



"the DARK" by Max Cottica is a philosophical graphic novel that explores a surreal cycle of life, death, and rebirth within a metaphysical void.

Arrival in the DARK

The story opens with the arrival of a disoriented entity named **Noone** (later identified as **x4y8z10**). Noone awakens in "the DARK," a pitch-black void between life and death, with the distinct, recurring sensation of "falling".

Confused and in pain, Noone is approached by **Deficit** (essence **x2y2z13**), a long-term inhabitant of the void. Deficit explains that they are both dead—a fact Noone eventually recalls—and that they must undergo an "induction program". This program assigns names based on a "tri-dimensional factorization" (X, Y, and Z factors) that computes an essence's potential for future "experiences" (reincarnations).

The Cradle and the Accolade

Deficit guides Noone to **the Cradle**, the central mechanism that processes essences. While Noone's factorization suggests a quick return to the living world, Deficit's status is grim: he is flagged for **Termination**, a final deletion from the cycle because he has failed to "progress" over multiple cycles.

A mysterious entity named **Veritas** intervenes, claiming to be able to reverse the termination if Noone and Deficit perform a "favour". Veritas is part of **the Accolade**, an ancient group seeking a specific book that contains the secrets to controlling the portal between life and death.

The Historical Backstory: Novacella, 1157 A.D.

The narrative shifts to 12th-century Italy at the **Abbey of Novacella**. **Brother Demiros**, a monk with a profound "mental affinity," has discovered the link to the DARK. He records his findings in a book, detailing how the power of the mind can create portals and control the forces of reincarnation.

Demiros views himself as a "shepherd" intended to purify future generations. However, his mentor, the **Father Superior**, is driven by a selfish obsession to use the book to achieve immortality and "cheat death".

The Climax: Memory and Revelation

Returning to the DARK, Noone realizes that Veritas has manipulated them to uncover the book's location. Through an intense flashback, Noone discovers their true identity: they are a reincarnation of **Demiros** himself. Noone remembers drowning as a child and tapping into the portal during that final breath, a skill they later perfected as a monk.

The climax involves a confrontation between the forces seeking to control the DARK. The Father Superior attempts to claim the book's power for himself, but it is revealed that **Deficit** is also a key player—actually a hidden aspect or protector related to Demiros. The story concludes with the opening of a final door, a vortex that threatens to engulf those who sought to exploit the cycle, while Noone/Demiros remains the gatekeeper of the "ultimate power".

Plot Summary

The story begins with an essence named "Noone," who awakens in a void known as "the DARK" with no memory of how they arrived. Noone is met by another entity named "Deficit" (also known as X2Y2213), who explains that they are both dead and undergoing an "induction program". This program assigns them a name based on a mathematical formula (tri-dimensional factorization) that determines their future experiences and their potential to return to the world of the living.

As the narrative unfolds, Noone realizes that the DARK is a giant filter where souls wait to be "pinged" for their next life or "experience". However, there is a threat of "termination"—a final deletion for those who do not progress or meet the required standards of the DARK.

The story shifts through time and space, revealing a connection to the Abbey of Novacella in 1157 Italy. There, a monk named Brother Demiros, and his Father Superior are obsessed with a book that describes the link between life and death. This book contains the knowledge to manipulate the portal to the DARK and potentially grant immortality.

Key Characters

- **Noone (x4y8z10):** The protagonist who arrives in the DARK confused and seeks to understand the "logic" of the cycle. They eventually recall their past life and their connection to the book.
- **Deficit (x2y2z13):** A cynical but long-standing essence in the DARK who helps Noone. He faces "termination" but is used as a pawn by more powerful entities.
- **Veritas:** A mysterious entity who claims to want to help Noone and Deficit but is actually manipulating them to find the location of the book.
- **Brother Demiros:** A 12th-century monk who discovered the "mental link" to the DARK and wrote the book detailing how to control it.
- **Father Superior:** Demiros' mentor, whose obsession with the book leads to betrayal and a desire to cheat death.
- **The Accolade:** A group or entity that "always was and always will be," seeking the knowledge within the book to control the process of reincarnation.

Core Themes

- **The Infinite Loop:** The belief that life and death are part of a standardized loop where souls are processed and sent back repeatedly.
- **Tri-dimensional Factorization:** The idea that an individual's worth or "factor" determines their destiny and whether they are worthy of return or destined for termination.
- **Mental Affinity:** The concept that certain individuals can tap into the portal between worlds using the power of their mind.
- **Knowledge as Power:** The central conflict revolves around the book, which acts as a manual for controlling the "cradle" of existence.