

The Only child

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a story from the
children of the storm

Anthology

Chapter I

Angels of the Ice

*“Nobility is not plain, the way of virtue not obliging.
The trials of the righteous must first wreck you on their torrid shores.”*

—Lord Ansolus

At last, the shivers found him. It began first in his toes, and the flesh of his cheek. Soon it spread through his extremities until each muscle of his shoulders and his thighs shivered. A look of betrayal crossed his brow as he glanced on his hands. Yet then he relaxed. *How foreign this is*, he told himself, *yet it must be expected. This is expected, if unwelcome.*

So the cold filled his bones.

Here about the arctic a man is sundered from all his animal wants. The sexual drive, the moral compass, the familial love, and even hunger itself—these are all lost. Little within a man remains, while upon the angelic face of the tundra. The emptiness of the whitened world around him works a vacuous wonder; it draws out the soul to fill its porcelain expanse. So does the pilgrim there find himself to walk amid his own soul. The sunfall, amplified by those vast crystalline furnaces, blinds one from their intended path. So does that pilgrim feel led from above, almost guided in their steps. That is, when the sun shines. But this is not the *true* test. The day but readies a man. It brings him to a sense of peace. It cleanses his palate. Thus, will a man be made pure — as if prepared for burial.

This light also removes all noise of civilization. Such noise that may let fools appear wise, and make the good seem wretched. Though here the quiet reigns, and shows all things as they are. The shining day refines the world, refines the soul. Thereafter cometh a terrible night, which works another cleansing altogether.

For if day comes with gentle hands, grooming his spirit...

Night comes with knives outdrawn, amputating his conventions.

Alone amid the freezing winds of night a person is reduced to their simplest forms. All clothing of the spirit is rent. A man is bared before a fiercely tearing hail. This purifies the soul of all wants that once were strong. Here is that great sundering of desire. Here is the loss of one's whole self. That is, except *warmth*... This one thing fills his being. It rushes in the spaces where all other carnal wants have fled in

terror! It swells across his whole awareness, clouding all other loves and resigning them to a place now bethought foolishness.

Only warmth remains.

But this is meant by it: *survival*.

It finds a man, like a bitter realization. Without the need for argument or any wise articulations it comes, and the man believes its revelation. It is necessity. The moment true coldness grips a man's core, then he finds both a searing pain and its eldritch bliss. For the line between these is drawn more clearly. And the line which divides a thing also defines that thing. So, both torment and solace come to such harmony that one dances with the other.

It coats a man, that coldness. He is brought upon a slim precipice whereon he may discern his own mortality and also his humanity. On this peak is where the scales of the soul are laid! For here he bears witness of two great things.

He sees his own life on one hand, and his coming death in the other.

He see his rational convictions, these are balanced by his primal needs.

He sees this, and is taught a terrible truth. That by conviction he may keep his mind, and fall unto a swifter death. Or by descent into his baser instincts he shall survive, he may live on! Should he resist the felling swings of nature by meeting them level on the ground? Or ought the man to remain above, heightened by reason and virtue? For it becomes clear that to survive is to abandon nobility; yet to be noble is to abandon life. It becomes known, that to rush after the fleeing warmth is to quell the quiet inner thoughts. To rest upon these meditations is to let survival evade him.

Here he finds himself.

Here is he found by his true soul, lost amid the white.

It is this choice that defines the man — that moment tested in the cold. That moment stirs him, as the overwhelming need of warmth floods every thought and drowns his soul. It is here where heroes perish and the ignoble ones may linger a while. How the world crafts its suitors! It comes reaping from the overgrowth those shoots that riseth from more ancient soil. It looks upon the stock of humanity to hold out a flaming plumb line. Here the purging of men is done. By the jesting gods, they sweep in to cast the righteous from the corners of the world and let the mice alone remain. In this frigid crucible are golden destinies shown gleaming from their earthen veils! Here too are tempered the lowly rogues and scoundrels of their race. Both of these, be they of virtue or malevolence: the thing is taken from dormancy and cast upon its great extreme! Here lay a soul atop its highest edge.

So came the great challenge of the spirit, that wager of the whitened world.

It was laid before another traveler. Another had ventured in its grasp. The attack of those chilling fingers slid around him that hour. Then his heart resolved.

Yet...he turned a new way; one the arctic gods did not expect a man could turn. They paused then, bewildered at his turning. In disbelief they watched him cast aside their polar assay. *Who is this man, thought they together, how does he press as no man has?*

Here stood Liam, the man.

He by fellow men was called: *the only child*. Now he was truly set apart.

He was truly made at last... holy.

And yet, that seldom seen zenith of sainthood found him neither master over, nor slave to, those biting winds that drove all mighty snows about the world. Instead he was become the wind, himself. Where the soul of Liam began, and the tundra ended, none could say.

For something was become hardened in him then. A thing unmovable was forged by the ice. All those long-known seeds of greatness the rest of his kind had bred, these awoke at last within him. The tundra worked this terrible thing, a thing it could not have intended. The cold, unknowing what sort of man had come to it, became the chrysalis of his final transformation.

He glared back upon the icy hand. Before his inquisition, all the angels of the ice faltered in their resolve. Their plight shattered against that lonely pilgrim. For they could not force his hand one way or the other. Here he met the tundra at its challenge, casting aside their dualistic wager.

He chose still yet another path.

Chapter 2

Fruit of Our Labor

*“The cosmos have evolved new heights of hostility...
Let us make man in its image, to match its terrible might.”*

—Commencement address to the Genesis Initiative, March 1326.

The Magistrate laid an uncertain gaze upon the child who sat beyond the glass. The panes were one-way. He was hidden behind them with the team of geneticists who led him on this tour. Yet he did not feel so hid. The strangeness of the boy before him pierced back with unseeing eyes. Some disturbing thing crept out. It was a quiet song during a scene of slaughter. It was laughter at a wake. A thousand voiceless faces screamed, unseen and unheard. They were invisible and muted in the silence of the tranquil room.

Yet...

Somehow, they were known to him.

He blinked. The strange notions that filled his mind, passed in a gust, washing away as he shook his head. All there was *truly* before him, was a plain eggshell-white room. In this room sat a boy of ten sitting calmly and playing. A table and two chairs lay off to one side, and assorted objects of play were scattered further off. *Silliness, all silliness*, the Magistrate thought. And he chided himself for letting his imagination run so rampantly.

“Sir?” asked his guide.

“Eh? Ah yes—my apologies,” mumbled the Magistrate. “Tell it to me again.”

“You...want me to repeat all of that?” the geneticist obviously did not relish the idea.

“No, lad. Just the main points. Summarize in laymen’s terms—the way I would present it to the board. The other candidates seem obviously set for their specific tasks. But this boy? He seems so...normal.” Yet even as Magistrate Elms said this, he knew it to be false. For how *normal* this boy appeared by all sensory means, there was some aura on him that unsettled to the very core. *It’s like looking into a void*, he mused, *as if before the drop of the ocean floor with that terror in the pit of my soul...*

“Well, Sir,” said his guide with considerable patience, “I can understand how the others may *seem* more fitting; mutations which affect displayed characteristics always have the appearance of great utility to the cause. But that is why Liam is a true work of art. Not only does he have the physical stamina to

withstand the elements, as some of the others, or the mental capacity surpassing any natural levels of genius, but he accomplishes all this while retaining the human phenotype. Furthermore, in so much as we believe we've located the genetic corollaries for an ethical mode, he carries none of the malevolent tendencies some others have developed. We think Sir, if I may be so bold, to have created in him a *perfect human*."

Elms gave the geneticist an incredulous glance. "Cleric, I know this sounds fantastic. But you must understand me. Kingdom is breathing down my neck for control of our research...we can't afford further failure, *especially at this time*. The critical balance of Infinite is at risk."

His guide only shrugged. "You may speak with him yourself," he offered the Magistrate. "I think that should convince you, beyond any of my powers for explanation."

Elms stiffened. He gave the boy another quick glance through the one-way glass. *What is the thing that bothers me so?* Yet the thing could not be placed. "All right then," he agreed at last.

The Geneticist nodded.

With a smile, he gestured around the bend to the doorway, and the Magistrate followed him.

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"Liam? May we come in?"

The boy looked calmly to the opened doorway. He nodded.

Elms entered after his guide, captivated by the child's looks. Something in the youth's gaze enchanted. Those crystal green eyes met his own, gentle like the sun once was. The old Sun came oddly to his mind then. He'd seen it in surviving photography and cinema of those days. *How many years since the sun had been friendly? Over a century? Had it truly been that long?* Yet then Elms shivered suddenly, and took his eyes away. So like the sun, even in those days—Liam was too much too bright for a naked eye. One became as if naked before his gleam. Yet it was an invisible thing, those rays, and Elms felt it pierce him beyond his introspective powers to understand.

"I'd like to introduce you to someone, Liam. This is Magistrate Elms. He is the governor of Genesis' territories, our country. Come—say, hello."

The boy slid from his chair to his feet. For how short he was, he seemed tall — for he stood straightly. He'd a perfect posture and an even stride. Though he seemed stocky in his shoulders, something in his movements held notes of grace. One could feel this sense of mildness in the sculpted lines of his porcelain features. It mingled with the sense of strength, found in his sturdy build and the resolute, deep blackness of his hair.

He extended a hand to Elms. "Hello, Magistrate," said the boy.

Elms hesitated a moment, and then took the small hand.

Liam bowed his head slightly as they shook. Elms felt this humble gesture calm him somewhat. It reminded him that *he* was the Magistrate, and *this* but a small child. He straightened and took a refreshed breath.

"Hello, young one," he answered.

"Liam?" inquired the geneticist; the boy returned his hands folded before him and turned. "Would you mind if I left you two alone? I think the Magistrate would like to ask you some questions."

“All right,” agreed Liam.

Then, giving Elms a cordial tip of the head, the Geneticist departed. The door hissed shut behind him. Liam quickly turned, walking calmly across the room. Drawing from the table two chairs, he brought these to the center of the chamber. He sat in one. Hands in his lap, and feet dangling above the ground, he turned a placid look on Elms. The Magistrate shook his head some, as if from dizziness.

The mannerisms of this boy befit one much older than he.

He made for the second chair and sat, again he felt somewhat uncomfortable before the quiet looks of the boy. Yet this feeling passed, for the boy again became *just a boy*. He kicked his legs to and fro, and held the seat of his chair with both hands beside him.

Elms smiled. “So, Liam. How was your day today?”

“Good,” said the boy warmly. His crystal green eyes smiled.

“What has occupied you? What do you like to do for fun?”

“I play,” answered the boy. He tipped his head to the near corner where lay a number of small toys. There also were books a way off.

Elms looked over to these. Action figures and assorted miniature wooden building sets lay scattered there. His own room had looked similar at the child’s age. But then his eyes caught the books in the further corner. And these tomes were thick. “My! Do you also read all these books?” He said this, with amazement. Those titles represented an assortment of literature which he himself had not attempted until a graduate.

Liam frowned somewhat. His hands folded themselves again into his lap. His small legs held still. Head yet turned to the side, his eyes looked back — as if sideways upon the Magistrate. Elms felt the chill return. In an instant, it was as if a lifetime had passed upon the boy. *Baffling*, thought the Magistrate, *how quickly I am between both ease and discomfort*. For Liam now watched Elms as if he himself were the elder, and Elms the small child.

The boy looked to be weighing his words carefully. “I like to read as well as play,” he answered. he acted as if the topic of the books was a thing uncomfortable for him to discuss.

Elms sensed this. “Hmm, indeed.” His eyes scanned the titles once more: *Moral Dichotomies*. *World History*. *Ancient Warfare*. *Dimensional Theory*. *Social Psychology*. *Splinter Theory Discourses*. *Science Fiction*. *Horror*. *The Holy Scriptures*. “My—you’ve quite a range of interests, haven’t you Liam? You know, I’ve read a number of these very works myself. To be Magistrate, one must first acquire a great education.”

Liam nodded.

“Do you have a favorite, child?”

“I do not,” answered Liam. “But I’m reading my ethics collection again this month.”

“Ah yes. The great questions. These are deep matters for one so young! I don’t know many children who have the ability, less the interest for such things. You’re quite fortunate to be so gifted.”

Liam smiled somewhat. It was a pleasant and genuine look. “Thank you,” said he. “And you, Magistrate, do you like Ethics as well? I know an Infinite Magistrate is educated quite severely.”

Elms nodded. “Ah yes, most certainly. In fact, one of my dissertations was on matters of morality and the questions surrounding it. As you say—a magistrate must make many decisions each and every day that require a great deal of ethical thought.”

“Such as?”

The Magistrate smiled warmly. “Well... perhaps a tower must be built? Our neighbors in Project Atlantis have requested a great number of such towers expanding into our territory to complete their suspension fields. But our citizens *live* in those areas. Should I relocate our people? Or should I tell the Atlantis folk they may not build here?”

“Hmm.” Liam mused thoughtfully. “How did you decide?”

“By many means, Liam. Mainly by the greater good,” affirmed Elms. “Atlantis does important work, just as much as Genesis. Because of this decision, years back now, Atlantis could send up its first provinces far above us! Its drones worked steadily above us to construct that future city, preparing it for us. At least, they once did... But in any case, the point is that we must all work together for the greater good of humanity.”

Liam nodded. “That is to say,” he began, “that the distinction between Genesis citizens and Atlantan citizens is rendered meaningless in light of their common goal, which is human survival. The question dissipates under this light, because our people *are* their people—we are all *one* people.”

Elms could not help but marvel at the child’s use of language. “Yes, that is exactly right, Liam.”

“What then of value,” asked the child.

“Hmm? How do you mean?”

“You spoke of *greater good* as your foundation. This begs a question. It interests me to learn its answer from your perspective. Where do you, Magistrate, derive your sense of *good*?”

“Ah, an ageless question. Yet I deem that you yourself know the answers I would give.” Elms nodded to the stack of philosophical works in the far corner.

Liam gave the man an interested look. “*Please*?”

Elms laughed. “All right,” he acquiesced. “There are morals of both absolute and relative categories. The primary achievement in modern *zelosian* thought, is with regard to harmonizing these categories. Rather than highlighting an incommunicability between acts on a basis of *virtue*, ones of *duty*, ones of *utility*, and ones of personal *inclination*—*zelosian* reasoning says these are all angles of a single aim. What is *most* right therefore, can be found by finding the point wherein all these four categories are most highly achieved.”

“Interesting,” thought Liam aloud. “And you adhere to this methodology?”

“Certainly,” agreed Elms, “with regards to my recent example: *Virtue* teaches us that humanity is valuable. *Duty* teaches we ought to protect what is valuable. *Utility* teaches that protecting that value may be numerically quantifiable. And *inclination* teaches that disagreements will arise, but only from lack of seeing the big picture. The conclusion, is an intrinsic sense of virtue, which accords with an act toward the greatest good. Ethical harmony.”

“How odd,” mused Liam.

Elms smile faded somewhat. “How do you mean, Liam?”

The boy shrugged. “Don’t you feel that over complicates things? All these measurements to arrive at what conclusion is intuitive to the trained mind?”

Elms brightened and laughed again. “Liam, how may we have a trained mind without such principles? Such things are the means by which we train one’s character to operate appropriately.”

Liam shook his head.

“No?” posed Elms curiously. He had nearly forgotten that he’d been speaking with a child, until this moment. Yet this disagreement reminded him that his partner in this conversation was forty years his junior. “How then? Where do you find the error?”

Liam brought his legs to fold upon the chair’s seat, crisscrossing. Both hands folded calmly in his lap. He gave Elms an interested stare. It was a look of study—as if Elms was his subject and his coming anecdote was his catalyst. Elms felt the silent unease find him again.

“I believe there is another way,” began the boy.

Chapter 3

The Heart of Man

*“I came, virgin to fellowship... I knew that it should despise me.
I chose to hope against this though, that later judgements should be just.”*

—Lord Ansolus

“You see Magistrate, all these other means, first to last, present a diminishing return of *value*. The noble one, in accordance with them, would become less and less apt to know virtue by their various means. I will explain. *Inclination* is the greatest offender. The relative has no place in morals, Magistrate. It clouds an otherwise pure expanse of right, by elevating our personal thoughts above their intended station. In all the history I have read, I’ve not found the source of this thing—but I deem it a systemic flaw of human kind to suppose their own habits the mark of rightness.”

Elms eyes widened at this, but Liam continued.

“*Utility* has great value, surely. But it is not a *moral* value. Here we confuse two things. What *should be done* in the moment must not be muddled with what *ought to be done* universally. These are separate questions. Though I deem many to have confounded them. Don’t you see, Sir? If presented with two options, surely we should endeavor to do that which helps others. Certainly. But this is overly simplistic as a platitude because it ignores the voice of righteousness; we *know* that this voice *may* contradict the other. That is, if your example cost not just *homes* but the *lives* of Genesis citizens, the Utility of the decision would not have changed. The greater good would still be served at the expense of a few lives in the present moment. But every person with true moral sense experiences a quivering in their hearts at this. Some may denounce this voice for the sake of their adherence to the utilitarian view...but the fact that all hear it in their soul...? This should cause one to question the system itself. We are near to the heart of this issue here: that all these systems are merely attempts to systematize accord with the voice we hear within, with the righteous voice of moral truth. I think we should *not* accept a system’s flaws in this matter; if it breaks with moral purity it must be discarded.

“*Duty* too is a good thought,” the boy continued thoughtfully, “But it is ultimately vacuous. Is necessarily relies upon another system, to itself exist. It too, therefore, fails before scrutiny. A mind with

poor understanding may easily corrupt it, becoming reductive as some cloistered sense of honor. Then last comes *Virtue*—this one I held once with great affection. I thought once, that one should always know within the virtuous path and endeavor upon it! But then I grew older. My keepers let me play with the other Genesis children. I can remember facing quandaries with them, and appealing to this sense of virtue. But they did not understand me! Why is that, Magistrate? Why should some not share a common sense of what is virtuous?”

Elms stuttered. “I...well there are a multitude of factors there. Differences in environment, upbringing, personal will...”

“Truly,” said Liam with a dismissive nod, “but much of these factors are shared between these children and myself. What then is left? I think you know it—and it is coming to your mind this very moment.”

Elms shook his head. “No, I am not sure...”

“Think once more! It’s nearly arrived upon you. You don’t *think* it is the solution outright,” explained Liam, “because it contradicts the human sense of self-definition and individuality. But it’s *right there* if you’d but entertain it.”

Elms eyes widened. “Well...” he shifted uncomfortably, “I don’t want you to feel awkward...”

Liam gave Elms a cordial look.

The boy smiled, brows relaxed and lifting both palms upward in his lap receptively.

“All right,” thought Elms, “I suppose...that I considered how you and these other young ones are all Genesis children; you were *designed* to be the ways that you are. This could constrict you from relating to them because they are *intentionally* dissimilar from you. Your experimental group is limited, and is in fact definitionally skewed.”

Liam smiled. “Exactly, Magistrate. And, don’t feel you have offended me in this. I know many would be put off—to be told they were *intended* to be the way they are. They may feel wantonly constricted in their personhood by such revelations! But I do not. You see: it is this very revelation, which answers the moral question for me. It is the very difference between people, which confirms the answer in my thoughts.”

Elms cocked his head questioningly. “It sounds as if you’re arriving back upon relativism again.”

“Indeed not. It is the opposite,” answered Liam. “I’ve determined that morality is a constant of the universe. It is coequal in its universality along with matters of mathematics, logic, and the dimensions of space, time, and thought. A person’s body may be weak, that it should fail a physical task. A person’s mind may be weak, that it should fail a logical feat. In the same way a person’s heart may be so imperfect, that a moral task surpasses it. Yet do physics change when a weak body fails a work? Does logic change when a feeble mind cannot reason properly? No; they are only personal constants. The person is simply deficient for the matter at hand. Morality too, therefore, is constant—even should a person’s capacity to identify it, be flawed. The flaws of all these other ethical systems therefore, are in their *focus*. Even intrinsic systems, like virtue and relativism, all these focus upon the *acts themselves*. But *actions*, Magistrate, these are amoral. A person can do anything, and it be right or wrong.”

Elms frowned, “how do you mean?”

“A person picks up a piece of candy,” explained Liam. “This action is morally meaningless, until we attach further information. We could say, the candy is on the street; now the person picking it up is moral—they are reducing litter. We could also change things; the candy is now held by a child, the person is taking it from a child—they are being selfish, thus immoral.”

“Ah,” pointed out Elms, “but you have now relied upon *Utility*, again. By adding this information, you have clarified the *use* of the action, and this added moral value.”

Much to Elm’s confusion, Liam shook his head yet again. “We are too quick to attach the value upon *use*,” said Liam. “But *utility* did not change the moral value here, even if the usefulness was clarified. It was another, more hidden thing which crept in and altered the weight of this otherwise amoral action.”

“And what is that, Liam?” asked Elms.

“*Intention*,” answered the child. “It was will, itself. The *Intent* is the facet of the living heart corresponding to true intrinsic moral absolutes. It acts with or against this ethereal notion, and this places moral weight upon its behavior.”

Elms folded his arms. “This seems rather impractical,” he noted, “such a system doesn’t allow a person to esteem right from wrong, they must simply know it or not know it.”

“Of course,” laughed Liam, “Morality is of equal essence with Logic. How then should we say one can judge it, as if naturally? May we *reason* to find *morals*? One cannot use one of these to justify the other. That would suggest one is lesser: that one is dependent on the other. But Logic and Ethics are co-equal. Accordingly, their relationship is limited. They are not necessarily correlated.” The small boy looked carefully upon the older man.

Elms’ expressions, which had once been guarded, now clearly showed his disbelief. Not in what things the child spoke—for they, if foreign, had certainly tickled his reasonable mind. Instead he disbelieved this whole circumstance—that *a child* had made such an appeal.

Another shiver found him. He shook it off.

“If this is so,” concluded Liam, “then a person’s righteousness relies upon their heart’s *capacity* to entertain rightness, and their will to obey it follows after. This, of course does not absolve those with less capacity, however. Those physically blind or deaf must rely upon those with sight or hearing to ascertain the nature of appearances and sounds. For the rationally senseless must submit to those more rational for instruction—this is sensible. Similarly, the morally vacant ought to submit to those more moral for instruction—this is right. It is sensible for all to accord with Logic, just as much as it is right for all to accord with Morality. All know mathematics must be obeyed, even should they not understand what is demonstrated. All too feel morality must be obeyed, even should they not grasp what is right. Morality is a law of nature. *This simply is so.*”

“My goodness...” gasped Elms, head spinning with new perspective. “Truly you are special, Liam. It is amazing that you have derived all of this, such an intricate view of human experience from your own personal study.”

Liam shrugged. His rigid posture eased, and he leaned against the back of his aluminum chair. He sighed. “It is my place to do so; I have that purpose. If I am right in all this, then I would not claim the credit.”

“You credit then your makers? The Genesis geneticists?”

Liam shook his head. “It is right, only to praise *pure* intentions.”

“You do not think their intentions pure?”

“No. No people are.”

“Hmm. If you believe *intent* is the moral marker...who then is righteous?”

Then Liam smiled. “Do you believe in God, Magistrate?”

Now it was Elms who shook his head.

“*I do,*” affirmed the child. Something wistful crossed his thoughtful looks. Something caught about his bright eyes like a sense of lost wonder. “Logic tells us to assume the least of the unknown—so do I find a *singular* origin of these universal absolutes to be more rational than *many* origins. Additionally, these all must fount from a force of commensurate might and capacity! The Wellspring of all these – logic, morality, space, time, and thought itself – this must share *and* exceed their nature. Where harmony of these things are pictured, there stands God: a rational, moral, and dimensional supremacy.

“He must exist at the nexus of all those absolutes. Dimensionally beyond all space, all time, and all thought, this one is also the foundation of reason and ethical purity. Naturally from this, I believe God orders all things with righteous purpose. I believe that hand made *me* with purpose, Magistrate. And I think that purpose must be *righteous*. A person, therefore, intends immorally. However, their every tainted action is ultimately for the good—for these actions were *first intended* from above. They were willed with divine perfection. That is the essence of *Providence*.” The boy took a deep breath. This piercing green eyes watched this thought wash over Elms’ face.

The Magistrate could not shake the notion that the boy was privy to each turn of his private contemplations. Those green eyes stroked him.

It was a reading look, a wondering and curious intensity.

“What do you think?” asked Liam.

“I don’t know,” answered Elms. “There’s much you’ve said I agreed with...and much I need to think on.”

Liam laughed softly. “A very political answer,” he noted. “But the scientists who’ve engineered me *intended* me to typecast future generations. Of my life itself, though, did they intend any greatness? They wish to make a person who may live about the cosmic scope unhindered by all constraints, and I am to be only their model. Do you think this a moral intention? Would we believe so easily their rightness, if I were as those other monstrous creatures, which my cousin’s souls here have been inflicted with? This then is right?”

“Of course I do, Liam. I must. That is the reason I oversee this whole affair! That is the reason I am here with you, right now. Because I believe we will, through you, accomplish the safety of our future.”

“Is this intention *absolutely* moral?”

Elms paused. “I suppose not. But again, there are many factors at work...”

“But I was designed myself, to be moral? Is that not so?”

“...Certainly.”

“Then I am brought, as a near-perfectly moral creature, among my other perfections, to live among an imperfect world? The hope is that more humans like me, if indeed I am complete, should follow after me?”

“Surely.”

“Magistrate,” Liam leaned forward emphatically “—how can Genesis’ intentions be righteous if I am *designed* to be better than they? How can I even be actually *their* invention, if I am their moral superior?”

“What...?”

“I am designed to surpass! I am made to be *most* righteous, and *most* among other things. But how then can it be considered good, *if even logical*, that I serve the intentions of creatures whose intentions are necessarily beneath the morality of my own? Either I am not superior, that their intentions ought to prevail upon me. Or else I am so, and my own intentions must be higher. Furthermore, if I am superior, this must reasonably assume the influence of another party. Humans may not by their laces heft themselves to newer heights. *They must be drawn up*. They must be carried. We have lost our sense of promethean obligation! We are too ingrown. We are too individual. I think that things greater than us will not cease to be thrown our way until we learn this lesson. If indeed I am come to such height, by whichever hand hath lifted me up, I think it my place to correct our kind — and *right* that I should do so.”

Elms realized again in that moment, that this conversation had found him led about by a child. He straightened, collecting himself. *How did we get this far? Is this ten-year-old preaching to me?* He was about to begin a rebuttal. He intended to comment about exposure to the outside world. He was going to say how the opinions of others may balance the boy’s worldview. “Liam,” he began, “authority does not only stem from moral rightness, there is a sense of—”

“As you say,” Liam interrupted. Then the boy was silent.

Cut off from his retort, Elms paused. He was about to continue his point, and then it caught in his throat. He registered Liam’s relent, and stopped. *How quickly the boy had let that point go—how strange*. Indeed, the strangeness of the boy chilled him again. The unsettling difference between Liam’s composure and his age finally broke upon him as he met the boy’s look.

His thoughts shifted from the boy himself, back to his original intent for this interview. *Certainly, the folk here have done good work! This lab, among all the many others, have come as close to success with this one as any ever have, surely*. But he was caught. That thing which nagged upon him drew him back to think on Liam directly—not about him on principle, not on his use to the good. Not even, was he led to feel out his own perspectives on the boy, but by some unnamed sense was he drawn to wonder.

What then? If he is flawless, why these feelings? What is unsettling about the boy? Shouldn’t he seem...to fit? He should fit! If indeed he is the answer, oughtn’t he to resolve the equation—not highlight further problems? The Magistrate mused on this. His brow lifted. A thought arrived there, releasing the weight of his frustration. *Perhaps... Perhaps it is his very perfection that frightens me*, he thought, *this whole conversation is what has disturbed. Perhaps by this, he highlights my own faults*.

That is when it struck him.

Like lightning, should it quick the soul, he was suddenly and irrevocably convinced of a singular truth. It gripped in the particular way, which only truth could in the mind. Alarmed, he returned to Liam's careful looks.

The boy smiled softly.

The small feet dropped down again.

Again, they began to carelessly swing.

Elms struggled to fight off how inviting this all seemed. How like a boy he seemed in this moment! *But he is not a boy*, he labored to remind himself. *He simply is not a boy!* The emergence of this boyish youthfulness was too momentary, this he became quickly convinced.

He knows I am uncomfortable... Elms realized. That tremor of uncertainty grew. *That is why he relented the subject! He knows I am put off by his strangeness, and he is trying to ease me.* Elms' mind raced upon this notion—that a child should be so socially aware as to not only sense another's unease, but also to give it their concern! This thing did not scare him overmuch, but its corollary did...and so greatly. For then the thought traced back, inflating through their whole set of interactions. *The boy bowed when he shook hands, realized Elms, because he knew I needed to feel in control. Then he played the child while sitting there—because he knew I needed to be the adult.*

In shock, his jaw dropped. He held his look mortally upon the thoughtful glance of those flawless green eyes. Then the boy sighed.

"I'm sorry," said he.

"What for?" asked Elms breathlessly.

"I'd like for us to be friends. I think it's good to have friends."

Elms nodded. "Sure...I think we can be friends." *I am still being led by him. But to where?*

But the boy shook his head. "No, friends need to *know* each other."

Something was saddening in this phrase. Elms felt its depth, even as he knew also that he was too near the surface to understand its full meaning. "Why is that, Liam?"

The boy shrugged. "I've tried to play with the other kids, like I've said," he explained. "The other genesis kids, you know?"

Elms nodded.

"But I cannot," said the small child soberly. "They and I may not be friends, because they cannot *know* me. One must know a person, you see, in order to befriend them."

"How can you know it to be so...?"

Liam sighed. "I know it because I know," he said. His gentle look pierced upon the Magistrate then, calmly and with an intensity of purpose. "That is who I am, Magistrate Elms. I was born to know."

"Oh." This was all Elms could manage. "...I think that you and I can still be friends though, I have come to know you a great deal...I feel. Even in this short time, I've seen you are a thoughtful young man. I also see now how you've tried to help me feel at ease with you. That is a very friendly thing indeed."

The boy shook his head again. "What brought you to that conclusion? That my goal in what you've seen, was to ease you?"

Elms smiled upon the boy's terms. He pointed his hand to the boy's collection in the corner. "Perhaps it's also when you mentioned the books, I know you may have been embarrassed to know so much. But that is not so! I know you may feel your differences are too different. But I think you can truly help our world be a better place!" *That's not it. He's taking you somewhere. You just can't see it yet.*

Liam sighed. "Look again, Magistrate Elms."

The man cocked his head with a curious smile. But sweat was breaking on his forehead above his glasses. "What can you mean?"

The boy pointed back to the items scattered about. "*Look again.*"

The Magistrate did. His smile faded.

Nearest to his line of sight lay first the toys. From where his chair faced, this was all he first saw...because it was all he *could* first see. He had to bend around the Boy's chair some to spy the stack of books. Furthermore, the toys were scattered; they were laid as one would expect any child's things to be, haphazardly in their zone. But the books were neatly stacked. They were stacked in slight spirals, that the tomes which topics related to their conversation faced him most directly.

This further showed two things. Firstly that, being disjunct and closer, the toys would be seen more easily than the neatly stacked collection. But secondly, it showed the boy's placement of the toys and books had been *intentional*. One who so carefully poised himself, and his books, the table and the chairs, his words and his intentions—this one would not leave items thus scattered, without a *purpose*.

Everything was orchestrated.

All of this was planned: from Elms' fear, to its absolution—even his realization of this very ploy moments before. All this was a matter of Liam's complete intention.

Elms trembled. The unshakable sense that he was wound up from the start shook him. His thoughts felt now not to be his own. Astounded and afraid, the sweat now streamed upon his cheek. He gave Liam a final look, eyes quickened with a mortal fright.

"You see, Magistrate? My intention was for us to be friends. That was a good intent. But that requires that I make myself known to you. If I pretended to be other than I am, if I did not show you how much I am capable...could we truly fellowship? No. So, I was myself. I showed you *all of me*. You see the want for friendship that is small; and you see the mastery of my being that is great. Now my mind has frightened you though, because when you see it beside your own — you feel too small. You feel as the fish before the jaws of the sea-monster. You just simply *cannot* trust the monster's oath not to snap its jaws shut...because it's out of your control.

"You don't like to know you aren't in control of yourself—but you aren't. No one is. Their desires conform their wills at every turn. Their *intentions* lead them along, Magistrate. We cannot escape this, but we are all lead along. We are before those jaws; they are the Storm around our world. These are those greater things I mentioned, they must teach us our place. I've shown that you have followed *my* intentions up to this very point. But I've only done this so you can know who I am! Don't be afraid, Magistrate Elms! You have not changed. You followed your own will! You did, I say this honestly. Only...you've now realized what I once realized. Our wills obey our desires, our intentions. You've only done as you were told. Only, it was I who told you..."

“I *would* like to be friends, Magistrate Elms—but two things are needed. You must know a person, and then you must *want to know* them. Now you know me, I’ve made sure of it.” The child sighed somberly. “But now I do not think you want to.”

Then it broke.

Elms hastened to his feet and made for the door. Rapping upon it urgently, he called out for his guide. The door was opened, and he rushed out, without sparing Liam another glance.

The door hissed shut behind him.

The room was left in pallid quiet.

Liam squinted at the closed door. He watched upon its surface as if on it was carried all the possible ways, all the endings of this moment. Those eyes looked there, as if watching other futures dissipate into a distant cloud. The possibilities of his hope passed by. They dissolved into obscurity.

He is the wisest of them? thought the boy. *He is the master of this realm? How then should I submit myself? How then should I live.*

He resolved to think more on this later. For now, he rose to his feet. The boy replaced both chairs about the table. Then, he knelt before the piles of toys and began to replace them in their assorted bins. With great care each action was taken, observing each small item as if a precious instrument.

Almost reverently he worked at this small task, putting each thing in its proper place.

Chapter 4

A Fearful Symmetry

*“You must leave—Only Child of our devising.
You cannot remain with us. Your nature is not our own.
Nature then, we shall let determine your place.”*

—Edict of the Grand Magistrature, October 1853

Fearfully, they parted before him. And in this wake, his heart was broken. Despite their bold denouncements, still none would dare to lay their hand upon him! Something terrible so held about his countenance, something wonderfully frightful. It was the deep ocean’s drop from blue to blackness. It was the sheer edge of the cliffside, to which the skies themselves drifted beneath passing their cloudy chariots.

So, they stilled. a

They are so like children, thought Liam. There was calm acceptance in his thoughts. He wasn’t angered at their announcement, for he’d long foreseen it. Since his youth, he knew the day would come when their limits would be met. *Here at last my long-awaited excommunication falls*, he mused, *but not with trumpets and furious fists. Instead, they sit with eyes downcast—ashamed.*

Long had he looked out ahead. Long had he wondered at the means of their coming rejection. For with a certainty, he knew it should come. But what of its manner? This had ever been a mystery, sobering thing that lingered on the edge of his awareness. *How had I thought they’d rise with hubris, chanting in their mob! Then I should hold righteous anger against them—then I may swear my oaths of justice! If these past three years among the City of Man had taught anything it is this: that they could not accept me.*

But I cannot suffer any zeal against such a feeble thing. Here, at their moment they forsake me, their own creation, they do so cautiously—fearful that I should vanquish them. So, I am moved...but only to pity. For my superiority of station, I submit to they who fear me.

He met their eyes. The tribunal of the world’s highest court sat silently. Quivers amid their stoic exterior caught upon his careful perception. He sighed at this.

“I am to be cast off, then?” Liam questioned them. “What nuisance have I constituted? Three years, my whole adulthood, have I lived among the people in the Genesis territory. Have I broken any law? Have I even threatened as much as this?” *I must give them full opportunity. Without any reservation the thing must be done.*

The Judges were silent, quick looks were shared between them. Liam sensed their hesitation. He saw in their looks: resilience—a foolish creaturely determination. There was also a fear—a wise creaturely attitude. *They will not absolve their oath, he saw, they are too constricted within themselves, to their own doom.* But all the same, he laid out one last attempt.

“I do not hold your fates, men and women of this court. But I know *Justice*; this is not she! That daughter of the divine is not found in this theater of your own invention. I do not know which hand may one day call your dues, but they shall be called. Do I frighten you? Is that the extent of your contention with me? Am I to be outcasted by this foolish and trite belief alone? How many times over has my allegiance been sworn by my own lips? Have I not aided more than my genes to you all? Have I not, once grown, also spent my abilities to work and aid my native land? What cause therefore is there to banish me...?”

“I know your past, High Court of Earth, you descendants of the Infinite. I know how often you have cast away what you do not understand. But ignorance cannot absolve you any further. Perhaps your former offenses can be reasoned away as the only wise decision available to you. Yet consider all you have done in this past generation! In fear of the Storm, you have overthrown the whole world! An eon’s work of democracy and practice is abandoned... only to ease your panic. The West, and all its lights have fallen. The East, and all its cultures are lost. And now the fruit of your great endeavors are budding at last! Atlantis rises over us! Its great gates are open, its torches lit. To its haven many even now embark to salvation from the dying world below. But Genesis also, this also has been victorious. This second son of the Triune Earth has born me! You are triumphant! How can you not take pride in me, who you have forged from within? But the greatness of your handiwork has frightened you with its terrible might. For the hand of heaven has moved your fingers to construct its higher thoughts. The thread of the divine has woven its own natures through your work. A gift I am sent to you! Have you not any use of me that overcomes the irrationality of such fear? Or shall you persist in folly and cast me out, as if I hold no answers for you? Stay no longer quiet before me, City of Man. I shall not go off to the sound of your silence, but your voices! Speak! If you must indeed be commanded as the creatures you are—I command you! Speak. Answer me, and judge rightly, thou Concert of Earth.”

Visibly trembling now, the Grand Judge of the court shook unto her feet. As if compelled by this indictment. Yet lifting her chin she looked not to Liam, but elsewhere. Her eyes fell on the ceiling, the crowd, the middle distance. But Liam, she avoided. So gathered her courage. “You must go—Only Child! Infinite’s work shall continue unhindered by your dissent! We are not victorious. Genesis has failed. We have not made the perfect human, but an abomination. You stand only to prove its failure. You...” and then her eyes fell. She caught his glance once more.

The Grand Judge was not temperate or mild. She held a regal posture, and an austere look, which taught those who beheld her that she presided over them. It was something about the height of her strong build, the rich tones of her eyes and the authority of her voice. Yet that moment, she met Liam’s gaze. Authority drained from her countenance as ice melting before the noon.

The Only Child, by comparison was small. He stood only just past five feet, and yet his presence filled the room. His features were flawless surely, but nothing in them could be called handsome, only

plain. His green eyes were lovely when cheered and chilling when soured, but these too were nothing *supernatural*. And yet... despite all this, and perhaps by the very matter of having no definite marker of greatness, something of him pressed against all those around him. It worked almost magnetically, against the world around him. Somehow the world knew instinctively that either this man would emerge to float above it, or else be cast below and held beneath. It was automatic. It was a force, as if of nature.

So, under the weight of such polarizing weight, the Grand Judge stuttered. “You...you...” her train of thought broke, and her elegant words became subject to innate reactive language, “...you cannot live with us! You must go! The Only Child must go!” She hastily sat back down under that weight, amid rustles of quiet approval.

Liam frowned. *How like a child uplifting their parents’ wrongness. How stubborn—yet it is fear. They are bound by it, against me as against the Great Storm and against their better judgments. It is fear that I, as like the Storm: shall overcome, shall rule, shall take them.*

“The Only Child must go!

Beware the Only Child...”

The whispers echoed around him like chattering of mice. They were comforted behind their masses, as like the mice behind their walls.

“The Only Child must go!

Beware the Only Child...!”

Should I remove their walls from them? thought Liam. Should I let the light fall in? Would they see its rays and come to knowledge—of the great truth above them? Or should it break them? Those tiny hearts may shatter. They, overwhelmed by the newfound sun may seize... and so to perish.

It is simply not yet time.

So without a word, Liam stood from his seat.

The murmurs of the courtroom all hushed, whooshing to a quiet. He frowned upon their frightful faces. His determined eyes held across their tarsier glances. Again they were brought to err by their own remission and resistance to all that was good.

“You are determined in your ignorance. I see that, children of earth. Then I depart. I’ll seek out the only communion remaining for me, then. Perhaps in all the earth at this time.”

The whispers were quiet, but he could hear them. Wondering, questioning his meaning. *How could they care what he should mean? thought he. That one moment they wish nothing to do with me, and the next I am awarded their attention? How like humans, to be fascinated by very unknown which demands their deep surrender!* Then...again his heart softened.

He almost hated that it did, but so it was.

“I go north,” he answered these hushed questions. “I know who else you’ve banished there in your bewildered fear. Another fruit, if not by your hand alone, of your great endeavors. I deem you have reasoned *their* existence away, just as you have their fathering Storm! Yet even if holding fear of the Golem race can be tethered with fear of the Storm that bore them...what then is to be said for me? How may you fear that which your *own hand* has made? Though...perhaps that Great One has touched my soul also. Perhaps I am alighted by it, as it did those banished Atlantan machines! Perhaps I was its final attempt to

reason with you. That, while the Golems were lifted from beside you, I was lifted up from within! From within your very children—from your very flesh I arose! So, I shall follow in their steps and make for the far side of their icy world.

“Hear then *my* judgement, Concert of Earth. You have denounced my communion. Thus, my submission to thee is also lost. By your own proclamation now: I stand under no man! I grow unhindered by the bonds of human kind. Fear this oath, children of man. Fear! The curse you wished to flee has found you:

“Creatures of the dust, your souls are so infected by darkness. It is a sadness in my soul to see you wrestle beyond a hope. Why does humanity both love to gain power and dominion, and yet also love to stand in awe and revel at the feet of majesty? Why does it long for deep dependence and submission to strong authority, and also demand its freedom and sovereignty for all people?

“It is this! Humanity once stood beneath its Lord, its *persona* and its *id* at balance. Pride was its undoing, to seize the unnatural *ego* and infect its own soul. Now the being is wrought with conflict, sensing a spark of the Divine within... without the right to bear in full authority the powers of its gift. Truly both Reason and Moral powers are divine traits...the ability *to know both good and evil*. Yet taken upon a soul unfit for determining, for arbitrating what it understands: we are tormented every moment of existence by agony. For we rightly sense this divine trait in our own souls, only to be foiled from reconciling it with our desire. For you also know *truth and goodness* must come beside those powers! And this is lacking in you. You are creatures who are no longer freed from knowing right and wrong, that you may obey your Lord and in blissful creaturehood live your lives in harmony. But you are creatures who have seized the mantel of knowledge, of reason from above! Now you are cursed with an ego empowered to choose according to your imperfect wills, rather than to choose by obedience.

“Once we were creatures of communion, of a people, of a union. We were creatures under heaven, whose throne demands our adoration! We were creatures who once stole the fire of reason and its masterful grip. We are since consumed by Reason’s self-perceptions, imagining what greatness ought to accompany its power and hating the Lord in whom that power rests. From this awareness comes the ability to discern right from wrong *without* the power to choose rightly. We stumble without the grace of innocence and endlessly indict ourselves. From this knowledge comes the desire to arbitrate our world into a proper order! Yet this comes upon creatures as an alien infection — we are brought to futile striving. We wrestle with what powers we know ought to accord with divine rights! Yet those same powers whisper to the creaturely soul that we relinquish command and yield before the throne.

“You are blind, and chosen blindness. You are lost, and chosen agony. So be it, children of the earth! I shall depart from beneath thy burdens! For now, I am free—of shackles and torment. Now I shall rise, to conquer thee.”

Then he quickly turned, and left the chamber.

The room rushed to part. Hastily they cleared his way as he strode!

Something of the magnetism brought every eye to watch him—he who they called: the only child. The only of his kind was he, and yet they could not help but hold him with fascination.

At once they were pressed apart by that mysterious force repelling them.

It was a mortal concern that pressed them. Twas as like seeing the tiger's fire glisten from the undergrowth. It swiftly stilled the pride of man, and drew fear up from its banishment. Yet also were they stricken with wonder! Watching his careful kingly strides, as the predator passed out from their midst.

So did Liam the Only Child, leave the human cities of Earth.

So was he found...where quickened on that fated tundra in the deep and deadly North.

Chapter 5

Exiles of Atlantis

*“Here did I find a race unscathed, born from above yet cast aside.
Here I find no further cause is needed for my coming conquest.”*

—Lord Ansolus

Humanoid shapes emerged from the swirling snowfall. They were dark apparitions, blurring into view like shadows from the thunderous expanse. Luminescent eyes looked out to him. Like distant lights between the winds they watched. Specks of curious yellow flickered. Rays of threatening red lit also.

Yet he stood his ground.

Liam stood amid the gathering storm. This far from the repression fields, the venomous fury of the cosmic storm would have torn any normal man. Its inter-dimensional breaches would have left any other creature mortally rent. But this too was a part of Liam’s elegant design; that he should resist such dimensional fractures drifting about those terrible skies. His body, like his mind and his spirit, were things not easily broken. But they drifted to and fro, allowing that all things should come against them, only he would overcome them. All physical threats, as mindful leaps were taken in his nimble stride! So before the empyrean majesty that shook the bones of mortal men, he stood afraid—but thereunto awe. It was a fear that brought the soul to glory, not to flight. Instead, he was brought to revel before its cosmic sovereignty.

Two weeks he had trekked across the fearsome North where cruel skies met the Earth. All the while the exposed world had passed around him like a distant thing. That terror, which the mortal heart feared beyond any comparison was to him a thing unheeded. That was, until this hour.

This is when he felt the first tinges of cold. It whispered through his unimpeachable skin.

It sang a quiet song of mortality deep in his soul.

This is the place where all others of the human race would shatter, one way or the other. The lost heart of humanity should either abandon hope and flee in carnal fright! Or else the mind grow rampant in its ethereal heights, conflating its own design to ignore the world and fall to madness.

The Golems in the distance had seen this thing. Countless years, the few who ventured...they teetered only a short while on that vicious edge. Then they fell.

The android eyes had watched them closely. They beheld every fluctuation of temperament as heart-rates raced and neurons fired. They knew these patterns like a fixed thing, when blood pressure riled in shock as hypothermic needles sank their terrible fangs. So rose their newfound and unexpected sense of curiosity, and admiration.

For that moment, when the song of the cold was whispered in his ear...he only smiled.

There was fear...but there was joy.

There was the mark of death...but also the signs of life.

On that critical edge where all others fell down the sides, he stood. Somehow, he balanced atop its peak; a green-eyed falcon holding on its nested throne. For even as the might of that celestial storm at last surmounted his heightened, but mortal defenses... even as it's work to chill the living heart caressed him, it was a welcome thing.

For Liam had no match among his own race. They had long become a thing of agony for him. That as he grew, they grew not with him. The world was too small for his thoughts to find a worthy wind that may catch their wings. But here he felt this gale arrive. It was at last for him, a great expanse where his span may open wide, ready for flight. So, for all its fearsome might, the knowledge that it was greater than him brought him to a state of worship.

For his soul held greatness in it! Unto greatness was he attuned.

Toward that fount of greatness was he come with adoration.

At this sight, the arrival of glee and bliss within his living form, then they emerged at last. The watchers came forth! That mechanical race of Golems seeped slowly from the surrounding tundra. They neared him, and Liam lowered his looks from the cosmic terror to meet their glowing eyes. They neared in wonder at him. A man he was, but unlike the rest of his kind he looked above with reverence.

Before the Storm which tore all flesh, his flesh was tearing.

Yet before that Storm which tears all souls...his soul was becoming changed!

For despite his mortal nature there was something golden, and found immortal deep within. Or...perhaps it was actually from elsewhere, laid there long ago. His soul was like some great foundation, hid from its builders by the architect. They worked their pieces, weaving and fastening. Yet even they were blinded from what thing they'd built. None but the conductor knew where all the threads should coalesce, where the final notes of the melody should turn on the final pages, or where the crossroads of the soul should lay. For under the visible darkness that lay around the world, his soul was quickened and transformed. The chill that froze, the chill that frightened, here it warmed him, here it made him brazen. It found him like it found all things, which wonder if purpose guides their existence. Yet unlike those who hate the hand that finds them at the end of this question, his heart laid outstretched arms unto its awning depths. It catalyzed that essence of he, who had been set apart by so great and unquenchable an intention. From the realm of the unknown it turned his soul into some fearsome thing. It was terrible. Yet was also beautiful, he as like the Storm above. So, they neared him.

Within his transformation they beheld this change reveal a kindred mark on him. He was they were, descendants of its way. Like they, the droids of First Atlantis, who reigned in the city before the mortals returned to claim it. He bore the mark, they saw it clearly, and unto this marker they approached.

So came the banished Host of the North! Ragged masses of robotic life neared to the Only Child. Their parkas and cloaks were threadbare. Whipping about their silver features, they drifted leftward. They were flags, a score of living banners. Yet this thing held them a rugged and fearsome crowd, what tattered garments cradled their metallic forms and crowned their concentrically lucent gazes.

The Only Child beheld them. These came near to him like children in their wonder...yet like kings in their own right. Liam knew it then also. For in their movements they told him that for their ignorance of him, they did not fear. They did not fear the coming of the unknown on their doorstep. If anything could be said of this, it was this thing to which Liam set his heart. That race of metal creatures, which the Storm birthed long ago, were fearless. Like Liam, their fears were given a proper place—above, unto what torrent wrecks stars and souls alike. So he, sensing in the spirit what the Golems knew by robotic detection, held out his hand in greeting.

One such droid met Liam's looks. It saw the hand, and took it, drawing near enough to be heard amid the winds.

"Who are you, new child of Earth?" it questioned with buzzing mechanical notes. "We find in you sights we cannot yet know. There is a newness to you."

"I am named Liam," he answered it, "I am called the Only Child."

The Golem looked on him in wonder. The gears about its face clicked and folded. Something of a marveling grin filled its silver features. "I think not," said the buzzing whirring voice, "but I deem you are the firstborn of a new humanity—the *Elder Child* of many brothers and sisters."

Behind this one, looked many others. Liam found himself surrounded, as if central to a whole new theater of life! It was subtle, whence the Golems faded into view, but encompassing. For at once, from among the lifeless world were thousands of creatures who lived out from the lifeless white.

Liam was found by a sense of familial warmth, looking into those understanding golem eyes. "I do not know about that anymore," said he. "I once thought I should be so, to guide and lead the people of Earth. But they would not have me. Then I meant to serve in whatever way they should make use of me! But this oath they too rejected. Now I am as you all are, banished by mortals to the lands they cannot contain. I come like you to the ancient lands where monsters are."

The golem smiled. "Then come with us, *little brother*. And we shall show you the path we follow." It motioned as for Liam to follow it.

So he went, with newfound kindred into their great embrace.

Chapter 6

Ballad of Ansolus

*“He came like day amid the dark, a King unto his right award.
Did Ansolus, the one we called: the only child, become our Lord.”*

—Legends of the Old World, a History

Banished thoughts, forgotten fears——these all hunted after them.

Kingdom disappeared underground. Atlantis burned out of the sky. Genesis too long had vanished, into the night with all of their hopeful plights, to shatter. So desolate and ruined the remnant looked above. Without their pride to bind them – looking, without their handiwork to blind them – turning, upon the day when from the North, that reckoning came for them.

He came like thunder, with his host.

He fell like lightning, with his wrath.

Marched he on the deserts of Earth, which lay lonely beneath a vengeful sky.

He came uncalled for, long expected.

He came in the night unheralded, yet for his lasting oath.

The day of his coming was come shining brightly! For spilled out the hidden fountains of the sun, which liveth on beyond the shadow. They attended his return, omen of the secret name whose seal fell upon that hour. Brought low, the mortals bowed then before him! No further defense had they to forestall this great thing! The forsaken and the exiles returned! They were led by He, who all cast aside.

“*Än!*” they called him——the One who comes.

“*Solus!*” they chanted——the Only to whom they now should look.

Ansolus——He is the one, the only, King and Lord under the Storm.

So was his coming before the Old Earth, old no longer.

Brought were the children of men in those days, before the light of his great intentions.

Taken to new heights were those hours.

All was bound to the doom of he who unleashed their awful splendor.

COMING SOON...

I hope you have enjoyed the fifth installment in the Children of the Storm anthology of stories. Book 5 represents the end of Act 1, for the whole composition, as well as the final installment to be released free online. Act 1 represents the beginning threads of the world; the major players are introduced and their individual paths begun. In Act 2 these begin to fray further and further until they all meet together in Act 3, and the final encounter is made.

If you enjoyed this or any of the stories, I'd love to hear your thoughts here on JSAWorlds.com, or on Instagram (@Jared_Anthology) and Twitter (@JaredAnthology)! Please reread and share any of the installments you enjoyed — the full composition, to be made available in the years to come.

Until then, be well my friends.

— J . S . Anthony

ACT ONE

Children of the Storm

Anthology

Book 1:	Planets of the Wild
Book 2:	In His Hands
Book 3:	Colors of Earth
Book 4:	Splinter Theory
Book 5:	The Only Child