In His Hands

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a story from the
Children of the Storm
anthology
“Henry? Henry...!”

His mistress’ call slipped beneath the great fog. Subtly away it drifted through the tumult of the crowded lobby. A fabric of activity drowned the voice, twisting until lost completely. There were clattering of marbled floors. There was a chatter of voices, ambient and distant.

Beneath this fog of volume, the boy ran.

Deeper and deeper through the hallways, he dashed as quickly as his legs could carry! Thoughts like a torrent spun in his skull. They pressed within him, desperate to release an awful pressure.

They were like phantoms around him; faceless suited adults crossed to and fro. Gray and distant, their dark towers passed above him. But he moved unhindered. For he was a thing apart. He was a knight on the fields of his own hidden realm.

For he was a child.

*And all children stride a different plane.*

On he ran, deeper through the building’s corridors.

A furious fixation had gripped him. *Twas a face.* It lingered in his mind.

His father’s face drifted, as if ahead of him.

Though it dimmed with each passing moment. *It’s comfort fled.*

After it he sprinted! For it was his own soul, that face. *It was a mirror.* He may ask it of himself, and its answer oriented him. That face was a tome of priceless wisdom. Its tales were telling who he was, like guiding lights of aspiration. Its destiny etched upon him. His soul was a knight of old before its charge.

Yet now it faded.

Like an anchor lost to sea, his ship was caught by venomous winds.

Those oceans passed before him. Mind flew akin with his body. He’d grown oblivious to Ms. Beaumont’s’ cries. No doubt, her stout positions grew vexed by the obstructions of the lobby! But Henry moved on. Somehow the passing crowds could not assault him; he dashed throughout. It was that mysterious way of children.
They walk a different earth. Its alien currents spindle beside our own. Tangents pour along their elder’s trunks, like rivers. Like rivers they run along the banks of all our blurry spires. Shifting, they waft between this and that reality. For fractions of their minds still remain.

_They remain thither…where the wonders grow._

So Henry quickly flew.

Today this feat is dangerous, though. For the gains of youth have also a weakness. Near to the starlight, at times they slip. They find themselves in a cold place. Both earth and sun are faraway things, seen only through a telescope of frightful distance. The Child is safe when immersed in _other worlds_ beyond the eyes of adults. The Child is also safe when embraced in the loving arms of those in _this world_. But between them?

Should the cruelty of this world push away, while the ache of its reality invades: then they are caught. Their mind tethers on the hills of wild imagination! Their heart is pained by the burdens of life. Seeping through their soul, a conduit, the waters of wild dreams pour along these natural things.

It twists this world, distorting its rigid postures.

So Henry quickly fell.

He tumbled, lost through the cracks. The world of the lobby swept in mystery to him. Heights grew higher, hallways longer: all corners seem to spin in circles. Warping all the giants, they wandered with aims greatly beyond him. They curved like carnival mirrors and spun like paintings on his walls. They filled the background of his playable world, a place in the game he could not travel.

He rounded another curving corner.

Its juncture with the ceiling arched deep fathoms above his head. There he sat, back against the pallid wall, ghostly suits passing him by. Suddenly still, thoughts raced within him…desperately they scoured the water’s surface looking for that face. But his Father’s face was gone. Every hope within his soul grasped out against the shifting seas. He gave his all to remember even an inkling of his complexion.

But he could not.

_And this was frightening._

How many times had he walked with him through these hallways? How many laughs had his eyes observed: those creases tracing joy up from his laughter? Now, they were forgotten. Some distance he could not run after: this ran beyond his arms, failing his earnest reach.

Henry cried.

The features of his Father faded. They were only feelings now. No recollections were left. Each supplication only expended _another_ image from memory. Each plunge of reminiscence further exhausted his supply. Great waves of noise rose with their resounding rattle! They battered like a thunderstorm upon his forehead, in his skull. Small hands flew to his ears! Desperately he tried to fold himself inward: hands over his head, body against the corner. Voiceless cries escaped his lips, as Henry pressed himself there. The pain of the noisy hallway numbed over like the cold. As if to fight the coming frostbite he writhed against the concave steel. He clung in urgent agony to all the fleeting fables in his heart…

Then it came.
A soft and gentle bell chimed.
Calming like a wind, it breathed.
Henry ceased his sniffling.

It felt distant, that knell, and yet it overwhelmed all the madness near him. Henry let his hands slowly drop. His head lifted. Eyes looked up from his knees where they were buried. Cautiously, they looked back to the real world. They returned to where things happened only once, rather than in his mind where they spun endless circles of sadness. So Henry dipped back into the world: faces grew upon the passing suits. They glanced a measure of self-consciousness upon him. He wiped his nose upon his sleeve, and his eyes upon balled up fists. A small bunched up brow looked out to the hallway, searching for the source of that gentle…

It sounded again.
Yet it seemed to come from behind him.

Shifting his seating, Henry studied the supporting wall. Its cool steel face arose: a facsimile of all others in the building. They were all a brushed steel, a waxing and curving architecture. He remembered marveling at his father’s side. Henry had amazed that his Father could navigate such mazes, back when he’d brought him to see the places where he worked. With him, each wall grew distinct. Now they remained the same. Cold, austere, and imposing, their sheer ambiguity washed with silence.

His face scrunched. Hands laid on the wall, its plated metal face chilling his little palms.
Then a third bell tolled.

He heard it again! Now he was certain. Within the wall, it chimed through to him. It echoed in a magical peal, as if traveling past him from beyond. Rushing to his feet then, he continued his sprint! Onward he ran, now to where chimes arose, increasingly from somewhere else. He furthered through the endless corridors, wherever its beckoning sang.

Until, for all its oddity… he stumbled upon a dead end.

He paused. How strange this seemed!

How mysterious it was, that these boundless hallways should suddenly halt in such a fashion. For here he faced a little alley, which ended no more than ten feet in depth. Its sidewalls seemed too narrow to feel at place in such a vast complex. Yet here it stood. Some queer and out of place alley, nook’ed itself perfectly beside the racing currents of towers passing him by.

Drawn by this vacuum, Henry passed through. Relief for quiet ambience flustered through each vein. And not unlike a vacuum, silence slid immediately around him. The cacophony of industry vanished in a resounding hush! Henry halted, shocked by the change. Turning about, his almond brown eyes laid a inquisitive glance back out of his hidden alley. The chatter of the hall continued, but now muffled. He was now within that distant place, wherefrom the bells of comfort sounded. He looked back, focused with a characteristic furrow, upon the inanimate and the unseen. The narrow quiet alley was plain, but for a single thing of notice at its end. Henry drew forward then, walking with soft steps toward this.

And with a sniff, sadness walked to the back of his mind.
At the end of the narrow hall, there was a single heathered square. Twas an air vent, he observed, not unlike they he’d seen scattered about the panels of his classroom ceilings. Its face, amid surrounding rivets, lay speckled with numerous airy perforations. He squinted as he attempted to study it further.

Tinges of disarray and confusion filled his mind.

For unlike the many air vents of his classroom ceilings, a vexing indefiniteness clung about these features. With those others of similar kind, he had only need to glance upon them for an instant in order to number their many punctures. This was often a source of amusement for him. A game he would play within his thoughts, involved identifying vents that held irregular counts from the even-numbered common ones.

So came his frustration.

For no matter how long he studied the vent, no definite number was made available to him. His mind seemed to sputter slightly at the sight. Each instant holes both existed and did not exist. Numbers ranging from zero to the infinite bounded about with conflicting yet coexisting conclusions!

Henry frowned and froze there for a moment.

His determination held against the frustrating object.

He began to lean in closer, but then turned back around. Sudden bouts of self-conscious found him again. Yet scanning the tangental corridor he saw no other soul had noticed him. He alone could hear the chime and find the alley. The adults passed him by. Beyond his newfound passage they continued their purposeful paces.

Thus did wonder overcome all exterior thought, and he returned to observe the vent. Leaning up closely he tried to peer in through its minute holes, to no avail. Twas only blackness that lay behind.

A feeling of quietude passed, from that dark beyond. It reckoned itself to him as a thing of beauty. Though it was also of the unknown, and therefore of terror. Indeed, it was this terribleness of the thing that, beyond his control, caused him to take numerous steps backward. As if entranced, he backed away from the vent. He drifted without knowing he’d done so, until exposed from his vacuous alley.

Like the shock of water thrown upon one whilst asleep, he startled from stupor!

One passing suit had rattled his solicitude! He let out a soft shout of surprise.

This slight exclamation was enough to uncover him.

“Henry! There you are!”

The mild Ms. Beaumont had acquired a suitable flush of anger to her tone. The special sounds of his own name broke through clearly, from the blurry din around him. Henry looked up spotting her as she quickly drew near. The tall lady gripped his wrist with a cruelty brought on by fierce compassion.

“Henry! Why have you run off like this? You’ve nearly scared me half to death, you have!”

Henry did not respond. Words were still with other pieces of his being, far and away where the terrible things were waiting.

“Come on, then,” Ms. Beaumont entreated, her voice dimming some. Warmth eased her features as she observed Henry’s reticence and tear-stained cheeks. These she wiped with her thumb gingerly, as she led him back the way he had run.
Through the crowded halls he again passed, now led rightly about the plane of adults; the shortcuts of youth no longer allotted to him.

Behind, and fading softly, a gentle bell called after him.
Chapter 2
A Place Among the Laughter

Henry was escorted from the lobby via Ms. Beaumont’s hand upon his shoulder and an elevator.

The hand remained there, comforting him. The elevator enveloped, carrying him.

Upon exiting the lift, they were greeted by two adults in gray uniform. Unlike the many below, these wore not suits but some single piece: befitting security officers or janitors. He could not tell, but presumed upon the former. These were yet likened unto those below in this: their faces remained aloft and blurred by distance.

What chasm lay like monuments about his bleary horizons.

Those peaks passed words to Ms. Beaumont, who responded in kind, before leading Henry’s party about these new halls. Henry wandered with them, somehow caught by the constant presence about his shoulder from drifting into thought completely. Instead he floundered. Buoyant about the places where his little rivers coursed beneath dark oaks above — he rushed. Barred about the depths where places of laughter filled the caverns below — he departed.

“Henry? Won’t you say, hello?”

Henry looked up to Ms. Beaumont’s lovely face. It wasn’t lovely as many would count loveliness; rather she would have been called plain. But to peer above and otherwise see only distant apparitions…her definition itself, much less her care, were things more beautiful to him than fairness.

She spoke as if in indication, and Henry grasped this. He looked toward where she faced for clarity. There stood an adult with a suit of white. He, like the escorts around them, towered: faceless as the rest of them. The two minds rustled through to remember. The Far Mind, where he had drifted paused a while, so that his Near Mind of this world could think.

Henry remembered in his near-mind, that thither from the upper hallways they had entered this office. That this man and Ms. Beaumont had conversed, and thereafter the man had spoken to Henry. All this had passed in an instant to him, wandering amid his limbic nescience. Yet that other mind, which began to entertain some adolescence, had observed this thing beyond his conscious thought. It now reminded him: of all recently passed whilst he meandered elsewhere.
Alas the words of this white-suited man had been lost to him. Passed by in amorphous sounds, they were lost to echo amid that persistent chasm. So Henry said nothing. His near-mind had been working furiously to accomplish a feat of conversation; indeed it had enough sense to perceive the potential rudeness should he reply with naught.

Rumbled assorted laughter fell like thunder in that distance where the man stood.

The effect of this was likened unto popping: so of the ears above the clouds, or when diving below the seas. Henry’s ears popped slightly at the sound, somewhere within his thoughts a line was breached. Indeed, before him he perceived the man in the suit to bend down. A knee was placed upon his rivers, and the boughs thereafter followed. Soon the whole of that white canopy had lowered into view; breaching the veil of distance. So entered his smiling face.

“Hello, young man,” he knelt to greet him. The words came to Henry as if untangling themselves from ambiguity with each syllable that sounded. “It is good to finally meet you.”

Henry studied the face carefully. Twas a new addition to his short list of recognition, a voice which spoke along the rivers where oaks rarely ventured to bend. The face was colored like his own: skin the tone of sand, olive and fair. Almond eyes likewise were kindred: narrowly pulled, with irises dark and thoughtful. They further shared the color of hair – dark – the blackest black imaginable. Ms. Beaumont’s blue eyes, flaxen tress, and pale skin grew in their disjunction.

The smallness of his in-between world had waxed slightly at this entrance. Henry could feel its fluid borders grow taut. Those echoes of this man’s former chuckle rustled amid these bases, and interlaced there. Henry stood between these two: a place among the laughter where the echelons of mirth had mingled.

“Hello,” Henry answered him.

The man smiled. He looked up from him to Ms. Beaumont, who stood beside. She knelt likewise beside him and smiled sweetly.

“Henry, this is Dr. Huo; he was a friend of your Father’s.”

Henry registered this.

“Remember that we talked about coming here, earlier? To get asked some questions? This is the man who would like to ask you some things. Would that be all right?”

Henry looked back to the man; the man met Henry’s gaze for a moment. Most adults hadn’t often done this, even Ms. Beaumont. Henry felt his eyes skirt aside from the contact, to the man’s cheekbones, or his chin. Yet this was only to think about things. A person’s eyes, Henry felt, could overwhelm you if you looked too long. A great many things swirled there. Still, the appeal of Dr. Huo’s reached out. The effect of this intrigued him. Thus, not yet spurned enough to be daunted, Henry nodded to his mistress. Although the weight of this concession was lost to him.

Indeed, for his mistress acknowledged this consent with a rub about his back…and then she stood. Passing up beyond the heights, she departed the room altogether along with the other gray adults. Henry made as to object! The realization that such an interview should leave him without her struck him with a start.
“She’ll be right outside the door, Henry, not to worry.” Dr. Huo’s warm voice attempted to ease his fright.

But beyond the door was worlds away.

Henry felt tears begin to spring up from underneath him. His far-mind knew, it’d not forgotten, of all the many worlds that lay between him and that doorway. What fearsome distance had sundered them, whilst few meters had been taken up! What’s more, the rising clamour had stirred up from his rising panic. It only grew in its alarm by this man’s vocal intrusion.

It’s strange: the odd confluence of independence and reliance in him. Without a care, children may run freely alone about their imaginations right into peril… Yet at other turns, they become frightened at the lack of what supervision they’d spurned not hours before. But this is no true mystery. For these are in different worlds! A child is Lord and Master of what realms imagination bears them to. They are only helpless in this world, the near-mind, where adults walk above them.

Henry’s nearer mind had grown silent. It hadn’t strength enough to counter this swelling fear. For it was fearful itself, of all those unknown products of youthful wailing.

Yet neither mind had need of worry.

A hand like that of Ms. Beaumont’s arrested his waxing hysterics. Henry choked his coming cries within and looked thereto. Dr. Huo had traversed the office to his desk about the corner, and now returned. In his hand, he held out a frame — one he now held out to Henry.

Henry took this.

Curiosity overcame fear once more, as he wiped his tears about his sleeve. His eyes cleared to better perceive, his thoughts to better understand.

Floods of recognition sprung like firecrackers bursting bright!

A thousands hazy memories quickened, which had long ventured into distance. What face had despairingly departed, that he’d longed and yearned for, it hastened abruptly into view!

There within the frame stood three men.

One he knew not.

One, he knew now, was Dr. Huo.

One, he knew with certainty, was his father.

Elated at this arrival, all remnants of fear left him at last. He scarcely noticed Dr. Huo leading him from the entry toward the desk. He seated him there on one of two chairs that flanked it. Henry, though, was captivated by that face. For he had been called back from the edge. Those fleeting senses of comfort returned with great admission. Indeed, then all consuming sadness gave way to overwhelming relief. For he had glimpsed the void of absence, grown where recollection once stood! Now he had made his odyssean homecoming, and felt its sun warming him.

“Henry, I’d like to talk to you about Jon: your father.”

Henry nodded. His eyes did not leave the frame.
Dr. Huo took this consent and eased himself, resting his palms upon the desk; he sat with a lean upon its edge. His glasses were replaced about his nose, and his features took on a narrowed look: one becoming of focus.

“Jon and I had been friends for quite some time—do you have any friends, Henry?”

Henry nodded a second time. Sometimes Mrs. Beaumont took him to school grounds, and he’d meet other kids to play with.

“Well, your father was my friend,” Dr. Huo reiterated. His eyes studied Henry closely. “Do you and your friends ever play together?”

Henry nodded a third time.

“Hmm. The work your Father and I did here, was like our playing together, Henry. We would build things, and make things grow! We would imagine things, and make them become real …how old are you now?”

At this Henry finally tore his gaze from the frame, and set it in his lap.

It now took two hands to make the declaration.

“Seven, indeed,” Dr. Huo echoed the silent account thoughtfully. “It seems your father and I have been friends more that twice your age! Nearly twenty years at that.” He enunciated this point by flashing both his own hands fully twice, to Henry’s astonishment. Dr. Huo smiled at this. “Yes…a long time.” This concluding statement seemed, however, to sober his previous animation.

Henry observed this and began to wonder if Dr. Huo was sad—as he himself was sad. He looked at the man again. He did not seem sad. The child’s small brow scrunched slightly in thought. Or maybe he did seem so; this particular face was complex to him.

“I’d like to ask you something, Henry.” The doctor leaned forward slightly toward him. “I’d wanted to see if you would like for us to be friends, you and I, just like I and your father were.”

Henry did not respond, but continued to watch the man closely as he spoke.

Something was there he did not understand.

“And I would like to talk with you about your father. Because he was friend to both of us.”

“Okay,” answered Henry at last to this final point.

“Good,” smiled Dr. Huo.

The doctor moved from the desk’s edge, seating himself in the chair that mirrored Henry’s. This chair he turned about to face Henry more directly. His elbows hunched forward upon his knees.

“Henry, I’d like to have you think back a bit…to anything your father may have said to you before he passed. Did he say anything special to you? Anything that you can remember that may have sounded strange?”

Henry shook his head. Dr. Huo’s face bore mild displeasure.

“I know this may seem like an odd question to you. I am sure your father said a great deal many things to you all the time! And it may seem strange that I ask this—doesn’t it?”

Henry agreed.
“Yeah…” the doctor sighed, “I can see that.” He paused for a moment of thought, rubbing his brow. He restarted. “Henry… Your father and I have been working together on something—building something together. Do you like to build things?”

Henry loved puzzles. He loved adventure stories of Knights who solved riddles and challenges. He told Dr. Huo so.

“Ah. Well, your father and I were building a puzzle of sorts together. And, you see, he and I each had pieces of the puzzle that the other did not. This means we had to work together to build it. You know that if you don’t have all the pieces that the puzzle can’t be completed. It can’t be finished, right? Do you know what I mean?”

Henry knew this.

“Before he died, we were working on a very particular puzzle. It had a great deal many pieces we’ve spent all those years finding and building together! But he has left us before we could finish. So you see, I thought that, since both you and I were friends with your father, there may be a chance he gave some of these pieces to you before he died. This way, you could actually help him finish that puzzle, the one he and I were building together. You could give me those pieces, and I complete it. Does that make sense?”

It did.

“So...if you remember anything like that, you would tell me, wouldn’t you? Wouldn’t you like for me to be able to finish the puzzle your father and I have been working on for such a long time? Your father would like that, wouldn’t you think?”

Henry thought so. But another of his minds was less certain. That far-mind thought little of this puzzle, and more so of his father. But he nodded to Dr. Huo all the same.

“All right then! That’s all for now, Henry. I’ll let you think about all of that; maybe some things will come to mind. Would you come to visit again soon, so that we can talk some more?”

Henry signaled agreement to this, as his eyes fell back to the picture frame.

“You may keep that...if you wish,” said the doctor.

Hope flooded Henry’s thoughts; the frame was drawn close to his gaze.

Beyond that frame all things took place.

Within it all things stood still.

Dr. Huo nodded and left to fetch Ms. Beaumont…

Ms. Beaumont fetched Henry from the office, and then from the industry’s building…

Lastly, Henry was returned to his home under her care…

All of this passed apart from his awareness.

For he dove within that frame, and time itself now passed beyond all recognition.
His hands clutched upon his ears.

The playroom lay scattered about with various colorful items. Each toy had their particular means. By these children were intended to make merry with them. Yet Henry often found himself neglecting these intentions.

Instead he would more enjoy the repetitive and simple task of removing all the items from their bins and drawers...before carefully reordering thither. Something about the room unsettled him. It always had. He could not know why this was; none of his therapists aided him with helpful diagnoses. He knew only this: that cognitive pressure was temporarily relieved by ordering and reordering.

In and out of bins he placed them — in and out of drawers.

Perhaps it was due to the great variance of colors, which all those totems of childhood bore? Most children may be excited by the brilliance. Henry thought it dizzying. This idea was nearest to the truth. Something in his soul knew it as paramount: the divers array should not be either organized nor in chaos. But somewhere in between it balanced. Somewhere in between, he found himself at home with the many colors of his world around him.

In and out of bins he took them — in and out of drawers.

He had just begun the task of emptying all of these once more. A sudden and perplexing weariness overtook him. A pressure, unrelieved by the task, gathered between his eyes. Something of that near-mind had awoken. Real world awareness made its dreadful realization: of all the times this room had been remade, there had been no resolution. Of all the attempted harmonies, there held this same familiar bleary dissonance.

In and out of bins he placed them — in and out.

He sat amid the mess, centered upon the sea-foam mat that centered on the wooden floor. An abrupt change in mental temperature arose! It flooded the spaces between his thoughts. Filling him with that raucous clatter, he held his temples bitterly. The clutter had seemed to press within him, in his very thoughts. A constricting pain clutched his skull.

He wasn’t certain, though he must have begun shouting aloud.
For Ms. Beaumont came rushing in.
These wails must have further been quite alarming, for she came to him full of concern.
From her came comforts questing for his remittal. She asked if he wanted food; Henry said no. She asked if he would like to come downstairs and watch telly; He said no, again. She asked what he did wish for; Henry wasn’t sure. The pain between his ears had settled some, but ever the ringing continued.

“Oh Henry, I’m not sure what to do with you,” she said with a note of surrender. Henry wished she’d not be sad because of him. He told her as much. “Oh no, love,” Ms. Beaumont assured, “it’s all alright. I know. I’ll make us a cuppa——how does that sound?” she put hopefully.

“Oh,” Henry softly rejoined.

His mistress stood then. And Henry though he saw her sniffle slightly afore her ensuing departure. He looked back to the room.

Its clutterous mounds seemed to have grown. And a sudden urge broke out from him.

In a hurried flash of bitterness, Henry darted from the ground. On toward the nearest mound he grasped the nearest object. And fleeing next out to the hallway, he tossed it there upon the floor. A shout of elation broke out from him. He rushed back to the room with glee.

Frenzied beyond cogent counsel, he hastened this way, until a whole of half the room was emptied of its playthings. Dashing to and fro with baffling urgency, he rushed. Tearing at the mountains of mounting ruckus, he wrecked. All the careful arts he’d practiced with his gentle habits of unloading were abandoned! These were lost unto what agitation boiled over in his thoughts…

And yet, from where the fever roiled, came some newfound euphoria.

The more he dug, the more he bore, the further departed his inner turmoil! Indeed, up within its vacancy grew some ecstasy born from wildness. The more he pillaged that playroom of its contents, the less he felt burdened. Spaces in his thoughts were cleared, even as the room was cleared.

So with a sudden bout of clarity he paused.

One final hill stood about the furthest corner. By far it was the tallest, by far the most imposing.

But his thoughts were clearing now, and he looked at it more jadedly.

Until, that is…

A chime resounded from deep within its breadth.
Henry gawked.

A second chime rang out.
He tenderly made toward the mound. Thoughts raced quickly within.

It was the same: the same sound as before! How could that be? But so it was. Even more clearly than the former symphony of sounds, it rang. So he began to excavate.

Often he’d cleaned from the outermost layer of items working inward, shaving off layer upon layer of toys. Yet for reasons unknown to him, he pressed directly in! He dove. The small boy went tunneling, straight into the heart of the mountain of childish diversions.

Something, in the mystery of its monolithic imposition, stirred within his more ancient mind of youth. If the near-mind had spurned his rituals, the far-mind saw something new through them! That
mystery, hidden in the tunnels imagination chiseled for him, began to rise. Gentle at first, its winds quickened under his wings. They came, rustling through his lost feathers. They came, bearing memories of chilling rushes of cloud. As if in another life, elated flights of old returned to him. It recollected from long before, whence the soul flew through the stormclouds of the cosmos. So expanded the untold depths of the world within the mountain!

And Henry pressed on tunneling.

Hours, he felt, to plunge those lengthy caverns.

Their catacombs waxed, as he crawled within them. Eventually he grew lost. He paused there. Cradled by a curving nook, he nested there: amid a corridor of toys. There he caught his breath. He was unsure how long he been within the mound. It felt like ages. Though it could not have been as long as it seemed. For Ms. Beaumont ought have returned with tea by such a time. What forgotten hours were funneled in between the minutes of reality, to which only the little makers may enjoy! To enjoy the quiet echoes of their undiscovered crypts, beneath forgotten imaginary earths: they knead out the vaults of hidden time.

Henry’s near-mind had not a chance to entertain this incongruity, however.

For the diversion, which followed on its heels, quickened wheels in the farther thoughts!

A third time…the bells of the distance rang.

It was so close.

Henry followed his ear. Careful to maintain a sense of orientation this time, he tunneled with renewed purpose. Determination filled his courage. He was not to be distracted by the many undiscovered depths, but to pursue that singular note! It was so much closer than before. He pressed further inward.

And then he stopped.

His heart quickened.

Before him lay the wall of his playroom. He’d reached the boundary of this in-between world he discovered. Yet this was not what startled him. For upon this wall, which portion lay exposed before his tunnel’s end, was a heathered, gray, square vent. It was the same one as before: the same he’d found in the narrow alley of the industry’s building.

He stared in disbelief, trying to make sense of its appearance.

To have found so strange a thing at the first, was odd. It was not expected to have been found at all. But here… Upon this wall he’d known since infancy, how had it reappeared?

Just as before, he felt a chilling sense of vacancy rush out to him from beyond its panes. What simple steel rivets, and punched circular holes filled its face… What forlorn and mysterious dread, lurked behind its simplistic conciliatory pretense!

Unlike before, however, he could not retreat back into safety.

For turning back around, there his tunnel had collapsed. He was now stuck between the panel, its soundless voiceless terror, and the concave wall of playthings. A flare of fright whirled about his flesh; a sense of unchangeable fate met him also. Though, it came not with hopelessness.
Instead, the fear grew complimented by strange notions. Henry could only have related these vague tingling sensations to something of a hug. Some embrace of security and warmth here, between the torrential waves, now held him. He could not explain this, but that to be lost for fear a moment, was a thing greatly encouraging.

So he reached out.

His small hand extended toward the oddly distant steel plate. Its surface seemed to vibrate. Yet not in a loud or obvious way, as would juddering things typically attract the eye. This seemed to shudder off all inclination of attention, as if it wished all to look away, for all to flee it. It quivered as if in and out of sight, in and out of attention, in and out of sound and thought and firm reality.

So, for all the wonder such a thing as follows ought to inspire, it came rather as expected to Henry, given the oddity that already was this mysterious metal plate.

His hand reached out to touch its surface, to meet only empty space.

No sooner had his arm straightened fully, than did the metal plate cease to exist! In its place was only a void. A blackness reached far and endlessly onward. Yet rather than withdraw his hand in panic, Henry was frozen in terror.

He could not for the life of him, recollect the square vanishing. It simply had not existed. It both had existed and not existed all at once. So much so, in fact, Henry perceived its disappearance to feel normal. It was normal for imaginary things to not exist. To not exist, is an expected reality concerning all things imaginary, thus it made sense that this state – the plate’s absence – seemed less odd to the senses than the previous state of its appearance and ensuing mystery.

Yet much of this was not thought of by Henry. Instead he felt only a rush of realization: something uncanny and out of place was at work. There was something beyond the plan imaginary. Mostly, Henry had observed how near his hand was to this throat of darkness. Before this ravenous beast, he knew his ability to withdraw would likely indict closure of its jaws at a rate surpassing his own speed of retraction.

The chilling state of affairs left him immobilized.

Yet that sense of warm embrace encircled him a second time. It, like a persistent entreatment toward solace, recaptured his calm amid the terror. So his stillness of fear gave way to stillness of peace, as he furrowed his brow upon the dark beyond. Wonder began to pour in upon his thoughts. He could feel its currents pass. They ribboned through the seamless borders of warm and cooler waters, where his fingers reached. So Henry did the only thing he felt capable.

He crawled forward.
Blackness enveloped his vision. On all sides — darkness. Yet it was a cool sort of blackness. Not chilling as the witching hours, but refreshing and gentle. It was rather like the shade about the eaves of some great willow, which fell between the silver lights of cloudy mid-October skies… but for the darkness. Oddly, for how thin the veil seemed, it was blinding enough to prevent any sight around him.

He looked down.

Henry could see his hands. In fact he could discern his entire form. Thus, he knew intuitively not to be in darkness…but surrounded by an inexplicable and amorphous blackness. Light caught not a thing but himself within his vision. He looked around. No point of reference seemed to exist. It was such that he began to doubt he was even actually turning about… For no thing but him seemed in motion during his inspection.

That is, until he spotted behind him — if indeed it had been behind him — another square.

It would be false to say that he was shocked by this, however. For he had almost been able to know it lay there, long before he turned to discover it. Indeed, he felt it more correct that he had been re-discovering a thing that long was known.

Alas, the square did not seem plain, as it had before. Indeed it looked a thing entirely different. Yet his thoughts within him immediately recognized it for what it was. It was what thing he’d twice found, and since had brought him hither! And yet it seemed to appear less simple a thing now than it had before.

Apart for its shape holding roughly the same rectangular outline, its face now held no plain steel rivets and punched holes…but ornate frames of gold and ivory. These bordered a central crystalline translucence.

Wonder marked this sight.

He could have noticed how it oddly hung upon nothing but blackness, or how it seemed strangely familiar despite its strangeness. Instead, he held only wonder.

Nearing it, he did discern that he felt much more comfortable with this image, than with the former vent-like appearance. There was some inherent rightness about this form, which the other had
unsettlingly lacked. Amid those extravagant mountings, its face seemed to shimmer with prismatic hues; a great many colors greeted him from beyond its opal window.

He crawled toward it.

It occurred to him as he did this, that he may very well have stood to his feet. There was no apparent restriction to doing so, but for the subtle sense of claustrophobia which filled the place. Thus he remained on all fours.

So near, he further perceived it to have no definite depth. Reason would have it hanging about thin air, in that vacuous black space. Yet other senses informed him that the endless blackness ended where the window hung. Within his soul he knew that no thing could possibly lay beyond its face. Furthermore, he felt that to round its ghostly levitation, would be as impossible a task as to number the smiles contained by the color orange.

Henry respected this inclination, and did not attempt to circumnavigate its edge.

Instead he sat cross-legged, bringing the center of its pane level with his eyes. He studied its angled and florid face. It’s like a window, he thought. For it did not have hinges as would a cupboard door, which is similar in size, nor did it have and rivets and screws as to hold it in place like any other removable plate ought have.

But looking closely upon the uneven luster of its surface, he began to identify the appearance of objects! Indeed, the further he peered upon the milky, glassy surface, the further did images arrive.

Something, some room, seemed to lay beyond it. He truly felt to be peering upon the refracted echo of some small study. Its definitions were blear, given the imperfections of the lens by which he viewed them. Nonetheless, he could discern a desk, a tall bookcase, and a number of other assorted objects laid about a dresser top and nightstand. Intrigued by this, and long having forgotten caution, he touched the crystal center of the gold-brimmed window.

At once, the image beyond the pane faded to black nothingness…

A warmth of lights gathered around him.

Looking away from the window, he now saw around him the very study he had once observed! The blackness was gone. Warmth replaced this, and what small collection of objects he’d thought to have espied appeared around him. He turned from the window and, feeling the sense of closure release him, stood to his feet.

The room was coated by wood the color of hazelnut. Its eclectic assortment of furniture, nigh unanimously employed to station books and papers upon them, all seemed to vary slightly in the hue of their oaks. This gave the whole thing an enlivened air. Thus, for all the smallness and nearly incurvate sense the little studio held, this sense of life held about its fringes filling Henry with a warmth and sensations of welcome.

It occurred to him later, that this feeling was very much like the prior embrace of the blackness. The tones of the blackness – holding both comfort and mystery – were indeed an seamless amalgamation of both the playroom and this study. They poured into a single mixture.

But in this moment, Henry was more engaged upon an unshakable sense of familiarity.
Something in the tones of this room, as had the window, struck him not within simple wonder…but within his memory. He knew this with a fierce determination. Propelled by this, he moved forward to explore the small room.

Many of the shelves lay out of his reach. Stacks of yellowed paper stuck out from between old books on each open surface. His eyes fell to the nightstand; it stood by the arm of one small tweed sofa against the wall. To this he ventured.

Upon the top was a single book. He picked this up and sat down with it upon the sofa, studying the title upon its surface. It's binding was a bit worn, and the navy coloring upon its face was weary about its edges: some manilla material showing where the fabric was torn. The title itself was handwritten; a single blank space occupied the center-top spot on the front with a single line, as if to encourage such an inscription.

He began to sound out the words he found there.

R - E - S - E - A - R - C - H.

That one was rough. He hadn’t a clue to its meaning.

J - O - U - R - N - A - L.

He actually knew that one, surprisingly enough. Having found it elsewhere and asked Ms. Beaumont for its meaning, he recognized its shape after a few moments. Yet, unable to prevail any further upon the journal, he set it aside, and looked again to the nightstand. Like all the pieces it was wooden, but unlike the rest it was the least daunting to approach. Thus, he made to open the top drawer.

He was surprised to find it nearly empty…but for a single piece of paper.

Yet what the paper held upon it, was truly startling.

It was a drawing of crayon.

The image held two main figures. One was a man. The man had a thin beard, and wore a striped shirt and a green tie. He was holding the hand of a boy. The boy stood beside the man, smiling, and had dark hair and eyes, just like the man beside him had.

The image was crude, and not entirely clear. Indeed, if another had found it, these observations may not have been as apparent as they were to Henry. But Henry knew them instantly…for the drawing was in his own hand.

Indeed his name lay written, letters ranging in their sizes, filling the space above their heads!

He gawked at this. He had given this to his father long ago! How had it gotten here? Where was this place? What was his drawing doing in a drawer in a mysterious room behind a mystical window?

Dumbfounded, he left the drawing in the open drawer, and stepped backward slightly.

His foot met some object on the floor, which upon pressing it surface, produced a soft hissing snap from the far side of the room.

Hidden there, mostly covered by a curtain of sorts, was an old telly. Henry observed this, as its static began to fizzle and whisper; its flickering dots of light popped through the material laid over its screen. He moved his foot and retrieved the remote, which he had stepped on. Curious, he walked
toward the screen and gave the curtain a slight tug. It fell softly into a heap. Henry began to search about
the old device for an off switch…but as by fate his eye caught upon a second oddity.

There…nested beside the screen of the telly…was a collection of videotapes.

This was nothing new to him, of course, for he had watched his share of films. These tapes were
stacked about the space between the screen and the bordering furniture. Yet of all the many there, one in
particular stood out. This videotape had a white rectangular sticker upon its spine, on which was written a
single word.

HENRY.

If the appearance of the drawing had baffled him, this thing flew about within his thoughts like a
storm of curiosity. Whatever thing was at work here, reason had firmly concluded within him a sense of
purpose and intent, rather than randomness to have been at work. For now two signs about this place
were tied directly to him. Eagerly, Henry dropped the remote from where he held it limp at his side and
retrieved the tape. Careful to inject it with the proper side up – Ms. Beaumont had need to repurchase a
great many of his favorite films because of his overhasty misplacements – he slipped its plastic form into
the slot, and climbed upon the nearby desk chair.

Both his minds rushed within him. Together they flew in a flood of shared interest.

The amber light of the study dimmed.

Its entire existence seemed to wane unto this single point of focus, where the fizzle of telly static
abated, and the fluttering lines of the videotape began to rush across the screen.

These lines ceased their zipping, and in their place became a view of another small study. Henry’s brow furrowed at this. He recognized this other room, and his recognition suddenly made sense
of all the familiarity he felt toward this current one in which he sat.

The library-esque office on the telly’s screen was his father’s own home office.

Henry had only been permitted into this study, which lay beside his father’s bedroom, but twice. Yet its appearance on the screen had suddenly re-awoken his memory of it. The shocking thing, however,
came from a second realization; this study, in which he now sat, seemed a condensed imitation of his
father’s! Indeed, the defined corners and spacial regularity the actual office possessed seemed to have
been warped into some odd curvature of feeling. Its edges were sanded smooth, as for the comfort of
holding, if for lack of definition. What remained…was this room. For it held all the feelings and
memories of that actual study of his father’s, while lacking that cold distance which reality typically bore.
It was a place born of mood, perfectly filled with the tones and indefinite essence of the real thing, and of
his Father as well.

So strange was this impression, that it seemed to Henry as if the room in which he now sat was a
dream. Indeed the more he wondered upon this, the more he felt so. It was like a dream, in which his
mind had constructed a study like that of his fathers. For pieces beyond his recollection were missing and
the pieces that were left had mingled together into this abridged representation. Things that were
forgotten vanished, and the things that were remembered blurred together at their borders.

Was he indeed dreaming?
Henry felt this thought pass through him. It could be so…

And yet…there stood the telly showing him what things he had forgotten. What things were beyond his memory. The impression of realness crept around him like a slight chill. No, this could not be a dream, he knew. For too many things felt beyond his control, and too many things seemed a revelation, even for all those which he seemed to have expected. Confirming this suspicion, a figure entered the view of the screen and sat within its frame.

He entered, looking directly out to Henry who watched in fascination.

It was his father.

“Hello, Henry,” said he.

Henry felt tears blind him slightly. Immediately, the sound of that voice filled his throat with an aching sorrow. He hastily knuckled the tears away, desirous not to miss an instant of this conversation.


“How, I know you must have a lot of questions. But I need to to listen very carefully to me.”

His father paused, as if looking carefully right at him.

“Okay,” answered Henry, instinctively sitting up straight. His father would likely have told him to do so were he actually here.

“If you are watching this, then you have found a very special place. One that I hoped you would find. I’ve been working a very long time, on a very special project. It’s a gift for you, son. I wanted you to have this gift, so that you could be free from anything that was to come after.”

His father paused. Henry watched his face with the utmost intensity.

Those dark eyes focused intently back at him through the screen. The thin brow was darkened by the weight of heavy thoughts, his cheeks pursed from a fierce focus. It was that subtle ferocity which he remembered most. His father was not a cruel man, nor one easily angered. His temper had been even, and though his outward disposition seemed to convey propensity toward displeasure, it was not so. When Henry drew near, his father’s features never ceased to cheer and warm to mirth! But Henry had also watched the man when he thought himself alone. This was the face he saw now. It was one darkened by determination and quiet strength. It was a look of focus. Such focus that his face turned shades of what could appear a bitter intensity. But in reality, Henry knew his father’s face bore no adversity, but only the cold passion of a hunter. Those cheerless eyes filled Henry’s heart with a chilling form of reverence.

His father who laughed and loved him, let teem his heart with affection.

His eyes would grow warm, with what affection the sun held for its gardens.

But this father, who thought and contemplated alone, let teem his soul with awful aspiration.

His gaze was like a tiger, peering past, filling him all sorts of longing after similar mights.

Henry saw both these watching him together.

His father looked toward him in both love and with a fierce concentration.

Henry knew within him, even if he could not find the words, what brought about this amalgamation. This moment, before Henry’s time, his Father was approaching him as he would a fellow man. All love was present, so also was all unfiltered honesty. This sensation swelled within Henry’s
chest. He felt every inch the knight of his storybooks, called, uplifted, arisen, encouraged. All of it passed over him in an instant.

And he grew a little bit, by this quickening of his soul.

“Now,” his father continued, breathing deeply. “Stand up, son, and walk over to the window.”

Henry nodded and immediately obeyed.

Getting up to his feet off the tall desk chair, the lights of the study warmed again. They set illuminating a circular riveted window, like that of an airplane or submarine, on the wall above the tweed sofa. Henry made for this, climbing upon the scratchy fulvous surface of the couch to lean up against the wall. The fibers of the tweed pricked his hands as he gripped the back for support. Oddly enough, it was these tactile pricks which finally evinced him of their reality.

“Look through, Henry,” called his Father from the telly.

Henry did.

Outside the porthole was an ocean: the depths of the dark main.

All around in every direction lay the deep swirling navy abyss of the sea. A shoal of silver-bellied fish perturbed the distance, amid a confluence of midnight and waxing cyan. There above, Henry could see the beginnings of light trickle from the surface. These beams caught the scales of the passing schools and illuminated them with knives of glitter. He was deep beneath the water. Its billowy inflections made a constant motion increasing the impression of its depths, endlessly through the distant boundless aquatic fields.

“I know you loved our trips to the aquarium,” called his father across the room. Henry nodded his response, transfixed by the sea creatures beyond, which he indeed loved. “I thought this would be a good place for you then,” his father sighed.

Henry heard a note of sadness in his voice, and turned back to the telly with concern. But rather than return to the desk chair, he sat right upon the sofa, and looked over to his father across the small room.

“I wanted this place to be a safe place for you, somewhere you could escape to if need be. You will find many places you will be able to travel to…but this place I have made especially for you, as a home for you.”

Henry gave his father a thoughtfully furrowed look.

His father laughed. It was almost as if he could see Henry’s contemplative glance.

“Oh, son… I wish I could be there to tell you all about this in person. But if you are watching this, it means that I’m gone and you’ll have to go ahead alone. I am so sorry… But I have the greatest of faith in you! You are so special, Henry! So unique. I know that many people have said this to you at school and other places, but I mean this in a very different way. No one knows the half of it, but I.

“A few years before you were born…I discovered something. I discovered places like these. You see, Infinite Industries had placed me on a team for the very purpose of finding passageways to these places. And I had been working for some time to do just that. But less than a year before you were born, I discovered the terrifying truth to why they were looking for these portable worlds.”
Henry felt his father’s sadness echo with him. He left the sofa behind and neared the screen, his father’s creased face held inches beyond his own — millions and millions of miles.

“I knew then, that I could not let Infinite find them. So I kept my discovery hidden…inside you. I placed all my secrets inside you, within your mind. You hold all the answers they are after. If they discover this, they will come after you. I feel they have already come after me by the time you watch this…and if I am gone…that is why. If they get a hold of you, they may be able to extract what I have placed within you and complete what engine they wish to build. This makes you a target for them…but it’s also only way to ensure your safety. For there is no one left in the whole world I can trust but you. And should I place my secrets elsewhere, they would find them, you would certainly meet an even worse fate.

“The only way to protect you was to place their prize within your very mind. Because it may operate as your means of escape! I know all of this may be confusing…and I’m so sorry to not say all of this in person. Do you hear me, son? Stay safe. If you are ever in danger, come here — you will be protected. Do not trust anyone at Infinite, where I worked. Don’t trust anyone at all. The world is dying, Henry, so leave it behind. Go out and find the beautiful places you have always dreamed of. Be that noble Knight, just like the stories we read together! And maybe, when you’re ready, make some of your own.”

His father smiled at him.

Henry smiled back. He lifted his hand and touched the screen.

“Good bye, son.”

“Bye…” echoed Henry.

And the world around him withdrew in a flash of color, with a whirl of ringing windchimes.
Ms. Beaumont’s call gathered his attention. Henry poked his head out from the mountain of toys.

“There you are,” said she with relief. “Come now, the tea is ready.” She extended her hand to him. Henry took it and brought himself to his feet; his mistress led him from the playroom. “What a mess you’ve made!” She sweetly exclaimed, taking in the hallway as they passed by toward the stairs. Henry nodded. He had forgotten about his flurry of excavation. All would have to be put back. He dreaded that task, given the upheaval he had created.

Yet this thought was forgotten as they downed the stairs. It drifted out of thought even as the floor above him passed away and they descended.

He sat himself at the wooden table in the parlour, watching the pattering drizzle deck the windows with their fluid mosaic veil. The entire outward wall was window, letting the downpour accentuate its expanse across the surrounding dell and woodlands. The pines’ virecent rafters swayed with charcoal tones of sage. The windy rains pressed upon them silently beyond. The warmth of the tea against his hands withdrew his gaze; he looked back from the window as Ms. Beaumont sat beside him.

She closed her eyes as she took a sip, cupping the china between her palms. Henry returned to the windblown scenery. His tea remained upon the table between his hands.

But his mind wandered with all the waters rushing to and fro.

Without came the storm, and within it also stilled him.

Thoughts of all that happened filled his mind. He knew within himself that he should be thinking more intentionally on what his Father had told him. But his mind did not want to just then. Instead a wide view of contemplation saturated his thoughts. Withdrawn inside him like a panorama, he watched it all spin together. Like echoes of all that was said from that screen in the secret hidden room, drifting before him all at once, though in silence. Like the dancing treetops they were filled with stormy motion, but silent beyond the confines of his parlour.

He heard Ms. Beaumont sniffle beside him.

He looked back to her with concern, and instinctively placed a hand on her arm. He asked her what the matter was, and she shook her head, trying to smile though freckled with tears.
“Oh, just you, just then,” she answered him. “You reminded me of your Father a tad. Those thoughtful eyes of yours… It’s such a pity you…” and then she stopped again, bringing her hand to her lips, as to restrain a bout of agony. She closed her eyes.

A question formed in Henry’s mind, but he hadn’t the chance to ask it of her.

For his Father’s voice rang out clearly within his mind.

Don’t trust anyone at all.

Henry quickly withdrew his hand from Ms. Beaumont’s arm as a chill passed through him.

The voice had come to him, unlike any memory he’d ever had. Indeed the sound had come clearly within his hearing — but not as words. The sound was that of a chime. The same chime which had twice heralded his finding of the mystic window. Only this time, the chime seemed to present itself intelligibly. All along it was some unknown tongue. But now could perceive its meaning. The knells translated themselves within his mind; he heard the bell ring around him, but within he knew that words were spoken.

She opened her eyes and looked to him. He removed his hand. A question formed in her eyes now. Henry avoided her glance and looked away. A slight fear gathered around him. It seemed localized about the small of his back — against the back of his skull, pressing him for comfort.

But she likewise hadn’t the chance to pose her question, for then her mobile rang from across the room. Its digital tones rattled with a queer starkness against Henry’s waxing discomfort. He kept his eyes down as she stood to retrieve it. Each footfall of her heeled boots clapped with a hurtful resonance as she walked.

“Yes?” she answered the caller. Then her eyes fell upon Henry. “Yes. He is with me.”

Henry looked up at this, meeting her gaze directly. Suddenly, all verdurous heights of the adults sank, the highest boughs breached the running rivers under them. He felt not only understanding but a sense of remorse gather him. For in her eyes he saw what he formerly knew only as an indefinite sadness transform into a more distinct flavor.

It was regret.

“Yes, sir. We’ll be right there.”

Henry breathed deeply as she ended the call.

Gaseous disinfectant glazed the outside of their black SUV. The abrasive jets washed over everything, eradicate any trace of the poisonous air that filled the outside world. Suds formed and made their trek downward against the panes; Henry watched them race to the bottom. The more charismatic pilgrims gathered around them allies to their cause. By these they gained the weight to pull ahead. Stronger together, they made the great descent, passing by or annexing the less fortunate smaller streams.

And in the end, all departed. Some first and others later…but all descended to the end. In the end, all were blown away by the coming gusts of wind, which bathed the vehicle with a final and resounding gale.
The lights about the walls signaled a conclusion, and Ms. Beaumont drove them from the loading chamber. A long arching glass tunnel led them from the outskirts of the great industrial estate toward its fell and central imposition. Its reflective surface shimmered like a sword amid the furious winds that ever raged.

He could see it, tall against the darkened sky. It arose, that Tower where his father had worked. Once he had loved to watch it grow, there in the distance. The curves of the glass tunnel afforded a sweeping view, before weaving near and beneath its heights. Now it gave foreboding dread. Like a shark encircling, it watched. The curving glass was no longer such a pleasant foretaste, no such tour increasing the excitement. Now he made about its length like a circumspection of his soul. Around they moved, as if around a drain wherein the throat of hunger opened. For the curves of the tunnel drew near, and the Tower passed above him! Over and around him it swallowed. They had offered themselves to it.

It was a nameless and cold dispassionate air, which surrounded Henry then. For indeed, he did not know any particulars of his danger, but for the words of his father urging safety…and the echo of its truth amid the questions those near him had lifted. So full of interest and fright, a sadness also filled him. For by his youth, he knew no answers would ever come to reason. Only in the near-mind, the adolescent insurgent, could any contemplation form to address the mounting uncertainty… But he did not wish to travel there.

As in a dream, Henry followed his mistress from the car.

As before they entered the grand expansive lobby.

Only this time it was devoid of passing statues.

The lobby was emptied of its usual bustle, and replaced with an eerie solitude. It occurred to Henry then, that it was the weekend. He knew that he may be relieved from schooling in the same manner as some adults are their work. He also knew that to be at an empty school, as he often had for his tutoring sessions and special afternoon classes, was not a pleasant thing. Something in the vacuum ate away at cheerful dispositions. It was a thing of stillness and sobriety.

It was a thing out of place.

Strange — that a vacuum in nature filled the soul with delight, and the lack of persons there may be a thing of joy. But here, amid the coming tides of silence where the phantoms walked, a thing truly ghostly gained a gripping hold within the seat of fear.

Henry felt this chasm chasten all resolve within.

He’d little boldness to begin with. What mild anticipation, born from desperation and arisen on the car ride, now fled from him. For since departing, Mrs. Beaumont hadn’t said two words to him — a thing uncommon for her. All their car rides, as far back as he could remember, were full of games, or else her quiet humming songs. Such terseness of present further fostered what thoughts had grown since the warning chimed; she could not be trusted.

No one could be.

Gripped so by the notion, flares of hysteria made oscillations about his heart with increasing frequency. He was alone. If not even she was to be trusted, whom he thought had loved him, what
The fear he felt now, must have been common with what his Father held, when speaking from the videotape. The notion that there were none to trust, that one was alone, such thoughts sober a person. Yet, this connection was a similarity, he realized, between he and his Father.

They were now the same.

Together they were surrounded. Together they were afraid. Together they faced a rising terror that turned them toward each other. For in his fear Henry thought of his Father… And in his Father’s fear, he’d turned his thoughts to Henry.

And that thought gave him courage.

He remembered the eyes. The look of faith and reassurance his father had given — it covered Henry like armor. Like a falling ray of sunlight from the ever casting skies it struck; warmth like some intrepid valor gripped him, in the soul where knighthood grew. He knew it like he knew himself, no thing today could fell him.

A slight pressure upon his shoulder tore him from reverie. Henry found himself exiting the elevator as once before, where the offices where. He did not like how close everything felt. The walls, the floor, his mistress, the approaching end of the hallway — all these held disturbing proximity. Something had taken his distance: gone from within him. That safe place where the world worked a different way, had vanished. In its place he seemed forced to suffer among the treetops, like a creature in the canopy plagued by a constant fear of falling. Oh, rather to return unto the rivers about the floor! For there the safety of the stream embraced him, and the heights of all the dangers were a thing of distant nightmares.

For in these last hours he felt torn. The former felicity of his farther mind seemed to sunder from him. Time was resigned to pass in the dreadfully constant pace of adolescence. It moved too slow in the hours, where youth may imagine elsewhere and hasten a close; it moved too quickly in the blissful moments, where the expanse of youth may press within its boundaries and make a thing inflate to endlessness. So was he consigned here to pass about without reprieve, without a rest, without a home.

A home.

This place I have made… as a home for you.

Henry smiled to himself as the chime clearly passed on the message.

I must return, he thought, I must leave.

But how? He asked the passing chime.

There was no answer. He continued to press out to the fading echo.

Then a voice shattered his thoughts.

“Henry? What are you thinking about… right now?”

Henry blinked twice.

He was sitting, and facing Dr. Huo. The doctor sat in a chair beside Henry, turned to face him. Ms. Beaumont sat in the corner, hands were folded in her lap. She held Henry with a glance of curiosity, eyes moving back and forth from him to the doctor. The room they all sat in was not Dr. Huo’s office, as last time. Instead, Henry became aware of the placid tiles and numb features of a hospital or laboratory of
sorts. He was sat upon a mechanical chair, lowered to just above the ground. His feet swung gently, toes brisking the pale flooring. The doctor studied him closely, seated on a circular chair before him.

“Right then! Just then…” Dr. Huo repeated. He took his eyes from Henry to look down upon a small device in his hand. The small panel he held, shone with a lighted display that refracted off Dr. Huo’s glasses. Henry shivered. The glare concealed the doctor’s eyes entirely, giving them a monstrous luminosity.

Perhaps in this, Henry felt, the reflection revealed more than it hid.

“You were contemplating something,” continued the Doctor, tracing lines with his finger on the screen.

Henry shrugged.

Dr. Huo frowned.

“Another question then…” he continued. “Earlier today, Ms. Beaumont tells me you were playing in your playroom. Was that so? Did anything particular happen while you were playing?”

Henry looked instinctively toward his mistress for comfort. The Doctor’s nocturnal stare unnerved him. But he immediately regretted the impulse. For while Ms. Beaumont bore him no malevolence, she neither seemed to care. Her face had become an indifferent and cold repose. Her mask, if it had been so, now fell away. She turned away from Henry’s glance; her dispassion flung Henry’s attention back to the dreadful glare of Dr. Huo.

The steely sapphirine rectangles of his glasses glowed. They drilled into him with a predatory heat.

“Henry…is there something you’re not telling me?”

Henry shivered again.

Run, Henry! RUN NOW!

The chime resounded within his mind, flooding his thoughts with haste. Yet that very instant, the Doctor’s device flickered and changed its colors. Flashes of red filled his viperish gaze.

A grin snaked its way beneath his sanguine glare.

“There it is,” he whispered.
Dr. Huo leaned back as if in amazement. Awe mingled with contempt and a begrudging admiration gathered about his face. “Jon, you clever son of a——”

But Henry bolted from the chair, making for the open doorway.

Immediately, a pair of strong hands gripped his arms, and his feet tread the air in vain.

“Oh no, child,” said Dr. Huo, rising to his feet behind him. He nodded to the security officer holding Henry, who had been posted right outside the door. “You are going to be here with us for just a little longer… It seems that you are able to help me find the missing piece I need after all.” And to the officer he said, “take him directly to the dimensional ward.” He turned lastly Ms. Beaumont, “Janet, I believe we’ve waited long enough. Let’s finish this quickly.”

Henry commenced wriggling, but the towering brute held him firmly. Ms. Beaumont nodded her assent and gathered her things as Dr. Huo exited the room. Henry and his captor followed after him and his mistress brought up the rear. Together their party continued down a series of halls, Henry struggling all the while.

“Stop it,” grunted the officer darkly. Henry paused, and then stopped.

He noted the lack of anger, or really of any emotion, in the guard’s voice. His attempts hadn’t any effect but to give mild annoyance. A shock gathered his thoughts, as his body hung there gripped about the waist by the guard who carried him. How he could know this — the futility of his plight? But it had occurred as if a simple thing. That for all his toil, a physical wresting would be to no avail.

He breathed out heavily, and watched the doctor’s white coat swish to and fro before him. He could hear the light beeps from his handheld device he clicked upon out of sight. He could hear the high clack of Ms. Beaumont’s heels behind him. They tapped in sync with the boots of his guard, steady and even, while Dr. Huo’s stride was one of purpose and triumph. Henry could see in his shoulders.

He also heard…

A chime rang out from ahead of him.

Eyes wide, he urgently surveyed the coming stretch of hallway. There! Not ten meters away… there lay the gray, intangible vent. _They were so close_. He just needed a way to escape the clutches of
this man. But how? He wracked his brain. There weren’t many tools to aid him. He looked upward and to his right. The left side of the officer’s face lay not twenty centimeters from his own.

A thought occurred to him.

Then a second chime rang out…closer than before.

“Wait…” said Dr. Huo, slowing to a halt. He raised up his left hand to stop his party, as with his right he studied his device with scrutiny. He brought it up close to his face, as its blue lights began to flicker brightly once again.

A third chime sounded, clear and loud within him.
The device now burned with a crimson blaze; its tones grew long and low.

Now, Henry.

Henry whirled toward his captor with all his might. And in his sudden burst of movement, brought his face close unto that of the other. He bit down hard upon his ear! The officer shouted in anger, swatting with his free hand! Henry was flung roughly against the wall, his own head now ringing with more than inner chimes as the large fist rattled his skull.

But he hadn’t a moment to lose, and he knew this.

Scrambling quickly forward to his feet, he tore past Dr. Huo. The Doctor, who’d whirled his way, made a failed swipe after Henry, nearly dropping his device!

“Get him!” screamed Ms. Beaumont from far behind. The Doctor recovered quickly about, but as he turned to discern where Henry ran, he paused. For the boy had not run afar, but knelt against the rightward wall not five meters down, eyes watching them all closely.

“Henry. Now why did you go and do a thing like that? Come. We have important things to do…”

But Henry shook his head. “No,” he insisted. Though panting slightly from the nerves, his tone was calm and quiet.

The Doctor’s face turned grim. “No, indeed. And where else, exactly, do you think you’ll go?”

“Ohme,” said Henry smiling.

He reached out, toward the vent.

The Doctor’s device whizzed and chirped, alerting him to the danger of losing his own quarry — a moment too late. For as he registered this, the vertical lines of the steel wall plates seemed to quiver. Then Henry stood, and walked through them.

To those watched him, it seemed as if the metallic wall panels held some gap between them, one obstructed by the angel of perspective. For with inexplicable ease, baffling to all sense of reason, the small boy walked into the wall. Yet he had not disappeared.

Nor had the wall seemed some intangible apparition. But just that — that from an angle hidden to them, there was some passage through which Henry passed from view. Yet any change of perspective further confirmed the implausibility of this thought, for indeed the wall ran on, as it ever had before — metallic plates unbroken save the occasional emblem of the company. The fifth tally’s brushed steel lay there subtly shimmering.

Henry walked forward, and then was gone.
The fury of Dr. Huo rang against the empty halls! His fists battered the steel surface. His voice filled the void with rage.

Henry watched the whole world pass beyond the veil. He heard their rising shouts diminish into echo with supernatural speed. A cool and soothing blackness surrounded him. The familiar embraceable mystery filled his heart again with wonder.

It was a wonder he could name. It sifted like the taste of chocolate amid the sweetness of the cookie dough. It called all around him, inviting and entreating.

So with the echo faded all fear — quickly to pass for quickly it came. For came also joy, up from the many imagined ventures in his heart he’d always torn upon. Thus filling went the sense of what perilous thrills and escapades may soon remake him.

Turning around, he noted the reappearance of the opal window. He drew near. He looked closely upon its glistering panes. There between the prism’s glimmer was the study. *His* study. *His* home.

Warmth nested deep down within his stomach. It was a sense of security, and so of comfort. He lifted his hand toward the pane…but then he stopped.

A small wind had laughed behind him. It lifted from the blackness, like the heart of adventure calling: 

"*Come, young one, and fill the skies! Come to number all the brilliant depths. Come, my little maker, and find the forests where the wonders grow…*"

Henry turned and looked.

There lay another window, one with golden borders like his other. But this one’s face shone of jade and tourmaline. Henry smiled at this and neared it, looking deep within its tantalizing refractions.

All the many worlds, which lay beyond its shifting surface, spun about.

"*Wow…*" he breathed aloud.

A smile widened around him.

So reaching for the lost unknown he went, caught amid a ceaseless cry of thunder.
COMING SOON…

How did you enjoy Book 2: *In His Hands*? Henry’s adventure is just beginning; so it is for many of the cast from the *Children of the Storm* anthology. He’ll return soon, somewhere down along the path his feet have found him. In the meantime, the next serial installment is coming soon… and many questions about the mysterious threat over the world will be answered. Please share Book 2 with friends if you’ve liked things so far! Book 3 is soon to come.

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**Book 3:**

*Colors of Earth*

Fate brought Winston to *Project Odysseus* at the exact right time. No sooner had he pierced the veil of Infinite Industries, than did a whole new world of mysterious threats face him! Quickly learning about the emergence of a cosmic Storm raging across dimensions — there isn’t a moment to waste! Will their team be ready for this looming threat in time? Although…perhaps not.

Perhaps a moment wasted is wisdom earned.

Perhaps what Humanity needs isn’t haste — but clear look at the consequences.

*Perhaps it is already too late.*