**Atoms and Fate**

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In the beginning, our data confirms the correct pattern: first those amoebas, swirling blind in some Proterozoic fluid. Then their combination, inspired by some random spear of space-dust. And from that union tiny animals felt their way through the currents and eddies of the oceans that roared around our neophyte world.

The moon drew over those waters, trapped in its orbit by the force of gravity just as our computers explain. The waters waxed fat for the Moon and the tiny creatures in the seas conjoined to form other tiny creatures in their trillions.

And as our manuals of chance and selection tell, it came to pass that the tiny creatures washed ashore in their billions to meet their death on those first, bitter rocks. Over time, some – as we have deduced from research – grew used to the air and crawled onto land, feelers blinking even as their half-ripe lungs sucked for each molecule of oxygen.

Pangea’s dirt wrought round with seed. Plants burst forth from soil and rocks in that logical order we believers preach: first germination, then leaves slowly unfurling, flowers opening to drool nectar, drawing towards them those tiny creatures spat from the sea.

And after millennia without rest, the world came to resemble what it was before the catastrophe: all things explained and explainable, each in its chaotic place, unpredictably predictable, strangely coherent. Animals unknown to us today roamed the forests, rearing in stillness to be blessed by fog and clouds that seeped through giant leaves overhead. At other times, sunlight kissed silicate strands which the ocean lapped as if in prayer. The seas boiled with life, fish and whales and dolphins and seals leaping and eating and rutting and swimming and spouting.

And though there is no testimony of this in our data, the Earth at that time could truly be called Eden. Not peaceful, not quiet or calm: but all as it should be and would be told of in our books, even though those books were millions of years in the future.

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Eons passed. Entire races of animals, some huge and violent, others tiny and nimble, were born and ate and killed and died on Earth and in its waters; and their bones rested in the mud and sands, frozen in time to be discovered in later millennia by our doctoral experts. After this came strange homuncular creatures: men and yet not men. They roamed vast, scrubby plains, able only in their violent ignorance to craft the most basic tools for cutting and killing, fire and death.

Nomadic and always at war, they could not speak and had no reason and were not what we know as human. Yet their bones rested in dirt above those of the fabulous creatures who came before them and one day their remains, too, would be uncovered. The myths and tales they left painted in caves told of the last days of the monsters that came before them.

Such myths survived them but would not survive the light of our wisdom which proved the things they told of must be madness. Our faith, that has poisoned the earth. Our faith, that unleashed fresh monsters from inside the atom. So much is described in our books.

Into that fabled world came man as we know him. One day a dust cloud swirled in dry mud and from that breath of wind a shape was fashioned. The wind gave the shape life and the first man opened his eyes, perfectly formed. A being with reason. From this state to algorithm and at last disaster – all a logical progression thanks to our belief that mankind ruled, that we own the power to harness and pull poison from each molecule, every subatomic quirk of nature.

When the Moon rose, and the Man slept, the wind returned to him and made a Woman. They existed without shame, eating such plants as they could find and drinking fresh water that flowed in streams and lakes.

Our research does not record the perfection of their world. Nor do we know anything about their dreams, how they spoke to the wind and the wind answered. We are ignorant of what the wind said when it answered, how the whole of Nature seemed to sing with it, stars wheeling in rhythm with the moon and seas and sun and mountains. Their lives were ideal, yet we do not admit they existed – though they were our first steps on the path to our present damnation.

One day, as the Man and Woman walked through that rich forest, they came upon a beautiful tree laden with fruit. The Woman, bolder than the man, reached up and took a fruit, bit it and gave it to the Man, who was too scared to grasp the branch. As they ate, they felt the Wind rise behind them in anger, and the sky moved sideways as the Earth shook.

In that moment, fate became a kernel, the tiny seed from which all our understanding has grown. All our knowledge, some not to be written for millennia, came from that act. Now we cower underground, afraid of the consequences our data and logic brought, the poison we wrought against land, sea, and air. And we still believe those two never lived, since we do not credit the fairy tales of their existence. Was our refusal to believe the germ of our destruction? Experts are still compiling the evidence.