to dry off. Shaitean grimaced and crushed the daises in his hand. The crushed, flowery remains sifted through his hands and fell back into the warm pool water.

Henry’s team of the aqua people and the squid gang had won their water polo battle between the two groups. The winged beings were terrible swimmers, the heated plasma beings boiled the water, and the remaining players were no match for Swoosh’s people and the “squidies.” The only members of the opposing team who offered any substantial resistance were the lizard people, but their numbers were too few to create any real threat.

“Where are you going?” Swoosh started splashing Henry with his flippers.

“I’ve had enough. You’ve made your point. Tomorrow we’re playing golf.”

“Can we use our fins as clubs?”

“Fine. No cheating with your fins flapping in the air to help guide the golf balls, and no, Swoop and Ick, you can’t swing at the ball under water. That’s a penalty.”

The winged people exited the pool. “These rules apply to you fellows too.”

The winged beings ignored Henry’s humor and dried themselves. They appeared upset that Henry singled them out by frowning and ignoring Henry for the rest of the day.

The Elder’s insistence that they play together got on the nerves of the winged people and plasma beings.

Visitation

As time passed, the beings became accustomed to each other. They weren’t all friends, but minimum respect levels had been established, and they managed to get along. As promised, the Elder began his individual visits.

“So, Henry, what have you learned?” The Elder sat next to Henry in a quiet room.

Henry thought for a moment and then said, “Swoosh is an excellent sportsman. Shaitean’s winged people and plasma beings keep mostly to themselves. And the mathematics of the early entries is extremely complex but learnable with time.”

The Elder rocked backward and forward slowly. “So much time. So many disappointments.” He sighed and shook his head. “I don’t want to do this anymore; eternity is a very long time---much longer than you can imagine. The point of this effort is for the next generation to take over. I want to retire and spend time with my family, those who have earned the right to live with me.” The Elder paused, turned, and looked Henry in the eye. “Let me ask you a simple question. Where are you?” The Elder clearly had not been pleased with Henry’s first answer.

“I’m in a Neverworld outside of space and time. We’re beyond my universe.”

The Elder nodded once. “Good. Now, tell me, if we are in a Neverworld outside of space and time, how do you exist, and what do you see?”

Henry thought for a moment and then asked, “I’m seeing my own impression of this place or yours, aren’t I?”

“Figure that out, and you are well on your way to solving the universe rebirth problem. I’ve said enough. We will meet again when another period passes. Don’t take too long. My powers are fading.”

And So On

Henry and the others got into a routine. They spent time studying the rebirth problem in two distinct groups. Shaitean's group learned to combine their powers and succeeded in forming mini-universes but these fragile universe bubbles quickly dispersed. The other group concentrated on learning fundamental physics theories and searching for alternative explanations. Morning activities were followed by mixed sports in the afternoon. Plasma beings often stood on the side, as many sports injured them, but they did excel in activities requiring lift, such as parachuting or gliding.

Whether it was part of the mission or not, Henry spent his time socializing with other creatures. He felt they all were stronger together—as a group—than they were apart. Of the aqua people, there was, of course, Swoosh, Swash, and Swimmy. The rhinos were the toughest of all. When they wanted to win in their versions of football or rugby, no one stood in their way. Their names were Rock, Beef, and Bert. Rock led them. The ten squid people excelled in swimming and nearly all ball sports. Their names were Ick, Spush, Plunge, Plop, and other nicknames that Henry provided because he found their true names unpronounceable. Ick was their leader. The oval beings with the big black eyes were led by Supra. The others were named Frsh, Lottee, Crankle, and Mishmosh. They were highly intelligent and very deliberate decision makers. They were the worst athletes of all the groups even when compared to the plasma beings. The reptiles, who were led by Seth, consisted of Siss, Prash, and Prush. Excellent swimmers and somewhat savage in their behavior, they clearly looked out for themselves in all respects. Even so, they always took part in the sport festivals and often visited Henry's group out of respect.

Shaitean led the winged and plasma beings. Socializing with them was nearly impossible. Only through their mandatory sports play was Henry finally able to learn their names. The other winged people were called Micael, Gabi, Ecans, Harajel, Camella, Ira, Mamo, Luxy, and Amond, and Levi. The plasma beings, who were extremely hot bodies of sparkling vapor, were Focalort, Kobalt, Shabrit, Metatront, and Zadkielt.

Second Visit

Sometime later, the Elder visited each individual a second time. His wrinkles had grown firmer. It was as though he had aged one hundred years since the last visit. Preserving the Neverworld took its toll on him. The taskforce of 30 got along better now. Even though several races remained reclusive, they all ate meals together now.

The Elder sat before Henry. "What have you learned since we last spoke?"

Instead of answering that question, Henry asked a question that had been troubling him all along. "We're all dead, aren't we?" It was a statement as much as it was a question.

"Try not to look at it that way. Do you remember when you transferred your inner essence into a robotic shell? Was that existence all that different from this one or the one within your original body?" The Elder paused and placed his caring hand on Henry's knee. "You're still here, aren't you?" The Elder removed his hand and seemed to act in a more caring manner.

"This place is not what it seems, is it?"

The Elder shook his head. “No, it isn’t.”

“I’ve asked my friends what they see around themselves. They see an ocean setting, while I see an ancient humanoid setting. They see an Elder who resembles them, while I see an Elder who looks like an old man. We don’t see the same things, do we?” Again the Elder shook his head. “No, you do not, except when a sports activity requires it. Under those circumstances, I force my will upon you.”

“You’re providing the Neverworld environment, but we’re interpreting it.”

“That’s exactly right, Henry.” The Elder coughed and looked uncomfortable. “Now that you have learned this, how can you use these facts to restart the universe?”

“When we understand each other’s theories, we can combine them to power the new universe.” Henry smiled. He thought he had the right answer.

“Do you think that the scientific approach has any merit here?” The Elder frowned. “You’re starting to think like the wing-dings and gas bags. Despite the confidence that they exude, they don’t have the correct answer. Let me ask you a direct question: What powers this place?”

Henry thought long and hard. “I don’t know.”

“Have you seen any strange occurrences?” The Elder rocked backwards and forwards slowly hoping that Henry would see the truth.

“Some water polo balls transformed into daisies. Shaitean looked nervous when he saw this.”

“Who made it happen?” The Elder continued to rock back and forth. His worn appearance began to bother Henry.

“I don’t know.”

“When you figure that out, you’ll have the answer you seek. The next time we meet with you will be the last time that we’ll talk. You’ll either create a new universe or be crushed by the Neverworld tidal forces when I pass.”

Further Study

Several years later, Henry finished learning about all the other cultures. He worked the mathematics over and over and came to a surprising but very plausible conclusion: every individual had entered the Neverworld through a different means, but in all cases, the intertwining of enormous energy levels was involved. Henry suspected that these energy sources could be super massive black holes, pulsars, or exploding suns combined with intense thoughts or tremendous faith. For Henry’s people, it was the wiring of their direct navigation or thoughts into their ships, hovercrafts, or spacesuits that made this possible. All these energies merged together to form thought power. Henry approached his friends and showed them his work. After a few days of study, they believed he was right—time to confront Shaitean and the others.

As Henry approached Shaitean’s group, he noticed the winged and plasma people holding hands as a small bright vortex formed in the middle of a library conference table. They concentrated to grow the vortex, but Henry’s presence distracted them, and the growing bright sphere vanished.

“You’ve interrupted our experiment. I hope you’ve got something worthy to say.”

“I do. I’ve analyzed every culture’s mathematics and theoretical methods, and none of the science is able to predict the possibility of this place, let alone our ability to enter it.” Henry grinned.

Shaitean took great offense. “Ape creature, you’re wrong. You can’t even tell me what the hyperbola of fractals 0.5 and 2.5 are in hyperspace of 12 dimensions.”

Henry walked to their board and mapped out the answer. He showed each step and accentuated the answer with a hyper graph.

“Satisfied? Now will you listen?”

Henry crossed his arms in judgment of this group. His behavior did not go unnoticed. Winged creatures and plasma creatures murmured. No one had ever answered Shaitean’s question with such audacity and authority.

“Ok, smart ape, you know some of our ways, but we won’t allow you to ruin our plan. If you think our theories are wrong, you still don’t understand them. Have you told anyone else about your revelation?”

“They all know. I proved it to them during this past cycle.” Henry stared at the hypocrites before him. He had experienced enough of their arrogance and sensed that they were being evasive.

Shaitean’s face looked extremely stern before he said, “I had hoped we could all coexist here, but you now pose a threat to our intentions.” Shaitean pointed his fingers and fired a warning fireball toward Henry. Shaitean barked orders to his cohorts. “Micael, Gabi, Levi, and Amond, round up the others! Hold them while we create the next universe.”

As they escorted Henry away, Henry said, “Does this mean we’re not friends anymore?”

Prison Visit

The library’s self-study rooms were transformed into jail cells by the winged and plasma beings.

As Micael pushed Henry into his cell, Henry said, “You transformed these rooms into jail cells, didn’t you.”

“Be quiet. Don’t let Shaitean hear you. I don’t want you to get hurt. He’s more powerful than you think.” Micael gently pushed him in and closed the cell door. Before leaving, he turned to Henry and said, “Let us restart the universe our way. I will release you when we’re done.”

Henry sat on a bench with a cold stone wall against his back. He found a round stone under his bench and imagined tossing a ball against the opposing jail wall. In the first toss the rock glanced off to the side. Henry retrieved it. He put his back on the stone wall and tossed the rock again. This time, he focused harder on creating a rubber ball, and a small red, rubber ball returned to his hand. He stared at the ball and just then realized who had transformed the stone and water polo balls.

As Henry figuratively patted himself on the back for solving the puzzle, the Elder appeared within his jail cell. He looked extremely frail, as if the final essence of his life were ebbing from his being. Taking deep, labored breaths, he addressed Henry. “I can’t stop Shaitean. He’s obsessed with the idea of starting a universe in his image where only winged and plasma beings coexist. You have to stop him before it’s too late.”

“I was the one who turned the water polo ball into daisies, wasn’t I?”

The Elder smiled. “Yes, that was you. You came to the right conclusion, Henry. What works here is thought energy alone. You have all brought in thought energy from the previous universe, and it is this energy that must be released for the universe to be reborn. This is why I insisted that you play together each afternoon. Shaitean’s small group does not possess the thought energy requirements for a universal rebirth. Stop them before their newly created universe rebounds and crushes the Neverworld.”

“What if I fail?”

“Then Shaitean and the others’ thought energy will crush all of you when it rebounds. Here is my last ounce of power. A blue bolt emerged from the Elder’s frail, wrinkled hand as it merged with Henry’s body. “Use it wisely.” The Elder fell to the floor and vanished.

Break Out

“Swoosh, Ick, Rock, Supra, Seth, are you nearby?”

Ick responded, “I’m in your neighboring jail cell. What is it?”

“Did you hear my conversation with the Elder?”

“No, Henry. Are you imagining things due to our circumstances?”

Henry threw the rubber ball against the wall and made it turn back into a rock.

“We need to combine forces and stop Shaitean and his allies. Their newly created universe is about to rebound and crush the Neverworld.”

Ick pushed his face down into his body. “How can we fight them? They’re too powerful.”

“That’s what they want you to think. Trust me, they’re not as powerful as they seem. Let me show you.”

Henry imagined that the stone wall was gone between him and his neighbor and walked straight through the stone wall with ease.

“How did you do that?”

“It’s not the theories or the mathematics; it’s what’s in your heart that gives us power. This world runs on the thought power we brought in from the previous universe. Energy has been preserved through the preservation of thought energy. In this place, our thoughts influence what we see and how we look. Shaitean and the others are wrong. Their combined thought energy is not sufficient to create the new universe, no matter how they contort their theories.”

“But Henry, just because you can work miracles doesn’t mean that the rest of us can.”

“Sure you can. Here, let me show you.” Henry grabbed a rock from the cell wall.

“Turn this into seaweed.”

Ick concentrated, but nothing happened. “Henry, I don’t believe your theory.” He shook his head.

“We don’t have much time. I’ll force you to use your power.” Henry imagined the world as an old, dirt dungeon and forced his will on Ick.

“What have you done? I hate dry land. Turn it back.”

“No, you do it.”

Ick flopped on the floor for a few minutes, closed his eyes, and imagined he was back in his warm ocean. He found himself surrounded by seawater.

“Thank you for returning me.”

“I didn’t return you. You did. Somehow this place magnifies our thoughts with the thought power we brought in from the old universe. My perception is not the same as yours.”

“Please don’t subjugate me to your will again.”

“I promise. Now we need to gather the others to form an effective rebellion.”

Henry and Ick worked minor miracles amongst the others before they were all convinced of their secret strengths. They made the environment change, made rocks turn into food, and even transformed creatures into other forms.

Seth yelled, “Knock it off, Henry!” Henry had transformed Seth into an attractive female humanoid wearing a revealing bathing suit. The others laughed at the transformed sight of the proud reptile man. Quickly changing himself back, Seth pointed at Henry and said, “Don’t ever do that again. You’ve made your point.”

War in the Neverworld

Henry’s army broke out of their cells and approached the winged and plasma beings. Some of Shaitean’s group focused their attention on re-expanding their collapsing universe, while the others destroyed building and furniture debris that hindered their movements or pushed back against the fabric of the collapsing universal bubble. Shaitean’s universe rebounded. It now threatened everyone’s existence in the Neverworld as it continued to shrink and force everyone into close proximity. They were experiencing the Big Crunch, a theoretical end of the universe, except in this case, Shaitean’s group’s lack of thought energy caused the collapse.

“Shaitean, this ends now. We’re here to build the new universe together.”

Shaitean broke his concentration. Signaling the others, they raised their hands and bolts of lightning, fire, blue rays, and gasses fired towards Henry’s group.

“Enough!” Power rays turned to daisies spewing out of the others’ hands. The winged beings’ and plasma beings’ jaws dropped. Henry pushed his hand out and winged and plasma beings were blown backwards by a powerful force. The tough lizard and rhino people pushed the mightiest of the winged creatures aside to allow everyone into the confined space of the collapsing universal bubble.

“Let me at him. I’ve had enough of the ape man.” Shaitean’s six-fingered claws emerged.

“Shaitean, join us. You can have your own section of the new universe, but we must combine our energies to create it.”

“No. This is my universe.”

Shaitean imagined Henry as an ape. Henry blocked his mind thought and projected a specific thought into Shaitean’s head. The thought was that Shaitean no longer had the support of the winged and plasma beings. Shaitean continued the attack. He pounced on Henry and clawed his body. Henry’s body was ripped to shreds as Shaitean tried to put the fear of death into Henry’s mind. Shaitean looked down at Henry’s tattered body. Henry smiled back.

“You can’t claw something that isn’t material, Shaitean.” Henry pushed Shaitean off with such force that Shaitean slammed into the collapsing universal bubble ceiling. Shaitean fell hard to the floor. The shrinking bubble of Shaitean’s group’s failed universe forced the group into close proximity. A blue glow surrounded Henry’s body as he repaired his essence.

“Will you submit, Shaitean?”

“Never. I won’t be part of a universe of mongrels.” Shaitean backed away.

Gabi who was pushing against the fabric of a rebounding universal bubble, shouted, “We can’t hold this much longer. Do something!”

“Those of you who are with me, join hands and concentrate.” Micael, Gabi, Ecans, Harajel, Camella, Metatron, and Zadkiel joined the others as they combined their powers for a universal rebirth. The previous failed universal bubble had shrunk to the point that it touched each of the creatures in the small huddle.

Henry said, “Let there be light!” An infinitely powerful blast emanated from the combined group and swept out into space. They had created a new universe that would, with time and tending, allow all beings to coexist. When the new universe had taken hold, the group placed the older Neverworld into a higher dimensional space so that their Neverworld and the new physical world could coexist. The new universe operated according to the laws of physics while the Neverworld continued to operate on thought energy.

Glaring down at Shaitean, Henry said, “Shaitean, the rest of us cast you and your cohorts from this place. Micael, keep them together.” Shaitean and his remaining cohorts were thrust out of the higher dimensional Neverworld.

As Shaitean vanished, his disembodied voice chillingly said, “If I cannot have my universe, then I’ll do everything in my power to prevent your next generation from earning the right to enter the Neverworld. Their own jealousies, lust, envy, pride, and anything else that I can come up with will be used to impede them.” Shaitean and his closest allies then disappeared from their midst.

Henry shook his head. “I wish this hadn’t been necessary, but he would have destroyed the Neverworld with his pride.”

Looking down for a moment, Henry paused. He smiled as he looked at the group of beings that had become his friends. Placing his hand on Supra’s shoulder, Henry said, “From this day on, the number seven represents the union of our seven species. When your thoughts reach out to the others, they will come to your aid, and we will act as a single entity again.”

Time Passage

Swoosh approached Henry. “I thought we weren’t going to tinker with the next universe; you’ve gone out of your way to recreate your own world. Why?”

“I made a promise to Sarah that I must fulfill. The only way it can come true now is to create a similar world and work the DNA such that a cloned Henry and Sarah can meet and fall in love. It’s the only exception that I will allow for myself.” Henry had detailed knowledge of humanoid DNA from his existence prior to the Neverworld. He would be this world’s caretaker from now on.

“Seth is furious with you because you destroyed a reptile world in favor of mammals. It’s only fair that the rest of us have a planet to tinker with. Do you have any problem with this?” Swoosh pumped his head up and down.

Henry sighed. “Okay, but just one planet for each race, and we can’t give any of these worlds an unfair advantage.”

“Agreed.” Swoosh threw a water polo ball at Henry. It passed through his non-corporeal body.

“Very funny, fish face, but we’re getting too old for this.” Eons of time had passed while they tended their creation.

Swoosh looked disappointed. “I long for the old days when we were just a couple of beings who liked each other’s company.”

“We still like each other, Swoosh. I’ll tell you what--if you play golf with me, I’ll subject myself to another one of your humiliating water polo battles.”

Swoosh snickered his head up and down in joyful agreement.

Second Universal Ending

Eons upon eons of time passed before Henry was unanimously elected as the official Elder to handle the new crop of candidates. He did not relish the role and remembered what the previous Elder had taught him. He took some solace in fulfilling his promise to Sarah. Henry’s cloned versions of himself and Sarah had lived, fallen in love, enjoyed a good human existence, had children, and died many millennia ago. This was as close as he could come to fulfilling his original promise. The cloned versions, who had lived righteous lives, now served him in his Neverworld.

It was a difficult decision, but with time, it was agreed that Shaitean and his cohorts would be permanently removed to allow the new beings to reach their potential. Shaitean relished picking on the next-generation creatures that resembled the beings that defeated him in the Neverworld. It wasn’t much of a battle when the time came. Truly worthy next-generation creatures avoided Shaitean’s temptations.

Henry heard a familiar voice behind his back.

“Boo!”

Henry sensed who it was before facing him. “I thought you had passed.”

The former Elder spoke, “No, Henry. I never passed. My people and I lived in a different hyper-dimensional Neverworld that you did not know about, until now. I never passed, and my family was never in any danger. I promised them that if they served me, they could live for eternity. You can’t go back on a promise like that. The only ones who would have been crushed were the people in your Neverworld. I wanted to tell you that you’ve done a wonderful job and will be rewarded for your services.”

“What’s the reward?”

“You know. I felt your mind reaching out to mine. You and the others are welcome to join us, where you can rest for eternity, if you wish. You can also choose to be reborn if you’re tired of this place.”

“I’ll complete my service as the Elder and then move over to your Neverworld to serve you.”

“Sarah has been asking about you. From her perspective, little time has passed since she left her universe. She did a marvelous job in the old universe by ensuring everyone stayed energized and fed even when things got tough. Don’t tell her of your role here; it will frighten her. I would have told you earlier, but you would have consumed yourself in finding her.”

Henry smiled. A heavy load had been lifted from his aching heart.

“Thanks for the extra energy.”

“Henry, I didn’t loan you any energy. The blue energy was minimal. Your confidence resided in you all along. Remember that now that you are the Elder.” The older Elder winked and smiled at Henry.

Reunion

The next universe was born again under Henry's tutelage. He wished the next generation well before placing himself into the old Neverworld, where Sarah waited.

They kissed and hugged each other before Sarah broke their embrace.

Tilting her head up, she asked, "Where have you been?" Her perfume still intoxicated Henry after an eternity.

"It's been a long journey for me, honey. I won't leave your side again." He brushed Sarah's golden hair to one side and cupped his hands around her face. "We have eternity now."
