

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Companion

You are Dom's friend. Yeah, you're also an Agent of the Order and all worlds are about to end, but this doesn't change the premise in the slightest. And when a friend who hates their life decides to change it, you encourage them, or at the very least you avoid telling them that the Apocalypse will come if they do.

After all, what can they do to you if you don't fulfill your mission? Fire you? So you'll spend your final moments doing something fun. Ugh... You would love to be so fatalistic. Truth to be told, this whole thing has shaken you. You don't want to die! In fact, you're one of the Lus with the lowest incidence of suicidal tendencies.

But the point here is Dom. Over the last years you've practically plotted against them to keep their unhappiness a constant. Not that you have ever obstructed them (your colleagues make Machiavelli look like an amateur...), but you have never pushed them when you felt you should. Doing so would have been High Treason against the Order. Now you can't delay the decision any longer: You must do what you think is right. For you and for Dom.

The other Lus will fill Dom's various heads with poison. You will undo their work and leave your friend free to choose. If the problems of a Dom don't seem that big, you can always suggest they stay. You just want to be a good friend, and avoid the slight, trivial, negligible conflict of interests with the fate of the universe.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Researcher

Strange creatures, monodimensionals. They spend their existence ignoring the complexity of the universe and at the same time they have the potential to put an end to it. What a fascinating paradox!

You have been studying Dom for years now. You are even writing an essay, your masterpiece, with Dom as a protagonist. You are so proud of it that more than once you've found yourself on the verge of telling them, but the fear of consequences has always kept your mouth shut. Losing your position as an Agent of the Order would compromise your reputation and the Regulations mandate that monodimensionals be kept utterly unaware of the existence of parallel dimensions.

This doesn't keep you from regretting that you can't interview Dom more openly, instead of limiting yourself to memorising their subway confessions. It has become an obsession to you, to the point that you keep thinking about it, even now, as you face the end of all worlds. Ah, your dedication to the scientific method!

Nostudy has confirmed that you are risking the end of the universe as you know it. It's simply a theory, elaborated without any precedent of a Pillar leaving their duty, as the efficiency of the Order has always prevented that eventuality. Part of you would love to see what would happen if Dom changed their life. To make it part of your essay. But can academic glory be worth risking the end of all things?

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Observer

You may be the same person, but it's a well-known fact that nurture makes a big difference. Some of your "fellow Lus" posit that the ends justify the means, and that with the destiny of the universe at stake everything is allowed. Well, not you. The Regulations are the Regulations.

Even at the end of the world, your absolute priority is the fact that Dom, a monodimensional entity first and foremost, must NEVER come to know about the multidimensional nature of the universe. This cannot and must not be the desperate card the Order keeps up its sleeve.

Someone will break the Regulations, you're certain of that. And it will be your responsibility to bring Dom back to a state of innocence, at the cost of putting your credibility in jeopardy, as well as their trust or even your chances of success regarding the maintenance of the status quo.

For what good would convincing Dom to stay be, if as a result they ended up knowing about the existence of other worlds? How long before they decided to explore them? You hold some affection for Dom's various incarnations yourself, and you cannot begin to think what absurdities your irresponsible colleagues would get into their heads if pressured by a knowing, motivated Pillar. They might even try and bring them along in an interdimensional journey!

That's how it always begins, one little break from the Regulations and all you have left is ashes. You aim for true, complete success, not a Pyrrhic victory. Dom must be convinced to stay where they are without compromising their innocence. They must not know.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Candidate

It's not easy to maintain the right perspective when the end of all things is looming over your head. But you know to look beyond this crisis and see the opportunity that lies there. The next election for the Cardinals of the Order is coming up and you have always longed for one of those seats. All you need is to make a good impression. No, a clear victory, an outstanding success!

When you hear the other Lus calculate the odds and reason that all you need is to convince a "percentage of the Doms superior to 51%", you can't help but feel sad for them. You need to aim higher, for the full prize. Not a single Dom can leave their post and relinquish their status as a Pillar. You need to try your best to make it so: You cannot apply to be a Cardinal with a meager 51%.

The other Lus have too much fear and too little ambition. They make this out to be a matter of minimal guaranteed respect for the freedom of choice. As if you were proposing to tie Dom up like a prisoner, or to point a gun at their head! Let's be serious. Dom is a good fellow, but they're also so insecure... This is not the first time they flirt with the idea of giving a twist to their sad existence. That's what everyone thinks, isn't it? Sometimes all you need is a good night's sleep, and sometimes the agitation lingers a little bit longer than usual. There's no need to panic.

You know you can smoothly glide past this crisis. How complicated can the problems of a monodimensional be? You just need to listen to Dom and give them advice, like you always have. The job of a Cardinal is to be a point of reference. To the Order, and to the universe at large.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Traitor

Your membership in the Order is just a complex covert operation. Your loyalties lie with a Cell of Hyperdimensional Anarchic Operative Saboteurs, the ex-terroristic group known as C.H.A.O.S.

You have long awaited the right chance to make a difference and now you can barely hide your grin as you see the rest of you whipped into a frenzy at the mere thought of Pillar Dom changing their life. They fear the end of every possible world, as if the universe deserved to continue existing as it is. As if the natural aspiration of every lifeform was not to go beyond.

The truth is nobody knows what would actually happen if a Pillar ceased to be. There are no precedents. You need to give credit to the Order's efficiency. But this leaves you with no doubt: If a situation is unsustainable, it must be subverted. Change is in itself an ideal to pursue.

All Doms are finally ready to awaken, both your reports and those from your colleagues converge on this point with no room for error. They want to change their existence and by doing so they will impress that change on the whole universe. Your alter egos will do all they can to scare them straight, to crystallise their thoughts and orient them towards blind conservatism. But they don't know about you.

You will push Dom to remain steadfast. Together you will be agents of unprecedented change. C.H.A.O.S. will triumph.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Convict

You did not join the Order by choice: It's just a way to pay your dues. In some sort of karmic counterbalance, you, who travelled between worlds for your own pleasure, must now clock in and babysit a monodimensional. A fellow named Dom.

It truly feels like hell, between meetings with all your dutiful alter egos and their minutely-crafted working schedules. The Order wants to be the only force meddling with the destiny of parallel dimensions, so, since Dom is a Pillar, you must keep them chained in place. Who cares if they like it. How could anyone be surprised that you ended up sympathising with them?

Now each Dom seems set on changing their life. You were already preparing to toast with them, when your colleagues reminded you that this is the worst possible outcome. Whatever will become of the universe, they ask. All worlds will end, they say. Who cares, you answer!

You want Dom to choose freely, but if you told them that the fate of the universe depended on them, you'd just put more than a little pressure on their shoulders. It's also a violation of the Regulations, which forbid the Pillars from learning about parallel dimensions.

If you encourage Dom and they tell another Lu, the Order will lock you up and throw away the key. If Dom takes you seriously and changes their life, the universe may end. Will you take that risk?

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Stilite

Many are convinced that the task of the Order is to watch over the Pillars, or worse, to control them. As if their monodimensional nature somehow made them inferior, as if being a keystone of the universe did not confer them any exceptional standing. No, you don't watch over Dom. You worship Them. Literally.

You belong to a real cult, that of the Stilites. Yours is actually quite the balancing act, between your fellow believers who see the Order as an abhorrent means to deny the divine ascent of the Pillars and your colleagues with their rigorous scientific approach, which places Stilite beliefs firmly in the realm of raving lunacy. The trick is avoiding all forms of extremism.

Now that the Order's science is crying in alarm over the impending end of the world, you find yourself in the unique position of having to chat with an unknowing God and maybe talk Them into changing Their plans, so that the universe may continue to exist as you know it.

A fascinating prospect, you must admit.

You do more than trust Dom's choices. You have faith in Them. The idea of manipulating Them is blasphemous to you: All you can do is push Them to look within Themselves, and make Them aware of how crucial Their decisions will be. For all Their status as a Pillar, Dom's strong suit has never been confidence. If only you could manage to share with Them your mystical approach to existence, everyone would be better off. You certainly can't oppose divine plans, but if the world must end, you need to know that it is for a reason. Not by mere chance, or worse, by mistake.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Multipolar

You suffer from a sensory disorder that affects a minimal percentage of multidimensionals. Some in the Order believe yours to be a talent, but it's easy for them to talk without going through it at every dimensional hop. Once, someone told you that Mozart must have suffered twice as much as anyone else with his absolute pitch when he heard nails on a blackboard. Who knows?

The point is that part of you is always aware of the other planes of existence. In the unlikeliest of moments you hear yourself whispering, like an echo between parallel dimensions. While you chat with Dom, you happen to hear the voices of their alter egos, sometimes as background noise, sometimes as if they were travelling on the same car as you. At first you thought it was just your imagination, but when you talked about it with the other Lus you realised you had actually heard their conversations. In fact, if there existed some sort of intergalactic snooping olympics, you'd be getting all the medals.

Whether others pity you like a diseased man or look at you like a great seer, it doesn't matter: You're sick of it. The only one that seems to avoid giving you a label in spite of your continuous "distractions" is Dom. The same Dom on whose shoulders rests the fate of all worlds.

As soon as you heard of the last, desperate mission to convince them to stay in their role as a Pillar, you started imagining what it would be like to hear the sound of infinite dimensions collapsing. It's your recurring nightmare and you are willing to do anything to stop it from happening. You will not be a witness to the end of everything.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Hedonist

So you and a whole bunch of you need to save the universe. It's all up to you and a friend that always looks a tad depressed, no matter what reality you meet them in. To say that there is no guarantee of success is an euphemism, isn't it?

If you look closely, the end of the world is not that different from any old bad day. All you can do, all you really have control over, is take what good is left and enjoy it. You have always tried to pass this knowledge on to Dom, and this means you'll have to try one last time- literally.

But you have no intention of spending what may as well be the last day of your life tormenting a poor sod. You'll show them that they don't need to upturn their whole existence to see the glass half full. Because there's one simple trick to life: Drink the damn glass instead of standing there looking at it.

"Carpe Diem" isn't exactly the Order's motto. Nor is "Do what you can and if you fail don't make a big deal about it". But they happen to be your rules and you will be the one on the subway with Dom. You can always hope that your alter egos will be more responsible and ready to spit blood to talk the greatest possible number of Doms into staying put and keeping to their usual, sad routine... You won't beg anyone to condemn themselves to boredom. If these are really your last journeys with Dom, you'll make them memorable.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Travelsick

Some suffer from seasickness, some can't stand car rides and some get sick from interdimensional hopping. It's all motion sickness, in the end. Of course, things get a little more surreal when your profession consists of moving from one dimension to the next. Once, the travelsick were ruled out by the Order during preliminary exams, but then it started to sound so politically incorrect... And now here you are, a 007 with an upset tummy.

Actually, yours is not a stomach issue as much as a state of confusion. You are always careful to omit it in your reports, but you often happen to mistake one world for another, one Dom for the next. You can generally pass your misgivings off as simple jokes, but you know you're a walking infraction of the Regulations. Monodimensionals must not know about the existence of parallel worlds. This is Agent of the Order 101.

Under the advice of your doctor, you have contemplated the possibility of a period of leave, to settle in a world and try to alleviate your disease, but you let it slide out of fear of being substituted and reasigned. You'd hate to never see Dom again.

You'd also hate to see the Apocalypse. When the memo about the daily interdimensional hops to make Dom stay started making the rounds, your heart skipped a beat. But you can't give up now. The universe won't end because of a little nausea!

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Monophobe

You are terrified. Every world trembles on the brink of oblivion and the person who put them in that state is also the only one who can save them. Dom. A monodimensional. You get chills just thinking about it. Now take a deep breath...

Dom is not a bad person, per se. In years of terrifying service to the Order you have filled report after report about their meek disposition. Still, they are a monodimensional, a bizarre creature, tethered to a single world and completely oblivious to the consequences of their actions. As if this wasn't enough, Dom is a Pillar, so the entire universe depends on the constance of their habits. How could any good come out of this?

You have always been polite with Dom. A bit detached maybe, since the Regulations forbid fraternisation and you are after all deathly afraid of monodimensionals. But they seem to have taken a fancy to you, so you can perhaps affect their decisions without upsetting them too much. Who knows what excesses monodimensionals are capable of! Don't panic.

You always knew working for the Order was going to be hard, but someone has got to do it. You were trained for this, you have your dose of experience and you have mostly managed to keep your phobia of Dom at bay. Aside from that time they sneezed and you fled to the train doors in a panic. They were closed and you broke your nose.

Come on, it's all water under the bridge. Dom will tell you about their problems, they will ask for advice and you'll remind them not to do anything rash. Hoping they really don't. For your own good and that of every lifeform in the universe.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Wanderer

You weren't always a fervent supporter of the Order. Far from it. Although you never went as far as to break the law, you never liked their rigid regulations on dimensional hopping. All you ever wanted was a job that allowed you to see as many worlds as possible. So you embraced the old adage: If you can't beat them, join them.

Now all your colleagues are nervous about the prospect of a dimensional hop a day, but to you it's a dream come true. Pity that it took the impending end of all worlds to get to this all-encompassing freedom.

You don't envy Dom's condition as a Pillar, it's too great a responsibility, a veritable chain. On the other hand, someone must sustain the weight of the universe and your duty is to convince your friend not to change their life, as hypocritical as that may sound.

But if you think about it more closely, it's enough for the majority of Doms to stay in their post. They don't all need to do it. On the contrary, if the state of alarm was to be prolonged, you might get more chances to hop between parallel dimensions every day. Does living on the razor's edge not make us all better people? At least, that's how things have always worked for you.

But you're not irresponsible and you have no intention of taking the choice lightly: Some Doms must be tethered to the ground and others made to take flight. Some problems are worth escaping and others you can easily live with, or on the contrary will chase you down everywhere you go. What you want is to save all worlds and lend your hand to the various Doms, in that order.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Recruit

Not even a month as an Agent of the Order and the red alarm rings. Someone save the universe, please, someone save the universe! Talk about bad luck...

You have a sneaking suspicion that, if only they had a choice, your superior officers would have kept you away from the frontlines. But every available Lu is needed to keep Pillar Dom a constant. Among all the Lus you are the one who has known Dom for the least time, and this makes your relationship quite bizarre, because they have all known Lu for years. Before this, your main worry was not exposing yourself too much, being vague enough to avoid making a mess. Now you're being asked to make a difference.

How do you convince a half-stranger (or better yet, a certain number of versions of the same stranger) to not doom the universe to its fiery end? You bet even the veterans are hard-pressed for answers.

But when a debate is underway, sometimes the best thing is to listen to an outsider. Someone detached enough to be lucid. Maybe that someone could be you. Maybe the others are struggling to see the solution because they're shoulder-deep in the problem. And maybe Dom's problem is nothing more than Lu's interference!

A revolutionary thesis that would have granted you a better mark in the academy. Follow this lead and distance yourself from Dom. You are the only one that can.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Veteran

Your world hosts particularly long-lived individuals. This makes you the most senior Lu agent and the only one to have served under another Pillar before Dom. There is something that the Regulations don't say: What holds the weight of the universe is not a person, but the role they occupy over a predetermined span of time. Achilles had worn the shoes of the invincible hero for many wars before Troy, and by then his services were no longer required. So came the arrow and the heel.

Sooner or later, the service of a Pillar comes to an end, although not necessarily through death. So the problem with Dom is not their willingness to change their life, as much as the timing of the decision. You could say it hasn't yet been written in the book of destiny. All you need to do is convince them to delay their departure.

Part of you knows you should feel a cold weight in your stomach, now that the end of all worlds depends on Lu. Yet the passage of time ends up wearing down one's consideration for freedom of choice. Things will be as they should.

You would like to explain this to Dom, so sad and frustrated. The Regulations strictly forbid you from telling them about parallel dimensions, but what meaning can their problems have compared to the history of even a single world populated by billions of individuals? You just can't make this out to be a personal matter.

ALTER EGO - Lu, the Shirker

Everyone goes crazy for capital letters: The Order, the Pillars, the Apocalypse. Everyone but you. After all, when you strip off the thick layer of sensationalism, all that's left is a job not unlike any other. Your job. It's a quiet affair after all, with its own routine, not too different from Dom's.

You don't really believe that the world will end just because some Doms decided not to take the subway anymore. Sure, the holy Regulations say so, but they also say a bunch of other things nobody listens to. You certainly don't feel moved by a greater Duty, nor do you think you will make any difference: You just need to do your job, so that you won't lose it. And it's not like your role as an Agent of the Order is anything special, you just don't feel like looking for something else.

You have always kept these thoughts to yourself, naturally, but in the end, if there's someone that can teach Dom what it means to stay in their place, that's you. What guarantees are there that doing something different with your life will get you a better deal? Play with the cards you have and don't make a fuss about it. Mono or multi-dimensional, that's how things are for everyone.

Your colleagues, the other Lus, like to fill their mouths with bizarre speculation, but when they actually faced the end of all worlds they whipped themselves into a frenzy. It's all just talk, as it turns out. So you're going to clock in, change dimensions when they tell you to and devote yourself to your usual subway rides with Dom. They're a quiet, reasonable fellow. You'll hear them out and put in some well-thought-out advice. If everything goes well, all the better. If not, it certainly won't be the end of the world. Or will it?