

Brisbane Brahma

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## Introduction: The Divine Vacancy

The heart of Brisbane's Fortitude Valley throbs with a feverish, electric pulse. It is a place of profound contradictions, a concrete canyon where the scent of cheap beer, greasy wok oil, and stale sweat mingles with the sweet, cloying perfume of night-blooming jasmine. Neon signs, in flickering strokes of electric blue, fever-pink, and acid-green, bleed their colors onto rain-slicked pavements, promising ecstasy and oblivion in equal measure. The very air is a "sound" a low, dissonant *thrum* composed of a thousand narratives: the muffled *thump-thump-thump* of bass from a dozen hidden clubs, the *sizzle* of a late-night kebab stand, the distant, mournful *wail* of a siren, and the constant, conspiratorial *murmur* of illicit deals whispered in shadowed doorways.

This is the Valley, a purgatory of ambition and regret, and it is here, in this pocket of audacious, unrepentant humanity, that a divine crisis unfolds. Far beyond the veil of this reality, in a quiet of cosmic proportions, the ancient god Brahma stirs. The four-faced Architect, born from a golden embryo that glowed with the light of a billion suns, is weary. The *aum* of creation, a sound he has hummed for aeons, has become monotonous. The endless cycles of 'srishti' (creation) and 'pralaya' (dissolution) have lost their savor. He seeks an end. He seeks a successor.

But his gaze does not fall upon the pure, the pious, or the wise. His divine logic, skewed by boredom, has led him to a radical conclusion: to create a universe, one needs not just wisdom, but *cunning*. Not just patience, but *audacity*. Not just power, but the raw, chaotic, untamed ego of one who would dare to build a reality from *nothing*. He seeks the ultimate outlaw, the soul who has danced on the edge of chaos and spat in the face of order. He seeks his replacement in Fortitude Valley.

From the Valley's storied underbelly, from the ghosts of its most infamous crimes and the masters of its current rackets, twenty notorious figures are summoned. These are souls stained by real-world atrocities, their legends woven into the city's fabric—shadows of the 1970 Whiskey firebombing, echoes of the 1960 murder of barmaid Gubke, whispers of corruption, violence, and grand-scale deception. One by one, they are pulled from their neon-lit, grime-soaked lives into a non-space, a nexus of potential, to be interviewed by a divine recruiter.

Each candidate, a reflection of the Valley's dark heart, must prove their mettle. They must face the eight-fold query, a grueling interrogation on the very mechanics of godhood: How would you wield the ultimate power? How would you absorb the totality of the dying universe's energy? How would you channel it, control it? How would you unleash the seven-day roar to condense that energy into a sea of hydrogen? How would you forge the stars, hammering hydrogen into helium, and then build the very elements of life—carbon, oxygen, nitrogen?

Why would you, a creature of shadow, accept the post of Brahma? What regrets would you carry into your new creation? And what unique, street-smart skill do you possess that makes *you* the one to command the cosmos? This tale weaves the grit of Brisbane's

criminal history with the grandeur of creation myths. It is an alchemy of scientific principle and street-level brutality. Four will be shortlisted to present their final visions. One will be chosen. One will enact the recreation. And one will be left to confront the final, bitter irony of absolute godhood: the ultimate heist, won at the cost of the one thing the Valley always offered—the thrill of the game.

Mandarin translation has been provided at the end of the book.

## Chapter 1: Adi Fatso - The Meme-Worthy Maverick

The Dragon's Pearl was Adi Fatso's unofficial office. He sat in his usual corner booth, the vinyl cracked like old leather, upholstery stained with a generation of spilled soy sauce and cheap beer. The air was a thick soup of scents: sizzling garlic, stale Tsingtao, and the sharp, chemical sting of pineapple-scented disinfectant that never quite masked the underlying grime. Dim red lanterns, coated in a fine layer\_of kitchen grease, cast a murky, womb-like glow over the room. Outside, the neon signs of Brunswick Street bled through the blinds in electric blue and pink stripes, painting the sticky tabletop where Adi nursed a warm beer. He was a man defined by a single, defiant bellow, a meme-legend whose life of chaotic heists and theatrical arrests was the Valley's own pulp fiction.

The sound of the sizzling wok from the kitchen suddenly *stopped*. The tinny sound of the 80s pop song playing over the speakers distorted, slowing into a demonic *groan* before cutting to absolute silence. Even the ever-present thrum of city traffic faded. Adi tensed, his eyes scanning the empty restaurant. He wasn't alone.

The air in front of his booth began to shimmer, not with light, but like an oil-slick on water, rippling with colors that didn't belong: iridescent purples and greens that seemed to slide off the spectrum. The scent of ozone and hot metal, like a dying transformer, prickled his nostrils. The apparition coalesced, not into a shape, but into a *presence*—a column of wavering, prismatic light that stood taller than a man. It had no face, yet he felt its four-fold gaze.

Its voice was a thousand perfect soundbites, a chorus of announcers and hosts, all speaking at once. "Adi Fatso. The Showman. The Connoisseur. We are interviewing."

Adi leaned back, forcing a laugh that sounded too loud in the dead quiet. "Interview? You pigs finally get creative? What is this, some high-tech new 'Candid Camera'?" He gestured with his bottle. "Alright, lay it on me. I'm game."

The prismatic light pulsed, and the air grew colder. "The throne of Brahma is vacant. Creation awaits a new architect. Your audacity has been noted. You will answer." The entity didn't ask; it *commanded*. The multi-layered voice drilled into his skull.

"First: How would you handle absorbing all energy of the dying universe? The total sum of existence, drawn into your being."

Adi blinked. The scale of it was absurd, but the *concept*... he understood acquisition. He understood *taking*. He put the beer down, his performer's mask slipping into place. "You treat it like the score of a lifetime," he said, his voice dropping into its familiar, booming cadence. "Not a smash-and-grab. That's messy. This is a ghost job. You slip in, find the mainframe—the heart of it all—and you siphon it. You inhale it, swift and sly, like pulling the reserve funds from a bank no one knows exists. By the time the 'cops of