

Once Upon Some Time

by Richard Tornello

Prologue:

Once upon some time, billions and billions of years ago, (time described here is being based upon the earthnocentric interpretation of time), this universe popped into existence. Popped is the word I will use for lack of a more definite term. Uncompressed from the last cycle is another myth-idea that comes to the fore. No matter, here it was in all its cosmic gory glory. Matter annihilated matter, created new forms, expanded and did more of the same. Star systems ate star systems. Black holes consumed what they could. This is the very Way of Nature. This nature was passed on to the animate creatures that spawned at later dates as the system allowed for evolutionary biological growth. This universe was no heaven. That's how the universe has propagated itself up until the current time as of this writing, here and now. So Be It

We observe and delineate billions of years based upon our revolution about our star. From our planet centered views of the cosmos we perceive it to be X numbers of revolutions old. That's just our view and not one held by these others above that I am referring to. The Time Concept Delineator (TCD, pronounced tee-sed) *days* is a vernacular term understood by all allowing for a common basis of discussion. The "time relationship" is relative. The concept is catholic.

However, if the truth be known, though the physics are in order up to a point in scientific evolution, the origins are a little bit different than either science or the ancient myths may claim.

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In the beginning there was almost No-Thing. From the almost No-Thing came a something that always was, and Not-was. For clarification see your Zen and Daoist texts. Not-was had a second. In order to be, anything or No-Thing required a *not* to be, some form of an opposite, or at least something to offset ones positive or negative nature. Two is a basic number in this universe. In this case the Not-was had a twin. This was an opposite twin encumbered by few flaws. The opposite twin was best chacterized as a mis-wired, buggy software CPU, but workable. As I mentioned this is the best current description I am allowed to give. His name was/is Not-really-is. Not-really-is could also be described as Not-was's halfwit twin, handsome, and strong, with a slightly warped sense of humor. When all Not-was said and done, Not-really-is was not quite right in the CPU department. But we care for our family members. This is a law of the universe. Observe It!

Not-was had business to attend to. Let's say for sake of brevity, there were and are other universes that were and are of interest to Not-was. Not-really-is was left alone and was bored. We all know that boredom is the workshop for the troubled mind. Others may call it the devil. I will leave that up to you to define. Not-really-is looked around and said to itself, "I'm bored. I need something to do. Not-was can do all this stuff. He" (this pronoun, He, is used for lack of a better one until the situation and temporary clarification is required) "makes this, does that, fixes this, and modifies that. I am not supposed to touch any **THING** unless he's there. He says even though we are twins, No-Thing in the beginning, seemed to parse most of the thinking ability to him. Well I've been watching and studying. I sat in on a number of his planning meetings and I think I can do something that will make him less concerned about my doings. Since it's a 'Tabula Rasa Time' out there, why not? "

Not-really-is wanted some form of companionship. Having creative power, like that of a demented artist, he made a few playthings. Again the number is not of any consequence, the term few being subjective and relative to the observer. In our case multi-millions would suffice. These toys, a host as I put it, offered no contest to Not-really-is. The dictionary would define these toys as toadies and sycophants and boring. In the long run, they were not to be trusted. In the short run they not only knew who buttered their bread, but owned the cows that gave the milk and the land on which the grain grew.

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"Eight days, nine days, two weeks, what does it matter? I leave you alone and I come back to... This? Look at this chaos. I mean, how could you?"

"It's not chaos now, it's..."

"Don't answer that. I know the answer. You're old enough to know better. You are my twin, albeit twisted in the head. Don't you realize your essence is now part of this whole thing? Anything you made has a part of you in it. From the smallest particle of matter to the whole shebang, you, you fuckin' moron. So this is a moron world. I should just end it, be done, No good can come of this. This I know. Your new creations have no idea of the inherent flaws. You do! Or you *should*..."

"Oh, it can't be that bad. I was bored. You left me alone with these idiots."

"You created 'these idiots', also from your essence, speaking of idiots!"

"They're no help or fun. 'Yes your greatness, whatever you say,' on and on. I know I'm not the brightest crayon in this box. Still, do I deserve *them* as my Host? Well, to hell with them. *I was BORED*. So I made a universe just like you do all the time."

"No, not like I do. You know what? This is your mess. You work it out. I'm tired of cleaning up after you. I have a headache. I'm going to have a few brownies and a mushroom pie. Go play with your creations. I'll see you later."

Not-really-is smiled as his twin shifted into another universe. *Well, he said I could, so I will. I'll show him! I will keep an eye on this mess. I'm sure something good will develop. I'll let him figure it out. He'll realize this is a bit more than me going, "Hey, let's build a universe and see what happens!"*

Okay, I may have screwed up a few details. It may take a few weeks to correct...

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Not-really-is looked upon his Creation and thought *Hey this isn't so bad. Look at the vegetation, all the food animals and wow, look at the women, the men, all tall handsome. My brother thinks I screwed up. Well I don't think so.*

He saw two of his creatures in a grove of trees surrounding by remarkably well-behaved grasses and low bushes. *I think I'll introduce myself.* Forming a shell of flesh and bone based on the same pattern he had used to populate his world, he said aloud, "Yo, you. Look up a bit, yes hello."

The creatures -- a man and a woman, both remarkably beautiful, fell to their knees as they saw Not-really-is appear out of empty space.

"OH, GET UP. Oh, Please."

The man made some incomprehensible gobbling noise and a series of hand gestures that would, in the fullness of time, be considered extremely rude in certain countries. Not-really-is sighed and adjusted his creations to grant them something more worthy of the term 'language'.

"What -- you go by?"

"What do I go by? Oh you mean, MY Name? Hmmm, just call me The Creator. Yep, my idea. Thought it all up and seven TCDs later, alakazam, here you are."

"Tee-seeds?"

"Units of time... you don't really have any, do you... A TCD is a cycle, a ... like a day, from one sunrise to the next. *My seven days, I think the physics is beyond you at this juncture. Accept what I say as gospel. Just go with it.*"

The man raised and lowered his chin a few times, which Not-really-is interpreted as agreement.

"Okay," he said, "you know my name, what's yours?"

Blank looks. The man raised and lowered his shoulders and pointed to Not-really-is.

"You don't have one? I can call you whatever I like? How do you know when someone wants you? That doesn't make any sense." But then Not-really-is supposed that with a population this small, names weren't really necessary -- you just knew everybody's face, and could point out the one you meant if you were referring to someone other than the people you were -- grunting and gesturing with.

"Hmm. Well you're the first ones I have met, so -- you, with the male part, yes the one with the penis. PENIS, the hang down thing between your legs. It's called a penis. Your name is Adam. And you, what a sweetie, you I'll call Suzanna."

Suzanna looked down, then looked at Adam, and frowned.

"Oh, you're female," Not-really-is explained. "You're not supposed to have -- See, you are different physically. 'Male', 'female', they're names, for classifications instead of individuals. *Your* name is, uh -- Suzanna."

This time the woman raised and lowered her chin a few times.

"We're making great progress," Not-really-is said. "Let me tell you about this whole place..." He spread his arms wide.

Adam and Suzanna looked bored.

"You know a bunch already? Interesting. Okay, then, you tell me what you know, so I understand you better."

Adam made a sweeping gesture to indicate all the men and women in the area. "Good people. But afraid. Afraid of -- nasty types."

Not-really-is frowned. "What do you mean nasty types?" He couldn't recall including anything that could be considered 'nasty' in the mix. "Hmm... if I don't even know what's in my own Creation, maybe my brother has a point."

Adam and Suzanna exchanged wide-eyed looks. "What point?"

Not-really-is winced. Their vocabulary was limited, but their listening skills were better than he expected. "Oh, nothing, just speaking to myself." An idea came to him, a way to keep things from getting any worse than they were. "Listen, I have an idea. I'll fix it to let you all stay here if you just do what I say. What do you think about that?"

"Good."

"I'll keep the nasty boys and girls out of this garden as you call it. Only one thing. I have a brother. He's kinda pissed that I made all this. I sat in on all his builds..."

"Satan?" Adam said. "Your name Creator, but your name Satan?"

"No I'm not called Satan; I said I SAT IN on my brothers builds. I think I can handle this. SAT-IN SAT-IN, get it. To observe..." He thought, *I'm dim? Not-was should meet these beings. They need a few years of education. Or maybe bigger brains. Oy.*

"Listen, I'm going to go rest under that Bodi tree. I'll get back to you later." As an afterthought, he said, "Oh Suzanna, do me a favor; wake me up in 90 degrees."

Suzanna's face went blank. Again.

Not-really-is sighed. "Okay... here's a quick lesson in solar geometry and time calculation..."

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Suzanna awoke Not-really-is some hours later. The angle of the sun was nowhere near what he had specified, but he supposed he should be happy that she had made the effort. "Ah, now I'm all rested."

His eyes drifted over to a nearby tree where another woman was standing on the tips of her toes to reach a ripe fig. "Well, well, well, lookie over there. Suzanna, are all of you this good looking? Wow, the daughters of this species are fair. The boys would be crazy not to come here."

Suzanna muttered something unintelligible, her new language skills apparently forgotten.

"Don't sulk, I'm simply looking," Not-really-is said.

"Why look at them like that if you are their Creator?" Suzanna said. For some reason her lower lip looked swollen -- at least it was protruding a good finger's breadth beyond her upper lip.

Is she jealous? Not-really-is wondered. *I don't remember including that in the formula either.* Aloud, he said, "Oh right. I made you all. Of course. Come here and sit by me for a while. I will attempt to explain this whole thing to you. You appear brighter than your opposite. He is kind of simple in thought."

"Nothing wrong with Adam," Suzanna said.

"OK, so he's nice and not like the others. Still, you should look for a better opportunity. I'll explain in detail." He tried to convey to her that she would be happier with a companion who was closer to her in ability, not just appearance.

Suzanna was overwhelmed yet managed to take it all in.

He noticed a gleam in her eyes, the realization that she couldn't possibly find a mate better than the Creator himself.

Seems it always works that way, he thought. In all my brother's Creations, power is an attractant. I should have known she might think like that, once I introduced the idea that one man might be preferable to another... Hmm, again my brother may have a point. I've never gone down to this level on his builds. There is more work here than I imagined -- and unexpected developments at every turn. Then he looked at Suzanna -- *Damn, I did some things right!* and decided that some unexpected developments were just fine.

"How about you hang with me. I'll get a new lady for big boy over there."

"Great!"

####

"Yo, Adam my good man. Yes M-A-N, man. That's what you are. I'm going to fix you up with a new squeeze. Me and Suzanna, well you get the picture. Power is an aphrodisiac. And I am the Creator. No hard feelings. Listen, just to make it up to you, you can run this place. Just no messing with my lady. Okay?"

Adam looked puzzled, then seemed to realize that his status had just been raised to Chief non-Creator, and grinned.

"Good. Me and Suz got some business to attend to." He paused. Adam was a decent sort, but he really wasn't as bright as Suzanna.

"You know what? I have a great idea. I am the Creator so all my ideas must be great. Go name all the things you can find."

Adam raised and lowered his head several times with so much enthusiasm that Not-really-is could hear the joints in his neck crackle. The man strode off into the distance, pointing at things and people and muttering under his breath.

Suzanna laughed. "Things will get stupid names this way."

Not-really-is raised and lowered his shoulders. "Yes, I know, he has no idea what to call them. I've just given him a job I would have to do anyway. This should make him feel important. I think he can use an assistant."

"What is ass-stamp? Ass-stamp? Ass-STANT."

"You see that female over there? Watch this. HEY YOU, come here."

The yellow haired long legged green eyed beauty approached. "Yes? And What and Who are you supposed to be?" she inquired with an attitude that would normally require smiting.

Presumptuous little thing, Not-really-is thought. *But very, very decorative*. Aloud, he said, "*He* needs a boss." He gestured in Adam's direction, although Adam was far enough away to make it far from clear which "he" needed a boss -- whatever a "boss" was.

Not-really-is looked closely at the blonde, noting the alert and suspicious light in her eyes. "You'll do"

"I'll do what? He who?"

"Listen sweetie, I made this place and you too. I brought you in, I can take you out. Got it?"

"I understand power."

"Good enough, realpolitik of the highest order."

"Real polly tick? Is that worse than a regular tick?"

"Er -- it's better. Don't worry, you have it. I think I'll call you Lilith. He needs..."

"Who is this 'he' you keep mentioning? By the way, Lilith is a nice name. I'll keep it."

"Yes, you will! 'He' is Adam," he said, pointing directly at Adam, who had wandered back in their direction while attempting to figure out the taxonomy of his home.

Lilith winced. "The fellow pointing and talking to himself? You want *me* to be with *him*? Oh please..."

"Yes. Done is done. Got it?"

"Yeah, I guess so. But really now, do I have to..."

"Whatever he wants, got it? You're smart enough to work this. I can tell. Listen, Lilith you two can run this place. It's yours to do as you like. Just don't mess with my lady here. She's the apple of my eye. And, that prohibition goes for anything else I call out of bounds. Otherwise, this whole universe is yours to command as you two please, forever, or as long as physics allows." *That will keep them busy and a while to figure out. Say, thirty thousand trips around the sun..* "It's as simple as that."

"Physics?"

"Not to worry at this time."

"No catch?"

"Well, yes. If you screw up I just might cancel this existence."

Lilith snorted. "Sure you will. What about your girl friend there? You're going to cashier her? I don't think so."

This one is maybe a little too bright. "Don't call my bluff. Just go. You can be replaced, outsourced if you will. This is the eve of a new beginning"

"I'll do my part. You just stick to yours." They both said this at the same time while each tried to stare the other down.

She's telling me? This is news. She's gotta go. He looked at Adam, whose pointing and muttering had almost started the first shoving match in this universe. *Well, once she gets Adam in line. Soon enough, soon enough. I'm going to have to do something about her. She could be a thorn in my head, I mean my side. I have to get my allusions correct.*

He raised his eyes to the sky and shouted "I'm DOING OKAY. HEY, BRO. I know you're watching. No problemo." *Well, nothing I can't handle, anyway.*

"Suzanna, come on over and make your Creator real happy."

#####

Not-was let his consciousness sweep over the whole universe while contemplating his halfwit twin's work:

He has no idea. He can't seem to get his arms around time-space. All I foresee are problems. All he has his arms and head around is that girl of his. She sure is cute. I have to admit, all in all not too bad a job even with the inherent dysfunctional nature of his build.

I just might have to go visit. I can lean from all, including mistakes.

A thought, and it was so. He wrapped his essence in flesh and bone as his brother had done earlier. His shell was just a bit taller and better-looking, of course.

Well, well, well, a nice place he made here. Still I'm not sure. I mean he made it. It's pretty and all, but I wonder if the plumbing works?. I just take a walk around the garden area.

Before long, Not-was encountered the woman his brother had chosen as his companion. "Yes? Hello, Suzanna, correct?"

Suzanna smiled coyly. "Funny game, pretending not to know me. I should call you Adam. *He's* still having trouble naming things."

Not-was frowned. "No, I AM NOT playing dumb. I'm..."

Suzanna tackled him, her hands tickling and probing under his clothes. He and his brother were the only ones who *wore* clothes, but Suzanna seemed to know her way around them. Or through them.

"Hey, get off me," Not-was said. With a gesture, he levitated the woman onto an overhanging branch. "Holy *Me*. What's got into you?"

Suzanna scrambled down from the tree and stalked over to him, obviously angry. "Creator! Why do you push me away?"

"You have me mistaken for Him. I'm his twin brother. No I'm not kidding. There are two of us. Everything comes in twos. Everything. I guess I made this body look too much like the one he chose. That, and wearing clothes... Now where is he?"

Suzanna's face crumpled and tears streamed down her cheeks. "You will tell him I tried to mate with you! Creator will be angry!"

"No, I won't mention it. It was an honest mistake. Don't worry. Trust me. Oh *Me*, Don't cry." He thought *Crying, Another dysfunctional mental development that needs correction and modification, probably rooted in Not-really-is's essence. These poor creatures started with quite a handicap...*

Suzanna had run off during his attempts to soothe her -- a pleasant sight, to be sure, but counterproductive. Not-was recognized the man she accosted to listen to her story. *Adam, the not-so-bright. This will not go well.*

"ADAM, ADAM, There are *two* of them! I just ran into the twin brother. Adam, this one is much brighter. One look, and his speech, and... well you can tell."

Adam took Suzanna into his arms and patted her on the back as she babbled. "I miss you, Suzanna --"

Suzanna paused and relocated Adam's comforting hand, which had drifted down to her hips. "Yes, I do miss you too. Adam, how's *Lilith*? You two doing okay?"

"Always telling me what to do," Adam said into her hair.

"Yeah, I know she is bossy. She's still thinks we're a thing, doesn't she?" Suzanna said. "I bet if she caught us talking she'd blacken both my eyes. How would that look? Creator would be pissed."

"*Lilith* would be pissed," Adam said, releasing her and backing away.

Suzanna smirked. "Yeah, see you later. I'm going to check the two of them out. This could be fun if..."

Lilith jumped both Adam and Suzanna. She flattened Adam with a roundhouse kick and double punched Suzanna knocking a tooth loose and bloodying her nose. Suzanna ran off crying and wailing into the arms of the Creator and his brother.

The Creator was mad as hell.

"What did I tell those two? 'Don't mess with the apple of my eye.' Now look what they've done. I'll fix you up honey, sweetie. Don't you worry. You'll be just fine. No marks or anything. Those two are out, evicted, see how they like it. Then me and you, Suz, we're out of here. Bro, this place can rot for all I care. What a bunch of malcontents, idiots and dim wits."

I quite agree, Not-was thought to himself. Now I'll have to intercede in this mess he just made while He's off with that bimbo. Cute -- but still animated mud. Oy again.

Let's see how he handles this.

The Creator turned slowly in place. The grass at his feet ignited and evaporated into wisps of smoke; the ground at his feet turned molten, then hardened into greenish-black glass as his anger cooled and he decided what to do.

"I'm going to separate those two. I will fix both their sorry butts. What Lilith deserves is somebody strong enough to stand up to her..." He surveyed the handful of males whose curiosity had outweighed their fear, and pointed to the biggest of the lot. "You," he said, "You are with her--" He paused to point at Lilith. "-- and you are both out of here. Now."

When neither Lilith nor her newly-assigned counterpart moved, the Creator gestured, and a gigantic, glowing creature appeared, a huge sword in one hand. In case that was not impressive enough, the Creator frowned and the sword burst into flames. And in case that wasn't impressive enough, more of the incandescent giants flickered into existence behind the first.

Oh shit, He's really doing it. He called down some of the Host -- not the brightest celestial beings themselves, the Creator's brother thought, but enough to scare this bunch.

Lilith and her ox-like partner exchanged looks of consternation. "I don't think he's kidding," Lilith said.

"Nuh-uh," the ox grunted in agreement.

Lilith rolled her eyes -- this one seemed even dimmer than Adam -- but raised one eyebrow when she grabbed the ox's tree-trunk-sized arm and tried unsuccessfully to make him move. "O--kay," she said. "Which way do you want to go?"

"West," the ox rumbled. "That's what Adam called the place the sun goes down." He trudged off with Lilith in tow.

Almost immediately, she began a long, colorful lecture about Adam's faults, occasionally pointing out that her new partner must be even worse -- unworthy of the Creator's attention until so late in the game. The ox's shoulders had begun to sag under the onslaught by the time they reached the next grove of trees.

Meanwhile, the Creator had looked over the assortment of females who were still in the vicinity. "Adam," he said, "you get this one over here, the bony one. Stop looking at the others, you get the one I say you get."

Adam and his designated partner approached each other without much enthusiasm.

"Adam, whatever-your-name-is -- wonderful, he hasn't given you a name yet, has he? I don't care. You two are out of here, too. You probably won't want to go in the same direction as Lilith and -- no name, yet, right, Adam? Oy." The Creator shook his head and signaled the creature with the flaming sword to herd Adam toward the boundary of the garden. Oh my, they are out of here, cursed to wonder, wander and work. W-O-R-K: now that's a real four letter word, the Creator's brother mused.

Adam's new mate was frightened at the prospect of leaving the only home she had ever known. But she was also apparently determined to tell Adam and everyone else in range that she was not to blame for the collapse of the Original World Order. She yelled, "None of this is my doing. It was all yellow-hair's fault!"

Adam meekly corrected her, "Her name is Lilith."

"I don't care what you call her, she's mud to me. So what's my name, huh? You got a name for me?" she demanded, pissed and close enough to count the pores in Adam's nose.

Adam, attempting to deflect the verbal attack, said softly and and slowly, "Listen... it's... getting... to... be... eve..."

She tilted her head to one side. "Eve, that's pretty. Much better than those other names you tried to give me."

"Ning..." Adam's voice trailed off. He still hadn't figured out that a happy wife was a happy life. He never would. He was too busy feeling sorry for himself and bemoaning his fate, evicted from the garden where he was the Creator's right-hand Man.

Not-was said to himself, "Poor guy, I see nothing but trouble in his future. It's his lot. I hope he is able to cope. Not my world, not my problem." He shifted into one of his own universes, which was, of course, unfolding as it should.

"What a mess that place is," Not-was mused. "It's Not-really-is's world, he made it, and the rules are his until he completely abandons it. I wonder what will become of the four of them? Two pair doesn't beat a full house. I'll just hang around for a bit. I know he'll be back. I want to observe what happens, and study the overarching effects of Not-really-is's wonky essence on this universe. All is him, which means that it's also, in some respect, me. We are family. We don't get to pick that. That's one other unchangeable law of any universe."

Epilogue:

Not-was continued to ponder his brother's flawed Creation. "The women are really attractive. That's one thing he did right. I do like them, no joke. They are interesting, smart and easy on the Mind's Eye. I think I will make a world of them simply to observe what comes of it. It's got to be better than his latest screw-up."

A messenger from the Host Guard came rushing in. "Sir, Sire, SIR," the lesser celestial sputtered.

Not-was sighed. The messenger had a "Don't smite me, I just carry the news" look on his face.

"Okay, what has my brother done now? Oh no, damn it all!" The messenger turned to relay this latest commandment to the Host, but Not-was managed to stop him. "That's just an expression, relax, please no smiting, no brimstone. The real problem is, now where did he go? I told you lot to watch him and call me before he left. You let him escape? Do I have to pound it into you?"

In a far distant place, Not-really-is said to himself, "I think I have it this time. Won't he be surprised?"

To his soul mate, he said, "Suzanna, come watch this!"

In the beginning, there was light...

THE END?

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Bio: Richard Tornello is a business owner/consultant/technical recruiter with 28+ years experience, married and kept by one very neurotic cat Stella. He has a degree from Rutgers University in Asian Studies. Richard's poetry and fiction has appeared a number of times in Aphelion (with one or more poems almost every month!); his most recent short story was [Some Molecular Self-Assembly Required](#), June 2009.

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