

Adversus **Backstory**

Species: Angel/demon hybrid dragon

Sex: ♂

Age: Late 20s / early 30s

Height: Unknown

Weight: Unknown

Siblings: None

Worldbuilding Notes

Purgatory

In this world Earth is referred to as 'Terra Nova'.

Purgatory is a big world, much like Terra Nova, and densely populated with souls who are neither fully good nor fully evil. The population includes dragons and many other species. It is the arena for purification trials designed to allow souls the chance to enter Heaven, or to examine them closely enough to determine if they are depraved enough to go to Hell.

The trials occur in public, with a jury in attendance, and almost inevitably draw a big audience. They are administrated by angels and demons, who visit Purgatory in an official capacity to perform the trials.

Purgatory is dotted with portals to Terra Nova.

God and the Devil

In this universe, God does not directly speak to anybody in Purgatory. Any inhabitant of Purgatory who believes that God has spoken to them has either an over-active or faulty imagination.

The devil can smell guilt. If a person commits sin but doesn't recognise it as sin then, while he can still take them to Hell, he may have difficulty locating them. When a person feels guilt, the effect is similar to that of a shark smelling blood in water: the devil finds them quickly and easily.

Angels and Demons

Angels and demons in this universe are born as angels and demons and have families in the same way humans do. They never lived on Earth at any point. The females are the primary nurturers.

Newly-hatched angel or demon dragons are able to see and hear but cannot feed themselves,

walk, climb, or fly. They have developed all of these abilities by the time they reach the age of three.

Their ambitions are also generally different from those of people on Terra Nova. While a human of equivalent age might imagine themselves as train drivers, sea captains, astronauts, and the like, young dragons who want to 'play grown-up' might imagine themselves as warriors, guardians, or protectors.

Angels and demons are capable of living forever, although they can be killed. Angels can also 'evolve' into guardian angels.

Guardian angels can only execute judgement on others if God allows it.

Adversus is an original character not currently associated with any particular story. He is a half-demon, half-angel who grew up in Purgatory and was put under constant and intense pressure to behave in a pure and angelic manner. An entire childhood of this led to him taking an 'easy' way out and becoming the judge, not the defendant, in brutal and bloody fashion. In the longer term he became a guardian angel.

Trust & Confidence

(newborn)

Adversus' parents lived in Purgatory. His father, named Evangelos, was an angel from Heaven who had looked among the angelic dragonesses for a mate but hadn't seen any who piqued his interest. He had visited Purgatory, seen Adversus' mother Delilah, and become infatuated with her.

Delilah was a fallen angel and for this reason qualified (and lived in Hell) as a demon. None of the male demon dragons had been interesting to her as all they felt was lust. When she saw Evangelos and the way he reacted to her, she saw something that she hadn't seen since being banished from Heaven.

Evangelos fell in love and lust with Delilah and this tainted him forever so that he was no longer pure. This meant that he no longer qualified for access to Heaven, and this fact weighed heavily on him. She fell in love with him too and they made a life together in Purgatory. That included having a child.

Adversus was therefore planned and wanted. Delilah felt delighted about having a baby and took good care of him. It was clear from the start that he was an angel-demon hybrid and she happily accepted him as such.

As part of their overall parenting strategy and as a compromise within their relationship, Evangelos asked Delilah agree to try to be good despite her evil core. She agreed to this. Between them, they agreed to raise Adversus to be good.

Freedom & Self-Determination

(toddlerhood)

Adversus grew into an active, mobile toddler. He had an extra-close bond with his mother, who he favoured over his father. From Adversus' perspective, he recognised and understood that his mother had a core of evil in her. She didn't try to hide it and instead was open about it, and demonstrated to Adversus that she was prepared to compromise between it and goodness so that she could continue to be with his father. Adversus found her candidness about her true nature and the fact that she was willing to make a compromise reassuring.

His feelings about his father were rather different. Evangelos still considered himself an angel and made it clear that he was invested in teaching Adversus to be angelic in nature despite the fact that Adversus himself was not fully an angel. Adversus sensed the shred of corruption within Evangelos and this undermined his trust in his father. To Adversus, this effort of his father's to be good – or to be seen as good – when there was evil in his core came off as inauthentic, and it left Adversus feeling wary of Evangelos.

Given that the dragon family was in Purgatory they were surrounded by people who were neither fully good nor fully evil. As Adversus' parents took him out and about more often, and as he matured enough to take notice of the other creatures around, he sensed the same scrap of evil in each of them as he recognised in each of his parents. The only thing that seemed different was the person's way of dealing with it. Sensing that badly-hidden evil in his father was unnerving enough for him but he could cope with that at least; sensing it in dozens of strangers was too much, and he developed claustrophobia when in crowds. His parents made a home away from the crowds with lots of space to try and help Adversus cope with his phobia.

Growing up in Purgatory meant that Adversus came to see the culture of Purgatory as 'normal'. To him, there was nothing out of the ordinary about the green fire that surrounded the land and the frequent trials of goodness and evil. He feared the evil in people. As far as he understood it, the trials were a good way to make the evil explicit and face it directly.

Ambition

(young childhood)

As Adversus reached young childhood he began to think about what he wanted to be when he grew up. Given his very young age his way of thinking about this was quite fanciful.

His world was steeped in the twin notions of good and evil, so this polarity was always likely to feature in his self-image. Perhaps if Adversus had been given more space to become whatever he wanted to be he might have decided upon a more easy-going path (although that was always unlikely given the fact that he was essentially born in a giant courtroom), but his father had some very strong ideas about who Adversus should be - in essence, goodness incarnate - and began imposing his ideals on his son early in his life.

Evangelos still saw himself as an angel and prized the concept of angelhood. He also saw God as the ultimate judge and somebody who he, and Adversus, should go out of their ways to please. He genuinely believed that he was doing right by Adversus to pressure him to be good and to impress on him that God was always watching, but Adversus did not cope well with this pressure.

Adversus' father's idea of 'goodness', of spiritual purity, was hard for a small child to comprehend, and it felt extremely daunting. Adversus' failure to understand and comply with his father's standards to a standard that Evangelos was happy with stressed Evangelos, and he reacted by pushing Adversus even harder, threatening punishment not only by himself, but by God too.

With all of this happening Adversus felt he had his claws full just managing his father's demands and had little space left to imagine himself into any particular role, however fanciful. Occasionally Adversus would try to lighten the mood for his own sake and in the hope that his father would lighten up too, often with imaginative play. Adversus rather liked to imagine himself as a guardian. Evangelos took a dim view of indulgence of imagination and saw it as occultish in nature. He discouraged it and Adversus wasn't sure whether he felt guilty or angry at his efforts to 'make good' being curtailed like this.

It should be said that Adversus' mother did not have any the lofty beliefs that Evangelos had for Adversus, however much she supported her mate. She didn't pressure Adversus to become a demon like herself and simply gave him space to play and be who he wanted to be, so long as he treated his father with respect.

For a while this confused Adversus. He felt like a failure for not living up to God's standards of what an angel should be. He occasionally thought about how unsafe he felt: that he wanted his mother's protection, but she didn't seem available for that. Adversus disliked this feeling but for now hardly dared even think it, let alone explore the feelings associated with it, and instead convinced himself that he should feel guilty.

This was compounded by the fact that he was considered, in Purgatory's culture, to be old enough to be put to trial. Time and time again he was tested and found inadequate. The aim of the trials was to seek and encourage purification. Adversus barely understood what purification meant, let alone how he personally could achieve it, and the confusion, fear, and guilt he experienced for failing his father, the angels performing the trials, and God, became overwhelming.

The public nature of the trials - the jury and the audience - exacerbated his claustrophobia. The pressure was often too much for him to bear, and this hampered his performance, which only made him less likely to satisfy the demands made of him.

His father did not comfort him in this. Instead he did his best to use the trials as leverage to get Adversus to be better. For the time being Adversus, confused though he was, did everything he could to live up to the ideals that everyone around him expected of him, but as a small and still naturally impulsive child, this was too hard for him to reliably do, and certainly not something he

felt confident about doing.

Productivity

(older childhood)

As Adversus grew bigger, the trials (and the disapproving glares of the examiners and his father) became more serious. Before, they had always emphasised the importance of pleasing God. Now that he was older his misdemeanours and failures were treated not just as 'naughtiness' but something more serious (Adversus hadn't thought this possible: naughtiness seemed to be the worst thing anybody could do when he was smaller).

He came to believe that he was actively toxic to society.

Another change that occurred to Adversus at this time was a stronger ability to think rationally. He watched the events around him unfold at these trials and saw that he wasn't the only one berated as toxic, wicked, and sinful: everyone who was tested was told the same, with the implication being that they were the worst, the bad apple in the proverbial barrel.

Yet that failed to alleviate a meaningful amount of pressure. Adversus began attending school. He wondered what he would find there as here, he would meet others of his own age. By this time in his life Adversus couldn't even articulate the idea of easy-going companionship without the threat of eternal damnation hanging over the relationship if he were to say or do the wrong thing, but somewhere deep down he felt a stirring of hope that he would find such a friendship.

In truth, the other children were under just as much pressure as he was and equally afraid of slipping up. The teachers at the school were very strict and the children all felt as if they were under constant scrutiny. As a result many of the children felt they were treading on eggshells, and feared associating with anyone who wasn't 'purer than pure'. Some became hostile to anyone who they, or the grown-ups, deemed to have sinned, and the fact that almost everybody fell short of the judgement in the trials in some way or another, the potential for getting back-stabbed was very real. A culture of faux-forgiveness, or "love the sinner, hate the sin" proved a helpful tool for the children in getting some semblance of friendship with one another while allowing each child to explicitly reject each others' 'sinful' behaviour.

Adversus noticed, and grew to hate, the sentiment behind it. He saw the duplicity in it and resentment of being labelled a "sinner" by a smiling child acting out benevolence infuriated him.

Adversus continued to look to his parents as guides for how to behave. With his thoughts more rational and clear, perhaps he might have recognised the contradictions and hypocrisies they presented him with, but he was still too afraid to see it, and too dependant on them to be able to freely explore any feelings about them. So he remained confused, hurt, and struggling for inspiration about how to make this situation better.

He felt pressure, both externally and internally, to demonstrate the capabilities that his elders wanted of him, but he was frustrated in his ability to do this. He knew that he hated evil (after all,

he was supposed to hate it. Everyone told him so) but hatred wasn't something he could easily translate into a demonstration of anything. The overall experience was immensely frustrating!

Occasionally, to release some of the tension, he would be cheeky to his father. Evangelos did not react well to this at all, and invariably Adversus found that he had to apologise and be humble.

Child to Adult Transition

(adolescence)

As Adversus became a teenager he went through several changes that severely rocked the proverbial boat.

First among them was the development of sexual desire. He noticed the demons around him more so than the angels, and he found this disturbing. As far as he understood it, it was only acceptable to find angels attractive. To find demons attractive was a clear sign that he liked evil, and he had genuinely believed for a long time that he hated it.

The idea of desiring devils was such an extreme taboo that he felt he couldn't dare to express it, but as a younger teenager he found this next to impossible. Staring for half a second too long at a demon, catching the eye of one, stumbling over his words when he saw one, or seeing his mother act in any way that even hinted as proud or seductive (even towards her husband) stirred up this dilemma. He felt as if demons everywhere were trying to catch him out, and this left him acutely paranoid and resentful, prone to becoming harsh towards any demon he saw as a warning for them not to try anything. Ultimately he felt that his world (and here he made no distinction between 'his world' and 'the world') would be better with no demons at all. This definition included anybody who had elements of demonhood in them.

The second was a sense that he wanted to move and act in the world according to his own beliefs, values, and goals. He had felt under pressure from all sides for some time but this new sense of budding independence left him feeling that he couldn't contain himself within the parameters set by others. There were two sides to this feeling: one was a desire to represent himself, and the other was a sense of pressure from others that he begin to develop his independence.

Except, his father and the examiners (and God, according to everybody around him) seemed intent on him becoming an adult who strove for good. This only confused Adversus all the more: what was the point in them praising him as a newly independent being if they were going to continue pressuring him to do whatever they wanted? The fact that what they wanted was the 'right' thing to do made this puzzle harder to solve.

The third issue for Adversus as a teenager was a physical one: his brain, like those of his contemporaries, went into a process of rewiring. The concept of risk became less important to him and this took the brakes off of Adversus' frustration about goodness, evil, and what he was supposed to do. He started to act out, barely thinking about what he was doing and keen only to find some way to ease the pressure. He argued with and interrogated everybody around him - his

father, his mother, the angels who tested him, and God. He completed tasks set for him by his father and the examiners with the best virtuosity he could manage. He raged and looked desperately for somebody, anybody, to show him what he was supposed to do (and what he wasn't); anybody that is, except his parents.

Little or none of this got a positive reaction from his elders. He was seen as wilful, wicked, unwilling to listen to his elders and betters, and he struggled with this for some time. By the time his rewiring ended and his attitude to risk reinstated itself, he had damaged many of the relationships around him.

Throughout this he had solidified his feelings towards Delilah. For many years he had felt ambivalent about her, reassured during his earliest years by her demonstration of honest evil, but later, suspicious of her apparent contentment with her demonic heritage (there were many times during his adolescence when he accused her of being proud to be evil). As he grasped for ways to interpret the world that didn't involve seeing himself as irredeemably bad, he came to view any sense of peace with evil as intolerable.

One element of this that he found particularly hard to stomach was his mother's (and other denizens of Purgatory's) primary identification as a demon. It seemed to Adversus as if, if only a dragon said, "Yes, I'm a demon. What of it?" then they were not expected to follow the same standards of behaviour as the angelic ones. It felt to him like a 'get out of jail free' card.

He grew to hate his mother for this.

As he neared the end of his adolescence he came to believe that he could hear the voice of God in his head, telling him to kill those who lived in sin. The messages he believed he was getting from God lacked any blame for him and contained only an instruction: purge the world of evil. For him, listening to nobody except God made everything far easier. Adversus was happy with this - it felt like the resolution of all of his confusion - and accepted the challenge.

The message the he understood from God included a reward: God's favour. Adversus believed that if he performed this 'cleansing' for God then he would win God's favour and be admitted to Heaven. This was a fantastic reward for Adversus: he had felt tired of Purgatory for years and admission to paradise was worth working for.

As he had aged through his teens he had learned how to gain better control over his desire for demons. By the time his adolescence ended he had learned to behave seductively.

This became a technique that he used against demons as a way to fulfil his promise to God: he used himself as a honeytrap. Demons would approach him, thinking that he identified as evil, and he would lead them somewhere where they could be alone. Then he would murder them.

Closeness in Relationships *(young adulthood)*

This was how Adversus started a murder spree that lasted many years.

He learned that he could seduce demonic females, lull them into a false sense of security, and kill them at his leisure. Being sexually attractive to Adversus did absolutely nothing to save them from this fate.

Adversus didn't only kill in Purgatory. One day he found a portal to Terra Nova and saw all the evil in the world through it. He didn't think twice: he went through, invaded the Earth, and began work.

At first he engaged in massacres. The police and military were unable to apprehend or otherwise stop him and were forced to react to his killing spree by putting the country on lock-down. Adversus reacted by adjusting his approach: he began using his magical powers to blend into the environment or transform into an apparently harmless figure.

He also didn't always go in for the kill immediately. With sex offenders, prostitutes, and others whom he considered particularly heinous, he toyed with them first, often in a way that related to their 'sin', before killing them.

He continued with his massacre for many years, his spirit nature making him impossible for the authorities to catch, his rage rendering him immune to reason or efforts to calm him down.

Far from qualifying him for Heaven, Adversus' murderous spree opened access for him to Hell. Adversus travelled between Terra Nova and Purgatory at will during his killing spree and, as his body count increased, so did the chance that he would meet one of his victims from the mortal plane.

One day, that is exactly what happened. During one of his visits to Purgatory he saw somebody who he had once murdered in Terra Nova. This encounter made him aware that killing a person did not truly 'get rid' of them, and all it did was send them to Purgatory. They had an admittedly tense discussion, where the victim told Adversus that if only they had had a chance to repent they would have done, but that Adversus had robbed him of the chance.

Adversus felt guilty about this. As he saw it, he had robbed God of the chance to admit this person to Heaven. Then he remembered something he had learned in school: that the devil could sense guilt, and he became deathly afraid.

The devil did indeed come for him and dragged him to Hell.

Adversus was understandably alarmed. Cornered, he tried to shift his guilt into blame and insisted that the devil was wrong to interfere with him and that he had been doing God's work. Defying the devil like this was the only way he could think of in this moment of panic. The devil only scoffed at this and continued to drag Adversus onward until they reached Hell.

When they reached Hell and the devil finally let Adversus go, Adversus went into a frenzied rampage where he killed a number of demons. This disqualified him from a life in Hell and he was spat back out into Terra Nova.

Adversus retreated as best he could from all sapient life on Terra Nova so that he could think about his next move.

He decided that the best move he could make next was to seek redemption. And yet, when he thought about it, there were so many people with whom he had to redeem himself: the murdered souls in Purgatory and their families on Terra Nova added up to a lot of people. Only after he had been forgiven by them could he consider hoping for forgiveness from God.

This became his next self-appointed task. He discovered the hard way that earning forgiveness took longer than killing a sinner. Before there was forgiveness, there had to be a reinstatement of trust, and trust was hard to earn. He hopped between Terra Nova and Purgatory, working on one family at a time.

He spent many years - around twenty - working on this. By the time he felt he had done all he could, some had forgiven him while others hadn't. He had reached a point where any further efforts would most likely be fruitless, but as they hadn't all forgiven him Adversus believed his task was incomplete. He began to mentally prepare to be a restless soul forever seeking something he almost certainly couldn't get, when he had a vision.

In that vision, God communicated that he forgave him. When he got this message from God, Adversus knew that his efforts had been worth it and he broke down in tears with relief.

By this time, Adversus was on first-name terms with self-awareness and self-development. While God's forgiveness was a natural end point where his efforts bore fruit, it felt natural to him to continue learning about, and developing himself, so that is what he did.

Passing on Responsibilities

(older adulthood)

While angels and demons do not age like mortals do, Adversus experienced a sense of 'turning a corner' at around the time of his 40th birthday, where he no longer felt as hot-headed as he once had and felt that he could afford to be peaceful and confident.

This wasn't a brash confidence like he'd had in his youth, but a mellow one. He knew that he had done well to earn the forgiveness of so many people, and the lessons he had learned while doing so had come to serve him well since.

One day it seemed that God agreed with him: Adversus began to feel himself changing. By the time the changes had stopped happening he had become a guardian angel! His wings had become fully angelic and his scales had developed brightly-coloured splotches.

Adversus could not see the changes in himself at a DNA level, but God had made changes there to remove the demonic DNA from him, with the effect being that he no longer had sinful demonic rages.

The change happened when Adversus finally accepted in his heart that he couldn't control the outcome of whether or not God would forgive him. When he fully embraced the fact that the outcome was unknowable - when he learned to tolerate the uncertainty of not knowing - he finally grew enough to change. That was the change in the nature of his confidence: that he no longer had to be fearful of the outcome because the outcome of some things were genuinely out of his claws - and that was okay.

As a brand new guardian angel Adversus heard the voice of God! At first he was wary - once upon a time he had thought he'd heard God's voice and had done terrible things. He continued to listen carefully and with a guarded heart, and came to realise that this was the genuine voice of God that he was hearing.

There were a few things that convinced him: seeing the physical changes in himself that could only happen as a result of divine intervention helped, and so did his sudden ability to sense the existence - and entry points to - Heaven. Like the dedicated learner he had become, he went there to check that that was what he was sensing, and he was right!

End of Life

(old age)

Once again, ageing works differently for angels and demons so Adversus didn't die in the way most people understand it. For Adversus, his 'death' or 'afterlife' was life as a guardian angel. He became integrated with the other guardian angels and absorbed - and became absorbed by - their culture.

That meant learning to enjoy the experience of allowing himself to relax, to be at peace, to know in his bones that his toils had an end point, and to leave those toils behind so that he could enjoy the time off - which could potentially be indefinite. Occasionally he or another guardian angel were called upon to execute judgement on another being, but he could only do that with God's blessing, otherwise he could not act.

This was a truth that Adversus had to have been ready for, in order for God to give him transcendence to guardian angelship.

Adversus had spent his whole life striving for something - approval, purification of the community around him, and later forgiveness - so learning to be content with inactivity, especially without stagnating or despairing had become his final task, which he had learned in his older adulthood. God had transformed him into a guardian angel because in the aftermath of his seeking of the forgiveness of his victims and the victims' families, he had learned what peace and contentment meant: the ability to stop 'doing' and to learn to enjoy 'being'. If Adversus had continued to feel restless, to try to fill the void by doing something else, he may not have transcended, as he would have found the overall 'stasis' of being a guardian angel frustrating and may have self-sabotaged so that he could become active again. God had given Adversus time to acclimatise to himself to contentment so that he could fit comfortably in with the culture of the other guardian angels.

That is how Adversus' life 'ended' - with time off, the occasional task to do that was easily within his capabilities, and like-minded souls to talk to and with whom he could experience 'off the clock' activities with if they both wanted.

Credits

Based on theory by:

Erikson, E., (1951) 'Childhood and Society', W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. chapter 7.

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy