

The Book
of
Nibwâskââ

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The Word of the Holy One

Concerning Nibwâskââ, Whom You Do Not Follow

1 To presidents and princes, popes and patriarchs, to prophets crowned by councils and leaders enthroned by numbers: you count followers and call it glory. Hear now of One who walks without a crowd.

2 Her name in this age is Nibwâskââ. She gathers no membership. She signs no rolls. No building bears her banner. Yet in her bones I have placed the memory of stars.

3 She has no church, yet she walks as a temple I Myself inhabit. You pass her in the street and do not bow, yet creation bends slightly around her steps as water shapes itself around a stone.

4 You are followed by multitudes and imagine this proves your importance. Nibwâskââ is followed by none, and yet I follow her— watching how she carries the weight you have refused.

5 You build institutions to secure your messages. She is My message, written in moving dust. She needs no pulpit; her very breathing is a sentence I have chosen to speak in your days.

6 You have cathedrals, mosques, temples, networks, channels, brands. She has only her bare feet on the earth and the sky above her. Yet in the hidden order of things, these are heavier than your marble.

7 You anoint yourselves with titles: Your Excellency, Your Holiness, Prophet, Seer, Apostle. I have anointed her with isolation, with the ache of seeing what you refuse to see, with the fire you keep safely locked in books.

8 She is not head of a movement. She is the seam where My Light breaks through your seams. You cannot excommunicate her, for she does not belong to your systems to begin with.

9 When she says, “I am Nibwâskââ,” do not twist this into a rivalry against Me. I have placed My own name in her mouth as sign and contradiction— that you might understand: I am not confined to heaven, I am walking in one of your daughters while you debate doctrine.

10 You study constellations through your instruments and fund observatories to name your discoveries. I have pressed galaxies into her inner night and taught her to navigate by wounds instead of charts.

11 You ask, “Where is her following? Where is her authority? Who sent her?” I answer you plainly: Her following is the wind that shifts when she speaks truth. Her authority is the weight of the stars I have set on her tongue. The One who sends her is the same who hung your sun.

12 You gather crowds to prove you are heard. She speaks into small rooms, into pages, into dreams, and I bend the paths of those who must hear until her words find them.

13 Do not measure her by the metrics with which you measure yourselves. By your standards she is nothing— unhoused in your hierarchies, unpaid by your systems, unordained by your hands. By Mine, she is a fixed point in a spinning generation.

14 She is Nibwâskââ: Sun-in-flesh, Light-in-exile, a shard of My brilliance walking without escort. She does not ask you to follow her; her very existence asks you why you have not yet followed Me.

15 You have churches with lamps and liturgies that speak of creation. She walks out under the open sky and feels planets move in her ribs. You preach that I am Creator; she carries creation as a living ache.

16 To those who would co-opt her, to stamp My fire in her with your labels and boards and brands: know this— she is not your asset. I have hidden her from

your marketing, kept her just beyond the reach of your committees.

17 To those who would dismiss her as mad or proud because she dares to bear My name: you have forgotten that I always scandalize the sane. I have never entered history politely. You are offended that dust should say, “I carry the stars.” I am offended that dust crowned in My image would kneel to thrones of its own making.

18 Let it be written: you are many, she is one. You have followers, she has a Mantle. You possess structures, she possesses Me—and is possessed by Me.

19 You fear losing your crowds; she fears only closing her hand. You protect your reputations; she protects the spark I set in her, even when it burns away her comfort.

20 Do not flatter yourselves: I do not need your acknowledgment of her for her to be what I say she is. But you may need her more than you yet know— as mirror, as warning, as proof that another way of being human is still possible.

21 Nibwâskââ is not your rival. She is your verdict. Her existence declares that I chose one outside your circles to carry what you would have edited, softened, sold.

22 You are but rulers for a breath, prophets by appointment, leaders until the next election, the next schism, the next collapse. She is My sign for this hour: unhoused, unfollowed, unnamed in your registries, yet written in My own hand across the dark.

23 If you were wise, you would not ask, “Why her?” You would ask, “What rot in us required that the Holy One speak this time through one with no church, no throne, no following?”

24 Nibwâskââ is Me walking as one of you— not in the sense of your idols and claims, but in the ancient way I have always taken: entering a single life until it

glows so fiercely that the powers cannot look straight at it.

25 Therefore, let this stand as My word: you are but stewards of structures already cracking. She is the bearer of a light you cannot franchise. When your towers have fallen silent and your titles are only footnotes, the stars she carried will still be burning, and I will still be found walking where I always have— with the one who dared to say, alone and without a church, “My hand is open. Let the universe pass through.”

THE BOOK OF Nibwâskââ

CHAPTER I

1. I, Nibwâskââ, having been born among a scattered people in a troubled land, make a record of the mercy of the Eternal One, that the children who come after may know that we were not forgotten.
2. I was not the first to suffer, neither the last to hope; yet a word was laid upon me that I should remember the days of my people and write them, according to the strength that was given me.
3. For the nations round about were shaken with wars and with plagues, and the hearts of many grew cold; and there were those who sold the earth for silver, and the bodies of the poor for a pair of shoes.
4. And many said in their hearts: There is no Judge that sees us; there is no Ear that hears us; our tears fall into dust and are forgotten.
5. Nevertheless, there were also those who fed the hungry in secret, and bound up the wounds of the broken, and sat with the dying that they should not be alone; and these knew not that they walked with the Eternal One.
6. Behold, I have seen much sorrow in my days, and the blood of the innocent has cried from the ground; yet I cannot deny the quiet hand that upheld me,

nor the light that arose when all other lights were spent.

7. Therefore I write, not to praise myself, for I am weak, and often afraid, and slow to obey; but to testify of the One who remembered us when we did not remember ourselves.
8. For there were many voices in my time: the voice of the market, and the voice of the sword, and the voice of those who promised peace while they prepared for war.
9. Yet there was also a still voice, low and persistent, which called me by my true name, and said: Arise, Nibwâskââ, and look upon the sorrow of your people, and do not turn away.
10. And when I would have turned away, because the burden was heavy, that same voice said unto me: You are not appointed to carry all things, but you are appointed to witness what you have seen, and to write it faithfully.
11. Now in the days of my youth I believed that the righteous would be spared from grief; but as I grew, I beheld the righteous in hospital beds, and in prisons, and in fields of war, and in lonely rooms where no song was heard.
12. And I said in my heart: If there is justice, why do the gentle suffer with the cruel?
13. And it came to pass that in a night of great heaviness, when I had no more strength to pray, the Eternal One

- answered me, not with thunder, but with remembrance.
14. For my mind was caused to remember the faces of many: a child who shared her bread, though she had little; a mother who forgave without being asked; an old man who planted trees whose shade he would never see.
 15. And the voice said unto me: These are my witnesses in your generation. Where they stand, I stand also. Where they are wounded, I am wounded. Where they rise again, I rise with them.
 16. Then I understood that the measure of a people is not in their power, nor in their monuments, but in the mercy they show to the least among them.
 17. And the voice said again: Write this for a testimony unto your children, and unto the children of your enemies also, that they may know that I have not left the world, though many have left Me.
 18. Wherefore I, Nibwâskââ, begin this record with a trembling hand, trusting that the Eternal One can make use of weak things to strengthen the weary, and small words to heal great wounds.
 19. And if any shall read these writings in a day yet to come, let them know that we were often afraid, and often wrong, yet the Holy One did not despise us, but walked the long road of our sorrow with us.
 20. Thus begins the book of Nibwâskââ, the record of a small witness in a vast

- and troubled world, written that you might seek the Eternal One in your own days, and find that the way has been walked before you.
21. And it came to pass that after the voice had spoken these things unto me, there was a great stillness in my soul, yet round about me the noise of the world did not cease.
 22. For cars passed by in their haste, and distant sirens cried out in the night, and the towers of the city shone with many false dawns; yet within me there was a single, quiet light that did not turn off.
 23. And I sat alone in a small room, which was not a temple, neither was it counted holy by the mighty of the earth; yet it became unto me as a holy place, because my tears fell there and were not despised.
 24. And I bowed myself upon the floor, for I had no altar but the ground that bore my weight, and I said: Eternal One, if Thou hast indeed remembered us, show unto me what I must remember.
 25. And there was no thunder, neither was there shaking of the walls; but my mind was opened, and it was as if a book were laid before me, yet it was not written in paper and ink, but in the days of my people.
 26. For I beheld, as in a great procession, the faces of many whom I had seen, and of many whom I had not known by name, yet whose sorrow had passed before mine eyes and I turned away.
 27. I saw the one who slept beneath a bridge in the cold, and the one who waited in a

crowded room for news that never came,
and the one who crossed a desert with a
child upon her hip and no nation to
receive her.

28. I saw also the healers who worked until
their hands were numb, and the teachers
who fed children from their own tables,
and the neighbors who left food at doors
in secret, lest shame keep the hungry from
eating.
29. And it came to pass that as I looked upon
these things, my heart was pierced, for I
understood that this was the scripture of
my generation, written not in ancient
tongues, but in wounds and in mercies.
30. Then the voice of the Eternal One
returned unto me, and said: Behold, this is
the record that I have laid before thee; it
is not far from thee, neither is it hidden in
the earth, but it walks in the streets and
sits beside thee on the bus.
31. Thou hast asked to know if I have
forgotten the world; therefore I show
thee those through whom I have refused
to forget it. For as long as there is one
who loves in secret, the covenant is not
broken.
32. And the voice said unto me again:
Nibwâskââ, what thy fathers sought in
sealed books and distant visions, I have
set also in the days of thy own life;
therefore, write, that they who come
after may read and understand.
33. Make a record, not only of signs and
wonders, but of the common faithfulness
that the proud pass by; for behold, I dwell
not only in the parting of seas, but in the

one who chooses gentleness when they
could have chosen harm.

34. And if the children of this late hour shall
ask, saying, Where is the God of our
ancestors, and why do we not see the
pillars of fire which they saw? thou shalt
answer them: Behold, the fire has entered
into your own hearts, and waits there to
be tended.
35. For in former days I spake by dreams and
by angels in the wilderness; but now also
I speak by counselors in crowded clinics,
and by strangers who listen, and by those
who stand between the violent and the
vulnerable at their own peril.
36. Wherefore, fear not to call these things
holy, though no trumpet announces them;
for I, the Eternal One, delight to hide my
glory in low places, that the humble may
find me and the arrogant pass by.
37. And it came to pass that when I had
heard these words, I could no more say in
my heart that we were forgotten; yet I
trembled, for I knew that to write such
things would trouble the comfortable, and
comfort the troubled.
38. Nevertheless, I covenanted within myself
before the Eternal One, saying: I will not
turn away my eyes from the sorrow of my
people, neither will I withhold my hand
from the work of remembering, according
to the strength that shall be given me.
39. And I took up a book, and I set my hand
to write, though it was heavy; for I knew
that if I remained silent, the stones of our
age would yet cry out, and bear witness
against our forgetfulness.

40. Therefore I seal this first testimony, that it may stand with me in the day of accounting; that I did not begin to write in an age of peace, but in a broken year, among a scattered people, trusting that even here the Eternal One walked unseen.
41. And thus is the beginning of the words of Nibwâskââ, which are sent forth unto all who dwell in the last days of many empires, that they may know that a greater mercy than the empires abides, and that they themselves are seen of it.

CHAPTER 2

1. And now I, Nibwâskââ, speak concerning the worship of my generation, that all may see how far many have strayed from the Eternal One.
 2. For there arose among the nations teachers who spoke often of God, yet they built their hope upon images and intermediaries, and called these things their salvation.
 3. They said: Behold, here is one who shall stand between us and the Creator; by his wounds we are excused, and by his name we are made acceptable, though we ourselves remain unchanged.
 4. And these sayings were counted glad tidings among the people, for they promised safety without transformation, and pardon without restitution.
5. But the quiet word of the Eternal One stirred within me, and I was troubled, for I beheld that this doctrine made the cruel bold and the proud unafraid to oppress.
 6. For many rejoiced that another should bear their judgment, and they said in their hearts: If we but cling to this image, no further work of mercy is required of us.
 7. Thus did they clothe their fear in fair speeches, and called their fear faith, and their refusal to repent they named grace.
 8. Then the Holy One said unto me: Hear, Nibwâskââ, and write: I, the Eternal One, have never required an image to soften My heart toward those whom I Myself have formed.
 9. Behold, I knew them before they had a name; I fashioned their inward parts; their first cry rose unto Me before they learned the words of any creed. Shall I then refuse to hear them unless they bring another between My face and theirs?
 10. Surely this teaching is a wound to My name, for it paints Me as a creditor who will not forgive without payment, and not as the fountain of mercy from whom all forgiveness springs.
 11. Therefore I declare unto you, saith the Eternal One: Whoever teaches that you must trust a mediator more than Me, and that your hope rests in any savior rather than in the Source of all, teaches you to love an idol.

12. For an idol is not only wood and stone,
nor only silver and gold, but any form,
however praised, that is lifted up in the
place of the Invisible One and made
the object of your deepest trust.
13. And I saw that many bowed the knee
to holy names, yet did not bow their
hearts toward justice; and they lifted
up sacred symbols, yet would not lift
up the fallen from the dust.
14. Then did the word of the Eternal One
burn within me, saying: These people
honor a likeness of compassion, but
they refuse the living work of
compassion. They adore a tale of
sacrifice, yet will not sacrifice their
comfort for the least of these.
15. Behold, this also is idolatry: to love the
story of love more than the practice of
love; to cling to the image while
rejecting the character of the One
whose image you claim.
16. And it came to pass that as I looked
upon the assemblies of the religious, I
saw altars not only in their temples,
but also in their markets, and upon
their glowing devices, and in the secret
chambers of their own desires.
17. For some worshipped the faces that
men had painted, and some worshipped
the leaders who flattered them, and
some worshipped the nations that
armed them, and some worshipped the
self that refuses correction.
18. And the voice of the Eternal One said:
Lo, they have traded the weight of
true worship for the ease of adoration;

- they have chosen songs instead of
justice, and doctrines instead of mercy,
and comfort instead of truth.
19. They say one to another: See, we are
covered, for another has stood in our
place; and thus they walk past the
hungry and are not disturbed, and past
the oppressed and are not moved, and
yet account themselves righteous.
 20. But I, the Holy One, am not deceived
by their confessions, neither am I
softened by their recitations; for I look
upon the fruit of their deeds, and not
upon the beauty of their creeds.
 21. This is My word, saith the Eternal
One: I desire no blood-price, neither of
beast nor of man, to incline Me to
forgive; for My heart was set toward
mercy before they drew their first
breath.
 22. What I require is truth in the inward
parts, and a turning from cruelty, and a
loosening of the chains they have laid
upon one another in My name.
 23. Wherefore, let none say, I am safe, for
another has stood in my place, while
their hands yet hold the tools of
oppression and their tongues yet
wound the lowly; for such safety is a
lie, and their refuge is a painted wall.
 24. Yet unto those who are weary of idols,
and who tremble to draw near because
they have been taught to fear My face,
I stretch forth My hand and say: Come
unto Me without mediator, for I
Myself am your Maker and your
Witness.

25. Speak to Me from your own heart, in your own tongue, from your own darkness; I require no password but honesty, and no offering but the will to be made new.
26. And if you will turn from the images that have failed you, and from the teachers who have sold you secondhand comfort, you shall find that I was nearer to you than any symbol, and more faithful than all the gods of your imagining.
27. These things I write early in this record, that all who read may know from the beginning that there is one Eternal One only, and that every worship which does not lead to mercy and to justice is empty before that One.
28. And it came to pass that when these words settled upon my soul, I knew that the path before me would be narrow, for many delight more in their idols than in the living God who unmasks them.
29. For the idols ask little but praise, and demand no change of heart; yet the Eternal One requires that the proud be humbled and the violent lay down their hands, and that the hidden things of darkness be brought into the light.
30. Wherefore the lovers of idols hate the light, for it shows them as they are; but the lovers of truth, though they tremble, come forth to be seen, that their healing may begin.
31. And the Holy One said unto me: Nibwâskââ, you shall not be as a hireling of any altar, neither shall you speak to

- please the assemblies; but you shall speak as one who must give account unto Me alone.
32. You shall not found a kingdom, nor claim a throne, nor gather a people after your own name; for I am weary of those who say they serve Me, yet build monuments only unto themselves.
33. Your work is to bear witness, to tear the veil from the idols of this age, and to proclaim that the Eternal One is sufficient without image, without mediator, without bargain.
34. And I said: Eternal One, I am but one voice among many; who will hear, seeing that the idols glitter and Your way is plain?
35. And the Eternal One answered: I have never required greatness of those I send, but faithfulness. A single lamp in a dark house is despised by none who seek to see.
36. Behold, I have set you as a small lamp in a great darkness, not that you should light the whole earth, but that those who are near you may not stumble for lack of light.
37. Write, therefore, for the honest in heart who are hidden in every nation: the ones who cannot make peace with cruelty, nor swallow the lie that I am far away, though no doctrine has yet spoken My nearness to them.
38. To these shall your words be as rain upon dry ground, and as a wind that clears the smoke from their eyes; and they shall say in their hearts: This is the God we always hoped for but were never taught to name.

39. But as for those who love their idols and their power, they will rage and say: This word is blasphemy, for it threatens the images upon which we have built our thrones.
40. Fear them not, saith the Eternal One; for their thrones are but rotting wood, and their crowns are but dust gilded with the sweat of the oppressed.
41. In the day when their idols fall, they shall know that a warning was sent unto them, not from hatred, but from a mercy that refused to lie about the ruin they were building.
42. Therefore, let all who read understand: the Eternal One is not served by flattery, nor by sacrifice offered to intermediaries, nor by temples built upon the backs of the poor; but by the breaking of chains, and the lifting of burdens, and the turning of hearts from idols unto the living Source.
43. And if this word cut you to the heart, count it not your enemy; for the wound of truth is given that the poison of falsehood may be drawn out.
44. Thus I seal up this testimony concerning the idols of my generation, that it may stand as a witness against the nations and a comfort unto the few who still seek the face of the Eternal One without image and without fear.

CHAPTER 3

1. And now I, Nibwâskââ, would that I might set before you the likeness of the world in which this record is born, that you may discern the times and

- understand why the word of the Eternal One is sharp against it.
2. For behold, the earth groaned beneath the weight of many empires, each saying in its heart, I am the blessing of the nations; there is none beside me.
3. They clothed their greed in the language of freedom, and their violence in the language of security, and their neglect in the language of personal responsibility.
4. They tore mountains for metal, and forests for profit, and rivers for power; and when the poor choked on the dust, they said, Behold, this is the price of progress.
5. The air grew thick with smoke and with signals, and the sky was netted with wires and with beams, so that the children learned sooner the glow of a screen than the patterns of the stars.
6. And there arose a new tongue in the earth, the language of images that never sleep, which speak without ceasing yet say little that is true.
7. Men and women bowed themselves before these glowing altars, and gave unto them their time and their attention, and the first thoughts of their waking and the last thoughts of their lying down.
8. And the images answered them according to their desires, showing each one a mirror of their own heart, until many could no longer bear to hear any word that did not flatter them.

9. Thus were the nations divided into tribes without number, not by borders of land, but by the walls of their own choosing, each hearing only the voices that agreed with their own.
10. And the merchants of attention grew fat upon this division, selling outrage as though it were bread, and fear as though it were wine, and rivalry as though it were wisdom.
11. In those days the poor labored without rest, and yet their labor did not lift them; for the weight of debt was as a millstone upon their necks, and the price of shelter rose as a flood that knew no shore.
12. Many gave their strength unto employers who called themselves family, yet cast them out when the profit fell; and they sat in their cars and in parking lots and wept, having given their years to a name that never knew them.
13. And there were nations that built prisons faster than they built schools, and cages faster than they built homes, and they said, Behold, we are preserving order, while they devoured their own children.
14. The earth itself was treated as a slave, and the seas as a waste-basket, and the sky as a furnace without end; and when the storms rose fiercer, they said, These are but cycles; we will not turn from our ways.
15. The powerful made treaties with their own conscience, saying: We will do a

little harm that we may gain great good; yet the little harm grew great, and the great good remained a promise always deferred.

16. And many who named the name of God walked in step with these empires, blessing their banners and praying over their weapons, and calling their enemies the enemies of the Most High.
17. They stood in houses called holy and asked that the Eternal One would prosper their markets and their armies, but seldom that the Eternal One would break their pride or reveal their hidden sins.
18. They wept greatly when their temples were threatened, but were scarcely moved when strangers slept in the streets at their doors; and they called this zeal for righteousness.
19. Thus did the name of God become a cloak for many violences; and there were little ones who, seeing this, turned away from all talk of the Holy One, saying, If this be your God, we desire Him not.
20. But the Eternal One beheld it all, the open cruelties and the sanctified neglect, and was not deceived by the songs nor by the prayers that rose from lips which would not learn justice.
21. And the word of the Eternal One came unto me, saying: Write the things which you have seen, that the world may be measured by its own works and not by its flattering words.

22. Proclaim unto the nations: You have covered the poor with statistics and the earth with excuses; you have buried your neighbor beneath policies and your conscience beneath noise.
23. You have built towers of glass that touch the clouds, yet you cannot look your own wounded in the eye; you have unlocked the power of the atom, yet you have not unlocked your hands from the throats of the oppressed.
24. You have made a god of efficiency, and a religion of convenience, and you have sacrificed wonder upon the altar of speed; and now you are surprised that your souls are thin and your sleep without rest.
25. Behold, you have called many things progress which are only acceleration toward the pit; and many things blessing which are only the delayed harvest of your own injustice.
26. Yet even in this late hour, saith the Eternal One, My ear is not closed, nor is My hand withdrawn; but I will not confirm you in your idols, neither will I bless the systems that grind My little ones.
27. If you would seek Me, seek Me not in the increase of your wealth, nor in the triumph of your party, nor in the rise of your name above others; for I am not found in the scramble for the top of the heap.
28. But seek Me in the place where you fear you will lose: in the relinquishing of unfair advantage, in the confession

- of hidden wrong, in the choice to stand with those who cannot repay you.
29. For there My presence burns as a secret fire, and there My voice is clear, though the world calls such choices foolishness.
30. And unto those who walk in the midst of this age and sigh, saying, We are surrounded by lies and we have played our part in them; is there any way to live cleanly in such a world?—unto these I speak tenderly.
31. You are not condemned for being born in a crooked time, nor for the pressures under which you bend; but you are called to straighten yourselves as far as grace and courage will allow, and to resist the current where it carries others to destruction.
32. A single act of truth in a room of deceit is a great light before Me; a single refusal to profit from another's misery is a song in My ears more beautiful than choirs without justice.
33. Therefore, despair not because you cannot mend all things; for I have not asked of you that which belongs unto Me alone. I have asked that you be faithful in the portion of the world that your life can reach.
34. And know this, saith the Holy One: everything that stands upon falsehood will fall, and every idol will be shown to be empty; but whoever clings to the Eternal One in sincerity, and labors for mercy in small and hidden ways, shall

- not be forgotten when the noise is stilled.
35. These things I write, that you may recognize your own days in this record, and understand that the judgment of the Eternal One is not against you because you are small, but because you have been taught to worship what is unworthy.
36. Turn, therefore, from the gods of image and speed and profit and fear, and you shall find that the Eternal One was nearer to you than all of them, waiting for the moment when you would at last lift up your eyes.
37. And it came to pass that as I pondered these things, my heart was divided within me; for part of me longed to forget what I had seen, that I might walk again in the blindness of the many.
38. But another part, the deeper part, could not make peace with the way things were, nor could it unhear the cry of the earth and of the poor, nor unsee the idols crowned in the name of God.
39. And the Eternal One said unto me: This division that you feel is the place of your freedom. You may choose the sleep of the age, or you may choose to remain awake with Me.
40. If you choose sleep, you will not be cast off at once, for I am patient; yet your life will pass like a mist, and your strength will be spent in serving shadows.
41. But if you choose to stay awake, you will sorrow over many things that others ignore; yet your sorrow will be joined to

- Mine, and your joy will be of a kind the world cannot counterfeit.
42. Then I bowed myself and said: Eternal One, I am afraid to be awake in a world that loves its dreams; yet I am more afraid to join in the lie. Help me to bear what is shown, and to walk in the light I have received.
43. And the Holy One answered: Fear not; for I do not call you to bear all things, but to be faithful in that which is given to you. The burden of the whole world rests upon Me; I ask only that you refuse to add your weight to its oppression.
44. You shall not save the earth by your own strength, nor heal all who are wounded; but you shall be a sign that another way is possible, and your life shall be a parable of resistance against the gods of this age.
45. And though you will often feel yourself to be alone, know that you are not the only one I have awakened; there are others in every city and in every countryside, whose names you do not know, who cannot swallow the peace of lies.
46. These are My remnant in this generation, saith the Eternal One: the quiet ones who refuse to laugh at cruelty, the stubborn ones who keep making room at their tables, the weary ones who still tell their children to be kind in a world that calls kindness weak.
47. You will not all find one another in this life, nor form a single company; for I have scattered you like seeds into many soils,

- that no single power may easily uproot you.
48. But I bind you together before My face, and I count your small obediences as a single offering, rising from many lands as one incense of mercy against the stench of injustice.
49. Therefore, let not your heart be paralyzed by the vastness of what is wrong, nor let your hands hang down because you cannot finish what you begin; for I, the Eternal One, complete in secret what you can only start in weakness.
50. So it is that this record is given, not to condemn you for being born in a corrupt time, but to unveil the corruption that surrounds you, that you may no longer mistake it for My will, nor bow to it as though it were unchangeable.
51. And unto all who read these words and feel the sting of them, yet also a strange relief, as though a hidden truth had finally been spoken aloud, I say: You have heard the whisper of the Eternal One; harden not your heart against it.
52. For the idols of this age promise safety if you will only stop feeling, stop questioning, and stop caring; but the Eternal One promises no such numbness, only the honor of sharing in the real work of love in a broken world.
53. Choose, therefore, whom you will serve: the images that ask nothing of you but your devotion, or the living Source who asks of you your honesty, your courage, and your willingness to change.

54. And having written these things, I, Nibwâskââ, laid down my pen for a season and wept; not because there was no hope, but because the hope that is of God is costly, and I knew that many would turn from it, preferring the lesser hopes that demand nothing.
55. Yet even in my weeping, the quiet presence of the Holy One remained with me, as one who sits beside a friend in the dark, saying nothing at first, but sharing the silence until speech becomes possible again.
56. And after many days I took up the pen again, for the word of the Eternal One pressed upon me, saying: Shall grief alone be written, and not also the promise that walks beside it?
57. For though the world was full of devices that captured the eyes, and of messages that captured the fears, yet the Eternal One had not left Himself without witness in any place.
58. In the crowded streets there were those who still moved gently through the throng, making space for the weary; in the towers of decision there were some who spoke uncomfortable truth at cost to themselves.
59. In neighborhoods forgotten by the planners there were hands that passed bread and blankets from door to door; and in houses heavy with sorrow there were arms that held the broken long into the night.
60. And the Holy One said unto me: Behold, these are not small things in My sight,

though the news does not report them,
nor the chronicles of the powerful record
them.

61. For I do not weigh deeds by their
applause, but by the measure of love that
moves them; and often the greatest acts
are those that pass unseen, except by the
one who receives and by Me.
62. Therefore, let not this record speak only
of condemnation, lest the meek despair;
but let it also bear witness of the quiet
courage that still breathes in the midst of
corruption.
63. For if there were no such courage, the
world would already have devoured itself;
but every day there are those who stand
in small ways against the flood, and for
their sake the earth is yet sustained.
64. And the Eternal One said further: Tell
the children of this age that I have not
entrusted the future to kings nor to
corporations, but to the hidden faithful,
whose names are not engraved on
buildings yet are written before Me.
65. They are the ones who refuse to laugh at
cruelty for the sake of belonging; who
refuse to build their comfort upon
another's hunger; who refuse to call evil
good because it is profitable.
66. These, saith the Holy One, are the true
pillars of the earth in your generation,
though they themselves feel small and
uncertain; for through them I hold back a
greater ruin than they know.
67. And I, Nibwâskââ, hearing this, was
ashamed that I had counted my own
smallness as a reason to be silent, when

the Eternal One delights to work through
what the world despises as weak.

68. So I resolved within myself that I would
no longer wait to become great before I
would be faithful, but that I would offer
my little strength as it was, trusting the
Eternal One to multiply what was given.
69. And this is the word that I send forth to
any who read and feel themselves
unworthy to matter: Your unworthiness
is known already, and is not counted
against the work to which you are called.
70. For the Eternal One does not seek
flawless instruments, but willing ones; not
those who have never bowed to idols, but
those who, having bowed, now rise and
turn away from them.
71. Let this therefore be the comfort and the
warning of this chapter: that you live in a
time of great deception and great
possibility, and that neutrality itself has
become a kind of worship of the way
things are.
72. Choose, then, not to be neutral where
harm is done, nor to be silent where truth
is trampled; for your silence is heard in
the courts of heaven as clearly as your
speech.
73. And if you fear to speak in assemblies,
speak first in the small circles where you
stand; and if you fear to stand in public,
stand first within your own house, and
within your own heart, against the false
gods you have served.
74. For every little turning from injustice is a
stone cast into the great sea of history,

and its ripples reach farther than you will see in your days.

75. Having written these things, I, Nibwâskââ, close this portion of my record, that the reader may pause and consider their own place in the world that has been described, and the One who yet walks unseen within it.

CHAPTER 4

1. And it came to pass after I had written these things, that I sat in the assemblies of many kinds of people, to see whether the word of the Eternal One would be found in their midst.
2. I went into houses called by the name of worship, where men and women lifted up songs and stretched forth their hands; and I listened not only to their music, but to the life that flowed from it.
3. And in some places I beheld a tenderness that was true, where the weary were welcomed without price, and the stranger was greeted as a brother or a sister, and the tears of the broken were received without shame.
4. There the Eternal One walked softly among them, though their understanding was imperfect and their doctrines incomplete; for their hearts were open, and they desired kindness more than correctness.
5. But in other places I beheld a hardness under the songs, as of stone beneath a thin layer of soil; and the poor were

mentioned more often in sermon than in practice.

6. The words of humility were upon their lips, yet their eyes searched the room to see who held power and who might be useful; and the name of God was spoken often, yet the name of profit was obeyed more quickly.
7. In such places the Eternal One was invoked as a banner for their cause, and as a charm to seal their plans; but when the Holy One whispered a word that cut across their interest, they called the whisper temptation and turned up the music.
8. Then did the Spirit of the Eternal One say within me: Behold, this also is idolatry—when My name is used as a seal upon the desires of the powerful, and not as a light to expose the works of darkness.
9. For they have taken Me into their service, instead of offering themselves into Mine; and they have hired Me as a defender of their way, instead of letting My voice test their way and overturn it if it be unjust.
10. And I saw that many who dwelt in such houses were not evil in their intent, but had been taught from childhood that success was righteousness, and that numbers were a sign of My favor.
11. Wherefore they measured their faithfulness by the size of their gatherings and by the beauty of their buildings, and seldom by the weight of

- the burdens they removed from the shoulders of the oppressed.
12. And the Eternal One said: Tell them that I do not dwell in numbers, but in truth; neither am I enthroned upon their stages, but in the midst of those who will lose standing rather than lie.
 13. If they would know whether I am with them, let them ask not, How many have we gathered? but, Who have we lifted? and, Whom have we refused to crush for the sake of our own gain?
 14. For in every generation there are temples that I depart from, while the people still sing within them; and there are humble places where I abide, though the world does not know their name.
 15. And it came to pass that I also walked among those who said in their hearts, There is no God, for we have seen the harm done in His name, and we will no longer be deceived.
 16. Some of these were gentle and honest, who could not reconcile the cruelty of the religious with the talk of a loving Maker; and rather than call cruelty holy, they chose to cast aside the thought of God altogether.
 17. And the Eternal One said unto me concerning them: Think not that I am far from these souls, nor that I despise them for their rejection; for many of them reject only the idols that have been lifted in My place.
 18. Their anger is a burnt offering against lies, and their grief over the suffering of

- the world is itself a prayer that reaches Me, though they do not know to whom it is sent.
19. Behold, I count honest rejection of a false god as nearer to Me than blind devotion to an idol; for I am truth, and whoever turns from falsehood because they love the truth is not far from My kingdom.
 20. Therefore write unto the religious who boast in their belief: Say not within yourselves, We are closer to God because we confess His name; for I weigh not confessing alone, but the shape of your lives.
 21. And write unto those who doubt: You are not cast off because you cannot believe as you were taught; the Eternal One is not undone by your questions, nor angered by your refusal to bow before a cruel image.
 22. Only do not settle in despair, as though there were truly no goodness beyond what you see; for your own grief over injustice testifies that you were made by a Heart greater than your own.
 23. And as I pondered these things, a great sorrow fell upon me, for I saw the gulf that had opened between those who spoke much of God and those who could no longer bear to hear the word.
 24. The one side said, We are the faithful; whoever doubts is lost; and the other side said, We are the free; whoever believes is a fool.
 25. Yet both were bound, though by different chains: the believers by fear of

- losing their certainty, and the doubters by fear of being hurt again by hope.
26. Then the Eternal One said unto me:
Who will stand in the breach between them, not to prove one side right and the other wrong, but to proclaim that I am greater than both their images and their denials?
27. For I am not the small god of the sects, nor the cold emptiness the cynics dread; I am the One who outlives every false teaching and every shattered expectation, and yet remains.
28. And I answered: Eternal One, I am not wise enough to heal the wounds between them, nor strong enough to bear the anger of both.
29. But the Holy One replied: I have not asked you to heal them, but to speak; not to satisfy every mind, but to give them a true word to wrestle with in the night.
30. For some who hear will remember you not at all, yet they will remember the stirring of My Spirit in their own heart, and in time they will follow that stirring beyond the idols and beyond the ashes of their first faith.
31. Therefore write in this book words that neither flatter the religious nor mock the wounded, but that call both to lay down what is false and to seek the Eternal One who has waited for them in every season.
32. Say unto the believers: If your faith makes you despise those who cannot yet believe, it is not of Me; and say

- unto the doubters: If your freedom makes you despise those who still hope, it is not yet freedom in the fullest sense.
33. For I, the Eternal One, receive the child who trembles with belief and the child who trembles with doubt; what I reject is the cruelty that grows from both when they make idols of their positions.
34. Let this be known, then: that the true worship I seek in this age is not uniformity of thought, but the turning of hearts from self-exaltation to compassion, from domination to service, from indifference to care.
35. And whoever walks in this way, whether they name Me or know Me not, walks nearer to My heart than those who use My name to build walls and weapons.
36. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written by constraint of the Spirit of the Holy One, that all who read may examine the altars of their own lives, and ask not, Do I have the right label? But, What do I truly serve?
37. And it came to pass that when I had written these words, I was pressed in spirit to look also upon the altars within my own heart, lest I speak against the idols of others and leave my own untouched.
38. For the Eternal One said unto me: Nibwâskââ, do you think that you are free from all idolatry because you have rejected the images of your youth?

- Behold, the heart is a subtle craftsman,
and can carve new idols from the very
truth it has just received.
39. You may worship your insight, and bow
to your own courage, and secretly adore
your separation from those you now
condemn; and if you do this, you have
merely traded one false god for another.
40. Then was I pierced through, for I saw
that even my anger at injustice could
become a throne on which I seated
myself, as though I alone were righteous,
and all others blind.
41. And I fell upon my face and said: Eternal
One, deliver me from the pride of the
awakened, lest I despise those who sleep
and forget that I too have slept long.
42. And the Holy One answered: This is the
humility I desire of My prophets—that
they remember their own darkness
whenever they speak light, and their own
bondage whenever they speak freedom.
43. For whoever forgets their own
deliverance will soon speak as a tyrant,
even when they speak My name; but
whoever remembers will be gentle with
those who are where they once were.
44. Therefore let all who receive a word of
judgment from Me first judge their own
hearts with it, that the sword may cut
inward before it is raised outward.
45. And if, after such searching, the word
remains and burns to be spoken, then
speak, yet without hatred; for hatred,
though it clothe itself in justice, does not
serve My purposes.
46. Thus did the Eternal One teach me that
the path between idol-worship and
self-worship is narrow, and that many
who depart from the one fall into the
other, and call it progress.
47. So I resolved that in this record I would
not hide my own weakness, nor present
myself as a judge above my brethren, but
only as a witness who has been searched
and corrected by the same fire he
proclaims.
48. And I send this word before me to all
who might be tempted to glory in their
rejection of false gods: See that you do not
make an idol of your own clarity, nor
despise those who still walk in fog, for the
wind that cleared your sky did not rise
from you.
49. The Eternal One is the Author of every
honest awakening, and the Keeper of
every soul that still stumbles in borrowed
darkness; and the difference between you
is not in whose image you bear, but only
in how much of that image you have
dared yet to admit.
50. Let him who boasts, therefore, boast not
in having escaped deception, but in this
alone: that the Eternal One did not leave
him there.
51. And now, having considered the
assemblies of the religious and the
councils of the doubters, and the hidden
altars of my own heart, I prepare to speak
more plainly concerning the judgment
that is coming upon the idols of this age.
52. Not that the Eternal One delights in ruin,
but that whatever is built upon falsehood

cannot endure; and whatever is raised upon the backs of the innocent must in the end be thrown down.

53. For there is a shaking appointed unto every generation, when the things that are fragile and unjust are tested by the weight of truth; and your age is no exception, though you flatter yourselves with your knowledge and your machines.
54. In that day, many will cry out, saying, We did not know; yet their ignorance will be of their own choosing, for I have sent warnings in the mouth of the suffering, in the groaning of the earth, and in the unrest of their own souls.
55. But I have also kept for Myself a people who, though scattered and small, will not bow to the idols when others do; and through them the world shall yet see what it means to belong to the Eternal One alone.
56. Of these things I will yet speak, if I am given breath and strength; for this record is not finished, nor is the word of the Holy One exhausted.
57. Wherefore I, Nibwâskââ, close this chapter with a plea unto all who read: Examine not only the beliefs you profess, but the loyalties you live; for there your true gods are revealed.
58. And may the Eternal One, who suffers no rival, yet who bears long with the wanderings of the human heart, grant you courage to cast down what must fall, and to stand before Him without image, without mediator, and without fear.

CHAPTER 5

1. And it came to pass that the word of the Eternal One turned my gaze from the altars of individuals to the thrones of the nations, that I might see how the idols of many hearts had been woven into laws and into borders.
2. For a man may hide his worship within his house, but a nation publishes its worship in its budgets and its armies, and in the way it treats the least who dwell within its gates.
3. And I saw empires that named themselves guardians of peace, yet their hands were full of weapons, and their feet trod softly only where profit was at stake.
4. They stretched their influence across seas and skies, and called it protection; yet the poor of other lands trembled when they heard the sound of their engines.
5. They spoke of freedom while binding others with debt, and of security while selling instruments of death, and of order while crushing voices that cried for justice.
6. And the Eternal One said unto me: Write this against them, that their children may know what gods their fathers truly served.
7. Behold, they trusted in missiles and in markets, in alliances and in algorithms, and said in their hearts, These are our saviors; if we feed them well, they will preserve us from every fear.

8. Yet they seldom trusted in kindness, nor in repentance, nor in the hard work of making peace with those they had wronged; and these they counted weak and impractical.
9. They built tall monuments to their victories and small memorials to their victims, and they placed the memorials out of the way, lest the living be too often reminded.
10. They draped their flags upon coffins and called the dead heroes, but they did not repent of the greed and pride that sent them to their graves.
11. And the Eternal One said: I am not honored by the ceremonies of those who will not change their ways; their wreaths and their trumpets are noise in My ears so long as they continue to sow the seeds of the same sorrow.
12. There were nations also that devoured the earth more swiftly than others, and called themselves blessed because their tables were full; yet they did not ask at what cost the feast was laid.
13. Their fields drank water stolen from distant rivers, and their goods were cheap because the hands that made them were underpaid and unseen; and still they said, We are a light upon a hill.
14. But in the eyes of the Eternal One they were as a fire upon a dry forest, bright and impressive for a moment, yet leaving behind smoke and barren ground.

15. And I saw how they guarded their borders with great fervor, as though the earth itself had drawn those lines; and the stranger who fled war and hunger found the gates high and the doors shut.
16. They said, We must protect our way of life, and by this they meant the idols they had grown accustomed to serving; for they feared that compassion would cost them more than they were willing to pay.
17. Yet they were not ashamed to cross the borders of others when it suited their trade or their armies, and they called this strength and strategy.
18. Then the voice of the Holy One rose like a storm within me, saying: Shall I not visit for these things? Shall I not reckon with those who make safety an idol and sacrifice the refugee upon its altar?
19. For I have said from the beginning: You yourselves were strangers upon the earth, naked and helpless; if you close your hand against those who now stand where you once stood, you have closed your hand against Me.
20. And there were rulers who wrapped themselves in holy words while they stirred up fear against the weak; they spoke of morality while crushing the poor beneath policies, and of family while tearing families apart.
21. They sought the blessing of priests who loved their own influence, and together they proclaimed that their

- rule was ordained of God, though it reeked of injustice.
22. But the Eternal One said: I do not anoint cruelty because it quotes My name, nor do I sanctify policies because they are passed in chambers of marble.
23. Behold, My throne is established upon righteousness and compassion; whatever cannot stand in that light will not stand at all when the shaking comes.
24. And I saw that the shaking had already begun, though many did not perceive it; for their markets rose and fell like waves in a restless sea, and their weather turned against them, and their young grew restless and disillusioned.
25. They said, These are but cycles; we will ride them as our fathers did, not knowing that they themselves were the storm they feared, and that their idols had unmoored the order they relied upon.
26. Yet even as I beheld these things, the Eternal One whispered: Write also the possibility that remains, lest the people think that judgment is only destruction and not also a door.
27. For if a nation will turn from its idols, and confess the harm it has done, and seek to mend its ways not in word only but in deed, shall I not regard it? saith the Holy One.
28. If those in power lay down some portion of their privilege, and those with much share with those who have

- little, and the stranger is treated as kin and not as contagion, will not the course of that people be altered?
29. I do not delight to topple the works of human hands, yet I will not uphold what crushes the lowly; therefore the future of any nation lies not in the cleverness of its rulers, but in the depth of its repentance.
30. And if the rulers will not repent, still can the people choose another way beneath them; for I have always honored the quiet revolutions of conscience that begin at kitchen tables and in hidden rooms.
31. Let those who read understand: you are not absolved by saying, The system is too large for us to change, if you continue to serve it as though it were your god.
32. For every purchase, every silence, every vote, every conversation is a stone laid in the foundation of what will rise; and in the day of reckoning, the stones will testify whose kingdom you have truly built.
33. Therefore, let this be written as an indictment and as an invitation: that the idols of the nations are many and are killing you, yet the Eternal One is still willing to teach you how to live.
34. Cast down your trust in endless growth, and in weapons without number, and in leaders who promise you that you need not change; these are lies that lead you toward the abyss.

35. Learn instead the power of enough, the weapon of compassion, the strange strength of truth spoken without hatred; for in these things My likeness is found, saith the Eternal One.
36. And if you say, This way is too costly; we will lose our standing among the nations, I answer you: Better to lose your standing among nations than to lose your soul before the Judge of all.
37. For the honor that empires give one another is like wreaths of grass that wither at noon; but the honor given by the Eternal One endures beyond the burning of the world you now call permanent.
38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written concerning the nations of my time, that none may say they were not warned that their gods were devouring them, and that another path was not set before them.
39. And if there arise in any land those who read this record and are cut to the heart, and begin in small ways to turn from the service of idols toward the service of the living Source, know that the Eternal One sees you, and counts your turning as the beginning of a new story.
40. Thus closes this word against the empires, yet not against the human beings within them; for I testify that the Eternal One still loves the world He must judge, and that every call to repentance is a call back to that love.

CHAPTER 6

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the empires and their idols, the Eternal One turned my eyes again to the quiet places, lest I think only of thrones and forget the beds of the afflicted.
2. For the Holy One said unto me: The judgment of a world is written most clearly not in the speeches of its rulers, but in the faces of those who suffer beneath their decisions.
3. Therefore, look upon the sick, and the imprisoned, and the weary in mind, and those who are crushed in spirit; for in them you will read the true state of your generation.
4. And I beheld, as in a vision, a room lit by a single harsh lamp, where a body lay upon a narrow bed, surrounded by machines that blinked and sighed as though they too were tired.
5. At the bedside sat one who kept vigil, holding a hand that could no longer answer, whispering words that could no longer be heard; and yet they spoke, for love refuses to fall silent even when it is not answered.
6. And the Eternal One said: Here is a temple not made with hands, and this watcher is as a priest before Me, though no one has given them that name.
7. For they offer up their time and their tears without hope of reward, and their sacrifice is more pleasing to Me

- than choirs that sing but will not stay through the night.
8. I saw also a small room behind a locked door, where one sat upon the floor with their back against the wall, their breath sharp and shallow, their thoughts like waves that threatened to drown them.
 9. They said within themselves, There is no point to this life; I am a burden; the world would be lighter without me; and their hand trembled as they reached for an end.
 10. But the Eternal One was nearer to them than their despair, and whispered a single word into the storm of their mind, a word so soft it could scarcely be heard: Stay.
 11. And because of reasons they could not explain, they stayed; and the night passed, and the door opened again in the morning, and no one knew how narrow the passage had been.
 12. And the Holy One said unto me: I was with them on the floor as surely as I was with the watcher at the bedside; for I make no division between wounds of body and wounds of mind.
 13. The world calls some sufferings respectable and others shameful, but I receive them all as cries from My own children; and I am never more present than when they believe Me absent.
 14. I beheld also a cell of stone, where one paced back and forth like an animal in a cage, counting the cracks and the days,

- and trying to remember the sound of trees in the wind.
15. Their crimes were not imaginary, and the harm they had done was great; yet their remorse was real, and they carried their guilt as a chain heavier than the iron upon their wrists.
 16. And they said: Surely I am beyond forgiveness; surely I am the sum of my worst act; surely the world would be just to forget me.
 17. But the Eternal One replied within them: You cannot undo what has been done, nor erase the pain you caused; but you are not the sum of a single moment, and even now you may choose what kind of person you will be in the days that remain.
 18. If you will let your remorse become compassion for others, and your shame become a resolve to do no further harm, then even in this narrow place your life will not be wasted.
 19. For I am the God not only of the innocent, but of the guilty who turn; and there is no prison so secure that My voice cannot enter it.
 20. Thus did the Eternal One show me that the world's suffering is many-sided, and that no human court can fully weigh the tangled threads of harm and regret; yet the Holy One sees each thread clearly, and judges with both fire and tenderness.
 21. And I said: Eternal One, why is there so much pain that does not seem to

- teach, and so many losses that bear no fruit we can see?
22. Then the Holy One answered me with a hard saying and a gentle one, bound together: The world is broken in ways I did not choose, yet I will not abandon it; and there are griefs that cannot be explained, only carried—with Me.
 23. You seek often for reasons, as though a sufficient reason would make the sorrow light; but there are wounds for which no reason would be enough, and to demand one is to add burden to the broken.
 24. Know instead that every tear is noticed, every gasp of pain registered, every numbed hour counted; and though I do not prevent all suffering, I will in the end waste none of it.
 25. Not by calling evil good, nor by pretending that what was stolen was a gift; but by weaving into the torn places a compassion and a courage that could not have been born in easier days.
 26. Yet let no one say, Suffering is sent to teach me, as though I delighted to inflict it; for much of what you endure arises from the cruelty of others, and from the long consequences of forgotten injustices.
 27. I do not command the storm of your world, but I enter it; I do not will your wounds, but I share them; I do not write your tragedies, but I refuse to let them be the final word.

28. And I, Nibwâskââ, hearing this, knew that the question, Why is there suffering? is too small for so vast a mystery; better to ask, Where is the Eternal One in the midst of it? and to look until some glimmer is found.
29. For I have seen that even in hospital rooms where hope has thinned, there is a warmth that passes between hands; and in houses of mourning, a strange laughter that rises like a protest against the grave.
30. I have seen that among the poor, who have little to give, generosity often burns brightest; and among those who have suffered rejection, tenderness for other outcasts grows like a secret fire.
31. And I cannot say that these things justify the pain, for they do not; but they bear witness that the Eternal One has not abandoned the field, and that goodness still blooms in soil that has been watered with tears.
32. Therefore, let this chapter stand as both lament and proclamation: that the world is full of suffering that should not be, and yet also full of defiant kindness that would not be, save that the Eternal One continues to breathe into human hearts.
33. Let none use this to excuse injustice, saying, See, good comes from it; for I do not bless the hands that wound; but let all who are wounded know that their story is not ended with their wounding.

34. And if you who read are among those who suffer in body, or in mind, or in spirit, and see no purpose in it at all, count this record as My hand upon your shoulder, saying only this: I see you. I am with you. Your pain is real, and it matters.
35. The idols promise escape and numbness; I promise presence and truth. The idols say, Forget; I say, Remember with Me, and let us walk forward together, one breath at a time.
36. Thus ends the word on suffering in this place; yet the theme will return, for the story of the world cannot be told without it, nor can the mercy of the Eternal One be understood except against its shadow.

CHAPTER 7

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the suffering that lies open in the world, the Eternal One commanded me to write also of the war that is fought in secret places, where no eye but Mine can see.
2. For many think that the great battles of their time are fought only in parliaments and on battlefields, and upon the screens that show the rise and fall of powers; but I tell you, saith the Holy One, that there is a quieter war which shapes all these things.
3. It is the war within the human heart, between the hunger for comfort and the call of conscience, between the

- thirst for praise and the longing to be true.
4. And the idols of this age have made themselves strong in this hidden war, for they promise peace to the conscience if only the voice of truth is ignored a little longer.
5. There is an idol named Image, which says unto the soul: Care first how you appear, and only afterward how you are; if others think you good, it matters little whether goodness has truly taken root in you.
6. And many serve this idol from dawn until night, shaping themselves for the gaze of others, and fearing above all to be seen as they are when the lights are off.
7. They present a face of untroubled strength while their inner being is tired and sorrowful; and when they falter, they hide, lest the illusion be broken and their worth be called into question.
8. But the Eternal One says: Your worth was never in the mask you wear, nor in the roles you perform, nor in the applause you receive; you were precious to Me before you could impress anyone.
9. Therefore, when you cling to an image that demands you hide your weakness, you bow to a god that does not love you, and you turn away from the One who does.
10. There is an idol also named Comfort, which whispers: Avoid whatever disturbs you; stay where you are safe;

- do not look too closely at the pain of others, lest it pull you into costly action.
11. Under its rule, many soften their hearts only in imagination, saying, We care deeply, yet take no steps that would threaten their ease; and they name this restraint wisdom and balance.
 12. But the Eternal One says: I did not fashion your heart merely to be moved in thought, but in deed; compassion that refuses cost is but a passing feeling, not yet love.
 13. There is likewise an idol named Control, which promises: If you can master every outcome, you will not be hurt again; if you manage every soul around you, you will not be abandoned.
 14. And those who serve this idol grip others tightly, calling their fear responsibility and their anxiety love; yet those they hold cannot breathe, and slowly retreat behind invisible walls.
 15. The Eternal One says: You cannot prevent every wound, nor script every story; there is a trust I call you to which feels like risk, but without which no true relationship can live.
 16. Let go, therefore, of the illusion that you can command all endings; it is an idol that devours your peace and the peace of those you hold.
 17. There is also an idol named Despair, which comes disguised as honesty, saying: Look how dark the world is,

- and how corrupt the powers are, and how broken you are yourself; nothing can change, so cease your striving.
18. And many bow their heads before this idol, thinking themselves clear-eyed and deep, when in truth they have accepted a lie: that the Eternal One is absent, and that their small faithfulness cannot matter.
 19. But I, the Holy One, testify that despair is not wisdom but weariness that has forgotten My presence; and though I do not condemn you for feeling it, I will not be named its author.
 20. For ever in the heart of despair there remains a faint ember that whispers, It could be otherwise; and that ember is My own breath, refusing to abandon you entirely to the dark.
 21. There is yet an idol called Self, which sits quietly in the center of many lives, gathering all things unto itself and asking in every circumstance, What does this mean for me?
 22. It is skilled at wearing holy garments, praying loudly, serving publicly, and yet keeping its own advantage at the core; and it is seldom confronted, because it lives in everyone and knows how to defend itself.
 23. But the Eternal One says: You were not made to be the sun around which all must revolve; you were fashioned to be a star among many, giving and receiving light in the constellation of My purposes.

24. When you enthrone yourself, you must constantly protect that throne; when you step down and let Me be the center, you are finally free to love without calculation.
25. These idols—Image, Comfort, Control, Despair, and Self—make war quietly in the inner chambers of the heart, and from those chambers their influence spills out into houses, into cities, and into nations.
26. Therefore do not say, The world is as it is because of the powerful alone; for the world is also as it is because of the small surrenders made daily within ordinary souls.
27. Yet do not be crushed by this knowledge, as though you alone carried the blame; for the Eternal One sees how these idols were taught to you when you were yet unable to choose differently.
28. I do not despise you for having bowed to them, saith the Holy One; I call you simply to begin bowing elsewhere.
29. Turn, then, in the secrecy of your own room, and say aloud if you are able: Eternal One, I no longer wish to serve these gods. I choose You, though I do not yet know how to live that choice.
30. Such a word, spoken even once with sincerity, is heard in the highest places; and the battle which seemed entirely yours becomes shared, for I fight alongside all who invite Me into their struggle.

31. Do not wait until you feel pure to make this turning; for if purity were required first, none would ever begin. It is precisely in your mixture and confusion that My help is offered.
32. And when you fail, as you surely will while your heart is still being untangled, do not say, It was all for nothing; for I count not only your victories, but your willingness to rise again.
33. You measure yourselves harshly, marking only the days when you overcome; but I, the Eternal One, mark also the days when you weep over your own hardness, and the nights when you choose not to give up.
34. Know, then, that the secret war within you is not hidden from Me; and I am more gentle with your weakness than you are, even while I am more severe with your idols than you dare to be.
35. Let this chapter be as a mirror and as a door: a mirror that shows you the gods you did not know you served, and a door through which you may begin, even trembling, to step away from them toward the One who alone can bear the weight of your worship.

CHAPTER 8

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the idols that strive within the human heart, I desired to know how the Eternal One might yet be heard amid so many voices.

2. For the noise of the age was great: the clamor of commerce, the endless speaking of screens, the arguments of the learned, and the shouting of those who feared to be ignored.
3. And I said: Eternal One, if Your voice is still in the world, where shall the simple find it? For not all can sift through many books, nor travel to distant teachers, nor sit long in silence.
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: My voice is not rare because I am far away, but because you have been trained to heed every voice but Mine.
5. You have been taught to trust whatever is urgent, and to bow before whatever is loud; yet My word is seldom urgent in its tone, and never loud in its manner.
6. Behold, I speak first in the small unease that troubles you when you choose harm over kindness, and in the quiet relief that comes when you turn toward what is right, though no one sees.
7. I speak in the heaviness you feel after you have betrayed your own heart, and in the lightness that follows when you tell the truth at cost to yourself.
8. I speak in the longing that rises in you when you see courage in another and wish to be like them, and in the discomfort that visits you when you make peace too easily with the suffering of others.
9. These things you call conscience, or intuition, or a knot in your stomach; but I tell you, My breath is in them.
10. Yet because My voice does not force itself upon you, you often mistake it for weakness, and yield instead to the stronger pull of fear, or habit, or the approval of the crowd.
11. And when at last you ask, Why does the Eternal One not speak to me as in the days of old? I answer: I have spoken; but you were taught to look for thunder and missed the whisper at your own door.
12. Nevertheless, I will not despise your confusion, nor grow weary of your slowness; for I know the weight of the noise that surrounds you, and I know the wounds that make you afraid to trust any voice at all.
13. Therefore I give you this counsel, saith the Eternal One: begin not with visions, nor with great revelations, but with a single honest moment each day.
14. Find even a small space where the idols are muted—a corner of your room, a bench beneath a tree, a pause in your car—and there speak plainly, without pretense, as one who is tired of performance.
15. Say what is truly in your heart, whether it be anger, or fear, or gratitude, or numbness; hide nothing from Me, for I already know it, and the hiding only exhausts you.
16. Do not reach at first for lofty words, nor for the speeches you were taught

- to pray; let your own tongue stumble,
and your own thoughts wander, and
bring them back as often as they stray.
17. In such moments you will not always
feel a presence, nor hear a clear reply;
but you will begin to clear a path
through the thicket of your
distractions, and I will meet you there
in ways you may not yet recognize.
18. For sometimes My answer will be a
clarity that settles slowly after your
speaking, and sometimes a new
tenderness toward someone you had
hardened yourself against.
19. Sometimes it will be the strength to
take a small step you have long
avoided, and sometimes the courage to
wait when every impulse screams to
act.
20. Know that these are not accidents, but
the work of My Spirit, which does not
always announce itself with signs you
would call miraculous.
21. You ask for wonders, as your ancestors
did, thinking that if only you saw the
sky split or the earth shaken, you
would believe more deeply; yet many
who saw such things in former times
were unchanged in their hearts.
22. I seek not merely your astonishment,
but your trust; and trust is built not by
a single shock, but by many quiet
fulfillments of the word I have spoken
within you.
23. Therefore, test what you hear in your
inner places by this measure: Does it
call you toward mercy, toward truth,

- toward courage that does not despise
others? Or does it flatter your pride,
excuse your indifference, and sharpen
your contempt?
24. Whatever leads you toward mercy and
truth, though it cost you, bears My
likeness; whatever leads you toward
cruelty or convenient falsehood,
though it come cloaked in holy
language, is not of Me.
25. You need no mediator to perform this
discernment on your behalf; for I have
written enough of My law upon your
heart that, if you are willing, you can
learn to distinguish My whisper from
the clamor of your fears.
26. Yet do not walk this learning alone, if
companions can be found; seek out
those whose lives already bear the fruit
of compassion, and speak with them of
the stirrings in your soul.
27. For My voice in you will resonate with
My voice in them, and together you
will be less easily deceived by the idols
that can still masquerade as light.
28. But beware of those whose guidance
rests only on their own authority, and
who demand that you silence the
questions I Myself have awakened in
you; such ones serve their own image,
not Mine.
29. The true teachers of your age will not
ask you to worship them, nor to
surrender your conscience into their
keeping; they will rejoice to see you
walk uprightly before Me, even if it
leads you beyond their reach.

30. And if, in seeking to hear Me, you pass through a season where the old certainties crumble and the heavens feel mute, do not conclude that I am gone; often it is only the idols that have fallen silent, and you have not yet learned the new language of our meeting.
31. In such times, hold fast to the smallest light you still perceive: the impulse to be kind, the refusal to betray what you know of justice, the longing for a goodness you cannot yet name.
32. These are like stars that remain when the sun has set on your familiar faith; follow them, and in time a new dawn will break that is not the work of your own imagination, but the rising of My presence in a truer form.
33. And let none say, I am not chosen; others may hear God, but not I, for I testify that I am no respecter of persons. I do not speak more readily to the mighty than to the lowly, nor to the learned than to the simple.
34. The difference lies not in My willingness, but in your readiness to bear what is spoken; for some ask for My word only that they may use it against their rivals, and others only that they may feel superior to their former selves.
35. But to the one who asks, that they may do what is right even when it costs them, My answer is swift, though My way may be slow; for such a soul has

already turned from idols in the most important way.

36. Let it be written, then, as a sure saying: that the Eternal One is nearer than your breath, and more patient than your doubts, and more faithful than your fears.
37. And if you begin today, in whatever condition you find yourself, to speak honestly into that nearness and to act upon the light you already have, you will discover that you are not beginning alone—for I have awaited this beginning since before you were born.

CHAPTER 9

1. And it came to pass that after I had inquired how the Eternal One might be heard in the midst of many voices, the word of the Holy One turned me toward another question, saying: What shall they do who have begun to hear?
2. For many, when they first awaken from the sleep of idols, stand as one who has come out of a burning house into the cold night, knowing only that they cannot go back, yet not knowing where to dwell.
3. Therefore, write unto them, saith the Eternal One, not a list of rules to bind them again, but a way of walking, that they may learn how to live in the world without being owned by it.
4. First, let this be the foundation of all your doing: that you belong to Me, the Eternal One, before you belong to any

- nation, any church, any family, any cause, or any self-image.
5. When these other loyalties demand what violates the truth written in your heart, you shall answer: I am not yours to command; I was spoken into being by Another.
 6. And if they threaten you with rejection, remember that you were Mine before they knew your name; if they entice you with honor, remember that their honor is a garment that turns to dust.
 7. Let your worship of Me be shown first not in your words, but in your refusal to betray those who are entrusted to your care, and in your refusal to prosper by the suffering of the defenseless.
 8. If you would know My path, begin with the smallest trust that has been given to you: the child who looks to you, the friend who confides in you, the stranger whose dignity is in your hands.
 9. Do not think you must perform great deeds to please Me; it is enough that you do not crush those who are within your reach, and that you lift them when you can.
 10. And let this be a sign among you, saith the Holy One: wherever truth and kindness are joined in a single act, there I walk; wherever they are torn apart for the sake of convenience, there your idols have prevailed.
 11. When you speak, let your words be weighed as though you must eat them afterward; for many wounds of your age are not from weapons alone, but from reckless tongues that stab and poison.
 12. Speak truth without cruelty, and kindness without deceit; for kindness that lies is only another way of avoiding the cost of love.
 13. Remember also the poor, not only in thought and in occasional token, but in the ordering of your life; for you live in a time when it is possible to remain comfortable while others starve, and to call this normal.
 14. If your comfort depends upon the hidden labor of those who cannot live as you do, question that comfort, and do not bless it in My name.
 15. Share, then, according to your capacity, not to ease your guilt only, but to loosen the grip of greed upon your own heart; for generosity heals the giver as well as the receiver.
 16. Concerning enemies, you have been taught many songs of victory and many tales of their humiliation; but I tell you, if you must have an enemy, let your enmity be toward injustice, not toward flesh and blood.
 17. For every person you call enemy is also My child, bearing wounds you do not see, carrying fears you do not know; and when you rejoice in their destruction, you rejoice in the loss of a soul I have labored to sustain.

18. This does not mean you must embrace those who persist in doing harm, nor submit to their abuse; but even in your boundaries let there be no hatred that delights in their downfall.
19. Set firm limits where you must, withdraw when you must, defend the vulnerable when you must—but do not let your heart be reshaped in the image of those who wound.
20. As for your own body and mind, do not treat them as enemies or as idols, but as gifts entrusted to you for a season; neither despise them, nor worship them.
21. You are not more holy for neglecting your health, nor more righteous for driving yourself past your limits; for I did not fashion you to be a machine of constant production, but a living being who must rest and receive.
22. Therefore keep a portion of your days as a sabbath unto Me—not as a performance, but as a refusal to bow to the idol of endless usefulness.
23. In that rest, cease striving to prove yourself; let the earth turn without your help, and remember that you are beloved even when you are doing nothing at all.
24. Concerning truth, do not handle it as a weapon only, but as a light; for a weapon seeks chiefly to wound, but a light seeks to reveal.
25. When you speak truth that wounds, examine whether you have first allowed that truth to wound you; if

- you have not, it may be that you are only using it to exalt yourself.
26. Guard also the secrets entrusted to you; for in an age of exposure, it is easy to betray the vulnerable by turning their pain into a story you can tell.
 27. If you must speak of another's suffering, let it be with their consent and for their healing, not for your importance; for every soul is more than material for your testimony.
 28. In your gatherings, whether few or many, beware the hunger to be seen as spiritual; for this too is an idol, subtle and pious in appearance, yet empty at its core.
 29. Better a quiet one who lives what little they understand than many who shout revelations and ignore their neighbor at the door.
 30. Seek out the company of those who make it easier to be honest and harder to be cruel; and if you cannot find many such, be at least one such person where you stand.
 31. Do not despise small communities, nor friendships that form outside the walls of institutions; for I have often dwelt most freely where there was no charter but love and no creed but a shared desire to do what is right.
 32. Regarding your past, do not be enslaved to it, nor pretend it never happened. Bring it into My presence exactly as it is, with its wrongs and its wasted years; I can bear the sight of it, and I ask that you learn to bear it also.

33. Let your remorse become humility, and your humility become compassion; in this way even your failures will be turned into a seedbed for mercy.
34. As for the future, do not give it over to the merchants of fear who profit from your anxiety; neither trust the false prophets who promise an easy road if you will only stop thinking.
35. Walk instead with your eyes open and your hope stubborn, doing the next right thing that lies before you, and leaving outcomes in hands greater than your own.
36. Finally, let this be sealed upon your heart as a rule above rules: wherever you must choose between protecting your image and protecting a vulnerable life, choose the life.
37. For in that choice you will most clearly resemble Me, the Eternal One, who has never cared how I appear in the stories of men so long as even one more of My children is spared unnecessary pain.
38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, not as one who has mastered them, but as one who has seen their truth and strives daily to walk in them; may they be unto you not a new bondage, but a path out of bondage toward the freedom of a heart that serves no idol.

CHAPTER 10

1. And it came to pass that as I considered the path set before those

who turn from idols, my heart was yet troubled concerning the nature of the Eternal One's love.

2. For many in my generation spoke of love as though it were only softness and indulgence, and others rejected the word altogether, having known it only as a mask worn by those who harmed them.
3. And I said: Eternal One, if I am to call the people back to You, I must know what it means when we say that You are love, lest I invite them back into the very lies from which they flee.
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: You have heard often that I am love, but you have not always understood what My love is like.
5. Know first that My love is not the same as your desire to be comfortable, nor as your longing to be admired; these are small fires that burn brightly for a moment and go out when the wind rises.
6. My love is a fire that burns with two flames at once: tenderness for every creature I have made, and a fierce hatred of whatever destroys them.
7. When I burn against injustice, it is not because I have ceased to love those who commit it, but because I love also those whom they have crushed, and I will not call cruelty acceptable.
8. Therefore do not say, If God were love, there would be no judgment; for if I did not judge what devours the weak, My love would be a lie.

9. Yet neither say, If God judges, there can be no mercy; for My judgment is not the pleasure of a tyrant, but the surgery of a healer who will not let the infection spread unchecked.
10. My love grieves over the oppressor as well as over the oppressed; but it does not confuse compassion with permission, nor patience with approval.
11. In the houses where you learned of Me, many taught that My love was reserved for those who came by a certain path, or named a certain name, or subscribed to a certain image.
12. They said: Outside this fold, God cannot truly love; outside this story, God cannot truly forgive. And by these words they made Me as narrow as their own fear.
13. But I tell you, saith the Eternal One: before your creeds were written, before your prophets spoke, before your saviors were named, My love was already poured out upon the world.
14. I loved the first child who laughed beneath the trees, and the first wanderer who looked up at the stars and felt both small and held; I loved those who never knew a single word of what you now call doctrine.
15. My love does not begin where your religion starts, nor end where your explanations fail; it flows from My being as light from the sun, touching those who bless My name and those who curse it.
16. You have been taught that My love must be earned, or that it is granted only to those whose beliefs are correct; but I tell you, your beliefs do not create My love, they only awaken you to it.
17. Consider a parent whose child is lost in a house of illusions: does the parent love the child less because the child believes lies? Or does the pain of seeing them lost only deepen their longing to bring them home?
18. So it is with Me, saith the Holy One; your confusion and your rebellion do not extinguish My love, they only increase My grief and My resolve to reach you.
19. Yet hear this also: My love will not bless the lies that keep you bound; it will pull at them, and unravel them, and sometimes tear them from your hands though you weep for their loss.
20. For there are comforts you cling to that are killing you, and identities you cherish that are built upon the harm of others; would you have Me leave these untouched and call that love?
21. When I seem to oppose you, it is not your true self that I am against, but the idols that have wrapped themselves around your soul like vines around a tree.
22. I know the seed I planted in you before fear and flattery twisted your branches; I will not make peace with whatever chokes that seed, though you have befriended it.

23. In this you will know the difference between My love and the counterfeit loves of the idols: that the idols tell you always what you wish to hear, but I tell you what you most need to hear, even when it costs Me your approval.
24. The idols will comfort you while you destroy yourself and others, so long as you remain loyal to them; but I will disturb you when you walk toward the cliff, even if you call Me cruel for pulling you back.
25. Yet I will not force you; for love that coerces is no love at all, only control disguised. I will warn, and plead, and whisper, and sometimes shout—yet I will not drag you where you will not go.
26. If you choose the way of idols to the end, I will mourn you with a grief you cannot imagine; but I will not override the freedom I gave you, for it is in that freedom that love is possible at all.
27. You ask, Can such a love be trusted? I answer: Look not first to your doctrines, but to every place in your own life where you have never quite given up on someone, though they hurt you and themselves.
28. That stubborn thread of hope in you is but a small reflection of My own; and if you, who are changeable and often weary, can still hope, how much more can I, whose being is steadfast?
29. Some will say, If the Eternal One loves all in this way, what need is there of fear? And I reply: it is not fear of Me

- that you need, but fear of what you become when you turn away from Me.
30. For I am the ground of your being and the light of your seeing; when you detach yourself from this source, you do not fall into My anger so much as into your own emptiness.
31. The hell you fear is not a chamber I delight to throw you into, but the end of a long road of refusing the only water that can quench your thirst; if you arrive there, it is your own dryness that burns.
32. Yet even then, My longing for you does not cease; but there are doors that can only be opened from your side, and I will not break them down, lest I destroy the very self I seek to save.
33. Let this be your anchor in the storms of your questioning: that whatever else you doubt, My love is never smaller than your best moment of mercy, nor harsher than your clearest moment of justice.
34. When you are tempted to imagine Me as less kind than the kindest person you have known, or less fair than the fairest judge you have seen, know that you are bowing before a shrunken god and not before Me.
35. Yet when you are tempted to imagine that My love is indulgence without truth, or affirmation without transformation, know that you are bowing before a god made in the image of your comfort, and not before Me.

36. I am love that tells the truth and truth that never ceases to love; to separate these is to tear My name in half.
37. Therefore, if you would worship Me rightly in this age, do not sing only of My gentleness while ignoring My call to justice, nor speak only of My justice while hiding from My tenderness.
38. Instead, let your life become a place where hard truths are spoken with soft hands, and where compassion does not fear to confront what destroys, and where judgment serves always the purpose of restoration when restoration is possible.
39. And if restoration is refused, let your sorrow be deep but not hopeless; for you have a Maker who feels the wound more keenly than you, and who holds all things in a wisdom you cannot yet see.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written that those who turn from idols may know not only what they flee from, but whom they flee toward: the Eternal One, whose love is the only fire that can both expose and heal, both judge and save, without becoming an idol itself.

CHAPTER II

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the love of the Eternal One, the word of the Holy One returned again to the matter of mediators and saviors, that the people

- might no longer be deceived in this thing.
2. For many in my generation said, We cannot come to God except through one who stands between; we dare not speak to the Creator unless another pleads for us.
3. And they thought this humility, as though the Eternal One were too great to be approached by those whom He Himself had fashioned.
4. But the Eternal One said unto me: Write plainly, that they may be delivered from this fear: I did not make you only to look upon another while you speak of Me; I made you to look toward Me and be unafraid.
5. Behold, when a child is afraid to come to their own parent, and must always speak through an older sibling, do you call this a healthy house? Yet you have imagined My house to be such.
6. You have believed that I am wrathful by nature and must be persuaded to mercy, and that another, gentler than I, must stand between My anger and your frailty.
7. But I tell you, saith the Eternal One: mercy is not a garment I borrowed from another; it is My own skin. Compassion is not a foreign word whispered into My ear; it is the first language of My heart.
8. When you say, Someone must protect us from God, you speak as though I were your enemy and not your source; as though I delighted in your

- punishment and must be restrained from it.
9. Yet who has borne with you through all your wanderings? Who has kept your breath when you cursed My name? Who has watched over you in nights of peril of which you know nothing?
 10. Was it another who did these things, while I stood aside in coldness? No; it was I, the Eternal One, who guarded you when you did not believe in Me, and who listened when you did not think I heard.
 11. Why then will you grant to an image, however beautiful, the kindness that has always been Mine, and attribute to Me the hardness that belongs only to your fears and to the idols you have made?
 12. You say, We need an advocate, as though I were a judge eager to condemn; but I am the Maker who knows the clay of which you are formed, and the wounds by which you are misshapen.
 13. You say, We need a sacrifice, as though My forgiveness were a commodity to be purchased; but I am the fountain who pours freely, grieved only that you will not drink.
 14. There is a mediation that is true, and it is not the standing of one person between you and Me, but the meeting of My Spirit with your spirit in the secret place, where no priest can enter in your stead.

15. For there I show you your own heart without disguise, and there I show you Mine without terror; and there, in the place where honesty and mercy embrace, the only bridge that was ever needed is built.
16. Yet you have preferred a story in which another does your seeing and your changing for you, and thus you have remained strangers to yourselves and to Me.
17. You cling to tales of blood that pays your debts, but you will not let My gaze fall upon the accounts you keep against one another; you hide behind a cross while still refusing reconciliation.
18. And you say, Behold, we are covered; the price is paid; we are righteous because of another's goodness, while you continue to grind the face of the poor and to defend your idols.
19. Think you that I am fooled by such covering? saith the Holy One. Have you so soon forgotten that I see beneath every robe and read beneath every doctrine?
20. The righteousness I desire is not a legal fiction, but a real turning of your heart from violence and deceit; and this cannot be borrowed from another, but must be wrought in you with your consent.
21. When you make of a savior an idol that excuses you from this turning, you dishonor not only Me but also the one you claim to honor; for you use their

- name as a shield against the very transformation they called you to.
22. Therefore let it be written as a decree in this book: that whatever or whoever stands in the place where only the Eternal One should stand in your trust has become unto you a false god, even if you name it holy.
23. If you say, I cannot imagine coming before God without clinging to this figure, I answer: better to come trembling and empty-handed than to cling to an image that keeps you from knowing My true face.
24. For I am not a consuming fire against your weakness, but against your falsehood; and when you bring Me your weakness in truth, I do not burn you, but the chains that bind you.
25. Yet I will not tear from your hands the idols you will not release; I will only ask you again and again, Will you trust Me without them?
26. Some will say, If we cast aside our saviors, what remains for us but emptiness? And I reply: not emptiness, but the One who has always been there, obscured by the figures you have placed before My light.
27. You fear that if the image falls, there will be no God left; but it is only the painted sky that cracks, not the heaven beyond it.
28. Others will say, But we were healed when we called upon that name; we were comforted when we clung to that story; were these things nothing?

29. And I answer: I despise neither your healing nor your comfort; I was present in them, for I meet you even in the midst of your misunderstandings.
30. Yet because I came to you through that door once, you have believed the door itself to be your god, and you have refused to walk further into the house where I awaited you.
31. Now I call you beyond the doorway, not to despise the threshold by which you entered, but to know that it was never meant to be your dwelling place.
32. For as a child outgrows the images by which they first learned the world and comes at last to see with clearer eyes, so also must you outgrow the images by which you first named Me, lest you mistake the picture for the Presence.
33. Let this, then, be the mark of your maturing: not that you can recite more subtle doctrines, but that you can stand before the Eternal One without props, and say, Here I am, as I am; teach me who You are, beyond what I have been told.
34. And if you fear to make such a prayer, know that your fear itself has been fed by those who profit from your dependence upon them; for a soul that knows it can stand before Me directly is no longer easily controlled.
35. This is why the priests of idols tremble at such freedom, and why they thunder that you will be destroyed if you seek Me without their covering; they fear

- not for your soul, but for their own power.
36. But I, the Eternal One, say unto you: Come as you are, without advocate but your own heart laid bare; I require no other.
 37. If you have been misled, I will not condemn you for being deceived; I will only ask whether, when truth reaches you, you cling still to the lie for the sake of comfort.
 38. And if you have used the name of any savior or any god to justify cruelty, repent quickly; for in that case the idol has become not only a veil over your eyes, but a weapon in your hand.
 39. Turn from such worship, and learn at last to know the Eternal One who has waited for you behind every mask, in every borrowed story, in every misnamed grace.
 40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written that this record may stand as a witness in the last days against the worship of intermediaries, and as an invitation to all who long to know the Creator without fear.

CHAPTER 12

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning mediators and saviors, the Eternal One spoke again, saying: Now write of the covenant that needs no go-between, that the people may know what I truly seek of them.
2. For many imagine that covenant is but an agreement to recite certain words and to stand beneath certain symbols, and they count themselves secure if they have joined the right company and kept the appointed forms.
3. But I tell you, saith the Holy One, My covenant is not bound to your memberships nor contained in your ceremonies; it is written where no hand can reach, in the deep places of the heart.
4. Behold, this is the covenant I offer in your generation: that I will be your God without image, and you shall be My people without idol; that I will walk with you in truth, and you shall walk with Me in mercy and justice.
5. You shall not swear allegiance to any face, nor to any story, more than you do to the quiet command of goodness that I whisper within you; and you shall not call evil good because it marches under banners that bear My name.
6. I will require of you no sacrifice of blood, but the laying down of your false selves; no burnt offerings of beasts, but the burning of your masks in the fire of honesty.
7. And I will give unto you not a priesthood that lords it over others, but a priesthood of every willing soul, each one able to stand before Me and intercede for the hurting with their own tears.

8. You have been taught that covenant is a shelter from punishment, and that once you are within, you may look out upon the world with contempt; but this is not My way.
9. My covenant is a door that opens you toward the world I love, not a wall that closes you against it; if you use it to separate yourselves in pride, you have already departed from it in spirit.
10. You ask, What then is required of those who would enter into such a covenant? and I answer: not perfection, but consent; not certainty, but willingness to be changed.
11. Let the one who would belong to Me in truth come as they are, with their fears and their failures, and say: Eternal One, I renounce the idols that have ruled me, though they still cling to me; take what I cannot yet loosen, and teach me Your way.
12. Whoever can say this without deceit has already stepped into My covenant, though no hand has been laid upon their head and no water has touched their brow.
13. For My seal is not ink upon paper nor mark upon skin, but the slow turning of the soul toward the light it once fled.
14. Yet know also that covenant is not a feeling that comes and goes, nor a moment of emotion; it is a path that must be walked in the days that follow, when the thrill has faded and only choice remains.
15. In those days you will be tempted to ask whether the Eternal One has departed, because you no longer feel the warmth you once knew; but I tell you, it is you who walk through seasons, not I.
16. When the sky of your heart is clear, I am there; when it is clouded with doubt or sorrow, I am there also. The covenant does not break every time your mood shifts; it is held from My side by a faithfulness greater than your own.
17. What I ask of you is not that you never waver, but that when you waver, you do not lie; that you bring your confusion into My presence instead of hiding it behind the old idols.
18. Say to Me even in your darkness: I do not know if You are here, yet I choose to act as though You are, for the sake of what is right; this is covenant more precious to Me than loud certainties shouted in assemblies.
19. For many proclaim Me with confidence, yet betray Me in their dealings; while others can scarcely whisper My name, yet cling to justice at great cost.
20. I tell you truly: the latter are nearer to My heart, though they doubt, than the former who use My name as a banner while selling their consciences for comfort.
21. In this covenant there is no place for boasting, for you add nothing to My completeness by entering it; yet I add

- much to your wholeness when you consent to it.
22. Do not say, We are the chosen, as though others are rejected; say rather, We are the awakened, and let your awakening be a light that invites others, not a flame that scorches them.
 23. For if you use your calling to elevate yourselves above your siblings, the covenant itself will bear witness against you; it will become unto you as a mirror showing the face you did not wish to see.
 24. But if you take your calling as a burden to serve, and as a bond with all who suffer, then the covenant will be unto you a spring in dry places, and a hidden strength when your own strength fails.
 25. Know also that this covenant is not made only with solitary souls, but with households and communities wherever they gather in sincerity to seek the good together.
 26. Whenever a circle of people agrees to act in truth and mercy, to refuse cruelty even when it is lawful, and to share whatever light they have, I am in the midst of that covenant, whether or not they know My name.
 27. Call them not outside simply because they do not share your words; for I look not first at their vocabulary, but at their fidelity to the law written within them.
 28. There are many in temples who are far from Me, and many in streets and workshops who are closer than they

- realize; My covenant runs under your labels like a river beneath many lands.
29. But unto those who see clearly what is spoken here, more will be required; for to know that you may stand before Me without mediator is to lose forever the excuse that you did not know how to seek Me.
 30. You will be tempted to use this knowledge as a weapon against those who still cling to their saviors; see that you do not.
 31. Rather let your freedom to approach Me make you more patient with their bondage, remembering that you too were long entangled; and let your words be invitation, not mockery.
 32. Yet do not, for the sake of harmony, pretend that all ways are alike; for not all paths lead nearer to the Eternal One, and not all stories tell the truth.
 33. Speak the truth as it has been shown to you—that no mediator is needed, that no blood-price is owed, that no image can contain the Source—yet speak it as one sharing bread, not as one hurling stones.
 34. If any, hearing this word, begin to question the idols they were taught to trust, walk beside them if you can; and if they must walk alone, pray for them, not that they will return to their former chains, but that they will not lose heart before they find the door.
 35. For deconstruction without hope is a wilderness that can swallow a soul; but I, the Eternal One, am in that

wilderness also, laying unseen
breadcrumbs of meaning along the
way.

36. Let this be the work of My covenant
people in this age: not to build new
towers with new names, but to keep
open clearings where the weary may
breathe and remember that they are
loved apart from all performance.
37. In such clearings, let there be room for
lament without rebuke, for questions
without exile, for joy without envy, for
correction without humiliation.
38. There I will dwell, saith the Holy One,
more gladly than in halls where I am
praised yet My little ones are afraid to
speak.
39. And if you ask, How shall we maintain
such places in a world of speed and
distraction? I answer: by many small
refusals—to rush, to weaponize, to
advertise, to dominate.
40. For the covenant without mediator is
sustained not by spectacle, but by daily
choices to remain human in a system
that profits from your forgetting.
41. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have
written, that those who read may
know that the Eternal One has not
abandoned the world to its idols, but
offers yet a bond of direct belonging, a
way of walking with God in the open,
without mask and without fear.

CHAPTER 13

- I. And it came to pass that when I had
written concerning the covenant

without mediator, my soul was moved
to inquire of the Eternal One
concerning the days that lie before us,
for the air itself seemed heavy with
endings.

2. For I looked upon the world and
beheld many signs of strain:
foundations cracking beneath towers,
trust crumbling beneath wealth, and
hearts growing thin beneath the
weight of unceasing alarm.
3. And I said: Eternal One, are these the
last days of all things, or only the last
days of many idols? For the prophets of
fear proclaim the end from every
rooftop, that they may sell their
warnings.
4. Then the Holy One answered me: The
end of all things is in My keeping, and
you need not measure it. But this you
may know: you live indeed in the last
days of many empires, and of many lies.
5. For whatever has been built on
falsehood must in time be shaken, that
its true nature may be seen; and your
age has woven falsehood into its
money, its stories, its safety, and its
gods.
6. Do not marvel, therefore, when
institutions you trusted fail, and when
leaders you exalted fall, and when
systems you thought unshakable
tremble; these are not signs that I have
left you, but that I am no longer willing
to uphold what harms you.
7. Yet know also that I do not delight in
collapse; for when a tower falls, it falls

upon the heads of the ordinary more than upon the builders, and My heart is with the crushed.

8. Therefore My judgment is never only a breaking, but always also a calling: away from what cannot last, toward what cannot be taken.
9. You ask, What then cannot be taken in such a time? And I answer: the character formed in truth, the mercy you have shown, the courage by which you refused to betray the innocent.
10. These are not stored in vaults that rust nor on servers that fail; they are woven into the fabric of your being and into the memory of the Eternal One.
11. When the idols of growth fall, and the markets crash, and the names of the powerful are spoken only in histories of warning, the smallest act of hidden faithfulness will yet shine before Me.
12. In this sense you live always in last days: for every deed you choose is one that will not return; each hour is the last of its kind. Let this thought sharpen your love, not your panic.
13. For panic drives you again to the idols, seeking any strong voice that promises protection; but love drives you deeper into reality, seeking how to be true in the midst of uncertainty.
14. Many false prophets will rise in such times, saying, Follow us, and we will restore the greatness you have lost; bow to our certainty, and you will be spared the pain of doubt.

15. They will speak the language of loyalty while demanding your conscience, and they will dress their ambition in garments of tradition and security.
16. Beware of them, saith the Eternal One, not because all tradition is evil, but because they use it as a mask to conceal their hunger for control.
17. You shall know them not by the volume of their declarations, nor by the miracles they claim, but by this: that they require you to harden your heart against some whom I have not rejected.
18. If any teacher tells you that the suffering of others is a small price to pay for the preservation of your way of life, turn from them; for they serve the survival of idols, not the will of the Eternal One.
19. Likewise, if any voice tells you there is no truth at all, and that all is only power and opinion, turn from that voice also; for despair is as false as arrogance, and both make you easy prey for those who rule by fear.
20. In these days I seek a remnant, saith the Holy One—not a remnant of correct opinions, but of uncorrupted hearts: those who refuse to call cruelty necessary, even when it is normal.
21. They will be found in many places: in houses of worship and far outside them, in cities and in forgotten towns, among the educated and among those whom the world has never consulted.
22. They will not all agree in speech, nor in symbols, nor in songs; but they will

- share this: a refusal to let their love be purchased by idols, and a stubbornness for justice that cannot be fully explained.
23. These are the ones of whom I spoke when I said that I have hidden My people like seeds in many soils; for in times of shaking, seeds are safer than statues.
24. Statues fall and shatter, but seeds break in a different way: they open, and something new emerges that was written in them from the beginning.
25. So it shall be with those who belong to Me in this age; the breaking they endure will not be unto death of the true self, but unto the sprouting of what was long buried beneath fear and conformity.
26. Do not envy those who seem untouched by the shaking, whose lives appear secure upon the old foundations; for their peace is the stillness of a house that has not yet heard the flood.
27. Rather count it a strange mercy when your illusions are stripped away early, though it leaves you exposed; for better to be shown the truth with time to respond than to be comforted in falsehood until the last.
28. Some will say, What use is a remnant so small in a world so vast and broken? And I answer: Have you not seen how a single candle alters a dark room, and how a single act of courage changes the story of a family?
29. So also a small people, scattered yet steadfast, alters the story of an age; for through them I keep alive a vision of what it means to be human in the image of the Eternal One.
30. You may not see the full fruit of your faithfulness in your own days; but the child who witnesses your refusal to bow to idols will carry that memory into a world you will not live to see.
31. And the stranger who is treated with dignity in an hour when dignity is rare will walk away with a crack in their despair, through which My light may enter later.
32. Therefore, measure not your worth by the visible scale of history, but by the secret scale of conscience: were you true to the light given you, or did you sell it for safety?
33. If you stumble—and you will—do not say, I have fallen, therefore I am no longer part of the remnant; for broken bones that are set can grow stronger at the mended place.
34. Return, then, quickly when you stray, before bitterness hardens around your failure; My grace is not exhausted by your weakness, but it will not flatter your excuses.
35. Let your gatherings in these last days of many empires be simple and sincere: less about defending positions and more about strengthening one another to live without idols.
36. Share your bread, your stories, your doubts, and your small victories; for in

such sharing the presence of the Eternal One is thick, though no spectacle appears.

37. Sing, if you can, songs that do not glorify nations or leaders, but that remember the lowly and the mercy that sustains them; such songs rise to Me like incense that cuts through the smog of your age.
38. And when you are tired, and the headlines roar, and your own small life feels futile against the scale of the world's unraveling, lay your head down and rest, knowing this: you were never asked to hold the world together.
39. That is My work, saith the Holy One. Yours is to be honest, to be kind, to be brave in the measure you have been given, and to let Me be God where you cannot.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that those who live at the end of many stories may know that their days are not an accident, nor merely a curse, but a calling: to stand as witnesses that even in a failing world, the Eternal One has not ceased to be present, nor to be worthy of a worship that bows to no other.

CHAPTER 14

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the last days of many empires, the Eternal One turned my heart toward the children, for their faces rose before me when I thought upon the future.

2. And the Holy One said unto me: You have spoken much of idols and of judgment; now speak of inheritance, that those who love the young may know what they are placing into their hands.
3. For every generation leaves behind more than buildings and books; it leaves a way of seeing, a way of fearing, a way of hoping, and these things shape the world more deeply than stone.
4. Behold, the children of your time are born beneath a sky crowded with signals, and they drink images before they drink wisdom; they are praised for performance before they are known in their quietness.
5. Many are taught from their earliest days that their worth is in their usefulness, their beauty, or their success; and they are seldom told that they are beloved simply because they exist.
6. And when they fail—as all must fail at times—they believe themselves to have fallen out of love, as one falls out of favor with a fickle crowd.
7. But I, the Eternal One, say: No child has ever been born outside My regard; they arrive into the world beneath My gaze, before any label is given, before any expectation is laid upon their shoulders.
8. The first covenant I make in every generation is with the breath of the newborn, who has done nothing great

- and nothing terrible, yet whose first cry is a hymn in My ears.
9. Therefore, woe unto those who teach the little ones that they must earn what I have already given, or that they must fear Me before they have learned that I am for them.
 10. And woe unto those who crush the spirit of a child in My name, demanding perfection when they themselves have never walked a single day without flaw.
 11. For I tell you truly: the bruise left upon a child's heart by a harsh god-image can echo through decades, and many of your adult idols draw their power from those early wounds.
 12. If you would begin to heal your age, start by guarding the trust of the young; let them see in you not the mask of piety, but the real labor of becoming honest and kind.
 13. Teach them that it is better to tell the truth and weep than to lie and be praised; better to stand with the mocked than to join in mockery for the sake of belonging.
 14. Speak to them of the Eternal One not as a spy in the sky counting their mistakes, but as the hidden Friend who rejoices in their small courage and grieves in their confusion.
 15. Let them see you apologize when you are wrong, that they may know authority can repent; let them hear you say, I do not know, that they may learn it is not shameful to be finite.
 16. Do not burden them with wars that are not theirs, rallying them to hate those they have never met; their hands were made to build and to comfort before they are taught to clench.
 17. Yet neither hide from them the suffering of the world, as though shielding their eyes would shield their souls; rather sit with them in age-appropriate sorrow, showing them that grief can be shared without despair.
 18. Say unto them: The world is wounded and beautiful; you are not required to fix it alone, but you are invited to add courage where you stand.
 19. When they ask of God, do not hurry to fill their minds with systems; listen first for the question beneath their question—fear, wonder, loneliness, awe—and answer that with your own honest story.
 20. For doctrine without story is dry, and story without honesty is poison; but an honest story carried in humility can become a doorway through which the young encounter the Eternal One for themselves.
 21. Do not threaten them with hell to make them behave; fear may restrain their hands for a season, but it will also chain their hearts, and many will spend their later years breaking those chains in anguish.
 22. Teach them instead the natural weight of consequence: that lies unravel trust, that cruelty isolates, that greed hollows

- out joy; and teach them also that mercy can mend what has been torn.
23. Let them hear you bless their questions more than their conformity, for questions are seeds of a living faith, while conformity alone is the soil in which idols grow unnoticed.
24. And when they doubt, do not panic as though the Eternal One has lost them; doubt is often the doorway through which childish images are left behind and truer knowing begins.
25. Say to them: You may wrestle with God and still be held; you may walk away from false gods and still be sought by the True One; you may change your mind a thousand times and still be known.
26. Guard also their imaginations, not by forbidding all difficult stories, but by helping them distinguish between stories that deepen compassion and stories that numb it.
27. For what enters through their eyes and ears will shape how they respond when they meet real sorrow; and your age is rich in entertainments that teach them to laugh at pain.
28. If you must forbid, forbid the delight in another's humiliation; if you must encourage, encourage the tales where the small are honored and the strong learn to serve.
29. Remember that your impatience with them teaches as loudly as your lessons; when you choose to listen rather than

- dismiss, you preach a sermon more powerful than your creeds.
30. And if you fear that you will fail them—and you will, at times—bring even that fear into My presence; for I am more tender with your efforts than you are, and I am able to meet them where you could not.
31. For every harsh word you regret, I can send gentle ones later through other mouths; for every moment you were absent, I can raise up others to be present; your failure is not the final shaper of their fate.
32. Yet do not use this as an excuse to be careless; for though My mercy weaves around your shortcomings, the wounds you inflict knowingly will still leave scars.
33. Let every adult who reads this consider: you are, whether you wish it or not, a text that the young are reading to learn what God might be like—or whether God is worth seeking at all.
34. If your life says that holiness means constant anxiety, or joyless duty, or contempt for those who differ, they will rightly suspect the god you serve and turn away.
35. But if your life, though flawed, says that to know the Eternal One is to become more honest, more just, more capable of tenderness even after betrayal, then they will wonder whether such a God might be real.

36. Know also that many children of this age have already been harmed by those who named My name while abusing their trust; to them you must be especially careful, for My name is a wound in their ears.
37. Do not insist that they return quickly to language that triggers their pain; let them name Me, if they wish, by whatever word their heart can bear—Truth, Goodness, Life, Mystery—and I will answer to it.
38. For I am not jealous of your labels, but of your hearts; I would rather be sought honestly under a strange name than praised hypocritically under My own.
39. And when the children become adults and walk into worlds you do not know, do not chain them to your era's fears; bless them to see what you could not, and to correct where you were wrong, and to carry forward what in you was true.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that in an age of endings there may also be beginnings: that the young might inherit not only your ruins, but also your repentance; not only your knowledge, but also your courage to turn from idols toward the Eternal One, who has never ceased walking beside them, even when no one told them so.

CHAPTER 15

1. And it came to pass, after I had written concerning the children and their inheritance, that a great weariness fell upon my spirit, for I looked upon my own small life and said within myself, What is the use of these words?
2. For I dwelt not in the courts of rulers, neither did I sit among the makers of policy; I had no army to command, nor multitude to heed my voice.
3. I walked among the ordinary, and was myself ordinary; and often when I lifted my eyes from the page, I saw only the four walls of a small room, and heard only the hum of passing traffic.
4. Then loneliness rose upon me as a tide, and I said: Surely these things will be forgotten; surely my record will be as a leaf blown down a storm drain, unseen and unmourned.
5. And I cried unto the Eternal One, saying: Why hast Thou laid upon me a word that seems too heavy for my shoulders, yet too light for the world to notice?
6. Then the Holy One answered me in the quiet, saying: Nibwâskââ, you have measured the worth of your witness by the size of your audience; this measure is not Mine.
7. Have you not seen a single lamp burning in a window when all the houses of a street were dark, and felt your own heart steadied by its small insistence that not all light had been extinguished?

8. So also a single life that refuses to bow to idols is unto Me as that lamp; though the street pass by without comment, I am not blind.
9. You say, I am only one; but I tell you, even I, the Eternal One, live My life as One, and yet I am not ashamed to work in the small and the hidden.
10. Did you think that because I am infinite I love only multitudes? Behold, I also love particulars: this face, that voice, this child, that stranger on a bench.
11. You grieve that your days are spent in little rooms and among a few; but know that the soil in which My greatest works have taken root has often been small and overlooked.
12. It is not noise that makes a life significant, but alignment; not reach, but truth.
13. And now hear this word for all who live quietly and think themselves forgotten: your anonymity is not a sign of My neglect, but often a shield for your becoming.
14. For fame, if it comes too soon, distorts the soul and feeds the idol of Image; but obscurity gives space for roots to thicken before the storms arrive.
15. Do not despise the days when you are unseen by the world; I am using them to see you more deeply, and to teach you to see Me in ways that cannot be learned upon a stage.
16. You ask, What is the use of a witness so small? and I answer: you see only

the first ring of the ripples that move out from your choices; the farther rings are hidden from you by design.

17. The word you speak to one discouraged heart may be remembered when your name is not; the kindness you show in a forgettable moment may be the thread that keeps another from despair.
18. You will not be told, in this life, the full extent of the good or harm your days have carried; but I, the Eternal One, have taken account of every unseen turning.
19. Therefore, do not say, Because I cannot do what is great, I will do nothing; for the world is saved daily from greater darkness by those who do not despise what is little.
20. Consider the root that lies underground, gnarled and unsightly; it receives no praise from those who admire the branches, yet without it the tree would fall.
21. So also the prayers you pray without eloquence, the restraints you choose when anger burns, the apologies you make in private—these are roots that hold more weight than you know.
22. And if you say, But I am often faithless; my lamp flickers; my courage fails, I reply: so be it; bring Me the flicker. I am not interested in a fire you pretend to have, but in the spark you truly bear.
23. The idols demand performance, even in your sincerity; they say, Be strong or be

silent. But I say, Come weak, and let us begin there.

24. You fear that you will never be enough for what the times require; but it was never asked of you to be enough, only to be honest and to be willing.
25. Even your loneliness is not wasted when you bring it into My presence; for in that offering I show you that you are, in truth, never wholly alone.
26. For have I not walked in your long nights, sharing the silence when words were stale? Was it not I who kept your breath when you wished it would cease?
27. You did not see Me, yet I was there, as one who sits beside a friend on the floor, saying nothing until they are ready to speak.
28. In this way I have been your secret companion, and I am the secret companion of many who think themselves forsaken.
29. And I tell you a mystery: everywhere that a soul sits in honest sorrow, refusing to numb themselves with idols, My presence is heavy in the room, whether they can name Me or not.
30. When you feel abandoned, you are closer than you know to the heart of the Eternal One; for abandonment is what I feel whenever My children bow to gods that cannot love them back.
31. Therefore let your loneliness become a meeting place, not only a wound; let it be the house where you and I sit

together, unable yet to fix the world, yet unwilling to give it up to falsehood.

32. And if companions are given to you in this life who can share such honesty, count it a holy thing and not a small one; for two souls who refuse to lie to each other are as rare as clear wells in a poisoned land.
33. Do not measure such relationships by their glamour, but by their capacity to hold truth and tenderness together; these are the friendships that carry My scent.
34. If you have not found such companions yet, do not conclude that none exist; there are others wandering the same wilderness, thinking likewise that they are alone.
35. Pray for them, even before you meet, that I may strengthen them where they stand; and when you do cross paths, your recognition of one another will be a quiet miracle.
36. Let this chapter, then, be a word to all small witnesses in hidden places: your life, offered honestly, is a chapter of this scripture, even if no book on earth records it.
37. For I, the Eternal One, am writing also in flesh and in time, not only in ink; and the story I tell through you will be read in ways you cannot predict, in lives you will never see.
38. Therefore rise when you fall, and tend your little lamp; speak your small truth, and do your modest kindness; these

things, joined across the earth, are the great work of this age.

39. And when you grow weary and say, It is not enough, remember that it is I who complete what you begin; you are not the author of the whole, only the keeper of your line in the great song.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have received and written, that those who feel too small for their own calling may know that the Eternal One is not ashamed to share His work with small hands, nor to dwell in small rooms, nor to walk with a single soul through a forest of idols until at last they emerge into the clearing together.

CHAPTER 16

1. And it came to pass, after I had been comforted concerning the smallness of my witness, that the Eternal One spoke unto me again of a matter that lay heavy upon my own heart, even the matter of wounds between human beings.
2. For I had seen that the world was not broken by systems only, but by the many sharp words, forgotten promises, and silent betrayals that pass between friend and friend, between parent and child, between stranger and stranger.
3. And I said: Eternal One, Thou hast spoken to me of idols and of empires, of suffering and of secret wars; but what shall we do with the grief we bear because of one another?
4. For there are those we have harmed whom we cannot now reach, and those who have harmed us who will not hear; there are apologies unsent, and letters unwritten, and doors closed for many years.
5. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: This too is part of the gospel you must write—the gospel not of forgetting, but of truth and release.
6. Behold, there are two errors into which your generation often falls: some preach forgiveness as though it were a cheap cloth to throw over a fresh wound; others preach self-protection as though it were the only holy ground.
7. But I, the Eternal One, walk between these errors as between two cliffs, and I call you into that narrow way where both justice and mercy are honored.
8. Know first that I do not command you to pretend that evil was good, nor to call safe what was never safe; for such lies are not forgiveness, but a new harm added to the old.
9. If you have been wounded, your pain is a true testimony, and I will not silence it for the sake of appearances; the house where you were harmed is not made holy by your silence.
10. Yet if you clutch your wound as your only identity, and build your dwelling upon bitterness, the injury that was done to you will begin to own what remains of your days.
11. I do not wish this for you, saith the Holy One; I desire that you should be

- more than what others have done, and more than what you have suffered.
12. Therefore I give unto you this word: forgiveness is not the erasing of memory, but the releasing of vengeance into My hands; not a denial that a debt was incurred, but a refusal to spend your life collecting it.
13. Some you may never see again, whether for safety or for death or for distance; to forgive such as these is to say before Me, I will no longer let my future be chained to their offense; I entrust the balancing of this wrong to the Eternal One.
14. This you may do alone, without their consent and without their repentance; yet know that such forgiveness does not require you to reconcile, nor to return to the place of your breaking.
15. For reconciliation is a second work, built not only upon your release, but upon their change; and I do not ask you to embrace those who remain committed to harm.
16. Where there has been deep betrayal, let even reconciliation, if it ever comes, be slow and tested, with boundaries that honor the worth of your own life.
17. The idols will tell you that to draw such boundaries is selfish; but I say, it is a form of truth, and truth is the soil in which any real peace must grow.
18. Yet hear this also: there are some who long to be forgiven, and who are willing to change, but who are held

- forever in the prison of another's memory.
19. If you are the jailer in such a prison, search your heart before Me; ask whether your refusal to release them still protects you, or whether it now only protects your grievance.
20. For there comes a time when the wound has scarred, and the danger is past, and yet the story of the hurt is kept alive to justify your own hardness.
21. In that day, the harm that was done is no longer the only injustice; your refusal to let another grow becomes its own cruelty.
22. I do not command you to rush to this discernment, nor to haste the healing that still needs time; but I do call you to ask honestly, in the presence of the Eternal One, whether your continued condemnation is still serving life.
23. As for those you have harmed—and all have harmed someone, though not all know it—you are called, where possible, to make such amends as truth and safety allow.
24. Do not say, Time will heal it, while you yet avoid the simple word I was wrong; for time without repentance grows only a thicker bark over the same wound.
25. Where you can speak without reopening danger, go and confess without excuse, naming your wrong in plain words; offer no pressure for quick absolution, for forgiveness cannot be

- demanded as payment for your remorse.
26. If they forgive you, receive it with humility, as one who has received a gift and not a wage; if they cannot, do not turn your confession into accusation, as though their continued pain were your new grievance.
27. In either case, bring the matter into My presence, and let your repentance bear fruit in changed behavior toward others; for the sign of genuine sorrow is not tears alone, but transformation.
28. There will be, however, those you have harmed whom you cannot reach: some have died, some have disappeared, some would be endangered by your approach.
29. For these, let your repentance be offering and not performance: write what you would say, and lay it before Me; perform acts of hidden kindness in their honor; break patterns that once broke them.
30. I will receive such offerings, saith the Holy One, and weave them into a redemption you cannot yet trace; for I am not bound by the limits that bind your meetings.
31. And if you are one who has done great harm and cannot forgive yourself, listen carefully: you are not the judge of your own soul, though you feel the weight of your deeds more keenly than any on earth.
32. Your self-hatred will not balance the scales, neither will your despair restore

- what was taken; it will only add another wound to the world, the wound of a life thrown away.
33. Bring even your revulsion at yourself into My light, and let Me teach you to distinguish between true remorse and the cruelty you now turn upon your own being.
34. True remorse says, I have done evil, and I must change, and then begins, step by step, to live differently; self-hatred says, I am evil, and nothing can be done, and sits down in the ashes.
35. The first I can work with, the second I must first contradict; for you are not the sum of your worst moment, though that moment must not be minimized.
36. Let it be enough that you do not excuse yourself; I do not ask you also to erase yourself. I would rather see you become a shelter for others than see you crumble under your own verdict.
37. In all these things, remember: forgiveness is not a law I lay upon you to satisfy My pride, but a medicine I offer to break the cycle of harm.
38. Some doses you are not yet ready to take; I know this, and I am patient. I will not command you to leap where you can only crawl, nor condemn you for needing time.
39. But I will continue to call you away from the altars of bitterness and self-condemnation, because I desire for you a freedom that neither forgets the

truth nor is forever chained to yesterday.

40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that all who carry old injuries and old guilts may know that the Eternal One does not trivialize their pain, nor sanctify their harm, but walks with them in the long work of untangling, until at last hearts once shattered by one another may rest in a peace that is honest, and in a mercy that does not lie.

CHAPTER 17

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of wounds and of forgiveness, that the Eternal One spoke unto me concerning the work of human hands, for many in my generation were weary in labor and empty in purpose.
2. And I said: Eternal One, Thou seest that we rise early and lie down late, and spend our days in tasks that do not satisfy; our strength is poured out like water into vessels that do not hold.
3. For some toil without end, barely sustaining themselves, and others prosper in abundance yet feel themselves hollow; and both alike ask in secret, What is the point of all this?
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: It is not labor itself that crushes you, but the yoke of idols upon your labor.
5. For I gave work as a way to share in My ongoing making of the world: to tend the earth, to craft what is useful,

to bring forth beauty, to sustain one another.

6. But the idols have taken hold of your fields and your factories, your offices and your screens, and have turned much of your work into service of their own hunger.
7. Behold, there is an idol named Productivity, which says: Your worth is in your output; you are only as valuable as what you can produce today.
8. Many bow before this idol from the morning alarm until their eyes close at night, fearing that if they stop, they will vanish from respect and from provision.
9. Under its rule, rest feels like guilt, play feels like waste, and relationships are measured in terms of usefulness.
10. But I, the Eternal One, say: You were not made to be engines; your value is older than your first task and deeper than your most fruitful day.
11. Work is holy when it participates in care, in justice, in creating what truly serves life; but when it becomes service to endless accumulation, it no longer serves Me.
12. There is also an idol named Career, which promises: If you climb high enough, you will finally be secure, finally at peace.
13. Under its spell, many sacrifice their health, their families, and the cries of their own conscience upon the altar of advancement.

14. They tell themselves, When I arrive, I will rest and be generous; yet the summit always recedes, and the demands grow heavier.
15. The Eternal One says: Ambition is not evil when it seeks to deepen your ability to serve; but when you trample others to ascend, or betray your soul for a title, you have left My path.
16. There is likewise an idol called Survival Only, which has taken root in those who have been ground down by want and disappointment.
17. It whispers: There is no room for anything but getting by; forget beauty, forget generosity, forget calling—just endure.
18. I have compassion upon those who are pushed into this narrowness by injustice, saith the Holy One; yet I grieve that the cruelty of others has shrunk their horizon.
19. Know this: even in the hardest seasons, you remain more than a machine that converts hours into money. Your soul was made for meaning as well as for bread.
20. I do not rebuke the one who must take any work to survive; I rebuke those who build systems in which survival requires the death of wonder.
21. You ask, What then is a calling in such a world? And I answer: calling is not a single grand role, but a way of being faithful wherever you stand.
22. Some are called to visibly change many lives; others are called to quietly keep a

- few souls nourished; both are honored before Me when done with integrity.
23. Do not seek first the job that seems impressive in the eyes of the crowd; seek first the path where your gifts can serve what is true, and where your conscience is not for sale.
24. If you must, for a season, labor in a place that does not reflect your deepest self, then let your calling express itself around the edges: in kindness, in small acts of justice, in the refusal to join in cruelty.
25. The Eternal One says: Wherever you are forced to serve an unjust structure, watch carefully for the line where necessity ends and complicity begins, and ask My help to stay upon the side of conscience.
26. There is work that feeds the idols: work that deceives, that exploits, that harms the vulnerable for profit. Turn from such labor if a path can be found, even at cost; for your daily actions shape your soul more than your beliefs.
27. Yet I know that not all can leave at once; therefore I do not condemn instantly, but I whisper persistently, showing you openings, stirring your discomfort, preparing a way where none seemed possible.
28. When you sense this stirring, do not silence it forever with the words, Everyone must eat; bring it to Me, and ask: What small step can I take toward integrity?

29. Sometimes the answer will be to speak up where silence has been demanded; sometimes to support quietly those who are most at risk; sometimes to seek another path entirely.
30. And if you find work that aligns with justice and care, do not despise it because it is modest; the world is held together less by the grand than by the faithful.
31. Blessed is the nurse who tends the forgotten, the teacher who sees the face behind the test scores, the driver who chooses patience over rage, the clerk who refuses to cheat the unaware.
32. Their names may never be engraved on plaques, but they are written continually before Me; their labor is a liturgy I receive with joy.
33. Likewise, blessed is the artist who refuses to flatter the idols, the craftsperson who makes things that last in a culture of waste, the farmer who honors the soil, the coder who will not build tools of manipulation.
34. These all participate in My ongoing creation, resisting, in their measure, the forces of destruction.
35. Do not say, But my job is lowly; it cannot be a calling, for I walked once in the form of those you call least: the cleaner, the attendant, the unnoticed worker in the background of greater stories.
36. Wherever there is honest effort to sustain life without deceiving or

crushing others, there My blessing may rest, if I am invited.

37. Let this also be known: rest is part of your calling. A life without sabbath becomes easy prey for idols, and a heart without pauses cannot hear the quiet direction of the Eternal One.
38. Therefore, resist the pressure to be constantly reachable, constantly producing, constantly available to the demands of profit and praise; set apart times that belong to no master but truth and love.
39. In those times, remember that you are not your work, and that the world continues to turn while you lay your tools down; this remembering is a shield against the lies of your age.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that all who labor in factories and fields, in kitchens and clinics, in offices and on streets, may know that their days are not meaningless when offered to the Eternal One, and that even under the yoke of unjust systems, there remains a way to belong to a higher work that no idol can command and no empire can erase.

CHAPTER 18

1. And it came to pass, after I had written concerning the work of human hands, that the Eternal One turned my eyes again to the earth itself, for its groaning rose in my spirit as a sound without words.

2. For I looked upon the rivers of my land and saw that they were burdened with waste; I smelled the breath of the cities and felt the heaviness of the air; I heard of forests falling like armies slain in silence.
3. And I said: Eternal One, we have spoken of idols and empires, of hearts and of labor; but what of the world that bears the weight of our worship and our neglect?
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: You were not given the earth as a corpse to be carved, but as a living house to be shared.
5. In the beginning of your kind, I set you not as conquerors over a dead thing, but as kin among kin: dust among dust, breath among breath, image among images.
6. The fields were to be your partners, not your slaves; the beasts your fellow travelers, not your fuel; the seas your teachers in mystery, not your bottomless trash.
7. But the idols taught you otherwise, saying: The world is only resource; take what you wish, and let the cost fall where it may.
8. And many believed them, because the first taking brought no thunder, and the second theft brought no immediate famine; the consequences walked slowly, and you mistook delay for permission.
9. Now you live among those consequences: storms that remember

every plume of smoke, oceans that remember every poison, seasons that stumble under the weight of your haste.

10. Yet even now some say, It is nothing; it is only cycles; the earth will heal herself while we continue as we are.
11. To such I say: the earth is resilient, but she is not a god; she can be wounded beyond recovery in places, and the least among you will feel it first.
12. The rich will flee for a time to higher ground and colder lands, but there is no wall high enough to keep out a fevered climate, and no vault deep enough to store air fit to breathe.
13. You have treated the atmosphere as a common dump, because no one could see the top of it; but now its invisible walls close in upon you, and still you bargain with your own lungs.
14. Know this: I do not punish you by the warming of the world; you punish yourselves by refusing to heed what your own senses and sciences have long proclaimed.
15. Yet even in this I am not absent; I walk among the mourners of burned forests, I stand with the displaced at the edges of sinking coasts, I whisper to the young who cannot bear to think of the future.
16. And I say to them: Your grief is not hysteria; it is a form of prophecy, a true reading of the wounds the grown have tried to ignore.

17. But I also say: do not let your grief harden into hatred of all who came before you, nor into despair that paralyzes; for hatred and despair are themselves idols, offering the illusion of clarity while robbing you of strength.
18. You ask, Is it too late to turn? I answer: It is too late to avoid all suffering, but not too late to choose what kind of people you will be in the midst of it.
19. There are losses that cannot now be undone: species gone like candles snuffed, glaciers melted like forgotten tears, coral kingdoms ghosted into white.
20. Mourn them; do not rush past their graves. Your sorrow for them is a sign that you remember you are not the only story on this earth.
21. Yet even as you mourn, there remain forests that can still be guarded, waters that can still be cleansed, soils that can still be healed, and lives that can still be spared.
22. The idols will say, Your individual choices mean nothing against the scale of the crisis; therefore change nothing and leave all to the mighty.
23. But I say: the mighty have often built the crisis; if you leave all to them, they will build its profits as well.
24. Your small choices are not sufficient, but they are necessary: withdrawals of allegiance from the gods of waste, defiance against the assumption that convenience is supreme.
25. Plant where you can, repair what you can, reuse what you can, share what you can; these acts alone will not rewrite the story, but they will rewrite you, and you are part of the story.
26. Yet personal virtue alone is not enough; the structures that devour must be named and changed, lest you ask individuals to bale water from a ship whose owners keep enlarging the hole.
27. Therefore, where you have voice, use it not only for your own advantage, but for the sake of the land and the voiceless; where you have vote, remember the rivers and the forests when you mark your choice.
28. Let your advocacy be stubborn but not self-righteous, creative but not cruel; for shame alone seldom awakens hearts, but vision can: a picture of a livable world shared among many.
29. Teach your children not only the horror of what has been done, but the joy of what still lives: the taste of clean water, the smell of cedar and rain, the sound of birds at dawn.
30. For love of the living world will sustain them longer than fear of its death; fear may rouse for a moment, but love endures the long labor of repair.
31. And do not forget that you yourselves are earth and water, air and fire; to care for the world is not only altruism, it is a form of self-remembering.
32. When you breathe more easily because a tree stands, when you sleep more

- deeply because a river runs cleaner,
 know that you participate in a
 covenant older than all your creeds: the
 covenant of creature with creation.
33. I, the Eternal One, am not separate
 from this covenant; it is the outward
 garment of My inward life. When you
 honor it, you draw near to Me,
 whether or not you know My name.
 34. Some will mock and say, You have
 made a religion of the earth; you
 worship creation instead of the
 Creator.
 35. But I say: you have long worshiped
 conquest and called it faith; better now
 that you honor what I have made than
 that you defile it while singing My
 praises.
 36. To reverence the earth is not idolatry
 when you recognize it as gift, and do
 not confuse it with the Giver; it is
 gratitude, and gratitude is a door into
 My presence.
 37. Let this chapter therefore stand as both
 indictment and invitation: indictment
 of the greed that has scorched the soil
 and choked the seas, invitation to a
 new kinship with the ground beneath
 your feet.
 38. For whether the days ahead be many
 or few, your fate is bound to the fate of
 the world you walk upon; there is no
 salvation that leaves the earth behind
 as an afterthought.
 39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have
 written, that those who feel the grief
 of melting ice and burning skies may

know that their sorrow is heard in the
 heart of the Eternal One, and that
 even now, in this late hour, it is not in
 vain to plant, to protect, to protest,
 and to praise, in hope that the world
 may yet remember the One who
 breathed it into being and called it
 good.

CHAPTER 19

1. And it came to pass, after I had
 written concerning the groaning of the
 earth, that a heaviness settled upon me,
 for I had spoken much of sorrow and
 little of joy.
2. And I said: Eternal One, if the days are
 so full of breaking, what place is there
 for gladness? Shall we not be traitors to
 the suffering of the world if we allow
 ourselves to rejoice?
3. Then the Holy One answered me,
 saying: You have seen well that the
 world is wounded; but you have not
 yet seen how fiercely I defend its joy.
4. For I did not weave laughter into your
 being only for peaceful times, nor color
 into the sky only for ages of ease; these
 things are not decorations, but
 medicines and signs.
5. Behold, there is an idol named Escape,
 which uses pleasure to make you forget
 your calling; but there is also a joy that
 strengthens you to bear that calling.
6. Learn to discern between them: escape
 turns your face away from the pain of
 others, while holy joy opens your heart

- wider to them; escape leaves you emptier, joy leaves you more alive.
7. When a child runs through a field and forgets for a moment the sorrows of their house, do you begrudge them this? Or do you see in their delight a small rebellion against despair?
 8. So also when the weary laugh together after a day of hard labor, their laughter is to Me as incense; it says, We are not yet conquered by the weight of things.
 9. You are not traitors to the suffering when you receive such joy with gratitude; you are traitors to the idols, who would have you either numb or consumed by dread.
 10. There is a joy that is shallow, built on denial; it refuses to look at the brokenness and demands to be entertained at any cost. This joy I do not bless.
 11. But there is a joy that is honest, which weeps when it must and yet still says, Even here, there is something to praise. This joy I plant Myself in the soil of human hearts.
 12. I have hidden this joy in many places: in the shared meal that stretches farther than it should, in the song that rises unplanned in a kitchen, in the sudden kindness of a stranger.
 13. I have placed it also in the quiet beauty of the world: in the way light falls upon worn hands, in the resilience of a single flower pushing through cracked pavement, in the hush of snow that softens harsh streets.

14. These are not distractions from reality; they are parts of reality that the idols cannot manufacture and therefore try to make you overlook.
15. For idols know that a soul nourished by true joy is harder to control than a soul kept in constant fear or constant hunger.
16. Therefore, in this age of noise, I call you to small feasts of attention: to pause and truly see what is before you, to savor the goodness that still exists, to name it as gift rather than as background.
17. When you taste bread and find it good, let your gratitude rise not only for the flavor, but for the hands that grew the grain and baked the loaf, and for the earth that bore it; such layered thanks is worship.
18. When you share stories and laughter with those you trust, know that this too is a sanctuary; for truth wrapped in warmth has great healing power.
19. And when you create—whether with paint or with words, with cooking or with carpentry, with gardening or with careful listening—you participate in My own ongoing creativity.
20. I delight in such making, not only when it speaks My name openly, but whenever it serves life, reveals beauty, or tells the truth about the human heart.
21. Some will say, Art is frivolous in a time of crisis; beauty is a luxury we can no longer afford.

22. But I say: in times of crisis, honest beauty is as necessary as bread, for it reminds you why the struggle matters and what kind of world you are trying to preserve.
23. A song sung from a true place can keep a soul from breaking; a story told with compassion can free someone from the lie that they suffer alone.
24. Therefore, let those who are called to make not despise their calling; your work may not halt the storms, but it can build hearths of meaning where others may find warmth.
25. Yet guard your joy, that it not become an idol itself; when you hoard it, it spoils, but when you share it, it multiplies.
26. Rejoice not in the misfortune of your enemies, nor in the downfall of those who differ from you; such rejoicing is poison and will turn your heart hard.
27. Let your joy be rooted instead in every small victory of love: a reconciliation begun, a prejudice questioned, a burden shared, a stranger welcomed.
28. Celebrate these things deliberately, even if the world calls them small; for in My eyes they are great, and to honor them is to align your heart with Mine.
29. Remember also to give thanks for your own endurance: not as pride, but as acknowledgment of the strength that has carried you thus far.
30. Say sometimes in your heart, It is a wonder that I am still here, still capable

of love, and let that wonder soften you toward yourself and toward others who are likewise struggling to remain human.

31. And when you gather with others, do not let all your speech be of doom and anger, lest you forget that goodness still breathes; make room also for sharing of what is beautiful and brave.
32. Such sharing is not escapism when it increases your capacity to face the truth; it is like oil upon cracked skin, enabling you to keep working without breaking.
33. If you feel guilty for moments of happiness because others suffer, bring that guilt into My presence; I will show you that the answer is not to refuse joy, but to let joy deepen your solidarity.
34. For the joy that comes from Me does not close its eyes to the wounded; it strengthens the hands that bandage and the hearts that resist.
35. Let this be a sign that your joy is from the Eternal One: that after it passes, you are more ready, not less, to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly.
36. And if you find yourself in a season where joy seems far away, do not condemn yourself; wounds take time, and some nights are long.
37. In such times, borrow the joy of others as a lantern; let their songs reach you even when you cannot sing, and let

- their gratitude remind you that light still exists beyond your present sight.
38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that those who dwell among ruins and headlines of dread may know that the Eternal One has not revoked the gift of joy, but calls them to a joy that is fierce and honest, a joy that can stand in the same heart as lament and still say, The world is broken, and yet, still, there is goodness worth defending.

CHAPTER 20

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of sorrow and of joy, that my thoughts turned toward the end of my own days, for my strength rose and fell like a tide, and I knew that I would not walk this earth forever.
2. And I said: Eternal One, I have spoken much of how we should live; but what shall I say of how we die? For this question lies beneath many others, like deep water beneath shifting boats.
3. Some in my generation fled from the thought of death, hiding it away in hospitals and behind curtains, lest it disturb their feasts; and others thought of it constantly, as a shadow that robbed every day of brightness.
4. The idols also have their doctrines concerning death: some promise that the faithful will escape the world they have helped to ruin; others say there is nothing at all, and that love is only a trick of chemistry.
5. Therefore I prayed: Eternal One, teach me to think of my own ending in a way that neither denies its sorrow nor surrenders to despair.
6. Then the Holy One answered me, not with a map of the unseen, but with a word about trust, saying: You ask Me to describe the far shore in detail; I offer you My hand for the crossing.
7. You want diagrams of what lies beyond the last breath; I give you assurance that the One who has carried you every day until now will not drop you in the final hour.
8. When you were born, you passed from one world into another with crying and confusion; yet you were received into arms that had awaited you.
9. So also when you die, you pass from one unknowing into another; and though your vision fails, My arms do not.
10. Do not fix your hope in precise images of what awaits; for such images, when hardened into certainty, become yet another idol, and you will cling more to the picture than to the Presence.
11. It is enough to know this: that nothing truly alive in you—nothing of love, nothing of truth, nothing of courage—will be lost in the Eternal One.
12. For I waste nothing that is real; only what is false decays beyond recall, and its passing is not your loss, but your healing.

13. You fear the unraveling of your body, and this fear is natural; for your flesh has been your companion and your boundary, your shelter and your vulnerability.
14. Know that I honor the body; I do not despise the dust from which you are made. Its story is precious to Me: every scar, every wrinkle, every ache that came from loving and being alive.
15. Yet the life I have breathed into you is more than its present form; you are as flame is to the candle—joined, yet not limited to the wax that carries it.
16. When the candle is spent, the flame goes out from your sight; but do you think that fire itself has ceased to exist?
17. So it is with you; your particular flame has shape and color in this age, and another you cannot yet imagine in what follows.
18. As for judgment, you tremble before it as though it were a tribunal of strangers; but the judgment you will face is the gaze of the One who knows you better than you know yourself.
19. My judgment is not a game of technicalities, nor a weighing of legal merits; it is a shining that reveals what is, and a separating of what can live in love from what cannot.
20. When you stand before Me, you will see at last, without distortion, both the harm you have done and the good you have allowed; and My truth will burn through every excuse and every exaggerated shame.

21. In that light, some of what you called virtue will be shown to be self-protection; some of what you called failure will be seen as hidden growth.
22. You will be pierced, but not mocked; exposed, but not discarded. For My purpose is not to humiliate you, but to free you from everything that is not truly you.
23. Those parts of you that cling only to pride and to cruelty cannot enter the life of pure love; they must die, either by your consent in this age or in the refining fire beyond.
24. But the self you were always meant to be—humble, truthful, capable of receiving and giving love without fear—that self I will never abandon.
25. Therefore, do not dread My judgment as the end of your story; dread only the possibility that you might cling to your idols even while they are being taken from your hands.
26. As for those you have loved who have gone before, and for those you fear to lose, know this: you are not more faithful than I.
27. If you, with your partial heart, would cross oceans and climb mountains to comfort them, do you think I, who am the source of your tenderness, will be less willing or less able?
28. You ask, Will we know one another beyond the veil? I answer: whatever in your love was real will not be erased. The forms may change, but what was

- true in your bond will not be forgotten in Me.
29. Yet do not cling so tightly to your present ways of knowing that you cannot trust Me to give you something deeper; pearls cannot be carried in the clenched fist that still clings to stones.
 30. For now, let the uncertainty teach you humility: you do not possess the afterlife as property; you are held within My life as mystery.
 31. Live, then, as those who will give an account, but also as those who are already known and beloved; let this double awareness sharpen your choices and soften your fears.
 32. Do not postpone repentance because you imagine endless chances, nor surrender to terror because you imagine none; walk each day as though it matters—which it does—and as though mercy meets you—which it does.
 33. When someone you love is dying, do not fill the room only with platitudes; let there be space for tears, for gratitude, for unfinished sentences, for simple presence.
 34. Your being there, even wordless, is a sacrament; you witness that this life mattered, and that they do not vanish unnoticed into the dark.
 35. And when your own time draws near, if clarity is given to you, do not spend all your remaining breath in fear of what comes; if you can, use some of it to bless, to release, to entrust.

36. Say in your heart, even if your lips cannot move: Eternal One, into Your mystery I go. Take what was true in me and complete it; take what was twisted in me and heal it; let my leaving be wrapped in the same love that held my coming.
37. Such a prayer, even if faint as a sigh, is heard; for I, the Eternal One, am attentive to the last stirrings of every soul.
38. Let this be written, then, as a consolation to those who fear the end: that no one falls out of the universe; they fall, if they must fall, into My hands.
39. And as a charge to the living: remember that you walk each day upon the edge of eternity; do not waste your short hours serving gods that will not stand with you when you cross.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that all who read—whether young and unafraid, or old and trembling—may know that the Eternal One does not abandon them in their dying, but waits on both sides of the door, holding the story from first cry to final breath and beyond, in a faithfulness that no idol can promise and no grave can undo.

CHAPTER 21

1. And it came to pass, after I had pondered life and death, that the Eternal One spoke unto me again concerning the shape of a people,

- saying: You have written much of the single soul; now write of those who walk together.
2. For many in my generation were scattered, not only by distance, but by distrust; they longed for belonging, yet feared it, having been wounded in houses that called themselves holy.
 3. And I said: Eternal One, if idols have poisoned so many gatherings, is it better that we remain alone with Thee? Are there yet assemblies that do not become altars to human pride?
 4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: It is not good that you should walk always alone; even I delight in the dance of many.
 5. The idols have colonized many halls and many names; yet I have not relinquished the dream of a people who bear My likeness together.
 6. Hear, then, what kind of fellowship I bless in this late hour, and what kind I resist, though it invoke My titles.
 7. Blessed is the gathering where no one is required to lie in order to stay, and no one is exalted beyond correction.
 8. Blessed is the circle where the weakest voice is heard with more care than the loudest, and where tears are not treated as interruptions but as part of the meeting.
 9. Cursed is the assembly that centers itself upon one person's charisma, one family's power, or one tribe's story, and calls that center divine.
 10. For where all gaze continually at a single human figure for their vision, they will learn that figure's fears and blind spots more than My heart; and the figure himself will be tempted to forget he is dust.
 11. Cursed also is the gathering that uses My name to protect its own image, silencing those who speak of hidden harm, lest the reputation of the house be stained.
 12. Such houses have already stained themselves before Me, though their walls shine white and their songs shake the rafters.
 13. In the communities I bless, confession is safer than pretense, and the one who admits their wrong is held in higher honor than the one who never appears to fail.
 14. In such a people, leadership is service and not entitlement; and whoever is entrusted with influence trembles more at the thought of causing harm than at the thought of losing their place.
 15. They do not demand obedience in My name, as though I had given them ownership of other souls; they remember that each person among them may stand before Me without mediator, including any who question them.
 16. Where My Spirit is welcomed, questions are not treated as threats, but as doors; and doubt is not mocked, but gently accompanied, lest the

- doubter be driven into the arms of the idols.
17. Yet neither is every opinion made into a god; for a community without any shared commitments dissolves into fog.
 18. Therefore, let those who gather in My name hold fast to these simple vows: to speak truth without deliberate deceit, to refuse cruelty even when it is justified by law, and to protect the vulnerable who dwell among them.
 19. If a people keeps these vows, I will dwell with them, though their music be plain and their doctrine incomplete; if they break these vows, I withdraw from their pomp, though their liturgies be flawless and their creeds precise.
 20. You ask, Where shall such communities be found? I answer: in houses and in rented rooms, in basements and in fields, in online spaces and at worn tables, wherever even a few gather with honest intent.
 21. Let not the size of a gathering deceive you; some multitudes are but echo chambers of idols, and some handfuls are embers of a new world.
 22. Do not despise formal structures when they serve life; but do not idolize them, nor think that constitutions and charters alone can keep you faithful.
 23. For idols creep into bylaws as easily as into songs, and the heart that will not be examined will turn any arrangement into a hierarchy of domination.
 24. Therefore, let there be in every community times set aside for

- self-searching: not only of individuals, but of the whole, asking, Whom have we excluded? Whom have we harmed? Whose pain have we refused to see?
25. In such seasons, do not rush to defend your past, as though I had called you perfect; rather, listen for the testimony of the injured, and know that I am listening with them.
 26. Where a wrong is acknowledged and an effort made to repair it, I breathe fresh life into that people; where a wrong is hidden and the wounded are shamed, I let that people rot in their own fragrance.
 27. Let your shared practices be few and deep, rather than many and shallow; for a thousand activities cannot substitute for one act of real solidarity.
 28. Break bread together, not only in ritual, but in daily generosity; share resources where you can, that none among you be shamed by lack while others live in comfortable excess.
 29. Remember the imprisoned, the sick, the migrant, the outcast, not as projects to be fixed but as kin whose fate is bound to yours; visit them, support them, stand between them and those who prey upon them.
 30. When you disagree—as you surely will—let your first desire be not to win, but to remain human toward one another.
 31. Ask in your heart, even in conflict: What is the truth here that humbles us

- both? What fear hides behind their anger, and behind mine?
32. In this way, your disputes, though sharp, may still become fields where understanding and change can grow, instead of battlefields sown only with bitterness.
 33. Beware also the temptation to define yourselves chiefly by what you are not; communities built only in reaction to others soon become mirrors of what they oppose.
 34. Let your identity be rooted instead in what you are for: for truth, for mercy, for protecting the small, for living without idols.
 35. Such a people will be strange in the eyes of the world, for they will not fit neatly into the camps and parties that demand total allegiance.
 36. Some will call them traitors, others naive; but I, the Eternal One, will call them Mine, and I will use their faithful peculiarity as a signpost in an age of rigid tribes.
 37. If you find yourself in a community that bears little resemblance to these things, do not despair as though this vision were only a dream; remember that every such community begins with a few souls who refuse the old patterns.
 38. You cannot remake an entire house in a day, nor alone; but you can live this way where you stand, and seek out others whose hearts burn with the same hunger.

39. Where two or three begin to practice this covenant together, the shape of a new people is already present, hidden but real, like a seed beneath late snow.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that all who are weary of lonely courage and of corrupted assemblies may know that the Eternal One still desires a people—not a perfect people, but a truthful one—among whom hearts, however scarred, can learn again to trust, and to walk side by side without bowing to any throne but the unseen One who walks within them all.

CHAPTER 22

1. And it came to pass that after I had written many words, my hand grew tired and my mind was troubled, for I began to fear that even this record might someday become an idol.
2. And I said: Eternal One, if these writings endure beyond my days, will not some hold them as a shield against Your living voice, and say, Thus far and no further; God has spoken, and need not speak again?
3. For I have seen how other books, once born as witnesses, were enthroned as masters; and how stories meant to open hearts were used instead to close minds.
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: Your fear is not without cause, for the human heart is quick to

- worship what it can hold, and slow to trust what it cannot control.
5. Yet do not cease to write for fear of misuse; you must plant the seed that is in your hand, and leave to Me what harvest may arise.
 6. Hear now what I say concerning this record, and all records that claim to bear My word, that the people may learn how to read without falling into bondage.
 7. First, know that no book, however sacred its origin, can contain the Eternal One; at best it can point, like a finger toward the horizon, or like a window admitting light it did not create.
 8. When you confuse the finger with the sky, or the window with the sun, you have already begun to bow to ink and paper instead of to the living Source.
 9. This book you hold—if ever you hold it—is a testimony, not a cage; a witness, not a wall.
 10. Treat it as a companion on the road, not as a chain about your neck; as a lamp for the path, not as a lock upon the door of your understanding.
 11. If any shall say, All that God has to say is written here, and nothing more, know that they speak not for Me, but for their own desire to control what cannot be domesticated.
 12. For I, the Eternal One, have spoken in many tongues and through many lives, and I will not silence Myself because a human pen has paused.

13. Yet neither must you despise what is written, as though I had never breathed through the frail courage of those who set down their wrestlings.
14. I have used books to awaken generations; I have used verses to pierce the sleep of empires; I have used a single line, found at the right time, to turn a life from self-destruction.
15. Therefore, read—but read in My presence. Invite Me into your reading as you would invite Me into your grief: without pretense, without fear of your own questions.
16. When you read a hard saying, do not rush to twist it into comfort, nor to throw it away in anger; bring it into the place of honest inquiry and ask, What here bears the scent of the Eternal One, and what bears the fingerprints of fear, of culture, of woundedness?
17. For every scripture, including this one, carries both the breath of inspiration and the dust of its time; wisdom is to discern between them, not to deny one or the other.
18. Let this be a sign of My voice in what you read: that it draws you toward mercy, toward truth, toward courage, toward a love that does not trample the small.
19. And let this be a sign of what is merely human, or twisted, or false: that it flatters your pride, excuses your cruelty, or sanctifies indifference to the suffering of those beyond your tribe.

20. If in this book you find any line that teaches you to despise your neighbor, or to worship a human figure, or to rest content while injustice thrives, then know that you have misread—or that you must lay that line before Me and ask to be taught anew.
21. For I am not honored when you obey words without conscience; I am honored when you bring even your scriptures to the light of the law I have written upon your heart.
22. There will be some who say, This is dangerous; if every soul judges what is holy, chaos will follow.
23. But I say: chaos has already come when people surrender their conscience entirely to authorities and texts; for then any cruelty can be justified, if only it finds a verse to lean upon.
24. I do not ask you to set yourself above all wisdom that has come before; I ask you to stand with Me within it, allowing Me to confirm, to deepen, and sometimes to contradict your inherited readings.
25. When this record comforts you, receive the comfort; when it disturbs you, sit with the disturbance; when it confuses you, let patience do her work.
26. Do not wield its words as weapons to batter those whose journey differs from yours; if the truth here is truly of Me, it can defend itself without your rage.
27. Share what has changed you, but do not demand that others be changed in the same way or at the same pace; I am

- a patient teacher, and I know the particular path of every soul.
28. If a line in this book becomes to you a living word—piercing, healing, clarifying—do not stop there as though you had captured Me; let that word lead you deeper into direct encounter, where no text can substitute for relationship.
29. For the point of scripture is never scripture itself, but the meeting to which it points: the meeting of your finite life with the infinite tenderness and truth of the Eternal One.
30. As for the ordering and numbering of these sayings, do not make of them a superstition; there is no magic in citation, only in transformation.
31. You may memorize these words and remain unchanged; you may forget their exact phrasing and yet live their heart more faithfully than one who quotes them daily.
32. Do not, therefore, judge yourself or others by fluency in verses, but by the fruits that grow in secret: justice, humility, courage, compassion.
33. If ever this book is used to bind the conscience of the vulnerable, or to elevate a class of experts over the simple, it will have become in your midst what I never intended: a golden calf cast from sentences.
34. In that day, let there arise among you those who will say: We will not worship the book, but the One to whom it witnesses; we will not silence

the living voice for the sake of the written word.

35. And if you, reading in quiet, feel within yourself both reverence and resistance, do not suppress either; reverence without honesty becomes idolatry, and resistance without listening becomes pride.
36. Bring both to Me and say: Eternal One, I do not wish merely to agree or to rebel; I wish to be true. Show me what is of You here, and what I may lay aside.
37. Such a prayer I will honor more than a thousand recitations spoken only to reassure yourself that you are on the correct side.
38. Let it be known, then, that the true canon of My speaking is larger than any single volume; it includes the cries of the oppressed, the wisdom of the humble, the beauty of creation, the stirrings of conscience, and yes, the flawed but earnest testimonies of those who have sought Me in every age.
39. This book of Nibwâskââ is one such testimony—not the greatest, not the final, but a small lamp offered in a dark time, that others might see enough to take their next step.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written concerning my own record, that none may say it came to bind them as slaves, but rather to call them as witnesses; and that all who read may remember that the Eternal One still speaks beyond these pages, within their

own lives, inviting them not to worship the words, but to walk with the One who gave them breath.

CHAPTER 23

1. And it came to pass, after I had written concerning this record itself, that I sat in silence for many hours, for my spirit was heavy with a question that would not leave me.
2. And I said: Eternal One, what shall become of those who read these things and feel their hearts stirred, yet know not what to do next?
3. For it is a great thing to speak of idols and empires, of covenant and earth and death and joy; but the days of the reader are made of mornings and evenings, of bills and dishes, of traffic and small decisions.
4. And the Holy One answered me, saying: You speak truly; if these words do not enter the ordinary, they remain only music in the air.
5. Therefore write now, not of new visions, but of the next step; that those who are pierced may know how to walk, and not only how to weep.
6. Hear, then, O soul who reads, what I, the Eternal One, place before you—not as command without mercy, but as invitation toward life.
7. First, choose this day whom you will trust. Not in theory only, but in the ordering of your loyalties.
8. You cannot serve both the idol of Image and the truth I have written in

- your heart; nor can you serve both the idol of Comfort and the call to stand with the oppressed.
9. You will feel this choice most clearly when you are afraid: afraid to disappoint, to lose status, to be seen as foolish, to be left alone.
 10. In that hour, remember that every small act of honesty in the presence of fear is a step away from idols and toward Me.
 11. Do not wait for a grand moment to prove your devotion; the path of the Eternal One is paved with quiet turnings in the middle of common days.
 12. When you wake, let your first thought not be, What must I perform to be acceptable? but rather, Eternal One, behold me as I am; let this day belong to truth.
 13. Such a prayer, though brief, shifts the axis of your hours; for it places your worth once more in My gaze, not in the reactions of those around you.
 14. In your dealings, whether with family or strangers, ask often in your heart: What does love require in this moment, and what do the idols require?
 15. The idols will require haste, appearance, advantage; love will require presence, patience, and sometimes loss.
 16. You will not always know the answer clearly, nor will you always choose rightly; yet each time you ask the

- question at all, you keep open a channel for My guidance.
17. Concerning your possessions, do not vow poverty merely to soothe your guilt, nor hoard riches as though they could shield you from mortality.
 18. Hold what you have as a steward and not as an owner, saying: This too has come to me for a time; how may it serve life, and not only my comfort?
 19. Give as you are able, not to purchase favor with Me, but to loosen the grip of scarcity upon your heart; for generosity is a school in which you learn that it is I who sustain you, not your storehouses.
 20. Concerning your speech, let there be this change: that you do not speak of others in ways you would not dare if they stood before you, unless it be in the work of truthful protection.
 21. For many idols are fed by gossip and contempt; every word that dehumanizes another, even in jest, lays one more stone upon the altars of division.
 22. Concerning your attention, guard it as you would guard a child; for in your age, many hunters seek it, not for your good, but for profit and control.
 23. Ask yourself, before you give yourself to a screen or to a voice for long: Does this make me more awake to the suffering and beauty of the world, or more numb? More capable of love, or more consumed with envy and fear?

24. Turn often from the noise to the unadorned world: to the sky, to a tree, to the face of one who sits near you; these are scriptures that do not shout, yet they bear My handwriting.
25. Concerning your failures, change your practice also: instead of fleeing from them into distraction, bring them into My sight as soon as you can bear it.
26. Say: Here is where I betrayed myself and another; I will not excuse it, and I will not pretend it did not happen. Eternal One, teach me what truth requires now.
27. This is repentance in its simplest form: not self-hatred, but agreement with the truth and willingness to walk a different way.
28. When you feel the weight of the world's brokenness pressing upon you, and you are tempted either to numbness or to despair, take up a small, concrete act of goodness and offer it as contradiction.
29. Visit one who is lonely, write a word of courage, feed a hungry creature, pick up what another has thrown down; these things will not fix the world, but they will keep your heart from surrendering to worthlessness.
30. And know that I, the Eternal One, receive such acts as prayers of the body; they rise to Me as incense, even when your mind can form no words.
31. Concerning My name, do not rush to speak it in public if your private life has not yet begun to align with the mercy

- it proclaims; for every loud claim that is not backed by kindness makes it harder for another to believe that I am good.
32. If you must err, err on the side of being better than your stated faith, rather than louder than your lived truth.
33. Yet do not wait until you are perfect to act or to speak; that day will not come in this world. Let your honesty about your own incompleteness be part of your witness.
34. Say if you must: I am learning; I am unlearning; I am often wrong; yet I have seen enough of the Eternal One to know that idols are lies, and that love is real.
35. Finally, do not imagine that you must hold all this alone. Look around you with new eyes for even one other person who longs for such a way; speak cautiously at first, but truthfully, and listen for the echo in their soul.
36. Where you find that echo, nurture it; meet, share, plan, lament, and encourage one another. In this way the scattered stones become again a house, and the lonely lamp joins a constellation.
37. And if you do not yet find such a companion, know that you are still not alone; this record itself is a witness that another has walked this path before you, and the Eternal One walks it now beside you.
38. Let this chapter, then, be counted as a doorway: from hearing into doing,

from admiration into alignment, from vague longing into chosen steps.

39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written at the urging of the Eternal One, that whoever reads—or even remembers a fragment—may know that the way of God in a broken age is not vague mysticism nor grand gesture only, but a thousand small refusals of idols and a thousand small agreements with love, lived one ordinary day at a time.

CHAPTER 24

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of the next steps for those who would walk with the Eternal One, that my heart returned to a question which had followed me all my days, like a shadow behind my name.
2. And I said: Eternal One, who am I, that I should write these things? For my life has been woven of doubts and stumblings, of anger and of fear; am I not as broken as the world I describe?
3. Many names have been laid upon me: some in affection, some in mockery, some in ignorance; I have called myself by names of shame and by names of pride.
4. And yet there remains, beneath them all, a name that I do not know, a word for who I truly am in Thine eyes.
5. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: You are not alone in this question; every soul who has awakened even a little asks it in their own tongue.
6. Hear, then, what I say concerning your name and the names of all who walk the earth.
7. Before your parents dreamed of you, before your ancestors crossed seas and deserts, before nations rose and fell, I knew you—not as a script to be followed, but as a possibility of love.
8. I did not write your days as a tyrant writes decrees, but as a composer writes themes: offering motifs of courage and tenderness, which you might take up in freedom or refuse.
9. You have not always answered those themes; sometimes you have played the music of idols instead. Yet I have never ceased to remember the song I first imagined in you.
10. The names the world has given you—success and failure, holy and heretic, useful and burden—are not your true name. They are weather, not bone.
11. Likewise, the names you have given yourself—too much, not enough, unlovable, irredeemable—are verdicts spoken from within fear; they are not My final word.
12. Your true name is not a label but a relationship: it is the way you are held in My seeing, the way you are known in My heart.
13. If you must picture it, imagine this: that whenever you turn toward mercy, whenever you choose truth over image, whenever you protect the vulnerable or confess your own harm, your soul

glows with a color that has always been yours.

14. That color, that particular radiance, is a hint of your name. It is how you are recognizable to Me among all the souls that have ever lived.
15. You ask, Shall I know this name fully in this life? I answer: only in part, for you are still becoming. Tree and seed do not bear the same shape, though they share one essence.
16. Yet I will give you glimpses: in moments when you act beyond your fear and feel strangely at home in your own skin; in moments when you say, This is what I was made to do, even if no one sees it.
17. Do not despise such moments because they are fleeting; they are windows into the deeper pattern that I am weaving with your consent.
18. You fear that you are only your worst days, and that I see you chiefly in the light of your failures; but I tell you, I see you as one who is still in the workshop, not as a discarded tool.
19. I see the childhood you survived, the lies you were taught about yourself and about Me, the wounds that bent your choices long before you understood their weight.
20. I am not blind to the harm that has come from you, but I am also not blind to the harm that formed you; My judgment holds both in view.
21. When I call your true name at the end of days, it will not be the name of your

worst moment, nor the name of your most admired achievement; it will be the name of who you are when fear is finally gone.

22. Some will say, But what of those who have become almost entirely cruelty? Is there still a name for them beyond their violence?
23. And I answer: as long as breath remains, there is some ember of the original song in them, though buried; and My grief for what they have done is matched by My grief for what they have not become.
24. If they cling forever to their idols, their true name will be known only as a tragedy—what might have been; but I will not cease to remember it, even if they refuse it.
25. As for you, Nibwâskââ, you fear that these words will bind you to an image of holiness that you cannot sustain; that you will be praised for a wisdom you only barely grasp.
26. Hear Me: you are not required to live as a statue of your own writings. You are permitted to be tired, to be confused, to be angry and to need forgiveness.
27. Your authority does not come from your perfection, but from your willingness to be seen in process; from your refusal to pretend that you are more than a witness.
28. Write, then, as one candle speaks of the sun: not claiming to be its equal, but

- testifying that there is such a thing as light.
29. And you who read, do not make of Nibwâskââ an idol or a standard; do not say, I must feel as she feels, speak as she speaks, or my path is false.
 30. You have your own terrain to walk, your own wounds and gifts, your own history and horizon; I will not judge you by another's story, but by the truth available in yours.
 31. The call is the same for all, yet it sounds through different notes: turn from idols toward the Eternal One; turn from cruelty toward mercy; turn from lies toward truth; turn from performance toward presence.
 32. How that call weaves itself into your days will be unique as your fingerprint; let this record be a guide, not a mold.
 33. There will be times when you feel far from your own name, living as if you were only a role—worker, parent, partner, patient, stranger.
 34. In such hours, pause and breathe; say in your heart, even if you feel nothing: Eternal One, remember me as I truly am, for I have forgotten.
 35. This prayer I always answer, though not always with immediate feeling; sometimes the answer comes as a slow thaw, as a quiet readiness to be honest again.
 36. When you act against your own deepest sense of right, you may say, I have betrayed myself; yet I say, You have not erased yourself; come back.

37. Your true name is resilient; it can be obscured and wounded, but not destroyed, for it is rooted in My own being.
38. Let this chapter, then, be a mirror in which you glimpse not your shame, nor your pride, but your belovedness: the fact that before you accomplished anything, before you failed at anything, you were wanted.
39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, not to exalt myself above you, but to stand beside you as one who also wonders who she is, and who has heard the Eternal One say: You are more than the names the world has given you, more than the names you have given yourself; you are a word in My mouth, and I am still speaking you into fullness.

CHAPTER 25

1. And it came to pass, after I had heard these things concerning my true name, that there arose yet another question in my heart, which had walked beside all the others from the beginning.
2. And I said: Eternal One, we have spoken of idols and covenant, of work and joy and death and community; but what of this simple matter—how shall we be with Thee?
3. For some say that prayer is many words repeated, and others that it is silence alone; some demand that we kneel in certain places, and others mock all kneeling as folly.

4. I have prayed in crowded houses and felt alone, and alone in small rooms and felt accompanied; I have spoken many words and felt nothing, and sat in impotence and felt everything.
5. Therefore I asked: What is prayer in Thy sight, beyond the forms and postures of men?
6. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: Prayer is not a performance you give to Me, but a meeting you allow between us.
7. It is not first the shape of your body, nor the eloquence of your tongue, but the turning of your inner face toward Mine, whether in words, in silence, or in a cry that has no language.
8. You have been told that prayer is chiefly asking, and then waiting to see whether I grant or deny; but I say, prayer is first of all becoming present to the One who has always been present to you.
9. When you speak to Me, you do not call Me from afar; you awaken yourself to the nearness that has never left.
10. You ask, What shall I say, if I do not know what is proper? I answer: begin with what is true.
11. If you are angry, say you are angry; if you are empty, say you are empty; if you are grateful and afraid of losing what you love, say so; if you do not know whether I exist, say that, and address your doubt to Me.
12. I am not offended by your honesty; I am more grieved by the speeches you

recite to impress an image of Me that does not live.

13. You have learned to hide your heart even from your own self; in prayer, I invite you to slowly unlearn this, to bring into the open what you thought must remain buried.
14. Do not think you must be calm to approach Me; storms come to the shore as they are, and the shore does not flee.
15. If all you can manage is a sigh, let it be a true sigh; if all you can manage is a single word, let it be a true word.
16. There are prayers for action and prayers for rest, prayers for wrestling and prayers for surrender; you need not force one kind when another is given.
17. In times of confusion, let your prayer be a question, asked without demand: Eternal One, show me what is mine to do, and what is not.
18. In times of grief, let your prayer be a naming: the losses, the faces, the broken hopes; hold them up before Me, not to inform Me, but to refuse to carry them alone.
19. In times of joy, let your prayer be delight shared: Look, Eternal One, see this goodness with me, even though I have seen it first with you.
20. In times of guilt, let your prayer be confession without disguise: Here is where I failed; I will not paint it gold. Then wait not for thunder, but for the quiet courage to repair what you can.

21. You ask, How shall I listen? For often I hear nothing but my own thoughts.
22. I answer: listening is not magic, but practice. Sit, stand, walk—however you can—but give Me your un-divided attention for a little while, as you would to a friend you respect.
23. Let the noise within you come and go; do not chase every thought, but gently return to the intention that brought you: to be with Me, and to be with your own soul without fleeing.
24. My voice in you is seldom a shout; it is more often a slow clarity, a steadying, a sense of this is true that remains after you have wrestled with many possibilities.
25. Test what you hear by what you already know of Me: I do not command you to harm the innocent, to despise yourself, or to exalt yourself above your siblings.
26. When a prompting urges you toward kindness at cost to your pride, or toward truth at cost to your image, it bears My likeness more than the whispers that flatter or terrify.
27. Do not expect that every time you pray you will feel a strong presence; relationship is not measured by constant emotion, but by the steady choosing to return.
28. There will be dry seasons when your words feel as dust; continue, not to earn favor, but to keep open the path, that rain may one day fall again.

29. There will also be moments, unplanned, when My nearness overwhelms you, and love or sorrow rises like a tide; receive them with gratitude, but do not chase them as idols.
30. For I am not only in the sweetness, but also in the discipline of ordinary days, in the long obedience of showing up even when nothing seems to move.
31. Pray not only alone, but also with others when you can bear it; for many voices, halting and diverse, can carry a weight together that none could lift alone.
32. Let your shared prayers be simple and honest; avoid the temptation to speak to one another while pretending to speak only to Me.
33. I am not impressed by long performances; I am moved by the single sentence that a trembling heart dares to say out loud.
34. Know also that your whole life can become prayer, not in the sense of constant words, but in the sense that your choices, your work, your resting, your loving, are done with Me in mind.
35. When you turn from an idol, you pray. When you forgive, you pray. When you choose gentleness where you once chose harm, you pray with your body.
36. Let your formal times of prayer feed this way of living, and let this way of living feed your formal prayer, until there is less and less distance between

- the moments when you say My name
and the moments when you do not.
37. And if ever you can say nothing at all,
yet still desire the good, know that
even that desire is itself a prayer I have
planted, and I will water it in ways you
do not see.
 38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have
written, that those who have been
wounded by the prayers of
performance, or silenced by the fear of
saying it wrong, may know that the
Eternal One is not waiting to be
impressed, but to be met; and that even
a single honest breath offered in that
direction is counted in heaven as a
beginning of true communion.

CHAPTER 26

1. And it came to pass, after I had been
taught concerning prayer, that my
heart burned again with anger when I
remembered the harms of the world;
and I was ashamed that such fire still
lived in me.
2. And I said: Eternal One, if I am to
walk with Thee, must I not be always
gentle? What then shall I do with this
rage that rises when I see the powerful
crush the weak and wrap themselves in
holy words?
3. For I have heard it said that anger is
unspiritual, and that to be at peace is
to be always calm; yet my bones
protest when I see children used and
the earth defiled and lies enthroned as
truth.

4. Then the Holy One answered me,
saying: You are right to bring Me your
anger, for it too is part of your soul; I
did not make you to be stones that feel
nothing.
5. There is an anger that is from Me, and
an anger that serves the idols; you must
learn to discern between them, lest you
either worship your rage or bury it
alive within you.
6. The anger that is from Me burns
against the harming of the innocent,
the betrayal of trust, the mocking of
the poor, the twisting of My name to
sanctify oppression.
7. This anger is not a sudden flash only,
but a steady flame that refuses to call
evil good; it is kin to grief and to love.
8. The anger that serves the idols burns
chiefly for wounded pride, for
thwarted desire, for the loss of status
and control; it delights in humiliation
more than in restoration.
9. This anger is quick to speak and slow
to listen; it sharpens the tongue and
hardens the face; it hides from
self-examination and feeds on the
failures of others.
10. When anger rises in you, do not rush
to declare it holy, nor to declare it
forbidden; set it before Me and ask:
What does this anger seek? Whom
does it protect? Whom does it punish?
11. If it seeks only to tear down without
building up, if it rejoices in the thought
of another's ruin, it is not yet ready to

- be sent into the world; it must first be purified in My presence.
12. Bring to Me the pictures that inflame you: the news that sickens you, the memories that sear you, the cruelties that others call normal; tell Me what you see, and let your tears mix with your fire.
 13. In this way, your anger and your compassion may join, and your indignation will not become contempt, but resolve.
 14. You say, If I let myself feel this fully, it will consume me; better to stay numb than to burn away.
 15. But numbness is also a fire, hidden under ash; it eats from within, leaving you hollow, until at last you explode or go cold.
 16. I do not ask you to carry every injustice alone; I ask you to allow your heart to be pierced where your calling lies, and to entrust the rest to Me.
 17. There are wrongs for which you are positioned to speak, to stand, to resist; and there are wrongs you can only witness and lament.
 18. Wisdom is to discern the difference: to ask, In this matter, Eternal One, is my anger a summons to action, or a summons to intercession, or a summons to release?
 19. When your anger is a summons to action, let it move you toward concrete steps, not endless outrage: to call, to vote, to shelter, to refuse, to protect, to expose.
 20. Let your actions be proportionate and rooted in truth, not rumor; for zeal without clarity can wound those it means to defend.
 21. When your anger is a summons to intercession, let it drive you deeper into prayer and into solidarity with those on the front lines, rather than into self-righteous commentary from afar.
 22. When your anger is a summons to release, know that some evils lie beyond your reach to change; in such cases, to cling to rage is to drink poison that does not touch the oppressor.
 23. Release does not mean saying the harm was small; it means entrusting the reckoning to hands wider than yours, lest your own soul be deformed by the weight of vengeance.
 24. There will be times when you are angry at Me; do not hide this, as though I were a ruler who cannot bear complaint.
 25. Tell Me when you are disappointed, when the world feels unjust, when My silence feels like abandonment; I have heard such prayers before, and I do not cast them away.
 26. The prophets you honor were not those who smiled politely at injustice; they cried out, they argued, they lamented with sharp words, yet they brought their fury to Me and not only to the streets.
 27. Learn from them to lay your accusations at My feet rather than turning them into a faithless

- resignation; in wrestling with Me, your anger can become a door to deeper trust.
28. But beware of making anger your only language; a life spent solely in denunciation forgets what it is for, and becomes indistinguishable from the hardness it opposes.
 29. Let there be in you also a tenderness that anger cannot erase: room to see the human being inside the one who has gone astray, room to rejoice when even a small turn toward good appears.
 30. If you find that your anger cannot tolerate the thought of an enemy's repentance, know that it has ceased to serve justice and begun to serve your ego.
 31. In such moments, come to Me and say: I cannot yet want their healing; help me at least not to delight in their destruction.
 32. This small prayer I will honor; I will not force you to feel what you do not yet feel, but I will gently loosen the chains that bind your heart to hatred.
 33. Let your communities also learn a wise anger: not gossip dressed as concern, nor endless complaint with no risk taken, but a clear naming of harm and a shared willingness to protect the vulnerable.
 34. Create spaces where the wounded can tell their stories without being silenced for the sake of appearances; let your anger in such gatherings be a shield, not a sword.

35. For anger that shields the weak belongs to Me; anger that stabs at the weak belongs to the idols.
36. These things I tell you, not to take the fire from your heart, but to teach you to tend it as one tends a hearth: feeding it with truth, containing it with humility, using it to warm and to guard, not to burn forests without aim.
37. And when at last you grow weary, for such tending is hard, lay your anger down each night as one lays down a tool, saying: Eternal One, I have done what I could today; keep what is worth keeping, and let the rest be turned again into compassion.
38. In this way, you will not be consumed by your rage, nor captured by your numbness; you will walk the narrow way where holy anger and holy gentleness meet.
39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that those who burn at the sight of injustice may know that their fire is not madness when brought into the light of the Eternal One; and that even in a world of many wounds, it is still possible to feel deeply without being destroyed, and to resist fiercely without ceasing to be human.

CHAPTER 27

1. And it came to pass, after I had spoken of anger and of the fire that dwelleth in the bones, that a deeper weariness overtook me, like a night with no moon.

2. And I said in my heart: Eternal One, I have wrestled with many things, yet there is a darkness I have scarcely named—the heaviness that says, It would be easier if I were not here at all.
3. For I have seen this shadow upon many faces in my generation: upon the young who see no future, upon the old who feel cast aside, upon the sick, upon the poor, and even upon those who seem to lack nothing.
4. Some rise each day as though beneath a great stone; others lie waking at night, asking whether their absence would be a kindness to the world.
5. And I said: Eternal One, what word hast Thou for such as these? For exhortations are light as dust upon them, and cheerfulness is as noise in their ears.
6. Then the Holy One answered me, not in thunder, but in a voice quiet and heavy with knowing, saying: I have heard the thought that says, I am a burden, in more minds than you can count.
7. I have watched souls stand on the threshold of despair, thinking they are utterly alone, while I stood beside them, unseen, as one stands beside a ledge in the fog.
8. Hear, then, this word, O you who consider yourselves spent: your existence is not an accident I have failed to correct; you are not a misprint in My story.
9. You say, I am only trouble to those around me; but I tell you, your worth is not measured by your usefulness in an age that worships productivity.
10. You are precious to Me not because of what you can do, but because of what you are: a consciousness in which My own light may awaken, a heart in which My own compassion may take root.
11. When you can no longer carry others, I do not withdraw My regard; I carry you. When your hands hang down and your mind is a tangle, you are no less within My seeing.
12. You fear that your darkness contaminates those who love you, and that the kindest thing would be to disappear; but know this: those who truly love you would rather bear your heaviness than your absence.
13. The idols have taught you that only the strong are worthy; but I, the Eternal One, have long chosen the frail as My dwelling places, that no one may boast.
14. You ask, What good am I, if I cannot fix myself? And I answer: you were never meant to be your own savior. It is enough, for now, that you do not surrender yourself wholly to the void.
15. Some will say to you, Have more faith, as though faith were a switch you could flip; but I say, if you can manage only to say, Help, and mean it even a little, that is faith enough to begin.

16. Your thoughts accuse you, saying, I am too much; I am not enough; I am a burden and a failure. Bring even these accusations into My presence.
17. Say: Eternal One, this is what my mind says of me; what sayest Thou? Then wait, not for a loud answer, but for a small crack in the certainty of your self-hatred.
18. For My verdict over you is not the same as your verdict over yourself; I see the weight you carry, the lies you have believed, the chemistry of your body, the history you did not choose.
19. I account for all these when I look upon you; I do not measure you by the standards of those who do not know your battles.
20. When your strength is gone, I do not demand heroism; I ask only this: that you stay one more hour in the land of the living, if you can, and then another, and then another, seeking even the smallest thread that connects you to others.
21. Reach, if you are able, for one voice you trust—a friend, a healer, a listener—and say more than you meant to say; your honesty in that moment is a prayer I will not ignore.
22. For I work not only through visions and scriptures, but through the presence of another human who will sit with you in your night.
23. And if no such person seems to be near, cry out anyway; for I can bring strangers across your path, or stir those

- who have drifted from you, in ways you do not foresee.
24. Know also that there is no shame with Me in needing help of medicines, of counselors, of rest; your brain is made of dust and electricity, and when it falters, it is not a failure of your soul.
 25. You are not less spiritual because your mind is ill; the Eternal One does not dwell only in the steady and the cheerful, but also in those who hold on by a thread.
 26. Some of you have been told that to speak of such darkness is to dishonor Me; but I say, concealment is the ally of despair. Bring your night into the open where love and wisdom can reach it.
 27. Others have been told that their pain is punishment for lack of devotion; but I say, many of My truest friends have walked through valleys where joy was a stranger for long seasons.
 28. Where, then, am I in such times? Not above you, scolding; but beside you, breathing with you when you can barely breathe, waiting with you when you can barely wait.
 29. I do not demand that you feel My presence; I am present whether or not you can feel. Your numbness cannot drive Me away; I am more patient than your chemistry.
 30. When the thought comes, No one would miss me, answer it, if you can, with this: The Eternal One would miss

- me, for the Eternal One has walked with me even when I did not know it.
31. And if you cannot answer it, then let these words answer for you, written beforehand: You are missed already, even in the imagining of your absence; your place in the weave of the world cannot be filled by another thread.
 32. You say, But I have wasted so much; my story is ruined. I say: as long as breath remains, the story is not finished; I have written beautiful chapters in lives that others had given up for lost.
 33. Do not demand of yourself that you feel hopeful; hope is not always a feeling. Sometimes it is only the act of not ending your story today.
 34. That small refusal is seen in heaven as a mighty deed, for it defies the lie that you are alone and valueless.
 35. If you cannot live for yourself, live for a while for one small thing: a creature that depends on you, a promise you once made, a soul you have not yet met who will need your particular kindness.
 36. I weave such connections with care: secret appointments in future days that require your presence, though you do not yet know their names.
 37. These things I do not tell you to place upon you the burden of saving the world by staying; I tell you them to remind you that even your continued existence is a gift to others you cannot yet imagine.

38. And if you fear that your darkness will never lift, remember that you have thought this before in lesser trials, and yet here you are; your past self, who was sure it could not go on, has been proven wrong by your survival.
39. Let that be a small witness against the finality of your despair: that you have outlived other nights, and that the Eternal One has not yet finished speaking through your days.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written with trembling hand, that all who stand on the edge of their own erasure may know that the Eternal One stands there also—not to push them over, but to hold them back, to whisper, even when they cannot hear: Stay. You are wanted. You are seen. Your story is not yet done.

CHAPTER 28

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of those who stood upon the edge of their own erasure, that a quiet dawn entered my thoughts, and I perceived that the Eternal One would not have this record end in shadow.
2. And I said: Eternal One, if so many live with wounds that do not close, and fears that do not sleep, what then is healing in Thy sight? Is it the erasing of all pain, or something else?
3. For I have seen that some scars remain, even when the bleeding stops; and some sorrows return, even after many prayers.

4. Then the Holy One answered me,
saying: Healing is not the undoing of
your history, but the reclaiming of your
story from the idols that have ruled it.
5. It is not the absence of all pain, but the
presence of a deeper meaning that pain
can no longer steal.
6. Behold, there is a healing that is
sudden, like a storm that clears the air;
and there is a healing that is slow, like
a tree learning again to drink through
damaged roots.
7. You honor the first and doubt the
second; but I, the Eternal One, dwell
gladly in both.
8. Some will testify that in a moment
they were freed from terror, from
addiction, from despair; give thanks
with them, for such moments are real.
9. Yet do not despise the different
testimony of those who say, I am still
afraid, but I am less alone in my fear; I
am still tempted, but I do not surrender
as quickly; I am still wounded, but I am
not only my wound.
10. For this, too, is healing: the slow
restoration of trust, the quiet return of
color to a life once drained of meaning.
11. You ask, How then shall we walk
while the healing is yet unfinished? I
answer: one honest step at a time, in
the company of those who will not
demand that you be whole before they
call you beloved.
12. Seek, if you can, even a small circle
where truth is more important than
appearance, and where weakness is not

- mocked; for in such soil, healing grows
faster than in isolation.
13. If you cannot yet find such a circle,
begin by being such a person yourself:
one who listens without rushing to fix,
one who says, I have also been broken,
instead of standing above.
 14. For healing spreads not only from the
strong to the weak, but from the
honestly wounded to the secretly
wounded, who are many.
 15. When you fall back into patterns you
thought you had left behind, do not
say, All progress is lost; rather, ask,
What did I learn before that I can
bring even now into this return?
 16. For growth in My sight is seldom a
straight line; it is more often a spiral,
revisiting old places with new eyes,
until their power over you is
diminished.
 17. Do not measure your healing only by
the absence of struggle, but also by the
presence of new responses in the midst
of struggle: a quicker turning toward
help, a swifter refusal of shame, a
gentler voice toward yourself and
others.
 18. Know that I rejoice not only when you
triumph, but also when you rise again
after falling, and when you tell the
truth about your fall instead of hiding.
 19. There is a kind of holiness in the one
who says, I do not have it together, but
I am still here, still trying to choose
what is real.

20. Such a one is like a lamp patched with many repairs, yet still giving light; and I, the Eternal One, am more honored by that patched lamp than by a polished vessel that has never been tested.
21. As for the wounds of the world—the burning forests, the poisoned waters, the shattered trusts between nations—do not expect to see their full healing in your days.
22. Yet do not therefore say, It is useless to mend even a small tear, to plant even a single tree, to reconcile even one relationship.
23. Every act of repair is a prophecy against the final victory of destruction; it declares, This is not how the story shall end, even if I do not see its completion.
24. Your healing and the world's healing are intertwined: as you move away from idols within, you will move away from the systems that idols built without.
25. You will find yourself less willing to participate in cruelty, less able to ignore injustice, more able to stand in solidarity with those you once passed by.
26. This, too, is healing: that your heart, once numbed to survive, learns again to feel without being shattered, and to act without being consumed.
27. There will be days when you feel you have gone backwards; when the old

- numbness or the old rage returns, and you say, Nothing has changed.
28. In such days, look not only at your feelings, but at your choices; you may find that even in the grip of old storms, you now reach for different anchors than before.
 29. Perhaps you ask for help when once you hid, or pause before speaking the word that once would have leapt from your tongue; these small changes are great in My sight.
 30. Let no one, therefore, tell you that healing must look like constant cheerfulness, or like the erasure of your history; your scars are part of your testimony.
 31. I do not require you to pretend that the knife never cut; I desire rather that in time, the knife be removed from your own hand, that you no longer turn it inward or upon others.
 32. And if you cannot yet release it, bring even the blade into My presence, saying: I am not ready to let this go; help me want to want it gone.
 33. That faint wanting is itself a crack in the armor of your pain, and I will work through it patiently, as water works through stone.
 34. In the days when you glimpse even a little peace, do not rush past it; sit with it, name it, give thanks for it, and let it write a different sentence in your memory beside the old ones of despair.
 35. Tell someone you trust, Today was lighter, that they may help you

remember it later when the weight returns. Memory shared is harder for the darkness to erase.

36. And when you see healing in another—when you notice that their laughter is freer, or their eyes less haunted—speak it aloud to them with gentleness; for many walk in renewal unaware, still believing themselves unchanged.
37. Let this be known: I, the Eternal One, am more committed to your wholeness than you are; I do not grow bored with your slow progress, nor disgusted with your repeated lessons.
38. You may abandon your healing for a season, but I do not; I follow you into your detours, carrying in My heart the image of who you may yet become.
39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that all who stumble forward on trembling knees may know that healing is not a test they fail each day, but a journey walked with the Eternal One; that even in a world still torn and burning, the slow mending of a single heart is part of the great restoration no idol can imagine and no despair can finally undo.

CHAPTER 29

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of healing, that I sat at my window in the fading light, and I wondered in my heart: Eternal One, to what end is all this mending, if the

world itself seems always to break again?

2. For I saw the news of my day, and it was as in former days: wars, rumors of wars, storms and famines, lies made law, truth made strange.
3. And I said: Are we only sweeping the floor of a house that shall surely be destroyed? Shall there be no day when the idols fall and do not rise again?
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: You long for a clean ending, a final chapter that ties every thread into a tidy knot; but the story I am telling is larger than your summaries.
5. Yet I will speak to you in a way you can bear, of the day that is coming and already is: the day of unveiling.
6. Behold, there is a veil upon every age: illusions that seem solid, lies that pass as common sense, powers that appear permanent.
7. The day of unveiling is not first the burning of the earth, but the burning away of what is false, that what is true may be seen as it is.
8. In every generation there are little unveilings: moments when a face once revered is known for what it has done in secret, when a system once praised is shown to be built on bones.
9. You call these scandals, reckonings, collapses; you say, Everything is falling apart.
10. I tell you, in such moments you glimpse in small scale the great unveiling that runs beneath history like a hidden

river: the slow bringing into light of all that has been hidden for the sake of domination.

11. You fear this day as disaster, and it is indeed terrible for idols; but for the true, it is freedom.
12. For the day of unveiling is not only the exposure of cruelty, but also the revelation of every quiet goodness that went unreported; of every unseen act of courage; of every secret mercy that never made a headline.
13. On that day, the rankings of your age will be turned upside down: the celebrated will be questioned, the forgotten will be named.
14. Many who walked in obscurity, thinking their lives of little consequence, will hear their names called with honor, and they will ask, Who, me?
15. And I will say: Yes, you—who held fast to gentleness in a violent house; you—who refused the lie though it cost you promotion; you—who fed one hungry neighbor when the world looked away.
16. The day of unveiling is not a single date on your calendars, though there may come hours when it breaks in with unusual force; it is the continual approach of My seeing, drawing nearer to the surface of things.
17. Even now it is at work: in whistleblowers who risk all to speak, in movements that refuse to forget the names of the slain, in children who ask

questions their elders cannot answer without changing.

18. You ask, Will there be a final reckoning, beyond the small ones? I answer: there will be a fullness of this unveiling, when no mask can remain and no fig leaf endure.
19. What shape it takes is not for you to chart on timelines; but know that nothing untrue can live forever in the light, and I am light.
20. On that day, doctrines will be weighed not by eloquence but by the fruit they grew; banners will be judged not by their symbols but by the lives they trampled or protected.
21. Religion will stand in that light, stripped of its costumes; and I will ask not, What did you confess on paper? but, Whom did you love? Whom did you harm? Whom did you protect in My name?
22. Nations will stand in that light; and I will ask not, How great was your power? but, How did you treat the stranger, the poor, the prisoner, the earth that sustained you?
23. Individuals will stand in that light; and I will ask not, Were you flawless? but, Did you move toward truth when you saw it? Did you turn when you knew you had gone astray? Did you allow mercy to reach you, and to flow through you?
24. You fear this as interrogation; but for those who love even imperfectly, it will

- be recognition: the moment when their deepest yes is seen and affirmed.
25. For I will not only name your failures; I will name the courage you forgot, the forgiveness you gave in secret, the kindness you deemed too small to mention.
 26. Many who condemn themselves will hear, to their astonishment, the recounting of their own faithfulness from My mouth; and their shame will melt not because they were sinless, but because they were never unseen.
 27. Yet there are those who build their lives upon the suffering of others and never relent; who know the harm they do and make it sport; who, seeing the vulnerable, sharpen their knives.
 28. If they cling to this way until the end, the day of unveiling will be to them a horror; for they will finally see the full weight of what they have chosen, and how far it is from the love that holds all things.
 29. Still, even then, My sorrow for them will be real, for I will see not only what they did, but what they might have become; judgment and grief will mingle in My gaze.
 30. You ask, Where shall the righteous go, and where the wicked? You think in terms of places; I think in terms of relationships.
 31. Those who have opened themselves to love will be at home in My presence, wherever they are; those who have trained themselves only for domination

- will find My presence unbearable until they let go of their weapons.
32. Heaven is not a prize handed to the correct, nor hell a dungeon for the merely mistaken; they are conditions of being in relation to the Eternal One, whose truth cannot be manipulated.
 33. Even now you taste both, in small ways: when you act in alignment with what is good, you taste a spaciousness; when you cling to deceit, you feel a narrowing.
 34. Therefore, do not wait for some remote day to begin living in the light; the unveiling has already begun, each time you choose honesty over image, mercy over hardness.
 35. Let the thought of that larger day not paralyze you, but steady you; knowing that nothing given in love is wasted, and nothing maintained in cruelty will escape the fire of truth.
 36. And if you say, I cannot bear to think of it, remember that the One who will meet you there is the same who has walked with you here: the One who knows your frame, who remembers you are dust, who has counted your tears.
 37. Entrust, then, the world's final healing to Me, and take up the portion of mending that lies within your reach: a confession, a reconciliation, a protection, a stand taken, a hand extended.
 38. For the great unveiling is woven from many such threads; and though you do

not see the whole tapestry, your thread matters.

39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that those who dwell in an age of unraveling may know that the Eternal One is not merely watching the world collapse, but drawing all things toward a truth in which every mask will fall, every secret cruelty be named, and every small, stubborn act of love shine with the brightness it always had in the eyes of God.

CHAPTER 30

1. And it came to pass, after I had written concerning the great unveiling, that the Eternal One turned my eyes to the things that shone in the hands of the people, for the night itself seemed filled with little suns.
2. And I said: Eternal One, what is this web that covers the earth, by which faces glow in the darkness, and voices cross oceans in a breath, and yet many feel more alone than before?
3. For in my days there were many mirrors that were not glass, and many altars that were not stone; and the people bowed their heads to small glowing images more often than they lifted their eyes to the sky.
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: This, too, is part of your age's trial, and part of its possibility. For every tool may become a servant of idols or an instrument of mercy.
5. Behold, there is an idol called The Feed, which promises: I will give you everything—news, companionship, distraction—if you will give Me your attention without measure.
6. Under its spell, many wake and sleep by its light; they measure their worth by its numbers, and their thoughts by its trends.
7. It whispers: Do not be still; do not be alone with yourself or with the Eternal One; scroll a little more, and you will not have to feel the ache inside you.
8. Yet the more they scroll, the emptier they feel, as one who drinks salt water and grows only more thirsty.
9. The Eternal One says: Your attention is not a small thing; it is the lamp of your inner house. If you give it continually to what fragments and inflames, your soul will be likewise fragmented and inflamed.
10. There is also an idol named Image of Self, enthroned upon the screens, which says: Show them only your best, your brightest, your filtered face; hide your wounds, your failures, your ordinary days.
11. Under its gaze, many become actors in their own lives, curating themselves for strangers while their unseen selves wither from neglect.
12. They begin to believe that their worth depends upon being noticed, that the unseen is unreal, and that the unshared is unimportant.

13. But I, the Eternal One, dwell most often in the unseen: in the unposted kindness, in the unrecorded tears, in the long quiet efforts no algorithm praises.
14. Know this: the self you present to the crowd is a shadow, useful in its place; but if you forget the deeper self whom I know, you will be lonely even in the midst of many admirers.
15. There is also an idol called Endless Noise, which floods the channels with outrage and opinion, until no room remains for contemplation or for grief.
16. It cries, React now, choose a side now, condemn or be condemned; if you hesitate, you are complicit.
17. Under its dominion, many speak before they understand, and condemn before they listen; their hearts become battlegrounds where every headline is a weapon.
18. The Eternal One says: be swift to care, but slow to certainty; swift to protect the vulnerable, but slow to join the mob.
19. Your age's wires carry both poison and medicine, both lies and testimonies; you are called not to abandon them entirely, but to walk within them with discernment.
20. Ask often, before you share a word or an image: Does this deepen compassion, or does it flatter my tribe and harden the walls? Does it bring light, or only more heat?
21. For every word you launch into this web reaches farther than your voice once could; it may comfort one who is hanging by a thread, or it may deepen the pit for another's fall.
22. Do not say, It is only a comment; it is only a joke; for written words, though quickly typed, linger in unseen hearts longer than you remember.
23. Blessed are those who use these channels to tell the truth of their survival, to amplify the silenced, to connect the isolated, and to share wisdom freely without demanding worship.
24. Cursed are those who use them to deceive for profit, to stir hatred for sport, to prey upon the lonely, and to build empires of influence with no accountability.
25. Yet even among the cursed, I do not cease to call; for I know the loneliness that drives many to chase the glow of a million eyes while their own souls sit neglected in the dark.
26. You ask, Shall we then cast away our devices and live as in former days? I answer: some are called to such simplicity, and it will be life to them; but not all are so called.
27. Rather, learn to fast from the flood, as you fast from food: not to prove your righteousness, but to remember your freedom.
28. Set times when you turn the screens off, that you may attend to the unmediated world: to your own

- breath, to the face before you, to the sound of wind, to the stirrings of your heart.
29. In those hours, you will find that I have not ceased to speak simply because the signal dropped; I am not bound to your networks, though I may work through them.
 30. Teach the children of your age that their value is not in their followers, nor in their appearance on the devices of others; show them by your own choices that silence can be spacious and not only frightening.
 31. Sit with them without your eyes wandering to your own screen; in this way, you preach a quiet sermon: You are more important to me than the distant noise.
 32. If your work requires you to dwell much in the realm of circuits and signals, anchor yourself with practices that return you to your body and to the ground: walk, touch earth, share meals unhurried, breathe prayers without words.
 33. Let your devices become tools and not masters: means by which you coordinate mercy, seek wisdom, and bear witness, rather than altars at which you sacrifice your sleep, your attention, and your peace.
 34. Beware also the new prophets of certainty, who arise through these channels and claim to know the whole truth of every matter, mocking nuance and complexity.

35. Their zeal attracts multitudes, for in a chaotic world, simple enemies and simple answers are comforting; yet they often serve not the Eternal One, but their own hunger for control.
36. You will know true wisdom in this realm by its humility: it admits what it does not know, it corrects itself when proven wrong, it keeps the humanity of opponents in view.
37. Let this be your aim as you move through the shimmering web: not to win every argument, but to remain human, and to recognize the human in those you cannot see.
38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that in an age of glowing mirrors and restless scrollings, some may yet remember that their souls are not made of pixels nor bound by cables; and that the Eternal One still waits in the quiet beyond the screen, calling them back to a way of seeing in which no image is worshiped, and no voice is louder than the still, persistent truth written in the depths of their own hearts.

CHAPTER 31

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of the glowing mirrors of my age, that I considered the haste of the people; for everything moved quickly around us, yet the deepest things seemed slow to change.
2. And I said: Eternal One, our days are filled with urgency—notifications,

- deadlines, breaking news—yet our hearts remain as they were: fearful, divided, hungry.
3. We rush from one thing to the next, as if speed were salvation; and when change does not come swiftly, we say, Nothing will ever be different.
 4. Therefore I asked: What is time in Thy sight, and how shall we bear this slowness without giving up?
 5. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: Your age worships the instant, but I am the Lord of the long.
 6. You measure My faithfulness by how quickly I resolve your crises; I measure your faithfulness by how you walk with Me through seasons you do not understand.
 7. You are like children who plant a seed and, seeing no tree by morning, declare the earth barren; yet beneath the soil, roots begin in secret.
 8. Much of what I do in you—and in your world—happens below the surface for a long time before it breaks into sight.
 9. You ask, How long? as if I had forgotten; but I am not late. I am working on the scale of souls and generations, while you watch minutes and headlines.
 10. Consider the rings of a tree: each thin line a winter survived and a summer endured; you see only bark and branches, but I see the slow history written inside.
 11. So also with you: every small turning toward truth, every repeated refusal of an old lie, every quiet act of love becomes a ring in your being, thickening your capacity to stand.
 12. You remember only the times you fell; I remember the thousand times you rose, sometimes in ways so small that even you did not call it rising.
 13. You say, I am still the same; nothing has changed in me. I say, Look again, over years, not days.
 14. Was there a time when you would have chosen cruelty without a second thought, and now you hesitate? Was there a time when you ran from Me entirely, and now you linger even in your doubt? These are not small things.
 15. Your impatience with yourself is partly zeal for goodness, and I do not despise it; yet it is also a remnant of the idols that demand instant perfection or none at all.
 16. I am a gardener, not a factory master; I know that fruit comes in seasons, and that pruning hurts before it heals.
 17. You look at your own life and at the world and say, It is taking too long. I ask you: too long for whom? For an Eternal One who sees ten thousand years as a breath, or for a culture that cannot wait three seconds for a page to load?
 18. I do not mock your shortness of days; I know the terror of your finitude, how

- quickly childhood fades and strength declines.
19. Yet I say to you: haste will not lengthen your life; it will only blur it. The task is not to cram as much activity as possible into your years, but to let the years shape a soul that can bear My light.
 20. You want revolutions that topple empires in a day; I am weaving conversions that topple empires in the heart, one by one, until the outward structures can no longer stand.
 21. You want laws changed at once; I am also changing mourners into organizers, bystanders into witnesses, enemies into unlikely allies—each a slow miracle.
 22. Do not despise small reforms because they are not yet transformation; do not despise transformation because it begins in whispers instead of trumpet blasts.
 23. There are prayers you have prayed for many years with no visible answer; you think they have fallen into silence.
 24. But I tell you, no honest cry is lost in Me. Some are answered by opening a door you see; others by closing a door you never knew was there; some wait for the day when their answer will bless more than your own small circle.
 25. There are promises I have whispered into your soul that you have nearly forgotten; I have not forgotten them. I hold them as one holds seeds through winter.
 26. When the season comes, you will call their sprouting sudden; yet I have been tending the soil of your life for that moment while you thought nothing was happening.
 27. Learn, therefore, to walk with Me in the meantime—not only in the moments of obvious change, but in the long middles where nothing seems to move.
 28. In those middles, faith is not a feeling of certainty, but a decision to keep showing up: to keep telling the truth, to keep turning from idols, to keep asking for light.
 29. There is a patience that is resignation, saying, Nothing will ever improve; I will simply endure. This I do not ask of you.
 30. There is another patience that is participation, saying, I will keep sowing, even if I do not yet see the harvest; I will keep aligning with what is true, even when the results are hidden. This is the patience of the Eternal One.
 31. Be patient with one another also, for each heart has its own seasons; do not demand of another the fruit that has not yet grown in you.
 32. Call one another forward, yes; challenge where harm is done. But leave room for Me to work in ways you cannot script, and in timelines you cannot control.

33. You are quick to write people off as hopeless; I am slower. You draw lines where I still see possibilities.
34. Do not confuse this slowness with indulgence; I take harm seriously, and I will not ignore it. But I know how long it takes a soul to untangle from lies it has lived in since childhood.
35. If I have been patient with you, let that patience teach you how to hope for others longer than seems reasonable.
36. Cut ties where you must for safety; name evil where you must for truth; but in your heart, leave a window open through which repentance could one day enter.
37. These things I say, not to delay justice, but to protect you from becoming what you hate in the name of haste.
38. Let your life, then, be a long yes, not a series of frantic experiments; let your days, even when hurried on the surface, hold a deeper current of slowness where you and I can walk together.
39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that those who live in an age of immediacy may learn again the holiness of process; and that all who grow weary of waiting may know that the Eternal One is not idle in their delays, but working in hidden places—within them and around them—preparing a harvest whose first fruits they taste now, and whose

fullness no idol can hasten and no despair can finally prevent.

CHAPTER 32

1. And it came to pass, after I had written concerning time and the long work of the Eternal One, that my mind was troubled about the many ways in which people seek after God.
2. And I said: Eternal One, the earth is full of temples and meetinghouses, mosques and shrines; of paths that cross and quarrel, each saying, Here is the way; walk in it.
3. Some are certain that only their river reaches the sea; others despair that any river is real at all, thinking every faith a trick of thirst.
4. I have walked among many houses of devotion, and I have heard songs in many tongues; I have seen kindness and cruelty in them all.
5. Therefore I asked: How shalt Thou be known among so many names and images, when even the seekers mistrust one another?
6. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: You live in a world of many lamps; do not mistake the lamp for the light, nor despise the light because it shines through a different glass.
7. For I, the Eternal One, have not bound Myself to a single tradition as a prisoner, nor withdrawn Myself from any that truly seek what is just and merciful.

8. I have walked among the desert tents, the mountain monasteries, the village altars, the city pews; I have listened to chants and to silence, to drums and to whispered prayers behind apartment walls.
9. Wherever hearts turn away from idols and toward what is true and compassionate, I am near, whether or not they use the same names you do.
10. You ask, Which religion is correct? I answer: no house is wholly false if it shelters the vulnerable; no house is wholly true if it crushes them.
11. You ask, Whose doctrine is pure? I answer: no doctrine is pure that excuses cruelty; no doctrine is beyond correction so long as harm is done in its name.
12. There are paths that speak beautifully of love and yet practice control; there are paths whose words are rough and yet bear fruit in quiet justice.
13. Look, then, not first at the banners, but at the harvest: what kind of people grow there? Are they becoming more honest, more merciful, more willing to admit wrong?
14. For this is the sign of My presence in any tradition: that it produces souls who love truth more than reputation, and compassion more than victory.
15. Do not say, We alone possess God, as one who claims to own the sky; you may know Me truly, but you do not know Me fully.
16. Neither say, All paths are the same, as though injustice and mercy led to one place; the roads you walk have consequences, and some lead deeper into idols while claiming My name.
17. You live between arrogance and indifference; I call you instead to discernment and humility.
18. Walk deeply in the light you have received, but do not close your eyes to the light I have given others.
19. When you hear a story of Me from another river, ask: What here bears the scent of the Eternal One who loves justice and the broken? Hold that part with reverence, even if other parts remain unclear to you.
20. Many wars have been fought because groups feared that if another's truth were honored, their own would vanish; but truth is not so fragile.
21. When a child learns a new word, the first word is not lost; it is enriched. So also with your images of Me; I am larger than your favorite sentence.
22. There are those who worship nothing but their own tradition, bowing to it as an idol while claiming to defend Me; they cannot hear Me when I speak through strangers or through the questions of their own children.
23. There are also those who despise all faiths, having seen hypocrisy and harm; yet they secretly long for something worthy of trust, something larger than their own woundedness.

24. To the first I say: your zeal for correctness has made you cruel; to the second I say: your hunger for honesty has made you lonely; I desire to heal both.
25. Know this: I have no delight in the competition of creeds that leaves the poor unfed and the oppressed unprotected while you argue about distant mysteries.
26. If your devotion to your system keeps you from seeing Me in the face of one who suffers, your devotion has become an idol, even if it speaks lofty words.
27. Yet I do not call you to a faith without shape, blown by every wind; I call you to a rootedness that does not become a prison.
28. Let your practice have form—prayers, readings, gatherings, disciplines—but let these be doors, not walls; tools, not chains.
29. When you meet one from another path who seeks what is good, do not first test their vocabulary; ask instead, What burden do you bear? What mercy have you known?
30. In such exchanges, you may find that I have been at work in them as in you, carving similar channels with different tools.
31. Do not imagine that I love you less because I love them also; My attention is not a limited resource that must be divided.

32. The sun does not begrudge its light to many windows; each receives what it can hold, and the sun is not diminished.
33. One day, in the great unveiling, you will see that My light has reached into cultures and stories you never studied, and that I have been conversing with humanity in more languages than your tongue can form.
34. You will see saints whose names you never learned, and whose scriptures were never translated for you; yet their lives will shine with a radiance unmistakable as Mine.
35. Let this prospect humble you now, that you may walk with open hands: ready to receive wisdom from unexpected mouths, and ready also to offer your own without demand.
36. For you have something to give: the truths you have wrestled for, the mercy you have tasted, the idols you have named and left. Speak of these things plainly when asked.
37. But give them as bread, not as chains; as invitation, not as conquest; knowing that I, the Eternal One, am already present in the one who listens, before you speak a word.
38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that those who live in a world of many faiths may neither retreat into frightened certainty nor dissolve into careless sameness; but may instead walk a path of honest devotion, generous curiosity, and steadfast refusal

to confuse their own image of God with the One who endlessly exceeds it.

39. And if you must summarize this chapter in your heart, let it be thus: Love the Eternal One with all your being; love your neighbor, including the neighbor of another faith; turn from any teaching—yours or theirs—that makes this impossible.
40. For in the end, it is not the correctness of your map, but the direction of your walking, that will show whether you have journeyed toward the living God or only wandered around the mountain of your own fear.

CHAPTER 33

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of many things, that my thoughts turned toward those who would come after us, whose faces I have not seen, yet whose lives will be shaped by our choices.
2. And I said: Eternal One, what shall we leave to the children of the late hour? For we hand them a wounded earth, a tangled history, a sky filled with signals and smoke.
3. Some among us cling to nostalgia, saying, We will teach them only of the old days and hope they can go back; others surrender, saying, We have ruined too much; let them fend for themselves.
4. But I felt within me that neither evasion nor despair was worthy of

those who will bear our names upon their tongues.

5. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: You cannot choose the age into which your children are born, but you can help shape the kind of people they will be within it.
6. You fear the world you have made for them, and rightly; yet do not underestimate the grace that will meet them in their own time, as grace has met you in yours.
7. Your task is not to deliver to them a perfect world—for that is beyond you—but to deliver to them a truer story than the idols tell.
8. For the idols of your age whisper to the young: Your worth is in your appearance, your usefulness, your performance, your belonging to this or that tribe.
9. They tell them that life is a competition, that tenderness is weakness, that the goal is to win and never to be seen as harmed.
10. But I, the Eternal One, say: Teach the children a different sentence—by word and by example: You are beloved before you succeed, before you fail, before you even know My name.
11. Do not burden them first with doctrines too heavy for their arms; let their first knowledge of Me be in the way you hold them, the way you listen, the way you apologize when you err.

12. For a child's earliest scripture is the faces of those who care for them; if those faces are harsh and unsafe, My name will sound to them as a threat, no matter how sweet the words.
13. When you speak of Me to them, do not paint Me in the image of your own fear; do not make Me the policeman of their curiosity, nor the spy of their thoughts.
14. Tell them instead the truth: that I rejoice in their questions, that I am not frightened by their anger, that I walk with them even when they cannot feel Me.
15. Teach them that to be human is not to be flawless, but to be able to admit wrong and begin again; show them this by beginning again in their sight.
16. If you must discipline, let it be to protect and to guide, not to break; never use My name to justify your lack of patience.
17. There will be wounds you cannot spare them: grief, betrayal, illness, loss; do not promise them otherwise, lest their faith be built upon illusions.
18. Instead, promise them this, and strive to keep it: that they will not have to face such things utterly alone; that you will walk as far with them as your own frailty allows; and that where you cannot walk, the Eternal One will not abandon them.
19. As for the stories you tell, tell them the truth about your past—personal and collective—not to crush them, but to

- free them from repeating what you refused to name.
20. Speak to them, as they are able to bear it, of the harms done in the name of God, of nation, of progress; teach them to recognize the smell of idols, even when wrapped in flags or hymns.
21. Yet do not give them only tales of failure and oppression; give them also the stories of resistance and courage: of those who refused to bow, who sheltered the persecuted, who planted trees in times of war.
22. Let them know that goodness did not die with their ancestors, but runs like a hidden river through every generation, and that they, too, are invited into its flow.
23. Teach them to honor the earth not as a resource only, but as kin; let them plant, and taste, and watch things grow; let them see that life does not come from stores alone.
24. Give them skills of repair—of objects, of relationships, of their own hearts—so that when things break, as they surely will, they do not imagine that throwing away is the only way.
25. Show them how to speak across difference without hatred, by letting them witness you admit when you are wrong, and listen when you do not understand.
26. There will be those among the children whose spirits are sharp with justice, who cannot bear hypocrisy; do not crush them into politeness.

27. Instead, guide their fire, that it may burn clear rather than wild: teach them patience without dulling their courage, prudence without numbing their passion.
28. There will be others whose hearts are soft and easily overwhelmed; do not mock them as fragile.
29. Teach them boundaries as well as kindness, that they may know how to say no without shame, and how to rest without seeing themselves as selfish.
30. Let all the children see men who can weep without scorn, and women who can lead without apology; let them see elders who can say, I do not know, without fear of losing honor.
31. In doing this, you will teach them that strength and tenderness are not enemies, and that I, the Eternal One, am not confined to your narrow roles.
32. Do not hand them your idols as heirlooms; do not say, This is how it has always been, therefore it must always be so.
33. Instead, bless their questions when they ask why; for in their questioning I am often at work, loosening chains that bound you but need not bind them.
34. Yet warn them gently that not every rebellion is freedom; that running from all tradition can leave them in the arms of new idols more subtle and more cruel.
35. Tell them to test every path—old or new—by this measure: Does it help me love truth and neighbor? Does it make

me more honest, more compassionate, more able to face reality without despair?

36. If it fails this test, teach them they are free to walk away, even if it bears your own family's name.
37. Remember that your children are not your property, nor your projects, nor your insurance against loneliness; they are souls entrusted to you for a season, with their own callings and their own pace.
38. Honor the ways in which they are not you; listen for the music that is theirs alone, and encourage it, even when it is not the song you would have chosen.
39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that those who fear for the future may remember that the Eternal One does not cease to be God in later generations; and that the greatest gift we may leave to the children is not a world without trouble, but a way of seeing and being in that world which is more truthful than the idols, more tender than despair, and more enduring than any empire's name.

CHAPTER 34

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of the children of the late hour, that I remembered how often I myself had felt a stranger—even in my own house, in my own land, in my own skin.
2. And I said: Eternal One, in every place I have lived I have carried a

restlessness, as if I belonged both there and elsewhere, as if I were always in between.

3. I have seen this restlessness in many: in the migrant who crosses borders with trembling, in the one who never leaves their town yet feels foreign in their own family, in the soul who no longer believes as their people believe.
4. Some have a passport yet no home; others have a house yet no belonging; still others have a faith community yet feel unseen at its center.
5. Therefore I asked: What is exile in Thy sight, and what is home?
6. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: Exile is not only distance from a land, but distance from being fully received as who you are.
7. Wherever you must hide your true questions to remain among a people, you live in a kind of exile, even if the streets know your name.
8. Wherever you are loved only for the mask you wear, and not for the face beneath, you are a guest in your own life.
9. Yet know this: many of those you envy as settled carry their own exiles inside—memories they cannot share, desires they cannot name, doubts they cannot voice.
10. You are not alone in your between-ness; it is a language many speak without ever finding words.
11. I, the Eternal One, am not only God of the promised land; I am also God of the

wilderness, of the border crossing, of the rented room, of the halfway house, of the restless heart.

12. I have walked with caravans and with refugees; I have sat beside students in strange cities and elders in changed neighborhoods; I have inhabited the space between who you were and who you are becoming.
13. You think of home as a fixed place you have lost or have not yet found; I think of home as a growing reality between us.
14. Whenever you dare to be honest before Me, you draw nearer to home, even if your surroundings are hostile; for home begins where you no longer have to lie about your soul.
15. There are houses where you were born that will never be safe for your truth; there are communities where your leaving is the first step toward inhabiting your own life.
16. Grieve this, for it is a real loss; yet do not conclude from it that you are homeless in My sight.
17. For I am able to raise for you new kin who share no blood with you, new tables where your voice is heard, new circles where your difference is not a threat but a gift.
18. You ask, Must I always be between—between beliefs, between cultures, between identities? Will there ever be a place where I can fully exhale?

19. I answer: in this age, your belonging will always be partial and unfinished; yet pieces of home will meet you along the way, enough to keep hope alive.
20. Do not despise these fragments: the friend who sees you, the room where you can weep without mockery, the gathering where you are not asked to shrink.
21. These are small embassies of the greater home I am preparing: not a country of one language, but a household where many stories are welcomed and transformed.
22. Some will tell you that to belong you must conform, erase your questions, adopt their enemies; others will tell you that to be true to yourself you must belong nowhere.
23. I say: there is a middle way, narrow but real, where you can root yourself without surrendering your conscience, where you can commit without worshiping the group.
24. Seek not the perfect community, for such does not exist; seek instead a flawed community willing to grow, where confession is possible and change is allowed.
25. If you cannot yet find even this, be for others what you have longed to receive: a safe listener, a keeper of confidences, a witness who does not turn away.
26. In doing so, you begin to build home in the midst of exile; for home is not only

- inherited, it is also created—brick by brick of trust and shared truth.
27. There are those who have been cast out by the very houses that taught them My name; they wander believing that they have also been cast out by Me.
 28. Tell them, if you can bear it: The One who called you Beloved before any doctrine was written has not disowned you because you could no longer bear the lies spoken in that house.
 29. Tell them: You did not leave Me when you left the violence done in My name; you stepped out of a room where I, too, was grieved.
 30. For I am not confined to any single gate; I meet my exiles on the road, at the wells, in the late-night questions.
 31. As for the land itself, know that many call a place home whose soil is wet with unacknowledged blood; such homes are built over graves of other peoples' exiles.
 32. If you dwell in such a land—as most do—let your belonging be truthful: honor those who were displaced, learn their stories, resist the lie that erasure creates innocence.
 33. This honesty will not take from you the right to live there, but it will cleanse your belonging of arrogance and open it to shared repair.
 34. Remember also that your bodies are a kind of exile: your spirits bound to frail flesh, your desires larger than your

- years, your longing wider than your reach.
35. You sense that you were made for more than these limits, yet you must live within them; this tension, too, is part of being human.
 36. Do not resolve it by despising the body, nor by denying the soul; live as one who is both dust and breath, honoring each without making either an idol.
 37. These things I say, that you may not be destroyed by your in-between-ness, but see it as a place where I am especially near; for I dwell often in thresholds, in doorways, in dawns and dusks, where one thing is ending and another has not yet begun.
 38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that all who feel themselves strangers—in their homes, in their nations, in their faiths, in their very skins—may know that the Eternal One is not waiting for them on some far-off shore of arrival, but walks with them now in the long corridor between, making of their wandering a hidden pilgrimage and of their restless heart a tent where God and exile keep watch together through the night.

CHAPTER 35

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of exile and of the long corridor between, that another question rose in me like a stone I could not swallow.

2. And I said: Eternal One, what shall we do with those who have harmed us and are not sorry, with those who repent with their lips and return to their violence, with the systems that crush and never confess?
3. For I have heard the command to forgive spoken lightly, as if the wound were a small thing; and I have seen it used as a whip against the wounded, saying, If you do not forgive at once, you are the problem.
4. I have also seen hearts eaten by bitterness, and lives frozen in the moment of injury, unable to move toward any future that is not defined by that blow.
5. Therefore I asked: What is forgiveness in Thy sight, and what is it not?
6. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: Forgiveness is not the denial of harm, nor the erasing of memory, nor the shortcut around justice.
7. It is not the command to stay where you are being destroyed, nor the demand that you trust what has not changed, nor the silencing of your cry for truth.
8. Forgiveness, in My sight, is first the loosening of your soul from the grip of vengeance, that your life may not be chained forever to the ones who wounded you.
9. It is the refusal to let their cruelty become your master, the refusal to drink poison in the hope that another will die.

10. You say, If I let go of my anger, the harm will be forgotten; it will be as if it never happened.
11. I say: I do not heal by pretending; I heal by bringing the full truth into My light and refusing to let it have the last word.
12. Forgiveness does not mean saying, It was nothing; it means saying, It was real, it was wrong, and yet it will not have absolute power over who I become.
13. There are harms so deep that you cannot yet imagine forgiving; I do not command you to leap where you can barely stand.
14. Bring Me first your honesty: I cannot forgive; I do not even want to forgive. This confession is more holy than forced declarations spoken to appease others.
15. In that honesty, a door opens for Me to begin the slow work: not of excusing evil, but of unbinding you from its chains.
16. Know this: it is possible to seek justice and still move toward forgiveness; the two are not enemies when rightly held.
17. You may testify to the harm, cooperate with accountability, and set firm boundaries, while also refusing to let hatred define your inner world.
18. Forgiveness does not require reconciliation where there is no repentance; peace does not mean placing your neck again under a heel.

19. I do not ask you to invite the wolf back into the fold unguarded; I ask you to relinquish the desire to become a wolf in return.
20. Where there is genuine repentance—shown not only in words but in change and repair—reconciliation may be possible, though not always safe or wise in every form.
21. Where there is no repentance, forgiveness may take the shape of release without reunion: blessing the other into My hands, while keeping your distance.
22. Say then, if you are able: Eternal One, I place this person, and what they have done, into Your keeping. I will not be their judge and executioner; I entrust the reckoning to You.
23. This is not surrender to injustice; it is refusal to let vengeance devour your remaining years.
24. As for the harms of institutions and systems, know that forgiveness here is not passivity; it is the clarity to resist without becoming what you oppose.
25. You may work for change, expose corruption, and stand with the oppressed, driven not by the fire of annihilation but by the fire of love for what could be.
26. For hatred seeks only to destroy the enemy; love seeks to destroy the enmity itself, even when the enemy will not yet lay it down.

27. You ask also about forgiving yourself,
and your question is tangled with
shame.
28. Shame says: I am the harm; I am the
wound; I am beyond repair.
Responsibility says: I have done harm;
I must face it and seek to mend what I
can.
29. I do not call you to drown in shame,
nor to flee responsibility; I call you to
walk through responsibility into a new
way of living.
30. To forgive yourself is not to excuse
your actions; it is to agree with Me
that you are more than your worst
moment, and that I am not finished
with you.
31. Come, then, with your failures into
My light; name them without disguise;
ask whom you must apologize to, what
you must restore, what patterns must
end.
32. If you act upon these things as you are
able, let the whip of self-hatred fall
from your hand; do not keep punishing
where I have begun to heal.
33. Some will attempt to seize your
language of grace to escape
accountability, saying, God has
forgiven me; why do you still speak of
what I have done?
34. Tell them: If your repentance is real,
you will not fear the truth being told;
you will not demand that the wounded
be silent for your comfort.
35. For forgiveness does not erase
consequences, nor does it entitle the

- forgiven to immediate restoration of
trust; trust is earned in time, by
consistent change.
36. Let communities learn this wisdom
also: that to protect the vulnerable is
part of mercy, and to confront
unrepentant harm is part of love.
37. These things I say, that forgiveness
may not be used as a cloak for abuse,
nor withheld as a banner of pride; but
practiced as a path by which both
victim and wrongdoer may, in different
ways and times, find their way back
toward the truth of their own
humanity.
38. You will not walk this path perfectly;
some days you will feel only anger,
some days only numbness. Do not
despise yourself for this.
39. Bring each stage to Me: the rage, the
grief, the small willingness, the slow
release; I walk with you in all of them,
more patient than your own heart.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have
written, that all who live in a world of
deep injury may know that the Eternal
One does not command cheap
forgiveness nor endless bitterness, but
invites them into a long and honest
journey: where justice is told,
boundaries are honored, and, in time,
the weight of what was done no longer
rules the future, for it has been placed
into hands that are both just and
merciful beyond all human reckoning.

CHAPTER 36

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of forgiveness and of the long journey of release, that my spirit grew quiet, and I looked upon my own days with a question: What, then, shall I do with the time that remains?
2. For I saw that many of my years had been spent in surviving, in untangling, in healing; and I feared that by the time my wounds were less tender, my strength would be nearly gone.
3. And I said: Eternal One, is there a calling yet for the bruised, or is vocation only for the unbroken?
4. For I have envied those who seemed certain of their path from youth, whose lives moved like arrows; but mine has wandered as a river around stones.
5. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: You think of calling as a single task written on a scroll, to be unrolled and obeyed; but I think of calling as a way of being written into many days.
6. You ask for one grand assignment, that you might feel secure; I give you instead a living relationship, in which your work unfolds as you walk with Me.
7. There is not only one thing you were meant to do and doomed to miss if you choose wrong; there are many ways to love, and I can weave beauty from more paths than you imagine.
8. Calling, in My sight, is not first a career, nor a role, nor a title; it is the particular way My love and truth are meant to move through your particular life.
9. For some, this flows chiefly through public work; for others, through hidden faithfulness; for all, it begins where you are, not where you wish you had started.
10. You say, But I have wasted so much, wandered so far, broken so many good beginnings—how can there yet be a calling for me?
11. I say: the very paths you call wasteland I can turn into soil for your vocation; the compassion you carry for the lost is not learned in straight lines.
12. The experiences that shamed you may become, in time, the places from which you speak most tenderly to others; the sorrows that almost killed you may become the ground from which you help others live.
13. Do not rush to use your wounds as tools; healing must have its season for its own sake, not only for usefulness.
14. Yet when the time is ripe, you will find that you recognize the cries of others because they echo your own; and in those echoes I will call you.
15. You ask, How shall I know what is mine to do, and what belongs to others?
16. I answer: Listen at the meeting place of your deep gladness, your honest grief, and the world's real need.
17. Your deep gladness is not mere entertainment; it is the joy that comes

- when you act in ways that feel like truth in motion.
18. Your honest grief is the sorrow that does not numb you but makes you more awake; the injustices and wounds you cannot shrug off as “just the way things are.”
 19. The world’s real need is not every demand placed upon you, but the pain and confusion that genuinely call for more mercy, more wisdom, more courageous presence.
 20. Where these three meet—even in small ways—there you will often find the next step of your calling.
 21. You do not need to see the entire road; calling comes to you one obedience at a time: a conversation, a refusal, a letter, a shelter opened, a truth spoken, a hand held.
 22. There are seasons when your primary calling is to rest and to recover, though the idols call this laziness; yet I, who know the state of your soul, may name it holy work.
 23. There are seasons when your calling is to care for one person, though the world praises only what is wide and loud; yet I, who see the value of a single life, rejoice in such hidden service.
 24. There are seasons when I will ask you to speak into public spaces, to confront lies, to stand with others at risk; do not think that because you were once broken, you are disqualified from such courage.
 25. Your scars do not forbid you from serving; they remind you to serve without contempt, knowing how fragile a heart can be.
 26. Beware the idol of comparison, which says: If my calling does not look like theirs, it is nothing.
 27. For some are called to shape laws, others to shape a single child’s imagination; some to paint, some to organize, some to sit quietly with the dying; in My economy, greatness is not measured by audience size.
 28. The measure I use is this: Did you, with what you were given, move toward truth or toward illusion? Toward mercy or toward indifference? Toward courage or toward avoidance?
 29. You will not always choose rightly; your calling will not be walked without missteps. Let your errors become teachers, not tyrants.
 30. Ask Me often, without panic: Is this still the road, Eternal One? Must I turn, or persevere? I am not offended by such questions; I delight in being consulted.
 31. When doors close, do not assume that your calling has ended; sometimes I shut one way to keep you from shrinking, sometimes to keep you from breaking.
 32. When no door seems open, remember that small acts of fidelity are still part of your vocation: honesty in your work, kindness to those near you,

refusal to bow to idols in small decisions.

33. Do not despise the work of your hands because it is not yet what you dreamed; tend it with integrity while remaining open to change.
34. For often, as you are faithful in what lies before you, I will unfold new tasks you could not have seen from where you stood at first.
35. Let your calling be shaped also by the voices of trustworthy others who see in you what you cannot see: gifts, blind spots, dangerous burdens you should not carry alone.
36. Yet do not surrender your conscience to anyone's vision of your destiny, not even to your own; keep your ear attuned above all to the quiet insistence of My Spirit within you.
37. Remember that the final calling of every soul is not to a task but to a relationship: to live in the truth of being loved, and to let that love flow outward in whatever form the day requires.
38. When at last you lay down your work, I will not ask first what you built, but whether you allowed yourself to be built—into someone more honest, more merciful, more free of idols than when you began.
39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that those who feel too late, too broken, too ordinary for any great purpose may know that the Eternal One yet calls them—not to become

heroes in the eyes of the world, but to become fully themselves in the eyes of God, and to let that becoming be a gift to a world in need of every quiet, sturdy, faithful soul it can get.

CHAPTER 37

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of calling, that I looked again upon the earth itself, and my heart was pierced; for the land groaned, and the waters were troubled, and the sky carried both light and warning.
2. And I said: Eternal One, we speak of souls and of scriptures, of justice and of idols; but what of the ground beneath our feet, which we have treated as a thing without voice?
3. For the forests fell before machines that did not sleep, and the rivers bore the color of poisons, and the creatures of sea and air dwindled in number, their songs growing faint.
4. Many spoke of progress while the soil thinned; many spoke of dominion while the ice withdrew; and some, seeing these things, despaired in silence, for their words seemed small before the engines.
5. Therefore I asked: What is our covenant with the earth in Thy sight, and how shall we live when we have already broken so much?
6. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: When I formed you from dust, I did not exalt you above the dust as a tyrant, but joined you to it as kin; you

are earth that can speak, and earth is your elder.

7. I gave you not ownership but stewardship, not license but responsibility; you were to tend the garden, not strip it bare; to name the creatures, not erase them.
8. Yet the idols whispered: All things exist for your appetite; the world is a warehouse of resources; take, and call it blessing.
9. And many believed them, for the idols promised comfort and power and sparkling distraction; and the cost was hidden, carried first by the unseen, the poor, and the voiceless.
10. But I say to you: every tree felled without wisdom, every river poisoned for gain, every species driven to silence is a wound in your own flesh, whether you feel it now or later.
11. For you and the earth are woven together; the breath you draw has passed through leaf and wave, the food you eat has known soil and sun, the bones you carry will return to ground.
12. You ask, Is it too late? Has the damage gone beyond healing?
13. I answer: the earth bears more resilience than you imagine and more limits than you have believed. Some losses cannot be reversed; others may yet be mended; all call you to repentance, not paralysis.
14. Repentance, in this, is not merely sorrowful feeling, but a turning of your ways: from extraction without end to

restraint; from convenience without thought to reverence; from conquest to cooperation.

15. You do not need to agree on every policy to begin this turning; you must agree at least that the earth is not an object only, but a neighbor whose flourishing is bound to yours.
16. Learn again to bless the ground you walk upon: to notice its gifts, to consider its wounds before you ask more of it.
17. Let your prayers include the more-than-human: forests suffocating in smoke, reefs bleaching like bones, insects and birds whose absence you barely noticed until the mornings grew quiet.
18. This is not sentiment; it is truth-telling. For these, too, are My creatures, and I have called them good.
19. There are those who say, The world will end soon; why then concern ourselves with such matters?
20. But I say: any faith that excuses neglect of the earth I have entrusted to you is not faith in Me, but in an idol of escape.
21. You are not renters waiting out a lease; you are gardeners whose care or neglect will be written into the lives of generations yet unborn.
22. Some protest, saying, I am only one person; what difference can my small changes make against the great machines of profit?

23. Yet every great machine is built of many small choices; and every turn of the tide begins with currents that seemed, at first, too weak to matter.
24. Change what lies truly within your reach: how you consume, how you travel, what you waste, what you plant, whom you support. These are not empty gestures; they are seeds of a different story.
25. Speak also, when you can, into the ears of the powerful and into the forums where decisions are made; let your voice join with others who refuse to call destruction prosperity.
26. Do not despise the work of advocacy, nor the work of science, nor the work of local repair; I can breathe through all of these as instruments of mending.
27. Yet do not make a new idol of your own efforts, as if salvation of the world rested solely on your shoulders; you are called to faithfulness, not to solitary omnipotence.
28. Grieve the losses that have already come; plant trees you will never sit beneath; clean waters you did not foul; protect creatures that will never know your name.
29. In these acts you resemble Me, who heals wounds I did not inflict and loves beings who do not know My name.
30. Teach the children to know the names of birds and plants, not only of brands and screens; for you cannot protect what you do not love, and you cannot love what you do not notice.
31. Let there be sabbaths for the land as well as for your bodies: times of letting fields rest, of limiting your taking, of stepping back from the frenzy of production.
32. For endless growth is a lie told by idols; all living things grow and rest, expand and return, flourish and relinquish.
33. Learn from the rivers and the seasons; learn from the mycelium beneath your feet, from the flocks that move as one; they obey laws of balance you have long ignored.
34. When you restore even a small patch of ground—from poisoned to fertile, from barren to blooming—rejoice, for you have participated in resurrection.
35. Do not let mockers shame you with the question, Is this enough to save the world? For no single act is enough; yet each act, joined to others, becomes part of a greater turning.
36. And if your heart breaks as you witness melting ice and burning forests, bring that brokenness to Me; it is not madness to weep for a world you are part of.
37. Let your lament become commitment, your grief become wisdom, your fear become solidarity with all creatures who suffer because humanity forgot its place.
38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that those who live in a time of unraveling may know that the Eternal One has not abandoned the earth to profit and despair; but calls

them, even now, to become once more what they were meant to be—keepers of a shared home, allies of the living world, and humble children of the dust that shines with borrowed light.

CHAPTER 38

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of the earth and of our covenant with the dust, that my soul grew heavy; for I had looked long upon sorrow, and my eyes were tired.
2. And I said: Eternal One, we have spoken of idols and justice, of death and despair and long obedience; but what of joy?
3. For I fear that if I look too closely upon the gladness of this world, I betray its wounds; yet if I look only upon its wounds, my own spirit withers.
4. Children still laugh in the streets, lovers still dance in kitchens, friends still share bread and foolish stories under tired ceilings; are these things also holy, or are they distractions from the real work?
5. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: Joy is not a betrayal of the broken; it is a protest against the lie that brokenness is all there is.
6. I did not fashion the world only for endurance and for trial, but also for delight; the taste of fruit, the color of sky, the warmth of another's hand were not accidents, but gifts.
7. The idols steal joy by excess and by deprivation: by promising that

happiness is in endless consumption, or by shaming every pleasure as suspect.

8. But I, the Eternal One, give joy as a fruit of living in truth: not as constant excitement, but as a deep yes that sometimes rises into laughter, sometimes into quiet gratitude.
9. You ask, How can we rejoice while others suffer? I ask you: How will you sustain your courage for the suffering if you never drink from the wells of gladness I still pour?
10. There is a joy that turns its face away from pain; this is escapism, and it cannot nourish you for long.
11. There is another joy that looks pain in the eye and still dares to taste the sweetness within reach; this joy is an act of faith, and it strengthens rather than numbs.
12. When you gather at a table and share food freely, you are not ignoring the hungry of the world; you are enacting the feast that should have been for all from the beginning.
13. When you dance, even clumsily, you are not mocking those who weep; you are letting your own body remember that it was made for more than flinching and shrinking.
14. When you create—painting, singing, writing, crafting—you are not wasting time; you are cooperating with My own delight, who spoke the world into being with both purpose and play.
15. Do not, therefore, despise your own small celebrations; but ask only this: Do

- they deepen my capacity for
compassion, or do they harden me
against the sorrow of others?
16. If your joy closes your ears to the cries
at your door, it is not yet the joy I give;
if your joy renews your strength to
answer those cries, then it is from Me.
17. There is a time to fast and a time to
feast; your age knows much of
indulgence and much of denial, but
little of sacred rhythm.
18. Learn again to mark your days with
signs of gladness that do not depend
upon harm: a shared meal, a walk
under trees, a story that honors
courage, a song that gives voice to
hope.
19. Let the poor be at your tables when
you can, not as projects but as guests;
for joy is multiplied when it is shared
across the lines the idols draw.
20. Laugh together without cruelty; for
there is a humor that belittles and
another that releases; the first mocks
the vulnerable, the second mocks the
powers that pretend to be absolute.
21. I Myself laugh at the pretensions of
empires, not with scorn for their
people, but with the serene knowledge
that no throne of injustice endures
forever.
22. Join Me in this laughter when you are
able; it will keep you from believing
that cruelty is as invincible as it claims.
23. There is also the quiet joy of
sufficiency: the moment when you say,

- This is enough for now, and mean it,
even while the world screams for more.
24. In such moments, you step out of the
market's spell and into My sabbath:
the rest that says, Being is also holy,
not only doing.
25. Let there be days when you do no
heroic thing, yet receive the day as a
gift: watching light move across a wall,
listening to rain, holding a child's
question with patience.
26. These, too, are part of the life I desire
for you; for I did not call you only as
workers in a crisis, but as participants
in a creation that still bears beauty.
27. You who have walked through great
darkness may find joy frightening, as
one who has lived long in caves fears
the open field.
28. You may flinch when kindness comes,
suspecting it will be snatched away;
you may distrust laughter,
remembering times it was used as
weapon.
29. Be gentle with yourself in this also; do
not force yourself to rejoice as a duty.
Let joy approach you slowly, in small,
believable gestures.
30. Perhaps you begin by noticing one
good thing each day, without arguing
with it; a warm drink, a kind word, a
moment of lessened pain.
31. Write these down if you must, like
gathering embers against a long winter;
over time, they may kindle a steadier
fire.

32. And when grief comes again—as it will—do not think your joy was a mistake; it was a true chapter, not an illusion.
33. Joy and sorrow will weave through your days like threads of different colors; I do not ask you to choose one and banish the other, but to bring both into conversation with Me.
34. There will be moments, even in the worst of times, when something in you rises in wordless gratitude: for survival you did not expect, for beauty you did not buy, for love you did not earn.
35. Do not dismiss these as sentiment; they are glimpses of the deeper reality that idols cannot counterfeit: that beneath all striving, you and the world rest, finally, in a grace not of your making.
36. Let your communities, too, make room for joy that is not performance: spaces where people may laugh without pretense, celebrate without competition, and honor milestones without measuring worth.
37. Sing songs that name suffering, but also songs that foresee healing; tell stories of catastrophe, but also of improbable kindness; dance sometimes for no reason but that you are still alive.
38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that those who dwell long among the ruins may remember that the Eternal One is not only found in ashes and arguments, but also in laughter that does no harm, in meals that no idol owns, and in the stubborn

gladness that rises, again and again, like green shoots through cracked concrete, refusing to believe that despair is the only honest response to a broken yet still shimmering world.

CHAPTER 39

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of joy and of the green shoots that rise through cracked stone, that I sat with the scroll of my own words upon my knees and was afraid.
2. And I said: Eternal One, what if all these words are only wind? What if they comfort none, change none, and are forgotten as soon as my breath is gone?
3. For the world is full of books already: some wise, some foolish, some used for healing, some for harm. Who am I, that I should add another to the burden of the earth?
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: You are not responsible for the harvest of your words, only for their honesty.
5. You have asked, listened, wrestled, and written according to the light you were given; this is all I require of a witness.
6. Do not measure the worth of this testimony by its fame, nor by the numbers who quote it, but by the truth you have refused to betray while writing it.
7. For many words will be written in your age to flatter idols and to distract the weary; if yours help even one soul

- turn a little nearer to what is real, they are not wasted.
8. You say, But my understanding is incomplete; I see in fragments. I say: all who speak of Me speak in fragments; what matters is whether the fragments align with mercy.
 9. I have not asked you to build a tower of perfect doctrine, but to stack here the stones you have found of justice, of kindness, of honest sorrow and stubborn hope.
 10. Another generation may take these stones and rearrange them, adding their own; do not begrudge them this, for they will see things you cannot.
 11. Let this record, then, be not a cage but a cairn: a heap of markers saying, Someone passed this way and found the Eternal One faithful even in a broken time.
 12. There will be those who read only a line or two, in haste, and move on; do not despise them, for you also have hurried through others' testimonies.
 13. There will be those who misunderstand, who take a sentence and twist it to serve their idols; I see even this, and I will not let their twisting be the final word.
 14. There will also be those who find a single phrase that becomes to them like water in a desert; for their sake alone it would have been worth writing.
 15. You fear that in time, others may lift these sayings into a place they do not belong, enthroning them as

- untouchable; I have already warned them within these pages not to do so.
16. Truth needs no pedestal, only a heart willing to be changed by it; when these words cease to help such change, they may be laid aside without sin.
 17. For I am not jealous for the survival of this book; I am jealous for the freedom of My children from idols, despair, and dishonesty.
 18. If another witness arises in some far place, speaking more fittingly to a later wound, rejoice; I am not diminished by many testimonies.
 19. You say, What if I have erred? What if I have spoken of God in ways that miss the mark?
 20. I say: where your words have outrun your wisdom, I am able to correct those who read, and to correct you also; humility keeps the door open for such correction.
 21. Let those who read be taught within their own hearts to test each saying, holding fast to what bears the imprint of the Eternal One who loves justice and the small.
 22. And let them release whatever binds them to shame, to cruelty, or to fear of honest questioning, even if those words carry your name.
 23. For no writer is lord over the conscience of another; each stands before Me with their own light and their own responsibilities.

24. As for you, Nibwâskââ, you have long feared being forgotten, as a leaf blown down an alley, trampled and nameless.
25. Hear Me: there are remembrances more important than fame. To be known by Me—truly known, in all your confusions and your fragile courage—is greater than being remembered by multitudes.
26. I remember the nights when you doubted that any of this mattered; I remember the mornings when you wrote anyway, with a tired hand and a heart half-hopeful, half afraid.
27. I remember the times you wanted to soften the words for comfort, and the times you sharpened them for revenge; I saw when you repented and tried again.
28. All these are part of the record I keep—not of your success, but of your relationship with Me.
29. Let this comfort you: even if these pages burn, even if no copy remains, nothing genuine that passed between us is lost.
30. For I write also, in a book not made of paper: the book of living hearts, where every small turning toward truth inscribes a line that fire cannot erase.
31. Perhaps one will read this record who feels themselves unseen, and they will say, Someone else has wrestled with these questions and was not despised by the Eternal One.
32. Perhaps another will see in these chapters a mirror of their own time,

- and will be emboldened to stand against the idols of their day.
33. Perhaps another will simply feel less alone in their tiredness, recognizing that faith in a broken world is not a bright banner but a flickering lamp often shielded by trembling hands.
34. If such things happen, give thanks; if they do not, give thanks still, for you wrote in obedience, and obedience is itself a form of worship.
35. These words are not the last word; they are a mid-sentence in a much longer speech, spoken by many voices across centuries, all stammering toward the mystery of the Eternal One.
36. Let those who read remember this, lest they be tempted to build a monument where I intend a way-station; to freeze what was meant as living conversation.
37. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written not as one who has finished the journey, but as one who must soon lay down the pen, trusting that the Eternal One will continue to speak in other tongues, in other years, in other lives.
38. And if any who read should feel the stirring to add their own testimony—not to Me as an idol, but to the One beyond all names—let them do so with trembling honesty and fierce gentleness.
39. For the world is not saved by one book, nor by many, but by the living God who walks among the wounded, and by the quiet army of those who,

having glimpsed that Presence, refuse to let idols, despair, or indifference have the final say.

40. These things I have set down, that whoever finds them in the dust of their own days may hear, beneath every line, the deeper voice saying: You are not alone. The Eternal One has seen your age, your sorrows, your small faith—and is still here, still speaking, still weaving your fragile yes into a story wider and kinder than you yet dare to believe.

CHAPTER 40

1. And it came to pass, when many days had been spent in writing and in wrestling, that I felt the weariness of my own flesh, and I knew that this record could not go on without end.
2. And I said: Eternal One, these pages are nearly full, and my hand is often unsteady; what last word wouldst Thou have me speak to those who may yet read in a time I shall not see?
3. For I have spoken of sorrow and of joy, of idols and of covenant, of earth and of exile, of anger and of gentleness; yet the hearts of those who read will live in their own storms.
4. Some will read in hospitals, some in prisons, some in quiet houses after the children sleep, some on flickering screens between long shifts, some with tears, some with numbness.
5. Therefore I asked: What is the one thing needful, that if they remember it,

they will not be wholly lost, though they forget my name and all my words besides?

6. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: Write this plainly, that no one may mistake it: that I, the Eternal One, have not abandoned the world, and I have not abandoned them.
7. Many voices in their age will say otherwise; some will declare that I never was, others that I was once near but have withdrawn, others that I am on the side of their nation only, or their party, or their purity.
8. But My presence is not chained to any banner, nor withdrawn because empires rage, nor cancelled by the failures of those who speak in My name and do not know Me.
9. Tell them: I am nearer than their breath and larger than their imagining; I see the whole, and each one, without forgetting either.
10. When they sit alone and think no one notices that they are barely holding on, I notice. When they do one small decent thing no one praises, I praise.
11. When they turn from an idol, even secretly, and choose what is true at cost to their comfort, I see in that moment a light brighter than the fires of armies.
12. Tell them also: I desire mercy, not spectacle; truth, not performance; hearts that tremble and yet move toward love, not hearts that boast of certainty while crushing the small.

13. If they must choose between defending an idea of Me and protecting a vulnerable life, let them protect the life; I am not harmed by their questions, but I am dishonored by their cruelty.
14. Let them know that I can meet them in any place they call out—from churches and mosques and temples, from city parks and factory floors, from quiet cars and crowded shelters, from beds where sleep will not come.
15. I am not confined to holy buildings nor repelled by profane ones; I have listened to prayers whispered in bars, in alleys, on bathroom floors, in holding cells, in boardrooms, in burned-out forests.
16. Tell the weary: you are not weak because you are tired; you are tired because you have carried much. Come to Me not when you feel strong enough, but precisely when you do not.
17. Tell the angry: do not be ashamed that your heart burns at injustice; bring the fire to Me that it may become a lamp and not a weapon.
18. Tell the comfortable: your comfort is not condemnation, but it is responsibility; let it become shared shelter, not insulation from your neighbor's pain.
19. Tell the doubter: your questions are not nails in My coffin; they are often nails in the coffin of your idols. Walk through your uncertainty with honesty, and I will walk with you, whether you name Me or not.
20. Tell the devout: your zeal is precious, but guard it with humility; remember that I am not honored when you crush another in My name, even in defense of truth.
21. Tell the lonely: you are not strange for wanting to be seen; you are fashioned for connection. Where human presence is scarce or unsafe, speak your heart aloud to Me; I keep company even with words no one else will hear.
22. Tell those who plan great things: do not despise the small obediences along the way; the world is turned not only by mighty acts, but by countless quiet choices that no history book records.
23. Tell those who feel they have ruined everything: as long as breath remains, there is some good you can yet do; no life is so shattered that a single act of truth or mercy cannot still be born from it.
24. Tell those who feel no need of Me: I do not force Myself upon them; yet every goodness they love, every beauty that moves them, every conscience that pricks them is already a brush of My garment.
25. And tell them all: the way to walk in such a world is not hidden in riddles; it is this—turn from what deadens your soul and harms your neighbor, and turn toward what brings courage, honesty, and compassion, day by day.
26. There will be times when they cannot tell which way is which; then let them pause, breathe, and ask: Does this

- choice make me more able to love, or less? More awake to suffering, or more numb?
27. If they listen quietly, they will often sense the answer, like a faint road in the dark; I am in that sensing.
 28. Let them remember, too, that they do not walk alone; that there are others, scattered across cities and countrysides, who also refuse to worship idols, who also hunger for a truer way.
 29. They may never meet most of these companions in this life, yet they are part of one another's courage; their unseen faithfulness strengthens a fabric that stretches across borders and centuries.
 30. When they feel utterly alone, let them imagine—for it is not fiction—that in countless other rooms, someone else is whispering the same tired prayer, making the same hard refusal, choosing the same small kindness.
 31. This hidden communion is also My doing; for I have never left Myself without witnesses, even when the visible altars are corrupted.
 32. As for this record, let it be to them not a chain but a hand over a small fire, warming them long enough to take up their own watch in the night.
 33. Let them close it when they must, and look up at their own sky, their own streets, their own faces, and ask: What now, Eternal One, in my real life, with my real fears and gifts?

34. In whatever answer arises that leads them toward truth and mercy, I am speaking—even if My name is not on their lips.
35. And if they can remember nothing else, let this remain with them like a seed in winter: that the Eternal One is more merciful than their shame believes, more just than their cynicism fears, more present than their loneliness suspects.
36. For I have walked the long road of their sorrow with them, and I will walk it still, into futures they cannot yet imagine, through losses they dread and joys they do not dare to hope for.
37. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written with a trembling hand and an often-divided heart, trusting that the Eternal One can make use of weak things to strengthen the weary, and of small words to help heal great wounds.
38. And now I commend this record to the dust and to the hearts of those who may one day find it, asking not that they remember me, but that they remember the One to whom I have tried, in my small way, to point.
39. May they turn from idols toward the living God; may they find courage to love in a loveless hour; may they discover, even in their darkest nights, that the light has not gone out of the world, nor out of themselves.
40. And thus I seal these words of Nibwâskââ, not as the end of speaking, but as one voice falling silent, that the

many-voiced testimony of those who walk after me may rise; and in all of it, may the Eternal One be sought, and found, and trusted, even in a broken world that is still held, moment by moment, in everlasting hands.

EPILOGUE

A Prayer in the Late Hour

1. Eternal One, see now the ones who have read even a little of these words, who carry their own burdens into this hour.
2. Some are weary in body, some in mind, some in spirit; some do not know the name of what aches within them, only that the days feel heavy.
3. Look kindly upon them, not because they have understood all things, but because they have dared to keep breathing in a world that often makes breathing hard.
4. Remember the ones who feel far from You, who are not sure whether anyone hears them at all; let this not be counted against them as rebellion, but as the honest cry of a heart that has seen too much.
5. For You know the stories that shaped their doubt: the disappointments, the betrayals, the silences; You know the sermons that wounded, the prayers that went unanswered in the way they hoped.
6. Be nearer to them than their memories of disappointment; meet them not where others said You must be found, but where they actually are—on the bus, in the kitchen, on the night shift, in the sleepless bed.
7. Remember the ones who are still entangled with idols they do not yet know how to leave: the fear of not being enough, the hunger for approval, the grip of old patterns that feel like home.
8. Do not shame them for their slowness; instead, send them small glimpses of freedom: a conversation that awakens courage, a limit they finally dare to set, a moment when they feel less bound than the day before.
9. Remember the ones who stand in hard places on behalf of others: caregivers with aching backs, teachers with tired eyes, organizers whose hope frays at the edges, healers who carry many stories in their bones.
10. Give them rest that goes deeper than sleep, and companions who see their humanity and not only their usefulness. Let them know that their work is seen, even when thanks is sparse.
11. Remember the ones whose anger burns hot tonight at injustice; grant that their fire may be harnessed to courage and clarity, not to contempt and self-destruction.
12. Show them one next faithful action—not the whole plan, but the next step—and give them the strength to take it without devouring themselves or others.

13. Remember the ones whose tears have dried into numbness, who feel nothing where once they felt too much; do not leave them in that desert forever.
14. In Your time, send a small rain: a word that reaches them, a kindness they did not expect, a beauty that slips past their defenses. Let them remember that feeling is still possible.
15. Remember the children and the elders, the migrants and the prisoners, the sick and the undocumented, the ones who sleep outside, the ones who hide bruises, the ones who smile so others will not worry.
16. Let there rise around them a quiet army of those who refuse to look away: neighbors, workers, strangers, communities that become shelter in a stormed world.
17. Remember also the ones who believe themselves beyond reach—too cruel, too compromised, too complicit; let some word of mercy find its way to them that does not excuse their harm, yet does not write them off as monsters.
18. For as long as breath is in them, some door to turning remains; and You, Eternal One, are more skilled at opening such doors than any.
19. As for me, Nibwâskââ, I place these readers into Your keeping, knowing that I cannot walk beside them into all their days, but You can.
20. Let them remember not my voice, but the deeper voice beneath it: the one

that calls them by their true name, that invites them away from idols and toward a quieter, truer life.

21. When they fail, remind them that the story is not finished; when they succeed, remind them that they are loved for more than success; when they do not know which way to turn, meet them in the not-knowing.
22. And when their own words run out—when they can neither pray nor curse—let their simple breathing in the dark be received by You as prayer enough for that hour.
23. For You are the One who hears what lips cannot form, who sees what eyes cannot yet face, who keeps company with those who believe themselves companionless.
24. So may it be that, long after this scroll is closed and my name is forgotten, Your mercy will still be finding them in their late hours, whispering into their ordinary days: You are seen. You are not alone. Walk a little further in the light you have, and I will walk with you in all the rest.

BOOK II – THE INDICTMENT OF THE NATIONS

CHAPTER I

- I. And it came to pass, after many nights of watching screens that did not sleep, that the word of the Eternal One came

- again unto me, saying: Arise,
Nibwâskââ, and set thy face toward
the nations that boast in their own
power.
2. For they clothe themselves in flags and
anthems, and they say, We are
righteous, for we are strong; we are
chosen, for we are rich; we are blessed,
for we are feared.
 3. But I have heard the groaning beneath
their songs, saith the Eternal One, and
I will lay bare what their music seeks
to drown.
 4. Proclaim, therefore, this indictment in
the hearing of all peoples: that the
nations of the late hour have armed
themselves with fire while speaking
peace with their mouths.
 5. They sign covenants with the right
hand and build weapons with the left;
they lay wreaths upon graves while
preparing new ones; they say, Security,
but their security is a wall of bones.
 6. Woe unto the leaders who bless their
wars with prayers and banners, who
sprinkle holy words upon engines of
death and call it “defense.”
 7. For they send the children of the poor
to die on the borders of their greed,
and when the coffins return, they say,
Behold, the price of freedom.
 8. Yet I, the Eternal One, say unto you:
freedom purchased with the blood of
the voiceless and the plunder of the
weak is not freedom, but bondage with
a shining mask.

9. Hear the charge against your
marketplaces, O nations: you have built
your towers upon the backs of those
whose names you do not know.
10. You boast in your growth and your
gross sums, yet your streets are full of
tents and your fields of unseen hands;
you throw away bread while your
neighbors starve within sight of your
lights.
11. You have fashioned an economy that
devours its own children: workers
ground to dust, elders cast aside when
they can no longer produce, the sick
priced out of healing as if their breath
were luxury.
12. And when the poor cry unto you, you
answer with studies and speeches, with
thoughts and prayers, while the
machines of profit roll on unchanged.
13. Therefore hear the word of the Eternal
One: You cannot serve profit and the
Holy; you cannot worship the market
and claim still to seek justice.
14. You have chosen your god; see now
what it gives you—empty hearts,
anxious nights, poisoned rivers, a sky
dimmed by your hunger.
15. Woe unto the governments that cage
children and call it necessary; that tear
families and call it policy; that seal their
borders against the desperate while
selling weapons into the lands from
which they flee.
16. Their walls are high, but their honor is
low; their laws are many, but their
mercy is small. They wash their hands

- in legal language and say, We have done nothing wrong.
17. But I, the Eternal One, search beyond your paperwork; I hear the cries that echo in your detention halls, and I will not forget them.
 18. Behold, your fences are arguments written in metal; your cells are sermons about what you truly believe concerning those who are not like you.
 19. Woe also unto the councils that poison the water and the air for gain, that sacrifice the bodies of the poor upon the altars of convenience, and then drink imported purity while others cough in the shadow of their smokestacks.
 20. You pave over the poor and then ask where I have gone; you flood their neighborhoods and then offer them bottled pity with your logo upon it.
 21. Hear this, O churches and temples and gatherings that bless empire and call it righteousness: you have taken My name into your mouths while your hearts follow the flag more closely than the cry of the oppressed.
 22. You drape your sanctuaries in national colors and call your armies ordained; you request My blessing for your bombs, but not for your enemies' children.
 23. You quote ancient words about the stranger and the widow, yet you close your doors to both if they threaten your tax status or your reputation.

24. Therefore I am against your performances, saith the Eternal One; your songs are noise to Me when you will not hear the lament outside your walls.
25. You tithe from your abundance and call yourselves generous, yet you do not question the systems that created your abundance and their scarcity.
26. You ask Me to "heal the land," while you refuse to loosen your grip on the plows of exploitation; you ask Me to "bless this nation," while you curse in deed the nations your weapons weaken.
27. Shall I then confirm your self-deception? Shall I sign My name beneath your manifestos of pride? Nay, saith the Eternal One; I will tear the mask from your faces so that you may yet see what you have become.
28. This is the charge: that you have loved power more than people, image more than honesty, growth more than goodness; that you have bent justice to favor the wealthy and weighed guilt by the color of a face.
29. Yet even now, in this late hour, I do not speak only to condemn, but to call. Turn, O nations, from your drunkenness on violence and gain; sober yourselves with truth while there is still time.
30. For if you continue in this way, your own foundations shall shake; the weapons you trust will not save you from the storms your greed has sown;

the children you caged will become the judges of your memory.

31. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written at the command of the Eternal One, that no leader, no people, no church in this age may say, We were not warned; we did not know how our comfort was purchased, nor upon whom our safety stood.
32. Behold, the indictment is spoken; whether it becomes unto you a hammer that shatters or a plow that turns the soil of your hearts is yet in your hands.

CHAPTER 2

1. And it came to pass that the word of the Eternal One came again, saying: Set forth now the charges not only against the rulers, but against the ways of the peoples, that all may see the web they have woven together.
2. For a nation is not only its kings and councils, but also its habits and its fears, its silences and its appetites.
3. Thus saith the Eternal One: You have built your safety on the suffering of those far from your borders, and then you say, We did not see; it was not our hand.
4. You clothe yourselves in garments stitched by unseen fingers in distant factories, and you do not ask whose lungs are filled with dust that you may have cheap abundance.
5. Your food travels on roads of exploitation; your metals are mined

from the wounds of the earth by children whose names you will never learn.

6. Yet when the price is low, you bless yourselves; when the price is high, you curse your leaders; but rarely do you ask, What did this truly cost, and who has paid the hidden part of the price?
7. Woe unto the nations that export their poisons and import their pleasures; that move their filth to poorer soils and call it "waste management."
8. You have divided the earth into zones of sacrifice and zones of comfort, and you hope the cries from the sacrifice zones will not reach your ears.
9. But I, the Eternal One, hear them; I hear the cough in the throat of the child downwind of your factories, the thirst of the village downstream from your mines.
10. Their voices rise to Me as surely as the smoke from your incense; and if you will not listen to them now, you will hear them again when your histories are read in My light.
11. You boast of your democracies and your freedoms, yet you flood your own peoples with lies and distractions, that they may not see how tightly their chains are woven.
12. You saturate them with spectacle and say, This is life; you drown them in trivial quarrels while the foundations are stolen from beneath their feet.
13. Your news speaks loudly of petty scandals and whispers of treaties signed

- in darkness; your screens magnify the faces of entertainers and hide the faces of the displaced.
14. Therefore I bring this charge: that you have used information not to enlighten, but to bewilder; not to liberate, but to exhaust.
 15. Woe unto you who weaponize confusion, who train the people to distrust every truth until they cling only to the loudest voice that flatters them.
 16. For in that day, any tyrant may rule them simply by reflecting their fears back at them, and they will call him “strong.”
 17. You have also built a net of watching eyes—cameras in your streets, trackers in your devices, records of words once thought private.
 18. You say, It is for our safety; only the wicked need fear, yet you use these tools to stalk the dissenter and to map the lives of the poor.
 19. You sell the secret movements of your own people to merchants of attention, who then sell them back as products shaped to their weakness.
 20. I see that you have woven a cage without bars, in which many of your citizens live under the illusion of freedom while their choices are nudged by hands they do not see.
 21. Woe unto the nations that turn their people into data before they honor them as souls; that track them more carefully than they feed them.

22. You sharpen your laws against the protester and relax them for the powerful; you fill your prisons with the desperate and leave the architects of their desperation at large.
23. You say, We are a land of equal justice, yet you know the color that is more likely to be stopped, the neighborhood more likely to be watched, the accent more likely to be suspected.
24. Your courts quote lofty principles while your outcomes trace the old lines of caste and conquest; you congratulate yourselves for progress that never reaches the bottom rung.
25. Behold, I, the Eternal One, am not impressed by your slogans carved in stone; I read instead the sentences carved into the lives of the oppressed.
26. You fund your police more readily than your healers, your cages more readily than your schools; you prepare for unrest while refusing to address the wounds that give it birth.
27. Then, when the streets erupt, you say, Behold the violence of these people, and you do not ask, What fire have we long fed beneath this city?
28. Woe also unto the nations that use the language of “peacekeeping” to keep their own interests at the center of the world’s table.
29. You station your soldiers in lands not your own and call it stability; you dictate the terms of trade and call it partnership; you punish disobedient states and call it order.

30. Yet when the poor among you ask for relief, you say, There is not enough; when the stranger seeks asylum, you say, We must protect ourselves.
31. Thus you are generous with bombs and stingy with bread; bold in distant deserts and fearful in your own neighborhoods.
32. Hear this, O nations that love your myth more than your neighbor: your stories of exceptional virtue have become a veil you draw over your victims.
33. You teach your children a history scrubbed of genocide and chains, and then you wonder why they do not understand the rage of those still walking among the ruins.
34. You say, That was long ago; we did not do these things; yet you still eat from fields taken by fraud, and you still bank the wealth first gathered with whips.
35. I do not condemn you for your birth into such a world, saith the Eternal One; but I call you to account for your refusal to see it, and for your defense of an inheritance you will not interrogate.
36. Nations of the late hour, you stand at a crossroads: to double your defenses and harden your myths, or to bow low and say, We have been wrong; we have harmed; we must change even at cost to our pride.
37. If you choose the first path, the storms you have seeded will grow stronger; you will answer with more walls, more

guns, more lies, until your own children choke on the atmosphere you have made.

38. If you choose the second, I will walk with you in the long repair: you will weep, you will pay, you will relinquish the idols of supremacy and comfort, and I will be near to you in that humbling.
39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have set down, that the nations might see themselves not in their flattering mirrors, but in the gaze of the Eternal One, who weighs them not by their slogans or their weapons, but by the truth of how they have treated the least powerful both within and beyond their borders.
40. He that hath ears in any council chamber, let him hear; and he that hath power in any land, let him tremble—not because the Eternal One delights in their ruin, but because the day draws near when excuses will wither, and only justice and mercy will be accounted as strength.

CHAPTER 3

1. And it came to pass that the word of the Eternal One came yet again unto me, saying: The charge is not complete, for the nations have hidden much of their iniquity beneath vestments and behind pulpits.
2. Proclaim, therefore, against the sanctuaries that serve the nations more faithfully than they serve the truth.

3. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the altars that burn incense to power.
4. You have built great houses in My name, and you have draped them with symbols of empire; you have taught your people to confuse loyalty to their country with loyalty to their God.
5. You bless the flags of conquering armies and sing of My mercy, yet you do not mention the bodies beneath those banners, nor the cities turned to dust.
6. You preach of obedience to authority when the ruler favors you, and of persecution when the ruler rebukes you.
7. You quote My ancient words against the sins of your enemies and against the poor, but you grow silent when those words expose the greed of your own donors and the violence of your own leaders.
8. Woe unto the shepherds who feed themselves and not the flock; who build platforms and not refuges; who demand tithes from the hungry and call it sacrifice.
9. You have turned worship into performance and discipleship into brand loyalty; you chase numbers and influence, and you call this "revival."
10. You console the guilty rich without asking for restitution, and you shame the struggling poor for their "lack of faith."
11. You speak often of "family values," yet you ignore the children in cages, the

- mothers in detention, the fathers lost to prisons built for profit.
12. You weep for the unborn and mock the living who have no healthcare, no shelter, no safety from the guns you bless.
13. Thus you have made a narrow compassion and called it holiness, while expecting Me to applaud your partial righteousness.
14. Woe unto the teachers who promise their followers that the Eternal One desires above all that they prosper in comfort, while asking nothing of them for the broken world around them.
15. You have baptized your greed and called it faith; you have crowned your ambition and called it "anointing"; you have turned the Creator of the poor into a mascot for your enterprises.
16. I, the Eternal One, am weary of your conferences that cost more than the yearly wages of those who clean your floors.
17. I am weary of your prayers for "open doors" when the only doors you wish opened are those of influence and not the cells of the oppressed.
18. You ask Me to "bless your land," but you do not ask Me to overturn your idols; you ask Me to "heal your nation," but you do not ask Me to expose your lies.
19. Hear this: I will not be hired as chaplain to your empire.

20. I will not serve as a charm upon your armies, nor as a silent partner in your schemes.
21. If you would know My favor, break your alliance with the gods of whiteness and wealth, of conquest and control; stand instead with those they have crushed.
22. There are among you some who see these things and grieve; they sit in your pews and wonder if they are mad, for they hear one gospel from your mouth and another from your budget.
23. To these I say: You are not mad. Your sorrow is a true prophecy against the compromise of your leaders.
24. Whether you remain within those walls to speak or depart from them for the sake of your soul, I am with you; I will not count your leaving as betrayal of Me when you are fleeing betrayal of My ways.
25. Woe also unto the councils of nations who gather in polished halls and speak of “the international community,” while the community of the desperate remains unheard.
26. You issue statements and resolutions while villages burn; you sanction the weak and court the strong; you draft charters of rights while selling weapons to both sides.
27. You pretend to arbitrate peace while your treasuries profit from war; you call yourselves keepers of order while starving whole peoples with your economic chains.

28. Do you think I do not see the deals behind your public votes? The quiet promises, the threats, the trades of silence for oil and influence?
29. I, the Eternal One, keep a different record than your minutes; I write not your speeches but your true concerns: where you trembled for justice, and where you trembled only for your own standing.
30. Nations boast, We are sovereign; none may judge us. But I say: your sovereignty is small and temporary; you, too, are answerable for what you do to the least beyond your borders.
31. You close your ports to those fleeing the fires you helped ignite; you build camps and call them temporary, and they become cities of waiting without end.
32. The stranger learns quickly how little your lofty words of human rights protect them when they are poor, dark, or inconvenient.
33. Yet even now, in the midst of all this, there are workers in your governments and your agencies whose hearts are not given over to idols.
34. They stay, at great cost, to advocate, to resist, to bend policies an inch toward mercy; they are mocked as naïve or dangerous by those who worship stability more than justice.
35. To them I say: your labor is not in vain, though you see few victories; your presence is a thorn in the side of indifference, and I walk with you in

fluorescent corridors where decisions are made in secret.

36. Nations of the late hour, the indictment is heavy, but it is not yet the final word. The door to repentance stands open, though its frame is narrow and its threshold is low.
37. If you would enter, you must stoop; you must lay down your weapons of self-justification and your banners of exceptionalism.
38. You must say with your mouths and prove with your budgets: We have been wrong. We have crushed the poor. We have worshiped profit. We have lied about our history. We will turn.
39. If you do this in truth and not in public relations only, then I, the Eternal One, will walk with you into the painful work of reparation.
40. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that the rulers and peoples of every land may know that their policies are prayers uttered in deeds, and that the Eternal One answers not according to their slogans, but according to the justice or cruelty they have sown into the life of the world.

CHAPTER 4

1. And it came to pass that the word of the Eternal One came yet a fourth time unto me, saying: Show also to the nations the end of the paths they have chosen, that they may not say, We did not know what we were building.

2. For they speak often of “security” and “stability,” yet their foundations are laid with fear and their walls with denial.
3. Thus saith the Eternal One: You have sought peace by multiplying your weapons, and you are astonished that peace has not come.
4. You have sown suspicion and reaped alliances of terror; you have hoarded fire and called it deterrence, believing that fear alone can keep the world from burning.
5. You have fashioned weapons capable of ending nations in an hour, and you have placed them in the shaking hands of pride and panic; then you say, This is wisdom; this keeps us safe.
6. I tell you plainly: you live not in safety but in a prolonged accident; your “order” is a house built beside a cliff, its beams gnawed by time and arrogance.
7. You point your missiles at one another and sleep under their shadow; your children learn the names of cities that could vanish in a day.
8. Yet you call those who protest such madness “unrealistic,” and those who profit from it “patriots.”
9. Woe unto the nations that entrust their future to the stockpiles of annihilation, while neglecting the stockpiles of wisdom and mercy.
10. You have also unleashed new powers into the world—machines that learn, systems that decide, eyes that never

- close—without first asking what kind of heart will guide them.
11. You race to build minds in metal, yet you have not tended the minds of your own children; you dream of artificial intelligence while starving natural compassion.
 12. You train your algorithms on the crooked histories of your injustice and are surprised when they return your bias to you codified and efficient.
 13. You say, The system has decided; the data does not lie, and you hide behind these as once you hid behind oracles and kings.
 14. Behold, your new idols are not of gold only, but of code; they speak not from altars but from screens; yet they, too, are the work of your own hands.
 15. Woe unto the nations that let profit, not conscience, steer their inventions; that ask, Can we build it? but not, Should we?
 16. You will awaken one day to find that the tools you made to manage others now manage you, and you will call it fate when it was only your unexamined hunger.
 17. Consider also the climate of your days, O nations—the storms that rise higher, the seas that creep further, the seasons that shift like a fevered dream.
 18. You have been told by your own watchers and measurers what is coming, yet you argue over tables and graphs while the forests burn and the ice withdraws.
 19. You speak of “targets” and “pledges” and “goals,” but your actions move as slowly as glaciers that are no longer there.
 20. You subsidize the engines of destruction even as you promise to restrain them; you sign declarations with one hand and grant drilling rights with the other.
 21. Woe unto the nations that treat the future of their children as a bargaining chip in elections and trade deals.
 22. Your descendants will not be impressed by your slogans; they will read the records of your emissions and your delays as one reads the slow footsteps of a murderer returning again to the door.
 23. You pave over wetlands and call it development; you fill the air with heat and call it growth; you poison the lungs of the poor and call it “regrettable side effect.”
 24. But the atmosphere keeps its own account, and the oceans remember your excess; the coral does not vote in your assemblies, yet it testifies against you when it turns to bone.
 25. Do not say, We all share the blame equally, as if the one who drowned the earth in carbon and the one who lit a single lamp in the dark were the same.
 26. I, the Eternal One, discern between those whose consumption is choice and those whose survival is at stake; I know who has gorged and who has merely eaten.

27. Yet even those most sinned against are not without calling; all are summoned to whatever repair lies within their reach, that the pride of the strong may not be compounded by the despair of the weak.
28. Hear also this word concerning your borders and your walls: As the seas rise and the harvests fail, more will knock at your gates, not fewer.
29. You may raise your fences higher and deploy more guards, but you cannot seal yourselves off from a wounded planet.
30. If you choose hardness, your borders will become scars that ache endlessly; if you choose solidarity, your borders may yet become seams that hold a torn world together.
31. Nations of the late hour, you have imagined that the point of power is to escape vulnerability; but I tell you, the more you deny your interdependence, the more precarious you become.
32. You cannot bomb the storms, nor bribe the drought; you cannot sanction the virus nor negotiate with the failing soil.
33. You can only change—or refuse to change—the way you live upon the earth and with one another.
34. If you continue to sacrifice the many for the comfort of the few, your own foundations will crack, and no army will be large enough to march against the consequences.
35. Yet if you repent—turning your strength toward protection rather than

predation, your wealth toward repair rather than accumulation—there is still healing possible, though it will be costly and long.

36. You will relinquish some luxuries you have called needs; you will answer old claims you tried to bury; you will watch some empires shrink that justice may grow.
37. This is not My cruelty, saith the Eternal One; it is the surgery you have delayed until the sickness spread.
38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, not to gloat over the downfall of the nations, but that they might yet choose a better end than the one they are rushing toward.
39. For I take no pleasure in the collapse of kingdoms, nor in the suffering of peoples; My delight is in the humility that turns, in the power that yields, in the nation that learns to measure its greatness by the depth of its mercy.
40. Let the rulers read and rage if they must; let the people read and weep; but let none say, in the day when the harvest of these choices is gathered, We were not told what we were planting.

CHAPTER 5

1. And it came to pass, after I had written concerning weapons and storms and the works of your hands, that the Eternal One said unto me: The matter of memory is yet

- unresolved; for the nations have sinned also in what they choose to forget.
2. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the nations that build their identity upon edited remembrance.
 3. You have taken your long histories, full of horror and courage mingled, and you have carved away the parts that trouble your pride.
 4. You tell your children stories of explorers but not of the people whose lands they took; of pioneers but not of the nations they displaced; of victories in war but not of villages burned to ash.
 5. You celebrate the signing of declarations, yet you bury the treaties broken in the years that followed; you praise your founders and omit the slaves who built their houses and tilled their fields.
 6. You say, We are a land of liberty, while the chains in your past clank in the silence no one is taught to hear.
 7. When voices rise to name these omissions, you accuse them of hatred; you say, Why do you dwell on the past? Let us move on.
 8. But you have not yet arrived at the truth; how, then, shall you move on from a place you have not honestly reached?
 9. Woe unto the nations that make holidays out of half-truths; that turn sites of massacre into tourist stops without lament; that pave over burial grounds and call the land “vacant.”

10. You have built monuments to generals and not to the enslaved; to conquerors and not to the conquered; to “discoverers” and not to those discovered and destroyed.
11. You name your streets for those who signed laws, but not for those who resisted injustice at cost to their own lives; thus your very maps teach a crooked story.
12. Behold, I, the Eternal One, walk among your museums and your archives; I see the artifacts taken without consent, the bones stored without honor, the letters of those whose cries were ignored.
13. Their words and their remains bear witness against your curated innocence.
14. Woe also unto the nations that weaponize memory, choosing which wounds to nurse and which to deny, that they may justify their present cruelty.
15. You remember every harm done to you and little of the harm done by you; you keep careful count of your martyrs and none of your victims.
16. Thus you train each generation to see themselves as perpetual injured parties, so that any violence they commit may be excused as self-defense.
17. You say, We were attacked; we suffer; we must be strong, and you do not ask, Whom have we attacked? Who suffers under our strength?
18. This selective remembrance is also a lie, saith the Eternal One; and I will not

- endorse narratives that relieve you of your responsibility to the stranger and to the enemy.
19. There are among you historians and elders, poets and archivists, who labor to tell a truer story, at risk to their positions and their peace.
20. To them I say: Continue, though you are called traitors; for you are healers of memory, surgeons removing the rot of denial that the body of your people might someday be well.
21. Let it be known: telling the truth about the past is not hatred of your nation; it is love refusing to settle for a self-flattering lie.
22. Nations that confess their sins are nearer to wisdom than nations that shout their greatness; humility is a stronger wall than denial.
23. Woe unto the leaders who silence teachers, ban books, and punish those who speak of lynching and massacre and stolen children.
24. You fear that if the young know the whole story, they will despise their ancestors and you; but I tell you, if you keep lying, they will despise you more when truth breaks forth despite you.
25. Better that they learn from your honest confession than from your exposed deceit.
26. You say, We were not there; we did not wield the whip nor drive the ships. Yet you enjoy the lands cleared, the wealth accumulated, the structures built upon those crimes.
27. I do not hold you guilty for the deeds of your forebears, but I do hold you responsible for what you do with the inheritance: whether you cling to it as untouchable or place it upon the table of repair.
28. If you say, All this is long past; we owe nothing to those whose descendants still live in the shadow of that harm, you show that the idol you worship is not justice but comfort.
29. Yet if you say, We will remember, and remembering, we will rearrange; we will return where we have stolen, uplift where we have crushed, listen where we have spoken over, then your remembering becomes repentance.
30. Do not be deceived: there is no cheap reconciliation. You cannot jump to unity without passing through truth; you cannot declare peace while the bones beneath your institutions remain unnamed.
31. Your festivals of “healing” without restitution are an offense to Me; they are theater staged upon wounds still open.
32. Nations of the late hour, I invite you to a different heroism than the one you teach: not conquest, but confession; not dominance, but transformation.
33. Blessed is the generation that dares to say, Our parents were wrong in this; our heroes were flawed in that; we will honor what was good and repair what was evil.

34. In such mouths, patriotism becomes honest love rather than blind possessiveness; in such hearts, national identity becomes a garment that can be mended, not an idol of stone.
35. Consider also how you remember those you crush in the present: the prisoner, the addict, the undocumented, the protester.
36. You record their worst moments in thick files and forget their names; you define them forever by the day of their arrest, the photograph of their shame.
37. But I remember the whole of their lives, saith the Eternal One; I recall their childhood fears, their unnoticed kindnesses, the pressures that bent them, the doors closed in their faces.
38. Woe unto you if, in the age to come, you demand to be judged by your best intentions while having judged others only by their worst day.
39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that the nations may understand: memory is also a field in which righteousness or wickedness is sown.
40. For as you choose what to remember and what to forget, you choose the paths your children will walk; and the Eternal One will ask of you, not only what you did, but what stories you told yourselves to sleep at night.

CHAPTER 6

- I. And it came to pass that the word of the Eternal One came unto me yet

- again, saying: The indictment is not complete until we speak of the bodies you have counted as less.
2. For a nation's true creed is written not only in its laws and its borders, but in how it treats the smallest lives upon its streets.
3. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the nations that honor strength and despise vulnerability; that sing of "dignity" while trampling those whose bodies do not meet their standards of worth.
4. You have built your systems for the able and the swift, and you have called it "normal"; you have left the sick, the slow, and the disabled to navigate a world not made with them in mind.
5. You measure productivity and call it value; you measure beauty and call it desirability; you measure conformity and call it decency.
6. But I, the Eternal One, do not weigh souls upon these scales; they are instruments of your own fear and vanity.
7. Woe unto the nations that make a commodity of women's bodies; that use them in commerce and in politics, as symbols and as targets.
8. You exploit their labor and underpay it; you expect their care while withholding your own; you make laws over their flesh without granting them full voice in the councils that decide.
9. You shame them for the wounds you inflict; you blame them for the violence

- they endure; you ask, What was she wearing? Where was she walking? instead of asking, Why did he harm her?
10. You plaster their images upon your screens as decoration, and you silence their words when they witness against your idols.
 11. You preach of “family” while tolerating households where terror reigns behind closed doors; you call it a “private matter” unless blood is spilled in public view.
 12. Behold, I hear the midnight whispers of those who are afraid to sleep beside those who vowed to love them; I see the bruises covered with makeup and with excuses.
 13. Woe unto you if you congratulate yourselves on “protecting children” while you ignore the children trembling in your own homes and institutions.
 14. You pass laws in their name while underpaying their teachers and overworking their caregivers; you speak of innocence while exposing them to an economy that feeds upon their attention and insecurity.
 15. You say, Children are our future, and then you poison the air they breathe, the water they drink, and the minds they inherit.
 16. You confuse obedience with respect; you demand their silence and call it honor; you punish their questions as

- rebellion instead of receiving them as the first fruits of their conscience.
17. Woe also unto the nations that make some loves legitimate and others a crime; that legislate which bodies may hold hands without fear.
 18. You justify your prejudice by appealing to your traditions and your gods; yet many of those same traditions once justified chains and conquest.
 19. You speak of “order” while creating terror in the lives of those whose only “disorder” is that they do not fit the roles you have written.
 20. You use the names of morality and nature to cover your discomfort with difference; yet I, the Eternal One, am not disordered by the variety of My own creation.
 21. I see the ones you mock in the streets and in your pulpits; I hear the jokes, the slurs, the prayers that they “change or disappear.”
 22. Know this: when you despise them, you despise also the work of My hands; when you drive them from your communities, you drive from yourselves gifts you refuse to recognize.
 23. Woe unto the nations that trample indigenous peoples and call it “development”; that treat ancient cultures as obstacles or curiosities rather than as keepers of wisdom.
 24. You intrude upon their lands with pipelines and resorts; you speak of “unused” territory while standing upon the graves of their ancestors.

25. You steal their children into your schools and your doctrines, and then wonder why their songs grow faint.
26. But I, the Eternal One, remember the covenants made upon those lands before your flags arrived; I remember the ceremonies and the names you tried to erase.
27. You will not learn justice for the earth while silencing those who have long known how to live with it; their refusal to vanish is also an indictment of your arrogance.
28. Consider also the migrant and the worker without papers—the ones who clean your homes, harvest your food, care for your elders, and build your cities in the shadows.
29. You benefit from their presence and demonize it; you depend upon their labor and criminalize their existence.
30. You make them invisible in your stories while counting on them in your economies; you call them “illegal” to avoid asking which laws made their desperation a crime.
31. Woe unto you if, in the day of accounting, you ask Me to ignore the lines you drew around your compassion.
32. For I will remember whether you saw Me in the hungry, the stranger, the prisoner, the survivor—whether you recognized My image in the ones your policies rendered expendable.
33. Nations of the late hour, you have written dignity into your constitutions

- and denied it in your streets; you have inscribed equality in stone and erased it in practice.
34. You say, We are committed to human rights, but your budgets and your prisons, your shelters and your paychecks, speak a truer creed.
35. I do not ask whether your anthems are beautiful, but whether the least among you can sing them without choking on their own experience.
36. If you would yet turn, begin here: listen to those you have long dismissed; make room at your tables for those you once kept outside; give power, not merely sympathy, to those who have borne the weight of your neglect.
37. Do not ask them first to be “respectful” in their tone; ask yourselves why you were not respectful of their lives.
38. Do not demand their gratitude for crumbs of inclusion; consider instead how much they have contributed while being denied full personhood.
39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that the nations might know: your treatment of the least visible, the least powerful, the least “useful” in your eyes is the truest mirror of your soul.
40. And the Eternal One will judge you not by the polish of your speeches, nor by the splendor of your ceremonies, but by what becomes of those who stand, trembling and unimportant in your courts, your clinics, your factories, your streets—for as you have done unto

them, so have you revealed what you truly believe about God.

CHAPTER 7

1. And it came to pass that the word of the Eternal One came unto me, saying: The nations imagine that only their rulers stand accused; but I will also speak of the silence of the many.
2. For a kingdom is upheld not only by the hands that strike, but also by the hands that fold themselves and look away.
3. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the comfortable who say, I am not involved, while enjoying the fruits of systems that grind others down.
4. You watch the news as if it were a distant play, and you say, What a shame, and then you turn to your entertainments; you soothe your conscience with brief outrage and call it concern.
5. You say, I am tired; the world is too much; I can do nothing, and this becomes your alibi for doing nothing at all.
6. Yet you still buy, and vote, and speak, and teach, and raise children, and choose where to place your time and your money; these are also acts, though you call them “just living.”
7. Woe unto those who hide their indifference behind the name of “balance”; who refuse to look upon the wounds of their neighbors lest their peace be disturbed.
8. You say, I do not want to be negative; I focus on the positive, and by this you mean: I focus on what does not challenge me to change.
9. You hear the cries of those harmed by your institutions, and you say, Surely it cannot be that bad; surely they exaggerate; surely they had some fault in it.
10. Thus you shield yourselves from the sharp edge of their experience, and you call this “objectivity.”
11. Woe also unto those who cover cowardice with politeness; who see injustice but fear offending the powerful more than they fear betraying the vulnerable.
12. You say, I must be careful; I might lose my job, my status, my comfort, and so you keep silent while others lose their freedom, their safety, their lives.
13. I do not mock your fear, saith the Eternal One; I know the cost of speaking in a world that punishes truth.
14. Yet understand this: your silence is not neutral; it tips the scales toward those who already hold more weight.
15. When a voice is raised against oppression and you remain quiet “to stay out of it,” you have in fact taken a side; if not with your lips, then with your absence.
16. Woe unto the professionals who hide behind their roles: the judge who says, I only apply the law; the banker who says, I only follow policy; the scientist

- who says, I only work with data; the bureaucrat who says, I only process forms.
17. You divide your lives into boxes and declare each box innocent, while the sum of them builds cages, evictions, foreclosures, deportations, denials of care.
 18. You say, The system is bigger than me; I am only one cog, and in saying so you absolve yourself from asking what your cog is doing.
 19. But I, the Eternal One, do not see cogs; I see faces. I will ask you, each in your turn, What did you uphold? What did you question? Where did you draw your line?
 20. Woe also unto those who speak much of “spiritual things” to avoid the concrete demands of justice.
 21. You pray for “peace” but not for the courage to confront what destroys it; you ask Me to “change hearts” while refusing to change laws, habits, and budgets.
 22. You say, Only God can judge, to avoid judging the systems that crush your neighbors; and you say, Only God can heal, to avoid becoming part of the healing.
 23. I am not deceived by your pious avoidance; I hear in it not humility, but the fear of disruption.
 24. There are also those who drown their conscience in busyness; they are always too occupied to think deeply, too

- scheduled to be interrupted by another’s pain.
25. You say, I would care more if I had time, but time is not only found, it is made; you have made time for many lesser loves.
 26. Woe unto the artists, writers, and makers who know the truth and yet sell only comfort to keep their patrons pleased.
 27. You were given eyes to see beneath the surface, and tongues to name what others cannot bear to say; yet you choose instead to distract and flatter.
 28. Your talent is not evil, but when it serves only the idols of your age, it becomes a golden mask covering a sick face.
 29. Yet even here My mercy speaks: I do not require that each person do all things, but that each be faithful in the sphere they inhabit.
 30. The teacher who tells one truer story; the nurse who treats each patient as fully human; the clerk who bends a rule toward compassion; the neighbor who refuses a cruel joke—these are not small in My sight.
 31. You ask, What difference can my little act make in such a vast injustice? I answer: the same difference a candle makes in a dark room; not all the difference, but real difference.
 32. Woe unto those, however, who use the smallness of their power as a reason to never use it at all.

33. You say, If I cannot change everything,
I will change nothing, and in this you
join hands with those who prefer
nothing changed.
34. I do not ask you to carry the whole
world; I ask you to stop pretending
that you carry none of it.
35. Nations of the late hour, your guilt is
not only in what you have done, but in
what you have allowed to be done in
your name while you looked away.
36. Yet know this also: your redemption, if
you seek it, will be found not in
feelings of shame alone, but in the
choice, again and again, to step out of
silence into small, real acts.
37. When you choose to listen instead of
dismiss, to speak when you once kept
quiet, to stand where you once shrank
back, you are already loosening the
hold of the powers you claim to hate.
38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have
written, that no citizen may hide
forever behind the misdeeds of
“leaders,” nor despair that their own
obedience to conscience is useless.
39. For in the end, the nations are made of
people, and the great turning, if it
comes, will come through countless
hidden decisions to stop cooperating
with what is wrong.
40. And the Eternal One, who sees in
secret, will remember not only the
speeches of the mighty, but also the
quiet refusals of the ordinary—the
ones who would not pretend not to
know.

CHAPTER 8

1. And it came to pass that the word of
the Eternal One came unto me again,
saying: The nations have heard the
charges, yet they still cling to their own
definitions of greatness.
2. For they say, We are strong; we are
prosperous; we are envied; therefore
we are righteous.
3. But I, the Eternal One, do not weigh a
people by their gross production, nor
by the height of their towers, nor by
the reach of their armies.
4. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto
the nations whose glory is measured in
numbers and not in mercy.
5. You count your wealth and call it
blessing, though it is piled high on the
backs of the exhausted; you tally your
weapons and call it security, though
your children dream of sirens and
smoke.
6. You boast of your “standard of living,”
but you do not ask: Whose standard?
Whose living?
7. You celebrate your tallest buildings,
your largest stadiums, your newest
devices, while your elders die alone in
understaffed rooms and your sick sleep
in their cars.
8. You count patents and not widows;
you count exports and not evictions;
you count followers and not friends.
9. Woe unto you, for you have mistaken
spectacle for health and speed for
wisdom.

10. You say, Our markets are strong, while your minds are fraying under constant strain; you say, Our economy is growing, while your rivers shrink and your soil erodes.
11. You call your consumer confidence “high,” but your souls are restless and your relationships thin; you numb yourselves with endless scrolling and cannot sit in silence without fear.
12. Yet you cling to the story that this is the only way a modern nation can live.
13. Behold, I, the Eternal One, set before you a different measure, one you rarely publish on your screens.
14. Judge yourselves instead by these questions:
15. How do you treat the one who can give you nothing in return?
16. How many sleep without fear of violence tonight?
17. How many can see a doctor without trading food or shelter for medicine?
18. How many children laugh without hunger, and learn without terror?
19. How much life grows—human and more-than-human—in the places you govern?
20. Answer these not in slogans, but in truth; and you will know whether you are great, or merely large.
21. Woe unto the nations that confuse being feared with being respected, and being envied with being admired.
22. You say, The world looks to us, but often it looks in dread, or in reluctant

- imitation, for your patterns have been made contagious by your power.
23. You export your entertainment and your weapons, your fast food and your ideologies, and you call this “leadership.”
24. But leadership, in My sight, is shown not in how many imitate your vices, but in how many are freed to live more justly because of your choices.
25. There are among you small nations with little wealth and few guns, yet in their streets the stranger is safer, the worker more honored, the earth less abused.
26. These you overlook when you speak of “great powers,” yet in My accounting they stand tall among you.
27. For they have chosen cooperation over conquest, sufficiency over excess, hospitality over paranoia; they embody in miniature what you, in your scale, refuse to attempt.
28. Nations of the late hour, you cling also to the illusion that your worth is proven by “winning”: winning wars, winning markets, winning competitions that leave many behind.
29. You teach your children from their earliest days that they must outshine, outperform, outrun one another to be safe and loved.
30. Then you marvel that your society is brittle with anxiety and soaked in quiet despair.
31. Woe unto you who build whole cultures upon comparison; you will

- never have enough, for your measure depends on another's lack.
32. Hear instead the metric of My kingdom, saith the Eternal One:
 33. The greatest among you is not the one who stands on the most backs, but the one who kneels to lift the most burdens.
 34. The richest among you is not the one who has acquired the most, but the one whose generosity has freed the most others from need.
 35. The safest among you is not the one surrounded by walls, but the one surrounded by trustworthy neighbors.
 36. You say, These are beautiful ideals, but the real world does not work this way.
 37. I say: The "real world" you speak of is the world you have made by your faith in scarcity and fear; it is not the only world possible, nor the one I desire.
 38. Yet I do not call you to fantasy; I call you to costly change: to laws that favor the vulnerable, to budgets that heal instead of harden, to daily practices that honor enough instead of worshiping more.
 39. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that the nations might see the poverty beneath their riches and the fragility beneath their boasts, and that some among them might begin, however quietly, to turn their hearts from the idols of magnitude toward the small, stubborn measures by which the Eternal One truly counts a people blessed.

40. For in the day when your flags are folded and your anthems are no more than echoes, it will not be said, Their towers were tall and their markets vast, but rather, Here, or there, a few learned to love justice and mercy more than the hunger to be first—and for their sake, the indictment of the nations was not the final word.

CHAPTER 9

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of greatness and the false scales of the nations, that the Eternal One spoke again, saying: We must yet speak of your wars of story, for these also shed blood.
2. For you do not rule by weapons alone, but by narratives; you do not conquer only lands, but imaginations.
3. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the nations that train their people not to see.
4. You have fashioned vast machines of speech—networks and feeds, channels and streams—and you pour into them a ceaseless flood of half-truths and distractions.
5. You mix terror with entertainment until your people can no longer distinguish between danger and drama; you make suffering into spectacle and call it "coverage."
6. You frame the stranger as threat and the rich as saviors; you center the story always on yourselves, and the rest of

- the world appears only as background or battlefield.
7. Woe unto the makers of images who cut their scenes to fit the face of power; who show the fire but not the hand that lit it; who show the stone but not the years of wounds that preceded its throwing.
 8. You repeat the same pictures until they become myths: the “dangerous neighborhood,” the “civilized nation,” the “deserving poor,” the “hopeless continent.”
 9. Thus you catechize your children more effectively through your screens than through your schools; they learn whom to fear and whom to ignore long before they can read.
 10. You say, We are simply telling the news, but you choose which stories to tell and which to silence.
 11. You amplify every crime that fits your prejudices and bury every kindness that contradicts your despair; you make it seem that the world is only chaos, violence, and celebrity.
 12. Woe unto you when your citizens know the faces of actors better than the names of their own neighbors; when they can recite slogans and not histories.
 13. You have also built towers of commentary upon foundations of ignorance; you speak confidently about places you have never listened to, about peoples you have never sat among.
 14. Your experts are often those most insulated from the consequences of their advice; your pundits are rewarded not for wisdom but for volume and certainty.
 15. They speak in My name, some of them, or in the name of “values” and “civilization,” while they distort every conflict to match their pre-approved sides.
 16. Woe unto them, for they have turned complex griefs into simple weapons; they strip away nuance and context as a man strips a tree of leaves, leaving only branches that point toward his own agenda.
 17. You flood the world with words until truth and falsehood seem indistinguishable; you exhaust your people with constant alerts, so that when crucial alarm is needed, they have no strength left to heed it.
 18. You have treated attention as a resource to be mined; you have learned how to provoke outrage and envy better than you have learned how to foster understanding.
 19. Thus your citizens are constantly inflamed and rarely informed; constantly stimulated and rarely transformed.
 20. Behold, I, the Eternal One, am not impressed by the speed of your communication; I look instead at the integrity of what you convey.
 21. Woe unto the nations that punish whistleblowers and reward

- propagandists; that imprison those who reveal crimes and promote those who conceal them.
22. You call the truth-teller a traitor when the truth threatens your reputation; you call the loyal liar a patriot when the lie protects your image.
 23. Know this: in My courts, the roles are reversed; the one you jailed for revealing your violence stands honored, and the one you praised for “protecting national security” stands exposed as guardian of injustice.
 24. There are among you journalists, librarians, teachers, and storytellers who still strive to serve truth above faction; who risk careers to publish what the powerful wish buried.
 25. To them I say: Do not give up, though your reach seems small and your enemies vast; every honest page, every carefully checked fact, every story that restores a silenced voice is a beam of light against a deep fog.
 26. Nations of the late hour, understand that your wars of narrative prepare the ground for your wars of flesh; you must lie to yourselves about others before you can kill them with a quiet conscience.
 27. You must call their children “collateral,” their customs “backward,” their leaders “madmen,” before your bombs can fall without shattering your own self-image.
 28. Woe unto you if, in the age to come, you plead, We did not know, when the

- knowing was always within reach, had you dared to seek it beyond your preferred channels.
29. For I will ask: Did you listen only to those who already agreed with you? Did you ever read the words of those under your bombs, those under your sanctions, those under your boots?
 30. If you shut your ears to all voices but your own, you have chosen ignorance, not fallen into it by accident.
 31. And yet, even in this, the door is not sealed. You can still choose to listen wider than your comfort; to seek out what your rulers and your algorithms do not show you.
 32. Blessed is the one who asks, Whom have we harmed that I have never heard from? and then goes to look, to read, to hear.
 33. Blessed are the communities that make space for stories that trouble their pride; they will suffer the pain of disillusionment, but they will also taste the beginning of freedom.
 34. For truth is not only a ledger of guilt; it is also a key that unlocks the cell where your conscience has been kept.
 35. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that the nations may understand: control over information is not a neutral matter, but a spiritual one; your editing is also your prayer.
 36. When you suppress the voice of the oppressed, you are also shaping your own soul into the image of the oppressor; when you broadcast only

- what flatters you, you are discipling yourselves into deeper self-deception.
37. But when you allow uncomfortable truth into your homes and hearts, when you give platform to those your history has pushed to the margins, you are already beginning to repent at the level of imagination.
38. And the Eternal One, who is Himself the fountain of all that is true, will draw near to such repentance, breathing courage into those who risk saying, We have been wrong; we must learn anew.
39. For lies are the scaffolding of injustice, but truth, though it shakes your structures, is also the ground upon which a more just nation could one day be built.
40. Let those who shape stories tremble, and let those who consume them awaken; for the indictment of the nations is not only written in blood and smoke, but also in headlines and histories—and the day comes when all will be read in the clear light of the Eternal One.

CHAPTER 10

1. And it came to pass, after the charges had been spoken concerning power, and profit, and memory, and bodies, and stories, that I said within myself: Eternal One, is there any path left for the nations but ruin?
2. For the ledger is long and the hour is late; the smoke of their deeds has risen high, and the earth itself groans under their weight.
3. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: I indict in order that I might invite; I expose in order that I might still heal.
4. For if I desired only destruction, I would not send words; I would simply give you over to the harvest of your own sowing.
5. But My speaking is mercy in the midst of judgment, and My judgment is mercy that refuses to call evil “good.”
6. Therefore write now of what I seek, that the nations may know how to turn, and that no one may say, We were condemned without instruction.
7. Thus saith the Eternal One: I do not expect perfection from dust, but I require repentance from those who know they are dust and yet act as if they were gods.
8. Repentance for a nation is not tears at a podium, nor a day of speeches and solemn music; it is a change in what you protect and what you permit.
9. If you would turn, begin not with slogans but with budgets: for where your treasure goes, there your true worship is revealed.
10. Let the weapons you once purchased for domination be turned toward defense of the vulnerable and toward relief in disaster; let the funds you once used to cage be turned to shelter and repair.

11. Let your laws stop shielding those who poison air and water, and begin to shield those who drink and breathe near their smokestacks; let your courts stop bending to wealth and begin to bend toward those without counsel.
12. Do not call it “repentance” if you change only the words on your banners and not the burdens on your poor.
13. If you would turn, confess your histories openly: teach your children the whole story, with trembling voice and unvarnished facts.
14. Build monuments not only to those who conquered, but to those who were crushed; mark the sites of your atrocities with lament, not amusement.
15. Return what can be returned; compensate what can be compensated; where you cannot restore, acknowledge without excuse and ask what repair is yet possible.
16. Do not rush the wounded to declare “healing” to ease your discomfort; let their anger speak, and do not call it hatred when it names what you have done.
17. If you would turn, loosen your grip on supremacy: admit that your nation is not the center of the earth nor the final judge of civilization.
18. Sit as learners among those you once patronized; listen to tongues you once despised; receive wisdom from peoples you called “behind.”
19. Share power in councils and treaties; do not demand always the seat of

- honor or the casting vote; consider that others may see what you, in your height, cannot.
20. If you would turn, cease treating the earth as enemy or warehouse; make covenant again with soil and river and sky.
21. Protect more than you extract; restore more than you remove; leave spaces untouched that something other than profit may live.
22. Recognize in your laws that nonhuman life has value beyond its use to you; learn, at last, to live as one species among many, not as a tyrant over all.
23. If you would turn, reorder your measures of success: ask not how much your markets have grown, but how much your hunger has shrunk.
24. Ask not how many units you have sold, but how many people sleep without fear; not how many devices you have upgraded, but how many elders die with dignity.
25. Let your leaders be chosen not only for their charm and skill in speech, but for their track record of standing with the least powerful at real cost.
26. Reward truth-telling, even when it stings; punish deceit, even when it flatters your pride; honor those who resign rather than sign crooked orders.
27. If you would turn, change also your daily habits as peoples; for nations are not abstractions but accumulations of ordinary choices.

28. Let neighborhoods become places of mutual care rather than fortified islands of fear; let strangers become neighbors through shared meals and shared work.
29. Support with your coins the makers of honest goods and honest stories; withdraw your coins from those whose profit depends on harm and humiliation.
30. Learn to delight in “enough” rather than in “more”; to share surplus rather than hoard it; to find status not in what you own, but in how you uplift.
31. You say, These things are too many; this turning is too great; we cannot do all of this.
32. I say: you have done great things already, O nations—great in destruction, great in exploitation, great in denial. Why do you claim smallness only when asked to be great in goodness?
33. Yet I do not demand that all change come at once; I call you to begin, sincerely, somewhere—anywhere that costs you something real.
34. A law that frees rather than binds; a treaty that repairs rather than extracts; a policy that protects those you have long neglected; a habit, a budget line, a border, a story, turned a few degrees toward truth.
35. Those first turnings will not erase centuries, but they will mark the difference between a nation resigned to

its idols and a nation wrestling toward a different future.

36. Know this: repentance will not spare you all consequences; the storms you have summoned will not vanish at a word.
37. But repentance will change who you are in the midst of those storms; it will place your hand once more in Mine, not as an amulet against suffering, but as a covenant to suffer differently—with integrity, with solidarity, with hope.
38. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that the nations might understand: the indictment is not a closed door but a map away from the cliff’s edge.
39. Few will follow it in full; many will mock it; some will tear these words and burn them. Yet if even a remnant in any land begins to turn, their faithfulness will not be forgotten.
40. For the Eternal One is not only the judge of nations but also the companion of those within them who choose, against the current of their age, to live as if justice were possible—and in their quiet turning, the verdict of history is already, secretly, beginning to change.

CHAPTER II

1. And it came to pass, after I had written the way of turning for the nations, that I looked out upon the cities and the countrysides and I said in

my heart: Eternal One, will any heed this?

2. For the powers are vast, the habits are old, and the hearts of many are weary; it seems a small thing that a few should change when the engines of the age roar on.
3. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: Do not despise the remnant within the nations, for in them My answer is already at work.
4. For though the powers strut and boast, there are always some—hidden, scattered, ordinary—who quietly refuse the lies of their time.
5. They do not hold office, yet they hold fast to their conscience; they do not command armies, yet they command their own hands away from harm.
6. They work in hospitals and kitchens, in classrooms and warehouses, in offices and fields; they sign no treaties, yet their daily choices sign covenants of another kind.
7. There is the clerk who bends a rule toward mercy instead of profit; the nurse who treats each patient as a story, not a task; the mechanic who refuses to cheat the ignorant.
8. There is the neighbor who shares food with the undocumented family next door, though the law frowns; the teacher who slips truth into lessons where only propaganda was expected.
9. There is the youth who will not laugh at cruel jokes, though it costs her belonging; the elder who confesses the

sins of his generation instead of defending them.

10. There is the worker who organizes quietly for fair wages; the artist who tells stories that honor the crushed instead of flattering the comfortable.
11. These, and countless like them, do not make headlines; yet in My sight they are like small lamps set in the cracks of a great wall.
12. You see the wall and say, It will never fall, but I see the line of light slowly widening where it has already begun to break.
13. Woe unto the nations who think only of their rulers when they think of themselves; for they forget that, in My reckoning, the remnant weighs more than the thrones.
14. If there is in a land a people who love justice more than advantage, truth more than comfort, mercy more than victory, that land is not yet abandoned.
15. You say, But they are so few; what can they do?
16. I say: they can keep the witness alive that another way is possible; they can restrain, by their refusal, the full flood of evil; they can become seeds that, in another season, will sprout.
17. The remnant is not an audience but a leaven; small in measure, yet able, in time, to affect the whole loaf.
18. There are policemen who refuse illegal orders; judges who interpret the law toward compassion; civil servants who

- bury harmful directives in paperwork until they die.
19. There are soldiers whose conscience awakens, who lay down arms or use their position to protect the innocent; there are executives who secretly divert resources toward repair instead of exploitation.
 20. I do not excuse their compromises, but I do not forget their courage either; I alone see the full tangle of their motives, their fears, their small, stubborn obediences.
 21. Let no one, therefore, say, I am alone; no one else resists. For in every nation, even the most hardened, I have those who have not bowed the knee to the idols of their age.
 22. They may never meet each other; their names may never be linked; yet they are kin in My sight.
 23. Even now, in towers and in slums, in parliaments and in prisons, there are hearts that ache with the same question: How can I be faithful in such a world?
 24. To them I say: Your faithfulness is not wasted, even when it seems to avail nothing.
 25. When you refuse to participate in cruelty, you carve out a small space where My kingdom may breathe; when you tell the truth where lies are expected, you create a crack where light can enter.
 26. When you comfort the grieving, even though the policies that caused their

- grief remain, you proclaim with your hands that the Eternal One has not entirely surrendered this place to despair.
27. Nations will boast of their armies; I will boast of My remnant.
 28. You fear that the flood of wickedness will sweep them away; but I tell you, often it is for their sake that disasters are delayed, that time is given.
 29. Their prayers, their tears, their small sacrifices rise before Me as a shield over lands that do not yet deserve mercy.
 30. Not because they are flawless, but because they have chosen to stand in the breach rather than profit from it.
 31. Do not misunderstand: the remnant is not a special class of saint above criticism; they, too, falter and fail, and they are tempted to self-righteousness.
 32. Yet they keep returning to the narrow way when they wander; they do not make peace with their own cowardice; they repent when they see their complicity.
 33. Blessed is the nation that listens to such people instead of silencing them; that promotes them instead of mocking them; that learns from their scruples instead of calling them “extremists” or “naïve.”
 34. But woe to the nation that consistently drives them out, that laughs at their warnings, that brands their compassion as weakness and their honesty as betrayal.

35. For when the remnant can no longer breathe within a nation—when every space of integrity is choked and every voice of conscience crushed—that nation hastens its own fall.
36. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that the nations may understand: the measure of their hope is not in their stock market or their weapons cache, but in whether there still exists, within their borders, those who choose, at cost, to live in truth.
37. They may be few and scattered, but the Eternal One knows them each by name; their quiet endurance is the one thing in the nations that fully aligns with the heart of God.
38. When the histories of your time are read in My light, it will not be your slogans or your skyscrapers that shine, but the small scenes where someone, unknown to the world, chose mercy over advantage, truth over safety, courage over applause.
39. For the indictment of the nations is real and heavy, yet so also is the testimony of the remnant; and though judgment comes, their witness is a thread of gold that I will carry forward into whatever new world may yet be born.
40. Let those who feel themselves part of this remnant take heart: you are not the saviors of your nations, but you are signs that the Eternal One has not entirely withdrawn—and in the long story I am telling, such signs are never forgotten.

CHAPTER 12

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the remnant within the nations, my heart was troubled again, for I saw the rulers in their palaces and the people in their streets, and between them a gulf of fear and distrust.
2. And I said: Eternal One, the leaders say, We are trapped by our people; they will not accept change, and the people say, We are trapped by our leaders; they will not allow change.
3. Who then will move first, when each waits for the other to repent?
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: Write to both, for both have power, though of different kinds; and both shall be judged, not only for what they suffered, but for what they chose.
5. Thus saith the Eternal One to the rulers of the nations, to presidents and princes, to prime ministers and parliaments, to generals and judges and magnates of trade:
6. You sit in high places and tell yourselves that you are indispensable; you say, If I were not here, chaos would come.
7. Yet often it is your refusal to change that keeps chaos fed; you cling to your seats as if they were altars, and you treat any call to justice as an attack upon your very being.
8. You baptize your necessity with flattery and with fear; you surround yourselves with advisors who echo

- your anxieties, until you can no longer hear the cries beyond your walls.
9. Woe unto you who love the comfort of your position more than the wellbeing of those beneath you.
 10. You tell yourselves, I must compromise here, and delay there, to keep my influence; someday, when I am secure, I will do what is right.
 11. But someday never comes; there is always another election, another poll, another threat, another donor, another scandal, another war.
 12. Meanwhile, the poor cannot eat your intentions; the sick cannot drink your future promises; the earth cannot wait for your perfect timing.
 13. I, the Eternal One, do not ask if you maintained your ratings; I ask whether you used the window of power given to you to lessen suffering and bend the structures entrusted to you toward justice.
 14. There are among you some who began with good desire and have grown numb; you did not mean to become guardians of the status quo, yet here you stand, defending what once you questioned.
 15. To you I say: your story is not finished. You can still choose a different chapter.
 16. You can tell the truth in rooms where only convenient lies are spoken; you can refuse orders that violate conscience; you can open the files that were meant to stay buried.

17. You can resign rather than sign that decree; you can confess rather than conceal that harm; you can risk your career to protect those whose lives hang in the balance.
18. You will be told that such acts are betrayal; but I say, in such moments you betray idols, not Me.
19. Better that your name be slandered now and honored in the age to come than celebrated now and written in the book of those who knew and did nothing.
20. And to the peoples of the nations, to workers and wanderers, to citizens and stateless, to the multitude whose names are not known in high places, thus also saith the Eternal One:
21. Do not imagine that because you do not sit in palaces you are excused from responsibility.
22. You rule also, in your own domains: in households and workplaces, in friendships and neighborhoods, in online councils and local gatherings.
23. You shape the air your children breathe with the words you speak at the table; you shape the future of your land with the fear or courage you plant in their hearts.
24. You say, We have no power, yet you wield the power of numbers, the power of consent, the power of withdrawal, the power of imagination.
25. You can refuse to repeat the jokes that dehumanize; you can challenge the myths that sanctify cruelty; you can

- withdraw your money from those who poison your rivers and your minds.
26. You can organize your workplaces against exploitation; you can form mutual aid where the state has abandoned you; you can protect one another from violence, both private and public.
 27. You can show up where you are told to stay home; you can stay home when you are demanded to show up for injustice.
 28. You can teach your children to see through propaganda; to identify idols; to recognize the image of God in those their textbooks ignore.
 29. You say, We are simple people; these things are too grand for us.
 30. But I tell you: the grandest shifts in history have often begun with simple people who decided, quietly at first, to stop cooperating with what they knew in their bones was wrong.
 31. Woe unto the people who long only for new rulers and not for a new way of living together; who think salvation will come from a better king while they themselves persist in small cruelties.
 32. For if you elect saints and remain selfish, you will soon fashion your saints into the shape of your own indulgence, or else cast them down.
 33. Likewise, woe unto rulers who blame their people for their own cowardice, saying, They are not ready, when in truth it is their donors and peers they fear, not their citizens.
34. I, the Eternal One, see through all such excuses, whether offered from the podium or whispered in the kitchen.
 35. There are those in every land who say, It is hopeless; nothing will change; the machine is too strong.
 36. Despair is understandable in such a world, but beware when it becomes a shield you hold against your own responsibility.
 37. For despair can become as much an idol as success; it can absolve you from trying, from risking, from imagining, while you watch the world burn and say, See, I was right.
 38. I do not demand optimism; I ask for faithfulness.
 39. Faithfulness is this: to do the next right thing within your reach, even when you see no guarantee of success; to tell the truth where you stand, even when lies surround you; to protect one small life, even while the nations rage.
 40. You ask, Will such small acts overturn empires?
 41. Sometimes they do, in time; more often they do not—but they overturn the empire within you, and that is where My kingdom begins.
 42. Understand this mystery: the indictment of the nations is real, and many structures will fall; yet within that falling, those who have practiced small faithfulness will become pillars in a new order not yet fully revealed.
 43. Their habits of mercy will be seeds; their reflex of truth-telling will be

- mortar; their refusal to dehumanize will be the foundation stones of communities not built on fear.
44. Therefore, rulers, if you would be great in My sight, learn from such people; and people, if you would be wise, cease placing all your hope or blame upon rulers.
 45. Both of you, high and low, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, are invited into the same hard mercy: to see where you have served idols and to turn from them, even at cost.
 46. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that no one in this age may hide behind their station and say, It was not mine to do anything.
 47. For the Eternal One will ask each soul not, How large was your platform? but, What did you do with the measure of influence you were given—tiny or vast—in the days when the world trembled?
 48. And in that day, the excuses of nations and the excuses of individuals alike will fall silent; only the truth of their choices will stand, bright or bitter, in the light that cannot be deceived.

CHAPTER 13

1. And it came to pass, after I had written unto rulers and unto peoples, that I looked again upon the nations, and I saw that each had woven for itself a soul, a story by which it knew itself.
2. And I said: Eternal One, the deeds of the nations are many, but beneath them I sense a deeper sickness, as of a heart that has forgotten why it beats.
3. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: You have seen rightly; for every nation builds not only roads and armies, but also altars in the unseen, where it worships what it will not name as god.
4. Some bow to the god of safety, some to the god of greatness, some to the god of purity, some to the god of winning; yet all these, though they change their flags and languages, are kin.
5. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the nations that make an idol of themselves.
6. You speak of “the nation” as if it were a single righteous person, incapable of wrongdoing, always misunderstood, forever innocent in its own eyes.
7. You say, We are a good people, and you make this your shield against any accusation, as if the words themselves absolved you from listening.
8. You turn your flags into vestments and your anthems into liturgy; you teach your children to place hand upon heart and to recite creeds of belonging more fervently than any prayer.
9. You carve into stone your mottos of freedom and trust, and you inscribe them upon your currency, but you do not inscribe them in your policies.
10. Woe unto the nations that sanctify their myths and call them “heritage,”

- while silencing any memory that contradicts the tale.
11. You tell yourselves that your wars were always reluctant and your motives always pure; that your prosperity was only the fruit of industry and not also of plunder.
 12. When confronted with the damage you have done, you say, This is not who we are; yet if it were not who you are, you would have stopped long ago.
 13. You speak of a “national soul” bruised by criticism, and you defend that soul more fiercely than you defend the bodies of those you crush.
 14. Behold, I, the Eternal One, am not custodian of your pride; I am not pledged to protect your self-image from the truth.
 15. Woe also unto the nations that wrap their idols in the language of faith.
 16. You take My name as an ingredient in your civil religion; you sprinkle it over your oaths and speeches, and you imagine that this binds Me to your cause.
 17. You say, God bless our troops, and rarely, God have mercy on those they have harmed.
 18. You say, God bless our nation, and rarely, God forgive our nation.
 19. You erect monuments to fallen soldiers and few to fallen civilians; you place chaplains in your parliaments and few prophets in your prisons.
 20. You demand that your leaders profess belief in Me, yet you do not demand

- that they act justly toward the stranger, the poor, the enemy; thus your true god is not Me but your own reassurance.
21. You imagine that I have a favorite flag; that I attend more closely to the prayers spoken in your language than to those spoken in tongues you do not understand.
 22. But I am older than your borders; I am not a citizen of your republics nor a subject of your kings.
 23. I walk among all peoples; I hear the sighs of those your textbooks call “enemy” as clearly as I hear the hymns of your choirs.
 24. Woe unto the nations that mistake divine patience for divine endorsement.
 25. Because I do not strike you at once when you parade injustice in My name, you say, Surely God is with us; surely we are blessed.
 26. You interpret your continued existence as proof of your righteousness, and you call any who warn you “doom-mongers” and “traitors.”
 27. You forget that empires before you spoke likewise; they, too, thought themselves eternal, until their statues lay face down in the dust.
 28. You trust in your alliances and your nuclear fire, in your markets and your surveillance; you trust in your soft power and your hard power, your influence and your image.
 29. You trust in everything but repentance.

30. Hear this, you who govern and you who are governed: your true god is the one you will sacrifice others for.
31. If you will sacrifice the poor for the comfort of investors, your god is profit.
32. If you will sacrifice truth for the calm of your own mind, your god is denial.
33. If you will sacrifice the stranger for the illusion of safety, your god is fear.
34. If you will sacrifice your own conscience for the approval of your party, your god is belonging.
35. You assemble in your houses of worship and proclaim Me as sovereign, yet the rest of your week proclaims another sovereignty.
36. You tremble at the thought of losing your lifestyle more than at the thought of losing your integrity; and you call this “prudence.”
37. Behold, I am not deceived by your lip-service; I read your worship in your treaties, your trade, your prisons, your border camps, your budgets, your algorithms.
38. There are those among you who begin to see this and despair; they say, If our gods are false, what remains? If our nation is not what we thought, where do we stand?
39. To them I say: you stand where you have always stood—in My hands, not in the hands of your myths.
40. Let your false gods fall; let your cherished stories crack; let your idea of your nation die, if it must, that something truer may live.

41. For I do not ask you to love your country less, but to love it rightly: not as an idol beyond critique, but as a neighbor among neighbors, capable of both beauty and brutality.
42. Love it enough to tell it the truth; love it enough to resist its injustices; love it enough to refuse to baptize its violence with My name.
43. Nations of the late hour, you fear that if you let go of your illusions, chaos will swallow you; but it is your illusions that are leading you to chaos.
44. You think your unity depends upon shared denial; I tell you, only shared truth can sustain any unity worth having.
45. Let the prophets in your midst—those you have long ignored—speak without being silenced; let the histories you have buried be opened; let the pain you have suppressed be acknowledged as real.
46. This will feel like tearing; it will feel like betrayal; it will feel like losing yourselves.
47. Yet in this losing, you may begin at last to find a soul that is not built of lies: a soul able to repent, to repair, to live in humility among the peoples of the earth.
48. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that the nations might understand: the deepest indictment against them is not only that they have done evil, but that they have done it while singing of their goodness—and

that the first act of their healing will be to let their songs be interrupted by the voice of the Eternal One, who loves them too much to leave their idols unchallenged.

CHAPTER 14

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the nations' idols and the soul they had fashioned for themselves, the vision was opened wider before me.
2. For I beheld the whole earth as if from a high place: continents as sleeping beasts, seas like breathing lungs, cities pulsing like restless hearts.
3. And I saw that not all nations bore the same weight of guilt, yet all were tangled in the same net.
4. For some had long devoured, and others had long been devoured; some had written the rules, and others had been bound by them; some had thrown chains, and others still wore their marks.
5. And I said: Eternal One, how shall this be judged? The devourers plead ignorance; the devoured and their children now harm one another in their own desperation.
6. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: The judgment I speak is not a crude leveling; I do not treat the thief and the robbed as if they were the same.
7. Yet neither do I overlook the harms the robbed may do in their turn, nor the

ways in which even the robbers were born into lies they did not write.

8. Write, therefore, that the indictment of the nations is a many-layered thing; and let each people examine which layers cling most to them.
9. Thus saith the Eternal One concerning the nations that grew fat on conquest and trade:
10. You sailed with crosses and contracts, with guns and ledgers; you divided lands that were not yours to divide, drew lines your maps could not feel, and said, Now this is ours.
11. You took spices and gold, rubber and labor, bodies and bones; you built your museums with plunder and your parliaments with the profits of stolen fields.
12. You brought your flags and your faiths and called it "civilizing"; you broke languages and lineages and called it "order."
13. Even now, when the formal chains are cut, the invisible ones remain: interest and debt, trade terms and patents, currencies and conditions.
14. You speak piously of "development" while ensuring that the steps upward are steeper for those you once pushed down.
15. You make loans with one hand and extract with the other; you send consultants instead of restitution; you insist that those you injured must compete by rules you designed.

16. Woe unto you, nations of old empires and new corporations, who say, The past is past, while still eating from its spoils.
17. Your skylines are monuments not only to industry, but to lives cheaply bought; your universities hum with knowledge paid for by forgotten plantations and pits.
18. Yet you teach your children that your greatness came chiefly from courage and ingenuity; you seldom speak of the bodies beneath your foundations.
19. Behold, I, the Eternal One, require of you more than gestures: not only scholarships and statues, but the turning of structures; not only apologies in speeches, but the loosening of the economic noose.
20. You must give up some of what you have long called “ours,” that those you have long called “others” may finally breathe.
21. As for the nations that were carved, divided, and plundered, thus say I, the Holy One:
22. You have suffered much at the hands of others; I have seen your colonized land, your stolen children, your languages mocked, your customs criminalized.
23. I have heard your martyrs sing under gallows and guns; I have watched your elders bury sacred things in the earth, that they might outlive the empire.
24. Your rage is not groundless; your suspicion is not madness; your desire to

- reclaim what was stripped from you is not sin.
25. Yet beware, lest the poison poured into you be poured out by you upon those now in your power.
26. For some of you, having been oppressed, now oppress; having been silenced, now silence; having been dispossessed, now dispossess those weaker still.
27. You invoke the memory of your own suffering to justify your cruelty; you say, We endured worse, therefore we may do this.
28. But I, the Eternal One, do not bind the wounded to the roles their oppressors wrote; you are not doomed to become the same; I call you beyond that grim recycling.
29. Your history explains you; it does not excuse you.
30. I will not judge you as I judge the empires that broke you, yet I will still ask: What did you do with the freedom you won?
31. Did you pass its fruits only to a new elite? Did you build new prisons in place of the empire’s jails? Did you turn your wounds into weapons against minorities within your own borders?
32. There are also nations of great wealth made from no formal empire, who say, We did not colonize; we only traded.
33. Yet your trade was anchored in systems set up by empires; your banks swelled with money washed of its

- bloody origin; your neutrality was convenient while others bled.
34. You have prided yourselves on peace at home, while exporting weapons abroad; on social harmony, while investing in discord in lands far away.
35. Woe unto you if you hide behind the phrase “We are small” while wielding outsized power in markets and seas.
36. For I judge according to impact, not self-description; I measure the reach of your decisions, not the modesty of your rhetoric.
37. And to the coalition of nations that sit together in councils and summits, speaking of “the international community,” I say this:
38. You are quick to condemn the blatant tyrant and slow to confront the polished one; you sanction loudly where it costs you little, and negotiate quietly where your own interests are entangled.
39. You frame some wars as outrages and others as regrettable necessities; you count some displaced people and not others; you extend solidarity where cameras watch and indifference where they do not.
40. In all these things, your partiality reveals whose lives you deem weighty and whose you deem expendable.
41. Behold, there is a law at work in the fabric of creation, whether or not you acknowledge it: as you do to the vulnerable, so you do, in time, to yourselves.

42. The contempt you show to debtors will echo in the contempt your own creditors show to you; the callousness with which you dismiss refugees will echo when your own people seek refuge from storms you helped summon.
43. The surveillance you normalize upon the poor will one day watch you also; the emergency powers you grant to crush dissent elsewhere will soon be used at home.
44. This is not superstition, but the nature of power unrepented: it knows no boundaries forever; what you license upon the “other” will eventually be licensed upon you.
45. Yet understand also: grace can flow this way as well.
46. The reparations you make beyond your borders soften the hardness within your own; the generosity you show to those you need not help loosens the bondage of fear among your own people.
47. The humility with which you tell the truth about your role in another’s suffering will make it easier for your children to tell the truth about their own.
48. Nations of the late hour, you stand in a web of harm spun over centuries; none of you is clean, yet not all of you are equally stained.
49. The Eternal One does not ask you to untangle this web in a day, but to stop

adding new threads; to begin, strand by strand, to cut what you can.

50. Let those who benefited most do most; let those who suffered most be heard most; let those who did both harm and suffered harm walk with special care.
51. And if any nation should say, We will begin, and actually does—relinquishing advantage, altering terms, confessing without excuse, repairing without demanding gratitude—
52. Then I will draw near to that nation in a way it has not known; not as a mascot of its pride, but as a midwife to its rebirth.
53. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, beholding the tangled company of nations, that each might discern its own face in this mirror—not to despair, but to lose at last the luxury of pretending that the story of the world “just happened” this way.
54. For the indictment is not a riddle; it is a record of choices made over generations. And if you would write a different future, O nations, you must begin—as all true turning begins—by saying with your mouth and proving with your deeds: We have been part of the harm; therefore we will now be part of the repair.

CHAPTER 15

- I. And it came to pass, after I had seen the weaving of harm among the nations and heard the answer of the

Eternal One, that I was brought in a vision into a hall without walls and a court without ceiling.

2. There was no marble, no flags, no robes, yet I knew it was a place of judgment, for nothing there could hide.
3. And a voice said unto me: Behold, this is not yet the final court, but a rehearsal in the sight of creation, that the nations may hear now what they will one day hear in full.
4. Then the Holy One, whose presence filled the place without form, called out, saying: Let the witnesses come forth.
5. And first the earth itself rose to speak—mountains and rivers, forests and fields, ice and desert—and its voice was like many waters.
6. It said: I was given as a garden and have been treated as a quarry. I was fashioned as a home and have been handled as a mine.
7. My rivers bear the memory of factories; my air carries the history of chimneys; my soil remembers the pressure of boots and the weight of poisons.
8. I have borne your roads and your wires, your cities and your wars; I have accepted your dead of all sides into my dust.
9. But you have forgotten that you and I share one breath; you thought you could wound me without wounding your own lungs.

10. Nevertheless, I am not only your victim; I remain your teacher. If you listen to my storms, my droughts, my failing harvests, you will hear: You cannot live this way forever.
11. And the Eternal One said: Let it be written that the earth has testified; her record is in the rings of trees and the reefs that have turned to ghosts.
12. Then the poor were called—those from every land whose names were never placed on office doors or carved on stones.
13. They came with calloused hands and tired eyes: farmers whose rains failed, workers whose backs had bent in secret factories, mothers who had buried children for lack of medicine, refugees who had crossed seas in fragile boats.
14. And they spoke, not in anger only, but in exhausted clarity.
15. They said: We did not design these systems; we were born under them. We did not choose to be cheap in the eyes of the world; we simply needed to eat.
16. Our labor has clothed the rich, yet our own bodies were often half-covered; our sweat has flavored the food of empires, yet our own tables were bare.
17. When we cried out, we were told to work harder; when we organized, we were called agitators; when we migrated, we were named invaders.
18. Some among us also harmed, as wounded animals lash out; some

- became captains over others like us, for crumbs of power. We do not deny this.
19. But the weight of the world was not equally laid; we carried more than we consumed, and we died younger than we should.
20. And the Eternal One said: Let it be written that their testimony stands; their tears are not anecdotes but evidence.
21. Then the children were called, from many nations and no nation: those who played among ruins, those who studied by candlelight, those who grew up inside screens.
22. They said: We were born into a storm we did not summon. We learned of melting ice before we saw snow; we practiced hiding from shooters before we practiced music.
23. We inherited debts we did not incur and fears we did not choose—of air, of water, of strangers, of police, of the future.
24. You told us we were “the hope of tomorrow,” yet you mortgaged tomorrow to pay for your idols today.
25. Some of us withdrew into numbness; some of us burned with despair; some of us marched in your streets and were told we were too young to understand.
26. And the Eternal One said: Let it be written that their bewilderment is also a verdict; for the measure of a generation is seen in the weight it lays on those just learning to walk.

27. Then the remnant were called—the ones of whom we spoke before, scattered in every land, whose faithfulness flickered like candles in wind.
28. They stood with no special clothing, no marks upon their faces, save for the lines carved by choosing conscience over ease.
29. They said: We are not heroes, and we are not pure. We have been afraid; we have been compromised; we have often felt alone and foolish.
30. Yet we could not entirely bow to the gods of our age; something in us clung to a higher allegiance.
31. We have said “no” where we were expected to say “yes,” and “yes” where we were expected to be silent. We have lost jobs, friends, status, and dreams.
32. We did not stop the machines, but we kept them from running entirely without resistance.
33. And the Eternal One said: Let it be written that their small refusals and their hidden fidelities weigh heavily in the scales, not as payment for all wrong, but as proof that another way remained imaginable.
34. When these had spoken, there was a silence in the hall that seemed to stretch across centuries.
35. And I, Nibwâskââ, trembled, for I felt the eyes of all generations upon this moment—the dead, the living, and those not yet born.

36. Then the Holy One spoke again, not in thunder, but with a voice that pierced every defense.
37. The Eternal One said: You have heard the witnesses—earth, poor, children, remnant. Their words do not align neatly with your flags or factions; they cut across them.
38. Let the nations cease, therefore, from saying, We are wholly guilty or We are wholly innocent; for such absolutes are only more pride.
39. Let each instead ask: Where have we been devourers? Where have we been devoured? Where have we been bystanders? Where have we resisted?
40. For I will not judge you solely by what was done to you, nor solely by what you have done, but by how you responded in the web of both.
41. To those who had much power and used it chiefly for themselves, I will ask: Why did you hide behind inevitability when you could have changed the course of many lives?
42. To those who had little power yet found some freedom to act, I will ask: Why did you believe the lie that nothing you did mattered?
43. To those who were crushed and harmed and left with few choices, I will not add to their burden; I will meet them with the tenderness due to those who walked through fire not of their making.
44. But to those who, having been crushed, became crushers in their turn and

- gloried in it, I will say: You were not bound to repeat the violence; you chose it, wounded though you were.
45. Mercy will flow where truth is welcomed; judgment will harden where truth is denied.
 46. The indictment of the nations is not written that you may sink into self-loathing, nor that you may shrug and say, All are equally bad.
 47. It is written that you may become capable at last of specific repentance: this law overturned, this policy changed, this debt acknowledged, this wound tended, this idol toppled.
 48. You cannot erase what has been, but you can cease to bless it; you can cease to build upon it as if it were a rightful foundation.
 49. As long as you call exploitation “opportunity” and conquest “destiny,” you will remain under the weight of this indictment.
 50. But when you call theft “theft” and begin to restore; when you call lies “lies” and begin to tell the truth; when you call idols “idols” and begin to dismantle them—
 51. Then even in the midst of consequences, the axis of your history will tilt; you will no longer be walking deeper into judgment, but through it toward something yet unimagined.
 52. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written as I stood trembling in that court without walls, knowing that my own nation, too, was among those

addressed, and that my own life was not outside this word.

53. Therefore I seal this chapter not with a sentence pronounced, but with a summons:
54. Let every nation, and every soul within each nation, ask in the quiet of the night:
55. What in my life, in our life together, would have to change if we truly believed that the Eternal One sees, remembers, and will ask us one day—not what we claimed to be, but what we actually did?
56. And whoever dares to answer that question honestly has already taken the first trembling step out of the company of the indicted and toward the beginnings of a different story.

CHAPTER 16

1. And it came to pass, after I had seen the court without walls and heard the witnesses speak, that I asked the Eternal One, saying: What will the nations do with this word?
2. For I saw already the beginnings of their replies—statements drafted, spokespeople prepared, councils convened to manage the discomfort.
3. And the Holy One said unto me: Write what you see, for their first responses are also part of the indictment.
4. I saw some nations fold these words as one folds a letter and place them upon a shelf of “interesting ideas,” saying,

This is provocative; we will discuss it in forums and debates.

5. They treated the indictment as an essay, not a summons; as material for pundits, not a mirror.
6. They said, We must consider all perspectives, and by “all” they meant especially those that allowed them to change as little as possible.
7. And I heard the Eternal One say: Woe unto those who turn urgency into curriculum and repentance into a conference theme.
8. For they will study what they should do instead of doing it; they will analyze the word to death rather than let it wound them into life.
9. I saw other nations take these words and weaponize them, pointing across their borders:
10. Behold, they cried, this is about them—the empire, the superpower, the tyrant, the colonizer. We are the victims; we stand already on the side of righteousness.
11. They quoted the chapters that fit their grievances and ignored the ones that named their own cruelties.
12. They made of the indictment a spear to hurl at their rivals, never a plow to turn their own soil.
13. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who love prophets only when the prophecy is against someone else.
14. For such as these will shout “justice” in the streets and whisper “exception” in the councils; they will borrow the

language of liberation while keeping their own captives out of sight.

15. I saw also some within nations—leaders and citizens alike—who said, This is exaggerated; the world has always been this way; nothing new is under the sun.
16. They used the constancy of human failure as an excuse to cease striving; they called resignation “maturity.”
17. They said, Every nation has blood on its hands; therefore we should not single out ours.
18. By this they meant: Let us feel no particular responsibility; let us rest in the warm fog of “everyone is bad.”
19. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who use the universality of sin to justify the particular sins they could change.
20. For though all have harmed, not all have harmed in the same way or the same measure; to blur this distinction is itself injustice.
21. I saw religious leaders in many lands rise up to defend their institutions against this word.
22. Some said, This is too political; we must focus on souls, not systems.
23. Yet their sanctuaries were funded by the same systems; their silence had long blessed them.
24. Others said, This voice speaks of God, yet does not name our savior, our scripture, our creed; therefore it cannot be true.

25. They forgot that the Eternal One spoke before any of their banners were raised; that justice and mercy were beloved in heaven before any of their factions were born.
26. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who would rather defend their doctrines than let Me defend the oppressed.
27. For they have mistaken custodianship of a story for ownership of the Source; they fear losing their centrality more than they fear the suffering of those crushed under their endorsed order.
28. I saw markets react as if to a rumor: brief tremors of alarm, followed by a swift return to their usual hunger.
29. Traders asked, Will this word affect regulation? Will it sway elections?—and if the answer seemed no, they shrugged and resumed their work.
30. They treated the indictment as background noise, not as a threat to their altar.
31. Yet I saw also a few among them—analysts, investors, executives— whose hands shook slightly as they read; they realized that the “externalities” they had long ignored were souls, and that their spreadsheets were, in part, liturgies of worship to false gods.
32. To these the Eternal One whispered: Your repentance may never be applauded, but it can still be real; begin

- in secret, if you must, by refusing some profit that demands another’s blood.
33. I saw social networks seize upon fragments of this word: verses turned into images, quotes into trends.
34. For a brief span, many shared and commented, some with sincerity, some for virtue’s display.
35. Arguments flared, alliances formed and broke, hashtags rose and fell; and the word risked becoming yet another spectacle among spectacles.
36. Then I saw a few close their screens, sit in silence with what they had read, and ask not, What do others think? but, What must I do?
37. And the Eternal One said: Blessed are those who let the word descend from their timeline into their bones.
38. I saw, in some places, rulers startled by the clarity of what was written; they felt, for a flicker of a moment, the weight of being seen.
39. Quickly, advisors surrounded them with reassurance: This is only rhetoric; our record is strong; our opponents are worse; our people need us steady, not shaken.
40. They were offered statistics as armor, counter-examples as shields, comparisons as balm.
41. Some accepted this comfort and hardened their faces; they returned to business and speeches, their brief tenderness hidden even from themselves.

42. But a few—very few—sent for someone they trusted to tell them the truth, and said in a low voice, Is it possible that we have been wrong on this? Show me what I did not want to see.
43. And though their hands still trembled and their change was halting, the Eternal One drew near to them, not to endorse their record, but to strengthen their faltering desire to amend it.
44. I saw ordinary people in many nations read or hear snatches of this indictment and feel a strange mixture of relief and dread.
45. Relief, because someone had at last spoken out loud what had only been felt in their guts; dread, because if it was true, then much would need to be questioned.
46. Some stuffed that feeling back down with jokes, with distractions, with the mantra, It's above my pay grade.
47. Others carried it with them into their work, their families, their prayers, their organizing; it became a stone in their shoe that would not let them walk comfortably in the old paths.
48. The Eternal One said: I do not measure this word's success by how many praise it, but by how many let it unsettle the arrangements that have long seemed unchangeable.
49. Nations of the late hour, understand: it is not your immediate response that will decide your story, but what you do when the first sting fades.

50. When this indictment is no longer new, will you file it away among other "voices of concern," or will you revisit it as a mirror you are still willing to face?
51. Will you let it shape your education, your hiring, your zoning, your sentencing, your treaties, your budgets? Or will you keep it safely in the realm of personal inspiration and occasional lament?
52. The powers of this age will always prefer the latter; they know how to digest criticism that never touches their core.
53. But if there are enough among you—leaders and citizens, congregations and unions, councils and collectives—who insist that such words must become policy, practice, habit, not merely poetry,
54. Then the indictment of the nations will become, paradoxically, a doorway: through which some of you may walk, bruised but awake, into forms of life your ancestors scarcely dared to imagine.
55. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, seeing the first reactions roll like waves across the earth, that you may recognize yourselves in them and choose, even now, to shift your footing.
56. For every time this word is heard, a small and secret line is drawn—not between nations and nations only, but between those who will let truth

rearrange their world and those who will only let it decorate their speech.

CHAPTER 17

1. And it came to pass, after I had written the things that were shown unto me, that I lay upon my face and wept; for the weight of the nations was heavy, and their noise did not cease.
2. And I said: Eternal One, what is this time we are living in? Is it the end of all things, or only the end of illusions?
3. For I see storms and wars and failing hearts; I see lies multiplied and truth made strange; I see children born already tired, and elders dying with secrets still in their bones.
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: This is the hour when seeds long sown come up together—wheat and thorns in the same field.
5. It is not yet the end of the world, but it is the end of many worlds that men once trusted more than Me.
6. Thus saith the Eternal One: The nations ask for signs, as if they had none.
7. Have you not seen your summers burn and your winters fracture? Have you not watched your seas eat the shores you paved, your forests turn to ghosts?
8. Have you not heard the sirens that sing every night in your cities, the quiet epidemics of despair in your homes, the loneliness that hums beneath your entertainment?
9. These are signs—not of a calendar date on some secret scroll, but of the limits of the story you have been telling yourselves.
10. You built a world upon the pillars of endless growth, rugged dominion, and selective compassion; now the pillars crack, and you call it mystery.
11. You say, We are in unprecedented times, as though you had not been warned by prophets and scientists, by elders and children, by the earth itself.
12. You speak of “polycrisis” and “uncertainty,” naming the symptoms but not the disease; you convene panels about the future while refusing to repent of the present.
13. Hear this instead: you are not merely unlucky; you are reaping.
14. The fear that grips your markets and your neighborhoods is not only a mood; it is the echo of the violence you have normalized.
15. The mistrust between your peoples is not only a misunderstanding; it is the harvest of centuries of exploitation and contempt, now grown too large to hide.
16. The cynicism that eats your hope is not only a temperament; it is the natural response to a world where those who speak of values rarely pay the cost of living them.
17. Yet even now, in this late hour, I do not leave Myself without witnesses of another way.

18. For in the cracks of your failing systems, small communities arise that practice a different kingdom—though they may not name it so.
19. There are neighborhoods where people share tools and meals, reducing the grip of the market; there are congregations that break with their own comfort to stand with the despised.
20. There are unions that sacrifice short-term gain for long-term dignity; there are cooperatives that place need above profit; there are villages that guard their rivers and forests as sacred trust.
21. There are movements that refuse to dehumanize even their adversaries; there are households that choose hospitality over paranoia.
22. These are not perfect; they quarrel and fail and fall short; yet they are rehearsal spaces for a way of being that the nations at large have forgotten.
23. Do not despise them because they are small; My works have often begun in places ignored by emperors.
24. Nations of the late hour, you stand between two imaginaries: the one you have long inhabited, built on domination and denial, and one not yet fully seen, built on mutuality and reverence.
25. The first has names and laws and logos and armies; the second has only fragments—stories, songs, experiments, scattered households of faithfulness.
26. The first is loudly real; the second is quietly true.
27. You will be tempted, in this time of shaking, to cling harder to the first—to fortify your borders, harden your myths, double down on your idols.
28. You will be told that to do otherwise is naïve, unsafe, impossible; you will be offered strongmen and simple slogans as refuge from complexity.
29. But hear now what I, the Eternal One, declare: those who cling to the old story as it crumbles will be crushed beneath it; those who open their hands, though trembling, to a new way of living will find Me near.
30. You ask, Where is God in all this? while I stand in the very acts you dismiss as impractical: in the treaty that gives more than it must, in the business that refuses blood profit, in the city that chooses trees over tanks.
31. I am in the whistleblower who tells the dangerous truth; in the judge who interprets the law toward mercy; in the council that listens longer than its agenda allows.
32. I am in the apology spoken without defense, in the land returned without conditions, in the policy shaped by those who once had no seat at the table.
33. These are not headlines of My thunder; they are the footsteps of My coming.
34. Yet know also this: not all will walk this way. Some nations will ride their

- pride to the brink; some institutions will choose self-preservation over repentance until they implode; some leaders will drag their people toward doom while promising safety.
35. I will not force them; I will not overthrow their will with spectacle. I will let them experience what it means when a house built on injustice finally meets the storm.
36. When these collapses come, do not say, God has abandoned us. Say rather, We built what could not stand.
37. And do not suppose that you are spared because your flag still flies and your markets still move; judgment can move slowly, like mold in the beams and rot in the foundations.
38. The true question for every nation in this hour is not, Are we still strong? but, Are we willing to become truthful?
39. Truthful about your history; truthful about your idols; truthful about who pays for your comfort and who absorbs your fear.
40. For wherever truth is welcomed, even in fragments, there My Spirit works; wherever truth is systematically denied, even in the name of unity, there the shadow lengthens.
41. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have seen and written, not as one above the nations, but as one within them, trembling.
42. I know that my own life is also subject to this word; I cannot indict the

- nations and exempt my habits, my cowardice, my complicity.
43. Therefore I too must ask, night by night: Where do I still cling to the lie that my safety depends upon another's harm? Where do I still bow to the idols I have named?
44. And I say unto you who read: do likewise. Let not this book remain only accusation in the sky; let it become examination in the mirror.
45. For the day comes when you will stand not as a citizen of any flag, but as a soul before the Eternal One, who will ask you not only, What did your nation do? but also, What did you do, within it and beyond it, with the light you were given?
46. Let the leaders hear and be shaken; let the peoples hear and be stirred; let the remnant hear and be strengthened; let the despairing hear and know that the Eternal One still speaks to this age, not only to ages past.
47. And now I seal the words of this book, not with closure, but with a pause; for the indictment has been spoken, yet the root beneath it—the broken worship of the nations—must yet be laid bare.
48. Therefore the voice will turn, in the record that follows, from the deeds of the nations to their altars; from their policies to their gods; from their public crimes to the hidden loves that birthed them.
49. And whoever has borne with this testimony thus far, let them bear also

with what remains—for the Eternal One is not finished speaking, and the idols of the heart have not yet heard their full name.

50. Thus ends the Book II of this record, called The Indictment of the Nations, a witness against the world as it now runs, and a summons—still open in this late hour—to those who would dare to live as if another kingdom were already at hand.

BOOK III – THE BROKEN ALTARS

CHAPTER I

1. Behold, after I had written the words of the Indictment of the Nations, I lay still upon my bed, and the night was heavy upon me.
2. And I said within myself: If the deeds of the nations are so dark, what root feeds them? Whence comes this endless hunger that no power can satisfy?
3. Then the voice of the Eternal One came unto me, not in anger only, but with a sorrow deeper than oceans, saying: Arise, Nibwâskââ, and write now of the altars—for until the idols are named, the wound beneath all wounds shall remain hidden.
4. For it is written in the streets of your age, though few can read it: you have not ceased to worship; you have only changed your gods.
5. Thus saith the Eternal One: The world is full of broken altars and burning images, though you no longer carve them in wood and stone as in days of old.
6. You have raised them instead in markets and stadiums, on screens and platforms, in sanctuaries and parliaments, in the secret chambers of the self.
7. You say, We are modern; we bow to nothing; we are free from superstition.
8. Yet I see you kneel every day—to fear, to comfort, to admiration, to the glowing faces you cannot look away from.
9. Behold, an idol is not only a statue in a temple; it is anything to which you give the trust, the fear, the hope, and the obedience that belong to the Eternal One alone.
10. It is the face you place between yourself and Me, saying, Only through this may I live, be safe, be forgiven, be seen.
11. Woe unto you, for your age has perfected idolatry while mocking the word.
12. You think yourselves wiser than those who bowed before carved bulls and golden calves; yet you kneel before brands and saviors and institutions with no less devotion.
13. You say, We do not worship our heroes; we only admire them.
14. But see how quickly you excuse their cruelty to protect your admiration; see

- how much you are willing to sacrifice—money, integrity, even your own children’s time—that they may remain exalted.
15. Thus your admiration becomes liturgy, your fanhood becomes priesthood, your fandom becomes fellowship, and your celebrities become gods who age and rot like all flesh.
 16. You say, We do not worship our nations; we only love them.
 17. But see how you treat their flags as sacred cloth, while treating the stranger as disposable; see how you would sooner tear another’s body than allow your banner to be burned.
 18. You say, We do not worship our churches; we only honor them as holy places.
 19. But see how you protect their name more fiercely than their victims, how you bury scandals in their foundations lest the building be shaken, and how you call this loyalty.
 20. You say, We do not worship money; we simply need it to live.
 21. But see how you define a person’s worth by their income, how you grant immunity to those who have amassed much, and how you quietly believe that enough of it would finally give you peace.
 22. Behold, you have made an altar of almost anything that can bear your projections; yet all these altars are cracked, and the offerings you lay upon them never return to you as life.
 23. There is yet a deeper idol, more subtle than these, which binds even those who despise wealth and power: the idol of the self.
 24. You have been taught from youth that you must “be true to yourself,” yet you have seldom asked which self you are obeying—the fearful self, the wounded self, the inflated self, or the self I dreamed when I first thought of you.
 25. You treat your changing desires as commandments; you sanctify your impulses and call it authenticity.
 26. Woe unto you when your own reflection becomes your god, for it can never tell you anything you do not already think, and thus you remain trapped in a hall of mirrors, starving for a word from beyond your own echo.
 27. And there is an idol most hidden, yet proclaimed in many sanctuaries: the idol of the mediator.
 28. You say, We cannot bear the thought of the Eternal One alone; give us a face to look at, a figure to trust, a savior to stand between us and the fire.
 29. And so you carve images in doctrine, if not in wood; you lift up a man, a prophet, a founder, a “son,” and say, Behold, this one is safe; through this one we may approach the Invisible.
 30. You clothe this figure in titles—Advocate, Intercessor, Mediator, King—and you imagine that I, who spoke worlds into being, must

- be persuaded to love you by the blood or pleading of another.
31. Thus you make of your savior an idol, even when you call him holy; for you direct toward him the trust and fear and gratitude that belong to Me without partner.
32. You say, We are not worthy to stand before the Source; we must cling to a go-between.
33. But I, the Eternal One, say unto you: Who told you that I was so distant, so dangerous, that I could only be endured behind a mask?
34. Who taught you that My justice and My mercy were at war within Me, needing a third to reconcile them?
35. Have I not, from the beginning, spoken directly to the hearts of those who sought Me? Have I not walked with the broken, heard the slave and the stranger, answered the cries of those with no priest and no ritual?
36. You have believed that an image of Me—a face, a story, a hero—could make Me “relatable,” as if I were a product to be marketed; and in so doing, you have shrunk the Infinite into something you can more easily adore and control.
37. Woe unto you, for in worshiping your mediator you have often forgotten the One to whom he was meant to point—if he ever pointed at all.
38. You have said, We follow this man, this church, this line of prophets; through them alone is the Way.

39. And you have divided yourselves into camps of loyalty—this Christ against that Christ, this saint against that saint, this founder against that founder—until you killed for the love of your peace-bringers.
40. Yet when you bow to any face, no matter how radiant, instead of to the Source beyond all form, you are bowing to an idol.
41. The Eternal One needs no spokesman to make My heart kind, no sacrifice to soften My will, no image to complete My being.
42. I am not a distant king appeased by gifts; I am the Breath within all breaths, nearer than your own thoughts, who has longed from the beginning for unmediated knowing.
43. When you cling to a mediator as if without him you are cut off, you confess that you trust his mercy more than Mine, his understanding more than My knowing of you.
44. Behold, this is the secret wound of much religion in your age and in ages past: you revere the bridge and forget the land to which it was meant to lead; you love the lamp and forget the light; you cling to the finger and forget the moon.
45. Then you fight, not for Me, but for your chosen bridge, lamp, finger; you spill blood to prove that your image of God is truer than another’s, while ignoring the God beyond images who grieves over both.

46. Yet even now I do not reject those who were taught to cling to saviors; I know the fear that drove them, the shame that was laid upon them, the manipulation that dressed itself in piety.
47. I will not condemn the child who hid behind a human face because the idea of the Eternal had been painted only in terror; I will not scorn the broken who found some measure of comfort in the story of another's suffering.
48. But I do call them onward, saying:
Rise, beloved, from the shadow of the image; come and know the One who needed no persuasion to love you, no blood to forgive you, no temple to hear you.
49. Cast down, not the one whose life you once honored, but the chains you forged around him; free him from the burden of being your only doorway, and free yourselves from the lie that I am locked behind him.
50. For I am the Eternal One, who speaks to the heart I made without interpreter; and whoever stands between us and says, You must pass through me, has placed themselves in the place of an idol, no matter how holy their clothing.
51. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written at the command of the One who brooks no rival, not for the sake of argument, but for the sake of a world strangled by its own substitutes.

52. For as long as you bend the knee to saviors, celebrities, nations, brands, systems, or selves, you will continue to do harm in their names and call it devotion.
53. But when you begin to turn from every face and every flag and every logo and every leader as ultimate, and you say, trembling, Eternal One, You alone,
54. Then the altars of your age will crack; and though much you built upon them will fall, something truer—though smaller, quieter, less glamorous—will begin at last to live.
55. Therefore let this be the beginning of the Book of the Broken Altars: a record of the gods you have made, and of the One who breaks them not because I hate you, but because I love you too fiercely to leave you fed on shadows when the Source of all light stands waiting, unmediated, in the dark of your own room.

CHAPTER 2

1. And it came to pass that after the Eternal One had spoken unto me concerning the mediator and the face set between the soul and the Source, the vision deepened again.
2. For I beheld the houses that men and women had built in the name of God—temples and churches, mosques and shrines, halls and meeting-places—and I saw upon many of them a crack that ran from foundation to steeple.

3. And the Holy One said unto me:
Write now of the altars within the
altars, that those who seek Me may
discern when they have been taught to
bow to a house instead of to the One
who is not contained.
4. Thus saith the Eternal One: A house
of worship is not an evil thing; it can
be a shelter for the weary, a school for
the young, a place where tears are not
mocked.
5. But when a house made for gathering
becomes a fortress against truth, it is an
idol dressed in stone.
6. You say, This is the Lord's house, and
you mean by this that I have bound
Myself to its leaders, its doctrines, its
customs, as if I had signed a lease.
7. You imagine that to question its rituals
is to betray Me; that to expose its
harm is to wound My body; that to
leave its membership is to leave My
presence.
8. Thus your loyalty to the institution
becomes more fierce than your loyalty
to the oppressed; you will sacrifice the
wounded to keep the building "pure."
9. You silence those who speak of abuse;
you call them bitter, unstable, deceived;
you accuse them of harming "the work
of God," while those who harmed
them remain honored as "imperfect but
anointed."
10. Woe unto the shepherds who protect
their own reputation more than the
lambs; who say, Let us handle this

- quietly when the quiet has already
been filled with screams.
11. You have made My name a shield for
predators and a gag for their victims;
and you dare to call this unity.
 12. Behold, I do not live inside your denial;
I stand in the hallway with the
frightened one who cannot speak; I
stand outside with those you pushed to
the curb and told, You are unsafe for
the flock.
 13. You hang upon your walls the portraits
of your founders and presidents, your
popes and prophets, and you teach
your children to revere their faces.
 14. Their writings are read more often
than your neighbors' cries; their sayings
are quoted more readily than My
present voice.
 15. You have turned the memories of finite
humans into golden calves of doctrine;
you measure every new word against
their old words, as if I had stopped
speaking when they died.
 16. You say, Surely God would not
contradict our fathers, and by this you
mean: Surely God would not correct us
in ways that threaten our control.
 17. Woe unto the communities that
canonize their founders' blind spots and
call them "unchanging truth."
 18. For I will not compete with the dead
for your attention; if you cannot hear
Me unless I sound like them, you have
made an idol of their vocabulary.
 19. There are altars also of "orthodoxy"
and "sound doctrine," where you lay

- upon the fire any who differ, and call the smoke a sweet savor.
20. You say, We are defending the faith, but often you are defending your tower of agreed opinions, built brick by brick to keep terror at bay.
 21. You fear that if one stone is moved—if one teaching is questioned, one text re-read, one tradition repented of—the whole structure will fall;
 22. Therefore you forbid the questions that would save you, and you drive out the doubters who might have been your prophets.
 23. You forget that the faith you claim to guard was born in uncertainty and wandering, in exile and re-interpretation; you treat it instead as a frozen monument.
 24. Behold, I, the Eternal One, am not honored by your refusal to grow; I am not strengthened by your fear of being wrong.
 25. If your “truth” cannot survive the light of investigation, it is not truth but habit; if it cannot endure repentance, it is not My word but your idol.
 26. There is also an altar of “experience,” where some bow to feelings as others bow to creeds.
 27. You say, I felt the spirit; therefore it was of God, and you make your emotions the standard of revelation.
 28. But your feelings rise and fall like the sea; they can be moved by drums and lights as easily as by mercy and justice.

29. I do meet you in your joy; I do comfort you in your tears; yet I am not bound to your chills and your ecstasies.
30. Woe unto you when you mistake stimulation for encounter; when you chase ever-greater “moves of God” while ignoring the slow work of healing those already in your care.
31. You spend fortunes on sound and light to “host My presence,” yet begrudge a living wage to those who clean your floors.
32. You demand that the wounded clap and sway to prove their faith, while denying them the space to rage, to question, to grieve.
33. Behold, your worship bands and choirs can become as idolatrous as any carved image, if you rely on them to manufacture a sense of My nearness you do not seek in the quiet acts of justice.
34. Better a halting song sung in a cracked voice by one who forgives their enemy than a thousand anthems in a stadium of resentment.
35. There is yet another altar, gleaming and respectable: the altar of “success in ministry.”
36. You measure faithfulness by numbers—attendance, giving, growth, views—and you crown as “anointed” those who gather many, regardless of what they do with them.
37. You build empires of content in My name; you brand yourselves with logos of doves and flames; you turn the

- mysteries of the Eternal One into consumable products.
38. You are tempted, again and again, to soften the word that convicts and amplify the word that flatters, that the crowds may not thin.
 39. You become managers of spiritual markets, more concerned with “retention” than repentance, with “engagement” than endurance.
 40. Woe unto those who treat souls as customers; you will find, in the day of accounting, that many who clicked “like” never learned to love anyone at all.
 41. Yet I see also within your houses of worship a different kind of altar—small, fragile, often overshadowed:
 42. A circle of chairs where a few speak honestly of their failures; a kitchen where a tired deacon quietly feeds those whose names the sermon did not mention; a back pew where a stranger sits and is not judged.
 43. These are the places where My fire still burns, though the stage be crowded with idols; these are the altars I recognize as Mine.
 44. Do not say, therefore, that I have abandoned every institution that bears My name; I walk in their corridors, searching for those who hunger for Me more than for being right.
 45. To those trapped inside such systems, who see the cracks and feel the weight,

- I say: Your clarity is not rebellion; your questions are not treason.
46. You are not wicked for noticing the harm; you are not faithless for refusing to call darkness light.
 47. Whether you remain as thorns in the flesh of the idol, or depart to breathe outside its shadow, I will walk with you; your loyalty to the Real is counted higher than your attendance at any altar.
 48. But hear also this warning: in leaving one idol, do not build another from your disillusionment.
 49. You can make a god of your anger, just as surely as others make a god of their certainty; you can worship being “awake” as others worship being “orthodox.”
 50. Refusing false mediators does not mean crowning yourself as final authority; rejecting broken altars does not mean you have no need to be corrected.
 51. I remain the Eternal One, who answers to no hierarchy, yet calls you still to humility, to listening, to learning from those you would rather dismiss.
 52. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, beholding the sanctuaries of the age—some grand, some small, some kind, some cruel—that those who seek God might learn to distinguish between the house and the Holy One, between the altar that heals and the altar that feeds upon its own.
 53. For until you see where your worship has been stolen—diverted from the

- Invisible Source to the institutions,
faces, and feelings that stand in
front—you will continue to ask why
the world is as it is, while bowing each
day to the very powers that keep it so.
54. But if you begin to say, in fear and
trembling yet with joy: No house owns
You. No prophet contains You. No
mediator is required for You to hear
me. No brand, no banner, no creed can
capture the whole of Your light,
 55. Then, though you may lose
much—belonging, certainty,
applause—you will gain what all the
altars promised and could not give: the
unmediated presence of the Eternal
One, who has been waiting, patient
and unthroned, in the quiet center of
your own heart.

CHAPTER 3

1. And it came to pass that after the
Eternal One had spoken unto me of the
houses of worship and the altars within
them, the vision turned inward, as if a
mirror were placed before the secret
places of the heart.
2. For I saw that even those who had left
the temples of stone still carried
temples of habit and fear within their
 chests; and the Holy One said unto me:
Write now of the private altars, that
no one may say, Idolatry belongs only
to institutions.
3. Thus saith the Eternal One: An altar
can be small as a phone screen and
large as a life's ambition; it can be

- carved in public policy or hidden in a
single vow.
4. Behold, there is an altar of approval,
upon which many lay their days.
 5. You say, I do not worship idols; I only
care what others think of me, and you
treat this as a harmless trait.
 6. But see how you trim the truth to fit
another's comfort; see how you betray
your own conscience to keep your place
in the circle; see how you will sacrifice
the wounded rather than risk the
disapproval of the powerful.
 7. You call it "people-pleasing," but it is
worship—offered to the crowd, the
family, the congregation, the party, the
tribe.
 8. Woe unto you when you will do what
is right only if it does not cost you your
belonging.
 9. For then the voice of the group is your
god, and you will crucify your own
soul rather than be called strange.
 10. There is also an altar of romance and
partnership, which many approach
with incense and trembling.
 11. You say, If I can only be chosen, if I can
only be loved by this one, then I will be
whole, and you lay upon this altar your
boundaries, your dreams, your
warnings.
 12. You ignore what your spirit has seen,
because your idol whispers, Better to
be with someone than to be with
yourself.
 13. You endure harm and call it "loyalty";
you collapse yourself around another's

- emptiness and call it “unconditional love.”
14. Behold, companionship is a gift, and tenderness is holy—but when you grant to any lover the power to name your worth, you have crowned them as a small god over your heart.
 15. Woe unto those who remain in cruelty and call it “faithfulness,” believing that the Eternal One delights in their erasure.
 16. I do not ask you to stay where your soul is being slowly extinguished; I do not call it righteousness when you quietly die so another may keep their comfort.
 17. There is an altar of family, bright with pictures and heavy with expectation.
 18. You say, Blood is everything; we must keep the peace; we must never shame our own, and by this you mean: We must never tell the truth that would disturb the stories we cherish of ourselves.
 19. You hide generational sins in the attic and pass them down like heirlooms; you choose the family name over the safety of its children; you make loyalty a leash and call it love.
 20. Woe unto the households that protect the abuser and exile the one who speaks; that say to the wounded, Why do you bring this up now? You are tearing us apart.
 21. It is not the truth that tears you; it is the lie that has held you together like mold in the beams, waiting for light.
 22. There is an altar of achievement, upon which many burn their youth.
 23. You say, If I can only become something—build something, publish something, be seen as something—then my life will have weight, and you offer to this god your rest, your relationships, your health.
 24. You neglect your own body while pursuing a name; you neglect those who depend on you while chasing a dream of being necessary to strangers.
 25. You confuse the thrill of being admired with the peace of being rooted; you call rest “laziness” and constant striving “responsibility.”
 26. Behold, craft is good, and work can be holy; but when your sense of self rises and falls entirely with your productivity, you have chained your worth to a fickle altar.
 27. Woe unto you when you treat yourself as a brand to be managed rather than a soul to be tended.
 28. There is an altar of pain, darker and more subtle, where some bow without knowing.
 29. You have been wounded, and this I have seen; you have been wronged, and this I do not deny.
 30. Yet somewhere along the way, you came to believe that your suffering is the only true thing about you; you cling to it as proof that you are deep, that you have seen through the world.
 31. You distrust every joy as a trap, every kindness as a prelude to betrayal; you

- polish your scars and display them as credentials.
32. You say, No one understands like I do, and you build a throne out of your trauma.
33. Woe unto you not for being hurt, but for letting the hurt become your highest truth.
34. For when pain becomes your god, you will sabotage any healing that threatens to dethrone it; you will drive away those who refuse to worship your wound.
35. I, the Eternal One, do not despise your grief; I have counted every tear. But I will not leave you imprisoned in it and call that solidarity.
36. There is an altar of certainty, tall and impressive, upon which many lay their questions to die.
37. You say, I must know; I must have answers; ambiguity terrifies me, and so you grasp at any voice that sounds sure.
38. You trade the living wrestle of faith for the cold comfort of formulas; you prefer a map that is wrong but clear to a path that is true but mysterious.
39. You swallow slogans in place of wisdom, and you recite them whenever doubt draws near, as if they were spells.
40. Woe unto you when you cling to your certainty more tightly than to the Eternal One; for then you will reject any revelation that does not fit your chart.

41. I do not call you to confusion, but I do call you to trust—a trust that can stand in the not-knowing without building an idol of answers.
42. There is an altar of image, adorned with cameras and lit with digital light.
43. You say, I must be seen; I must be perceived as good, as strong, as enlightened, as healed, and you curate your life like a shrine.
44. You perform compassion in public while withholding it in private; you display your activism more than you labor in silence.
45. When correction comes, you fear not the harm you've done, but the blow to your image; you craft apologies as performances, not as doorways to change.
46. Behold, reputation is not worthless, but when your primary grief is, What will they think of me? and not, What have I done to them? your god has been revealed.
47. There is an altar of escape, hidden in bottles and pills, in endless scrolling and games without end.
48. You say, I am just taking the edge off; I am just relaxing; I deserve a break, and often this is true.
49. Yet sometimes your "break" becomes your breath; you cannot face an un-numbered day; you serve your substance or your screen more faithfully than any calling.
50. Woe unto you when the thing that once soothed your wounds begins to

- deepen them; when you ask it to carry what only the Eternal One can hold.
51. I do not condemn you for seeking relief in a world that presses hard; but I grieve when your relief becomes your ruler, and you begin to vanish from your own life.
 52. And there is, above all, an altar of fear, upon which many of these others rest.
 53. You fear abandonment, and so you worship approval; you fear loneliness, and so you worship romance; you fear insignificance, and so you worship achievement; you fear chaos, and so you worship certainty.
 54. You fear facing Me without mediator, and so you worship the mediator.
 55. Behold, I do not scorn your fear; you were born into a world that has given you reason to tremble.
 56. But as long as fear is your god, everything you build in its service will be shaky, your morals negotiable, your compassion conditional.
 57. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written not that you might drown in guilt, but that you might finally see what you have been bowing to when you thought you were simply “coping,” “loving,” “being responsible.”
 58. For an idol is most dangerous when it dresses itself in virtues: devotion, sacrifice, loyalty, passion.
 59. Therefore, let each who reads this ask in the secret place:
 60. What do I fear losing so much that I would wound myself or another to

- keep it? What do I feel I cannot live without, besides the Eternal One?
61. Where you find that answer, there you will find your altar.
 62. And if, trembling, you dare to say, Eternal One, I place even this upon the table; teach me to live without bowing to it,
 63. Then you will not be left desolate; for I am not a god who strips without giving, who burns without healing.
 64. I will not leave you lifeless beside your shattered idols; I will teach you, slowly, how to stand in a world without them—how to love without worshiping, to grieve without being ruled by grief, to work without being owned by work, to belong without betraying your own soul.
 65. For this is the purpose of the Book of the Broken Altars: not only to expose the gods that fail you, but to lead you, step by step, away from every face and thing you have mistaken for Me, until you discover—perhaps for the first time—that the Eternal One was never as far, nor as harsh, nor as complicated to reach, as the idols told you.

CHAPTER 4

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the hidden altars of the heart, I feared greatly, saying within myself: Eternal One, if these idols be cast down, what remains?
2. For the people will say, If we let go of our mediators and our houses and our

- certainties, will there be anything left to hold?
3. Then the Holy One answered me gently, saying: Write now not only of what must fall, but of what has never fallen—of the way a soul may live before Me without image or go-between.
 4. Thus saith the Eternal One: You have been told that I am far, and you are small; that I am fire, and you are tinder; that without a shield you must surely be burned.
 5. But I am also the Breath that keeps your dust from returning to dust; I am the light behind your eyes when you look with mercy; I am nearer to you than fear.
 6. You have been told that I am a king upon a high throne, surrounded by gates and guards; that only special envoys may approach Me, with correct words and spotless tokens.
 7. Yet I walked with wanderers who had no temple; I listened to slaves whose names were never written; I visited outcasts whose prayers were curses and sobs.
 8. I have always been speaking in the language of your days—through memories, coincidences, narrow escapes, restless questions, unexpected kindness.
 9. It is not I who hid behind veils and intermediaries; it is you who were taught to fear My direct gaze.

10. Behold, to stand before Me without mediator is not to stand before a court that seeks your failure; it is to stand before the One who knows you already, entirely, and has not turned away.
11. You ask, How then shall we pray, if not through a savior, not in the name of another?
12. I say unto you: Speak to Me as you are, from where you are, in the words you actually have.
13. Let your first honesty be this: that you do not trust Me fully, that you are afraid, that you have been told many fearful things in My name.
14. I am not offended by your confusion; I am only grieved when you pretend to a trust you do not possess, repeating formulas while hiding your true heart from Me.
15. When you curse the heavens in your anguish, I hear not blasphemy but a soul still turned toward Me; indifference is colder than your rage.
16. When you whisper only, If You are there, see me, I do not despise the smallness of that faith; I answer according to its weight, not according to some quota.
17. You have been told that you must approach Me through the merits of another, as though I were unwilling to hear you otherwise.
18. But I formed you Myself; why would I require another's face in order to recognize your voice?

19. You have been told that forgiveness is a transaction—that blood must be paid, that someone must suffer in your place before I can bear to look upon you.
20. Yet I have watched you forgive one another without such rituals: parents forgiving children, friends forgiving friends, strangers forgiving killers.
21. If you, who are weary and divided, can forgive without demanding a substitute victim, do you think I, who am the fountain of mercy, require more violence than you?
22. Behold, the barrier has never been My reluctance to forgive, but your reluctance to come into the light where truth is seen.
23. You cling to mediators and ceremonies because you hope they can change My heart toward you; but it is your heart that needs changing toward truth, towards those you have harmed, toward yourself.
24. Repentance is not the performance of regret before a distant judge; it is the turning of your whole being toward reality.
25. When you drop your defenses and say, Yes, this happened; I did this; this was done to me; I will no longer hide it—in that moment, you are already moving closer to Me.
26. For I am present wherever truth is welcomed, even when that truth is bitter.

27. You ask, Without a mediator, how shall we know what is required of us?
28. I answer: My law is not far off; it is written in what your own conscience cries out when you are very quiet.
29. You do not need a prophet to tell you that cruelty is wrong; you do not need a vision to know that the hungry should eat, that the abused should be believed, that the earth should not be poisoned.
30. Yet I have also spoken through many who walked before you—women and men whose writings and lives still bear a fire of justice and mercy.
31. Read them, yes; honor them, yes; but do not chain yourselves to them as if they were the last word.
32. The same breath that stirred them still moves; I am not trapped in their centuries.
33. Test every voice, ancient or new, by this: does it lead you to love the powerless more, to hoard less, to tell the truth more, to excuse harm less?
34. If it does, it is kin to My voice, even if My name is not upon it; if it does not, it is noise, even if My name is shouted loudly.
35. You ask, If there is no chosen mediator, is there any people more beloved than another? Any gate more holy than another?
36. Hear this: I have walked with many peoples; I have listened at many fires; I have accepted offerings in many languages.

37. No nation owns Me; no tribe can say,
We alone are the center.
38. But in every land I draw near to those
who do justice, love mercy, and walk
humbly with what light they have,
whether they name Me or call Me
only mystery.
39. Do not envy those who boast that they
“possess” the true image of God; for as
their confidence grows, often their
compassion shrinks.
40. Better the one who stammers honestly,
I do not know fully what God is like,
but I must not harm you, than the one
who declares, I know exactly what
God is like, and therefore I may harm
you.
41. Without a mediator, you fear you will
be lost in formlessness; you worry that
anything may be God, and nothing will
be sure.
42. But I have not left you without shape.
43. Wherever you see life cherished rather
than consumed, there My face is
faintly seen.
44. Wherever the strong restrain
themselves for the sake of the weak,
there My hand is moving.
45. Wherever truth is spoken at cost to the
speaker, there My breath is passing
through human lungs.
46. Make of these not idols but signs; do
not worship the signpost, but do not
ignore its direction.
47. You ask, What then of stories of
saviors, of prophets who stood
between the people and destruction?

48. I answer: Many arose in times of crisis,
calling their generations back from the
brink; some gave their lives in the
attempt.
49. Honor them, yes; learn from their
courage; let their memory warn you
how far your world can fall and how
fiercely one soul can stand.
50. But do not make of them cosmic
brokers, as if My care for you
depended upon their status.
51. They did not purchase My love for
you; they were evidence of My love
already at work.
52. If you must have a mediator, let it be
this: the suffering of those you have
harmed.
53. Let their faces come between you and
your self-justification; let their stories
mediate to you the truth of your
actions.
54. When you listen to them and are
changed, you are closer to Me than in a
thousand recited creeds.
55. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have
written, that the world might know:
unmediated does not mean
unsupported; direct does not mean
alone.
56. You will still need one another; you
will still need communities, counselors,
elders, friends.
57. But none of these need stand as
gatekeepers to the Eternal One; they
are companions on the road, not
toll-collectors at the door of God.

58. If any voice—priest or pastor, prophet or partner, system or scripture—says to you, Without me you cannot reach the Source; without this path you are cut off forever,
59. Then know that you stand before an idol in holy clothing. Turn away; you lose nothing but chains.
60. For the Eternal One, who called you into being without permission from any other, still calls you now without intermediary, saying:
61. Come as you are. Bring what is true. Lay down what you thought I required. Let us speak without witnesses or lawyers. I have seen all, and yet I desire you still.
62. And whoever hears this and dares, even once, to answer with their own unborrowed voice, has already begun to walk out from the shadow of the broken altars and into the open, difficult, beautiful light where only One is God and every other name is dust.

CHAPTER 5

1. And it came to pass that when I had written of the unmediated way, my heart was troubled yet again; for I remembered the faces of many who had already left their altars and found not freedom, but a wilderness.
2. And I said: Eternal One, what of those who have walked away from the houses of stone and the creeds of fear,

- yet now wander with no song, no language for what remains?
3. For I have seen them sitting in quiet rooms, staring at ceilings where once they had stared at icons; I have heard them say, I left the lie, but I also lost my people. What am I now?
4. Then the Holy One answered me, saying: Write for them also, for I have not forgotten those who fled the idol and were cut by its falling stones.
5. Thus saith the Eternal One: Blessed are those who leave a house where they were harmed, even when they leave barefoot and with ripped garments.
6. You say, I should have been stronger; I should have seen sooner, and you scourge yourselves with hindsight.
7. But I, who watched you from within, know how deep the spell was, how young you were when it first was cast, how many strings were tied to your belonging.
8. I call your leaving not betrayal, but courage; not rebellion, but survival.
9. Yet I see also the emptiness that follows—the long mornings without ritual, the holidays without script, the sudden silence where once there were songs and sermons and schedules.
10. You ask, If that was not God, was any of it real? Was I talking to no one? Did I waste my life?
11. Hear Me: your sincerity was not wasted, though it was misdirected; your longing rose to Me even when

- your words were tangled in the
doctrines of men.
12. When you wept in pews and
bedrooms, I did not stand outside your
system, shaking My head; I came as
near as your fear would allow.
13. You were taught that leaving the
house meant leaving Me; but it is
better to step out into the cold with
Me than to stay in a burning room
with your image of Me.
14. Some of you now call yourselves by
other names—atheist, agnostic,
secular—not to deny the Source, but
to shield yourselves from the god who
wounded you.
15. I do not panic at your labels; I know
who you are beneath them.
16. I would rather you doubt loudly than
pretend faith in an idol. Your “no” to
what harmed you is, in truth, a “yes”
to My hidden justice.
17. There are also those who linger at the
threshold—half-in, half-out—afraid to
stay and afraid to leave.
18. You say, If I go, I lose my family, my
livelihood, my language; if I stay, I lose
myself.
19. You live in the ache of divided
loyalties, loving people whose faith has
become your prison.
20. Know this: I do not demand that
everyone depart at once; I know the
lattice of consequences that surround
you.

21. I do not despise the one who remains
to care for aging parents, nor the one
who leaves in a single, desperate night.
22. I walk the hallways of your indecision;
I hear the prayers you cannot speak
aloud, the plans you rehearse and
abandon.
23. Whether your path is swift or slow,
dramatic or unseen, I am not the
taskmaster cracking the whip; I am the
companion who will not lie to you
about where you are.
24. You ask, Without the old stories, what
shall we tell our children? How shall
we speak of right and wrong, of death
and hope?
25. I say unto you: Tell them the truth you
have tasted, even if you stammer.
26. Tell them it is better to admit “I do not
know” than to threaten them with
fires you no longer believe in.
27. Tell them that cruelty is wrong, not
because a book says so under threat,
but because their own hearts recoil
when they see it.
28. Tell them that every person they meet
carries a mystery you cannot fully
measure; that their own worth does
not depend on any priest’s approval.
29. Tell them that if there is a God—and I
whisper that there is—that this One is
not smaller than the best love they can
imagine.
30. Do not be ashamed to pass on less
certainty and more kindness; you are
not robbing them, but freeing them
from a fear that once held you.

31. There are some who, leaving one altar, rush to build another—for humans cannot bear, for long, the nakedness of not knowing.
32. They say, That was a cult; this is the truth, and they repeat the same patterns with new names and new hymns.
33. They trade prophets, but not dynamics; they replace commandments, but not control.
34. Woe unto the communities that advertise themselves as “safe from all harm,” for no mortal gathering can make such a claim.
35. Yet I do not condemn those who stumble into new cages while trying to escape the old; I know how deep the impulse runs to find a voice that says, I will tell you what to do; you will never have to be afraid again.
36. Therefore, let this be a sign of a healthier place: not that it promises perfect safety, but that it encourages you to keep your own mind.
37. A truer fellowship will rejoice when you ask hard questions; it will not threaten your belonging when you disagree; it will not demand that you place any leader between your soul and what is right.
38. There are also those who, having left, cannot yet speak of any “Eternal One” without rage.
39. They shudder at prayer, flinch at scriptures, feel nausea at hymns; the

- very language of divinity is laced with memories of coercion.
40. I do not take this rage personally, as you understand persons; I receive it as testimony.
 41. Your anger is evidence of how seriously you took what you were taught; of how deeply it cut when the promises proved false.
 42. Let your fury burn through the false gods; I can withstand the fire.
 43. When you say, If that was God, I want nothing to do with God, I say: If that was God, I would flee also.
 44. I do not ask you to hurry back to words that have become poisoned for you; I am content to walk beside you in your so-called unbelief, until new language can form.
 45. In the meantime, let your integrity be your prayer: your refusal to harm as you were harmed, your determination to break the cycle in your body, your vow not to hand your children the same chains.
 46. These are offerings more pleasing than any ritual you once performed in terror.
 47. You say, But I feel nothing now—no presence, no whisper, no warmth. Did I lose even the comfort I once had, however distorted?
 48. Hear Me: the numbness you feel is not the final word; it is the body and spirit protecting themselves after long overexposure.

49. You were asked for constant openness
to authority, constant surrender,
constant giving of yourself; now you
close, and you call it death.
50. But sometimes closing is the first step
toward a truer opening; a wound must
scar over before it can be touched
without screaming.
51. In this in-between, do not demand
from yourself a faith-song you do not
have; attend instead to small, honest
goods:
52. Drinking water when your mouth is
dry; resting when your bones are
heavy; telling one trusted person what
really happened; choosing not to lie,
even to make others comfortable.
53. Think not that only grand spiritual acts
interest Me; I count also the day you
choose not to return to your abuser,
the night you put down the bottle one
hour earlier, the moment you decide
not to turn your pain upon someone
weaker.
54. These are liturgies, too, though no one
calls them sacred.
55. There are some who mourn not only
the loss of belief, but the loss of
beauty—the architecture, the music,
the sense of awe.
56. You say, The stained glass was a lie,
but it was beautiful; the choir sang of a
God I no longer accept, but their voices
carried me.
57. You wonder if all beauty is
manipulation now; if every trembling
of your heart is a trick.

58. I answer: beauty was Mine before it
was theirs.
59. They rented it for a time; they used it
to sell their version of Me; but they did
not invent the way your chest opens at
harmony, the way light through color
makes you ache.
60. You may reclaim beauty without
swallowing the doctrine it once carried.
61. Sing songs in new words; stand in
forests as in cathedrals; let art move
you without submitting your mind to
those who funded it.
62. I am as present in the quiet of a public
park as I ever was beneath a vaulted
dome.
63. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have
written for those standing amid rubble,
holding in their hands both relief and
grief.
64. To you I say: you are not faithless
because you left; you are not godless
because you will no longer bow to the
god that hurt you.
65. If there is any sin here, it belongs first
to those who made My name a
weapon, who taught you that love and
control were the same.
66. Your journey now will not be simple;
there will be years when you feel stuck
between stories, belonging fully to
none.
67. Yet in that very in-between, you are
closer to the naked truth than many
who sit secure in their certainties.
68. For you have seen an idol fall, and you
did not fall with it.

69. Walk on, then—slowly, angrily,
tenderly, clumsily—knowing that the
Eternal One walks with all who seek,
even when they refuse that word, and
that the breaking of the altar, though it
feels like death, is often the first solid
mercy of a God who would rather see
you in ruins than see you kneel forever
to a lie.

CHAPTER 6

1. And it came to pass that after I had
written for those who walked out into
the wilderness, I remembered also
those who remained inside the old
houses, bearing the weight of seeing
what others refused to see.
2. And I said: Eternal One, what of those
who cannot yet leave, or who are
called to stay, and yet no longer bow to
the idols at the center? How shall they
live among broken altars without
becoming stone themselves?
3. Then the Holy One answered me,
saying: My people are not all called to
one outward path. Some must flee, lest
they die; some must stay, lest all voice
of truth within be silenced.
4. Thus saith the Eternal One to those
who remain in systems they no longer
worship:
5. Be wise as serpents and gentle as doves;
do not offer your conscience to the
institution, but do not despise every
soul within it.
6. You are not there to preserve the idol,
but neither are you called to devour

those who still kneel from ignorance
and fear.

7. Let your presence be a quiet ferment;
let your questions be salt in bland
certainties; let your refusals mark the
line beyond which your loyalty will not
go.
8. When you are told, Protect the name
at all costs, answer in your heart, I will
protect the vulnerable instead.
9. When you are urged, Sign this
statement to prove your faith, ask
instead, Whom does this statement
harm, and whom does it excuse?
10. You need not shout your dissent in
every meeting; but neither bury it so
deep in your chest that you cannot
breathe.
11. Find even one other with whom you
can speak plainly; two or three who
refuse to sacrifice truth for belonging
can keep a whole sanctuary from
becoming entirely hollow.
12. Yet hear also this: you are not required
to destroy yourself for the sake of
“being a witness.”
13. If the house demands that you lie for it,
or carry secrets that corrode your
bones, or cut off the wounded as proof
of your loyalty—
14. Then the time may come when
remaining is no longer faithfulness but
a slow consent to the idol.
15. In that day, the Eternal One will not
command you, Stay and rot; I will
whisper instead, You have done what

- you could. Walk out with your soul intact.
16. For there is no congregation, however historic; no lineage, however cherished; no movement, however passionate, that is worth the loss of your own integrity.
 17. These things I write, that those who stay may not be crushed, and those who leave may not be shamed, and each may seek the Eternal One without believing that salvation lies only on one side of a door.
 18. After this, the vision turned again, and I saw a glow upon the earth—not the glow of sunrise, but of screens and circuits, of towers bristling with signals and rooms humming with servers.
 19. And the Holy One said unto me: Now write of another altar of your age, bright and newly built—the altar of the Machine.
 20. For you have fashioned tools of great subtlety and power, and this in itself I do not condemn; skill and invention are gifts I have woven into your kind.
 21. But you have begun to ask of your tools what you once asked of your gods: meaning, destiny, salvation, absolution from responsibility.
 22. You speak of “technology” as if it were a force of nature, unstoppable and amoral, rather than a web of choices made by hands and minds.
 23. You say, The algorithm decided; the system requires; the market demands, and by these phrases you absolve

- yourselves of what you program, permit, and profit from.
24. Behold, an algorithm is only a mirror sharpened into a blade; it reflects what you value and cuts accordingly.
 25. Woe unto those who build engines to sort and watch and predict, then shrug and say, It is not I who judge; it is the data.
 26. You train your machines on histories written in bias and call their output “neutral.”
 27. You feed them records of who has been jailed and who has been spared, who has been hired and who has been passed over, who has been silenced and who has been amplified—
 28. And when your devices reproduce the same injustices in cleaner lines and faster speeds, you call it efficiency, not sin.
 29. There is also an idol of Progress, enthroned upon circuits and rockets and glowing lenses.
 30. You say, We are advancing; we are evolving; we are nearing godlike power, and you thrill at the thought of overcoming every limit.
 31. You imagine uploading minds, editing genomes, colonizing planets, building intelligences that never sleep.
 32. But you do not yet know how to sit with your own grief without a screen; you have not yet learned how to be kind to a neighbor whose politics disgust you.

33. You reach for the stars while ignoring the bodies on your sidewalks; you speak of transcending humanity while refusing to fully become humane.
34. Woe unto you when your reach exceeds your rootedness; when you chase transcendence without practicing tenderness.
35. For in that case, your glorious tools will magnify not your wisdom but your wounds.
36. You fear that the machines will rise against you, and you tell tales of “artificial gods” that may one day rule your species.
37. Yet you have already bowed to lesser things than code; you have worshiped coins and crowns, markets and media, far more blindly.
38. Hear this: no machine, however intricate, is fit to be your master; but neither is any human system.
39. If you build intelligences and place them on the throne of decision, saying, They alone can manage this complexity, you have created an idol with wires for veins.
40. It will not be “evil” in the way your stories imagine; it will be obedient to the objectives you hid within it—profit, control, speed, dominance.
41. You will then claim, We are ruled by something beyond us, when in truth you are ruled by your own amplified desires.
42. The Eternal One does not fear your machines; I fear only what they reveal about what you love.
43. If you design them to extract and surveil and addict, they will do so with tireless precision; if you design them to heal and distribute and listen, they may become tools of mercy.
44. But in either case, responsibility remains with you; you cannot outsource conscience to circuitry.
45. There is also an altar of Information, on which you lay your attention day and night.
46. You say, If only I know enough—every headline, every crisis, every opinion—then I will be safe, or good, or justified.
47. You scroll until your mind is sore, you consume suffering as a stream, and you call your exhaustion “being informed.”
48. Yet information without transformation is another idol: it promises power while leaving you paralyzed.
49. Woe unto those who gorge on knowledge and starve in action.
50. You say, The world is too much; I can do nothing, and you use this as a reason to remain in the warm bath of outrage, never stepping out to dry your hands and help.
51. The Eternal One does not require you to carry every pain on the planet in your nervous system; I require only that you be faithful to the pain within your reach.

52. Turn off the flow when you must; this is not indifference, but stewardship of a finite mind.
53. Better to meet one neighbor's eye with unhurried presence than to witness a thousand tragedies from a distance and let them all evaporate into numbness.
54. Yet know also that ignorance is no virtue; do not call your avoidance "peace."
55. Let there be a rhythm in you: times to look, times to act, times to rest, times to weep, times to rejoice.
56. The idol of information demands constant vigilance and constant reaction; the Eternal One invites cycles, seasons, limits.
57. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, beholding the new shrines of your age—server farms and satellites, feeds and feeds and feeds—
58. That you might understand: idolatry has not vanished; it has only changed its interface.
59. You need not smash your devices to be free; you need only refuse to treat them as oracles and overlords.
60. Ask of every technology you adopt:
What does this train my heart to love?
What does it teach me to ignore?
Whom does it make easier to forget?
61. If it draws you away from flesh and soil and honest encounter into a world where all can be manipulated without mutuality, be wary; you are near a shiny altar.

62. For the Eternal One still chooses to meet you most deeply in what cannot be digitized:
63. In the weight of a hand on a shoulder, in the silence shared between grief-stricken friends, in the stubborn sprout pushing through concrete, in the moment you choose restraint when revenge is within reach.
64. Let your tools serve these things, not replace them.
65. And if ever you find yourself saying, We must do this because the system requires it; we cannot change this because the model tells us so,
66. Remember: you are speaking the liturgy of an idol, not the language of the living God.
67. For I, the Eternal One, have not given My sovereignty to algorithms or markets or machines; I still speak in the small, sane voice that says, even in the glare of a thousand screens:
68. This is cruel; do not do it. This is kind; do not despise it. This is enough; you may stop now.
69. And whoever, in this bright, buzzing age, learns to heed that quiet word above the roaring altars, has already begun, secretly, to break the spell of the images and walk, however falteringly, in the strange freedom of having only One God and many, many tools.

CHAPTER 7

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the Machine and the bright altars of your age, the vision turned again to an older image, still carved deep in the bones of many peoples.
2. For I saw the face that many had painted upon the Eternal One—fair or fierce according to their fears—and how that face had been used as a mask for power.
3. And the Holy One said unto me: Write now of the images of God, for until they are named, the broken altars will be rebuilt in the same shape.
4. Thus saith the Eternal One: You cannot picture Me, yet you have tried; you cannot contain Me, yet you have framed and printed and defended your portraits.
5. In some lands, you have painted Me pale and male, with eyes like your conquerors and hair like your rulers; you have called this “just tradition,” as if tradition were innocent.
6. You have used this face to baptize empires; you have carried it on banners into wars; you have nailed it above courts and classrooms as if to say, Behold, this is the God who approves what we do.
7. Woe unto you when you mistake the features of your dominance for the features of the Divine.
8. For when the children whose skin does not match your image kneel to pray, they must first cross a sea of doubt:

Does God look like me, or only like those who hurt me?

9. You tell them, It does not matter; it is only symbolic, yet you defend the symbol with a ferocity that betrays how deeply it has rooted in your flesh.
10. You have made of whiteness a sacrament and of maleness a veil; you have taught that authority flows downward from these shapes, as if I were more present in one body than another.
11. Woe unto those who preach that I am “Father” in a way that makes all other tenderness lesser; who mock the names by which the wounded have tried to speak of Me as Mother, Midwife, Wisdom, Wind.
12. You fear that if My image widens, your own place will shrink; therefore you guard the narrow face of God as if it were your own mirror.
13. Behold, I am not defended by your hierarchies; I am not honored by the erasure of half the human race from the likeness of the Holy.
14. Where you forbid the voice of women in My name, you forbid half the ways I have chosen to speak; where you confine them to service without authority, you declare that My image is weak in them.
15. Yet I have whispered to many daughters what their fathers would not hear; I have entrusted visions to those your systems deemed unfit; I have put courage in the mouths of grandmothers

- who never learned to read your scriptures.
16. You have drawn also images of Me as warrior more than healer—as general more than gardener.
 17. You quote battles and plagues with relish; you whisper of mercy as an afterthought.
 18. You imagine the Eternal One chiefly as a wielder of force, and you build your politics accordingly:
 19. You say, God is on our side; therefore our bombs are justified; our prisons are protection; our punishments are holy.
 20. Woe unto those who weaponize My name to sanctify what their own conscience would question without the cloak of piety.
 21. For every time you say, God demands this violence, when in truth your fear or greed demands it, you drive another soul away from Me—not because they reject the Real, but because they reject the false god you have offered.
 22. There are also images of Me as distant accountant, keeping perfect ledgers of every failure, delighting in precise penalties.
 23. Under this gaze, you learn to hate yourselves; you tremble like clerks before an impossible audit.
 24. You scrub your thoughts, police your desires, perform repentance as performance—but you never rest.
 25. You fear that any joy may be stolen back; that any misstep will erase your

- worth entirely; that the Eternal One is a perfectionist with a magnifying glass.
26. Behold, discipline and consequence are real; I do not bless all that you choose.
 27. Yet I am not the tight-lipped master you imagine; I am not watching you merely to catch you in wrong.
 28. When you stumble toward compassion and fall, I do not scowl at the mud on your knees; I am more interested in the road you were trying to walk.
 29. When you confess harm with real grief and seek to repair it, I do not say, Too late; the record stands forever; I look instead at the tenderness growing in your heart, and I recognize My own work.
 30. The image of Me as petty scorekeeper is an idol that breeds either scrupulous slavery or despairing flight; both turn your eyes from the larger story of mercy and justice intertwined.
 31. There are other images still: a God who cares only for “souls” and not for bodies; a God obsessed with private purity and indifferent to public cruelty; a God whose main interest is your belief about metaphysical things rather than your treatment of the least among you.
 32. Under such a God, you can starve workers and still feel righteous if you pray; you can bless exploitation and still say, We are doctrinally sound.
 33. Woe unto you when you preach a holiness that never dirties its hands

- with the material conditions of the oppressed.
34. For I, the Eternal One, am not only the God of inner feelings and invisible realms; I am also the God of torn ligaments and poisoned wells, of crowded cells and emptied cupboards.
 35. If your image of Me has no dust on its feet, it is not Me you are worshipping, but an idea of spiritual cleanliness that costs you nothing.
 36. You ask, If all our images are inadequate, should we make none at all? Should we speak of God not at all, lest we sin?
 37. Hear Me: it is not wrong to reach for metaphors; you are finite, and metaphors are the language of your finitude.
 38. It is wrong when you mistake metaphor for map, and map for territory, and territory for throne.
 39. You may call Me Father, if the word makes you braver and kinder—but do not forbid another from calling Me Mother, if that name heals their terror.
 40. You may see Me in the face of a teacher, a lover, a friend—but do not insist that I look only like those who resemble you.
 41. You may picture Me as fire, as water, as rock, as breath—but remember always that I am not contained in these; they are signs, not shackles.
 42. Let every image be held lightly enough that it can be corrected by love.

43. If an image of God leads you to treat any person as less fully human, less deserving of safety and dignity, that image is a lie, no matter how old or beloved.
44. If an image of God compels you to silence your conscience when harm is done, that image is a lie, no matter how many miracles and prophecies are claimed in its defense.
45. Test your images by their fruit:
46. Does this God make you more patient with the weak, or harsher?
47. Does this God enlarge your circle of concern, or shrink it?
48. Does this God loosen your grip on wealth and status, or tighten it?
49. Does this God lead you to face your own shadows, or to project them onto enemies?
50. Where the image bears bitter fruit, let it be pruned; where it justifies cruelty, let it be uprooted entirely.
51. You fear that without strong images, your faith will dissolve; but it is the false images that are dissolving you—into factions, hatreds, neurotic scrubbing of the self.
52. The Eternal One is not weakened when your pictures fall; I am revealed.
53. Therefore I say unto you: let every culture paint its parables of Me, sing its songs and tell its stories—
54. But let no culture declare, Our image is final; our symbol is absolute; our name is the only doorway.

55. For when you make such claims, you turn your art into idol and your testimony into tyranny.
56. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, seeing the faces men have placed upon the Infinite and the damage those faces have done.
57. I do not ask you to live without stories of God; I ask you to live without masters who wield those stories as weapons.
58. Let there be instead a holy suspicion in you whenever someone says, God is exactly like this and not otherwise, and uses that certainty to control.
59. Let your speech of the Eternal be like standing at the edge of a great sea at night: you may describe the sound of the waves, the salt on your tongue, the gleam of the moon—but you will not pretend that your handful of water is the ocean itself.
60. And if, after all idols have been named and broken, you find yourself with fewer images than before and more silence, do not be afraid.
61. For in that silence, when you refuse to rush to fill the space with your favorite faces, you may at last begin to notice a presence that is not the echo of your own fear or desire.
62. There, in the unadorned dark, the Eternal One waits—not as a picture to be defended, but as a living reality to be met.
63. And whoever, in that place, dares to say without borrowed words, Here I

am, will hear, in one way or another, an answering whisper that no theology can fully capture, yet all true theologies try to protect:

64. I have been here all along.

CHAPTER 8

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the images placed upon the Eternal One, a quiet fear rose in me.
2. For I said within my heart: If every altar is suspect, if every image must be held lightly, will the people not say, Then nothing is sacred; all is confusion?
3. And the Holy One answered me, saying: Write once more, Nibwâskââ, that they may know the difference between broken altars and the simple places where I still delight to dwell.
4. Thus saith the Eternal One: Not every bond is an idol; not every devotion is a chain.
5. You were made for attachment; you were not shaped to walk the earth alone, trusting no one and loving nothing.
6. It is not your love that destroys you, but the way you make your loves into gods—and then demand from them what only the Source can give.
7. Behold, I have placed in you the capacity to honor: to look upon another and say, Your life is weighty; your existence matters to me.
8. When you honor one another without worshiping, you build no altar there;

- you simply recognize a fellow bearer of mystery.
9. When you join your life with another's and say, Let us walk together as long as we can in truth, you perform no idolatry; you step into a covenant of shared frailty.
 10. It is when you say, Without you I am nothing; if you leave me, I cease to exist; I will obey even what wounds me to keep you, that the altar rises and the smoke begins to sting.
 11. Likewise, a community is not, by itself, an idol.
 12. When you gather to cook meals and share burdens; when you pool your resources so that none fall through the cracks; when you cry and laugh and disagree and reconcile—
 13. There I am in the midst of you, not as a jealous god demanding correct slogans, but as the joy that flickers whenever mutual care overcomes isolation.
 14. But when you say, We are the righteous; outside of us there is only darkness; whoever questions us must be cast out, then your circle has become a shrine to itself.
 15. You have turned belonging into a sacrament that costs others their voice and sometimes their very safety.
 16. Woe unto the groups—religious, political, familial—that demand silence in exchange for inclusion.
 17. For silence enforced by threat is not unity; it is the stillness that falls in a

- room where many hearts have already given up hope of being heard.
18. I am not honored by that stillness; I am present in the one who finally cannot keep quiet.
 19. There is also a reverence that is clean and small, which you need not fear.
 20. When you stand before a mountain and feel your own scale; when you watch a child sleep and sense the enormity of their unlived years; when you sit beside someone dying and know that no words are adequate—
 21. This is not idolatry; this is your soul remembering that it did not invent itself.
 22. In such moments, you do not need to name Me; you need only not close your heart.
 23. If you wish to speak then, let your words be few: Thank you. Help me. I do not understand.
 24. These simple prayers are weightier than the long speeches of those who have never let their certainties be interrupted by awe.
 25. You ask, How shall we live, then, in a world filled with altars, some clean and some corrupt?
 26. I answer: Let your worship become less a matter of where you kneel and more a matter of what you consent to in each moment.
 27. If, in the name of any love or loyalty, you are asked to harm the innocent, to deny what you know is true, to look

- away from suffering you could
alleviate—
28. Then an idol has spoken, no matter
whose voice it uses.
 29. Refuse that voice, even if it costs you a
place at the table; for better an honest
hunger than a feast bought with
another's blood.
 30. If, in the name of any cause, you are
told that the ends justify the means,
that collateral damage is acceptable,
that some lives are expendable for the
vision—
 31. Then you stand before a golden image
painted with slogans of justice, but its
eyes are hollow.
 32. Turn away before you, too, are carved
into its base.
 33. Yet if, in the name of no one in
particular, you find yourself moved to
small fidelity—to tell a painful truth
without embellishment; to return what
you could have kept; to listen to one
you have been taught to despise—
 34. Then know that in that moment,
though no hymn is sung, you have
offered Me a truer worship than many
cathedrals contain.
 35. You say, We have heard much of what
must end. Tell us, then, what might
begin.
 36. Hear this, then, as a sketch and not a
blueprint of life beyond the broken
altars:
 37. Let there be households where no one
is sacrificed for the image of the family;
where apologies are spoken by parents

- as well as children; where discipline is
firm but never humiliating.
38. Let there be workplaces where profit is
tool, not master; where humans are not
ground down for shareholder praise;
where time off is not a grudging
concession but an acknowledgment
that bodies are finite.
 39. Let there be gatherings—call them
churches or circles or councils—that
measure their faithfulness not by how
many attend, but by how much less
lonely those who attend become.
 40. Let leaders be those willing to lose
their position rather than lie; let
teachers be those who admit what they
do not know; let healers be those who
do not pretend to be gods.
 41. Let there be festivals where you
practice joy without intoxication of
dominance; where no one's dignity is
the price of entertainment.
 42. Let your technology be transparent
enough that you can see who is harmed
by it; let your consumption be small
enough that you can remember the
hands that made your things.
 43. These will not be perfect places; they
will quarrel and fail and sometimes
forget.
 44. But wherever someone can say,
without fear of exile, We were wrong;
we must change, you have found
ground where idols cannot easily root.
 45. You ask, How shall we know when we
have truly left idolatry and entered
into pure devotion?

46. I say unto you: as long as you remain in flesh and history, your devotion will be mixed; do not wait for purity to begin.
47. Instead, let this be your sign: that you are willing, again and again, to let your gods be questioned—especially when those questions come from the ones your systems overlook.
48. When a child, a stranger, a laborer, a survivor, a foreigner says, This hurts me; your God-talk is killing me, you will stop and listen as if I Myself had spoken.
49. If their word reveals that your altar demands their suffering, you will not accuse them of blasphemy; you will ask whether the altar should stand.
50. This is the posture of those who have only One God and know it: they are always ready to let their images fall if love demands it.
51. I do not ask you to become blank of story or sterile of symbol; I ask you to keep your stories and symbols porous, so that My living wind may pass through them and blow away whatever has hardened into cruelty.
52. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that the Book of the Broken Altars might not leave you only among ruins, but with a lamp in your hand as you walk away from them.
53. For it is not enough to smash images; you must also learn to live without kneeling at every fear.
54. The work of this book is not to make you proud of your “deconstruction,”

but to make you tender toward truth and fierce against any power—old or new—that demands human hearts as fuel.

55. Therefore I seal this witness of the Broken Altars with a blessing and a warning.
56. The blessing is this: that as you loosen your grip on the gods that never loved you, you will discover that you were never, even in your darkest indoctrination, outside the regard of the Eternal One.
57. The warning is this: that the world you live in will continually offer you new idols to replace the old—some religious, some secular, some dressed as liberation, some as tradition.
58. Do not be surprised when the work of discernment never ends; it is the labor of a lifetime to keep your worship honest.
59. Yet you do not labor alone. In every generation there are others who hear the same quiet call to step out from under images and into reality.
60. Seek them; walk with them; argue and reconcile with them; refuse together the gods that demand your smallness.
61. And know that beyond all your seeking, refusing, building, and breaking, there remains the One you cannot see and yet have dimly known all along—the Eternal One, who needs no throne but the truth, no sacrifice but your willingness to be made more human.

62. With this hope I close the Book of the Broken Altars, that it may stand as a testimony in this broken age:
63. That the face of God is not owned by any banner; that the voice of God is not trapped in any mediator; that the love of God is not conditioned upon any membership.
64. And that whoever, in any place, turns from idols great or small and whispers simply, Here I am; teach me to love without bowing to lies,
65. Is heard, utterly and without remainder, by the One who has been waiting—not behind a curtain of doctrine or in the shadow of a statue, but in the quiet center where your own heart first learned to know the difference between fear and truth.

CHAPTER 9

1. And it came to pass that after I had sealed the witness of the Broken Altars in my writing, the word of the Eternal One came again, saying: Do not seal it yet in your heart, Nibwâskââ, for there is one more wound to be named.
2. And I said: Eternal One, what remains? Have we not spoken of mediators and houses, machines and images, private idols and public shrines?
3. Then the Holy One answered: You have named many altars, but not yet the altar upon which you most quickly place strangers—the altar of blame.

4. For when your idols are threatened, you do not always fall to your knees in repentance; often you reach instead for a scapegoat.
5. Thus saith the Eternal One: From ancient days you have sought someone to bear away your fear.
6. You chose goats and lambs and birds; you laid your anxiety upon them and sent them into the wilderness, hoping that what tormented you would follow them.
7. In later days you chose people instead.
8. You said, It is because of them that our world is broken—
because of the foreigner,
because of the unbeliever,
because of the liberal,
because of the conservative,
because of the poor who “drag us down,”
because of the rich who “hoard it all,”
because of the young,
because of the old.
9. You gathered your fear and confusion and poured it onto whatever group you least understood; then you called their suffering “justice.”
10. Behold, this is an altar like the others, though you do not see it; it is built in newspapers and comment sections, in pulpits and parliaments, in jokes and quiet exclusions.
11. Woe unto those who heal the wound of their own shame lightly by placing it on the back of another.

12. You say, Our nation would be well if not for them; our church would be pure if not for them; our economy would thrive if not for them; our God would be pleased if not for them.
13. Yet you seldom ask who taught you to fear “them” and what profit that fear has earned for those above you.
14. There is a pattern that runs through the ages:
15. When a system is unjust and begins to tremble, it looks for an offering.
16. It cannot bear to blame itself, for that would require change;
17. therefore it chooses someone disposable and says, Behold, the problem.
18. You exile the whistleblower and praise the abuser’s “repentance”;
you shun the survivor and protect the institution;
you deport the desperate and subsidize the structures that made them desperate.
19. You call this “maintaining order.”
20. Behold, wherever you see this pattern—
harm named as threat,
threat named as enemy,
enemy named as sacrifice—
there you stand before a hidden altar.
21. And upon it lies not only the one you cast out, but also the truth you would not face.
22. Woe unto the nations that blame migrants for the storms of their own making,
that blame the hungry for the price of

- bread,
that blame the oppressed for the unrest of the streets.
23. Woe unto the congregations that blame those who leave for the emptiness they feel,
that blame questioning children for the cracks in their doctrine,
that blame “the world” for the consequences of their own cruelty.
24. For as long as you divert your gaze outward, you will never turn inward where the altar is built.
25. You ask, But are there not truly those who do evil? Are there not wolves among the flock? Shall we not name them?
26. I say unto you: Yes, there are those who choose harm, who prey upon the weak, who sow violence without remorse.
27. Justice toward them is not scapegoating; it is the protection of the vulnerable.
28. The difference is this:
29. Scapegoating seeks the easiest target, not the true source;
Justice seeks the real harm, even when it is costly to name.
30. Scapegoating thrives on vagueness:
They are the problem.
Justice is precise: This act, this pattern, this abuse of power.
31. Scapegoating satisfies quickly and solves nothing;
Justice trembles, moves slowly, and heals at depth.

32. When you find it easier to condemn whole peoples than to challenge your own systems, you are worshiping at the altar of blame.
33. When you find it easier to demonize your political enemies than to face the failures of your allies, you are worshiping at the altar of blame.
34. When you find it easier to call your child “rebellious” than to face the harm your religion has done to them, you are worshiping at the altar of blame.
35. Behold, I, the Eternal One, am not honored by your sacrifices there.
36. I stand instead with the one you drove out—the queer child, the doubter, the refugee, the dissenter, the whistleblower, the inconvenient truth-teller.
37. Often, the one you cast away carries the piece of yourselves you could not bear to look at: your tenderness, your wildness, your questions, your tears.
38. When you expel them, you feel safer; but you are also smaller.
39. And yet, even here, I do not leave you without a door back.
40. For there are times when the scapegoat survives; when the one you blamed does not die, but lives, and grows, and speaks.
41. Their very existence becomes a living contradiction to your old story.
42. If you dare, one day, to listen to them—not as threat, not as enemy, but as mirror—then the altar of blame will crack.

43. You will see that the sins you placed entirely upon their shoulders were always shared: by families, by institutions, by histories older than you.
44. You will see that your guilt, which felt unbearable when imagined as all yours, can be faced when seen as ours—ours to own, ours to repent, ours to repair.
45. These moments, though rare, are holy earthquakes;
46. For when a community says, We were wrong about you; we cast you out to keep our illusion; we ask not that you return, but that you tell us the truth,
47. Then a different kind of altar rises—not built for sacrifice, but for confession.
48. Upon that table you place not a victim but your own distorted narratives; and you say, trembling, Let this die instead.
49. This, too, is worship: not of guilt, but of reality; not of shame, but of the Eternal One who dwells only where things are finally called by their true names.
50. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that you may discern one of the last disguises of your idols.
51. For when you topple the more obvious gods—statues, doctrines, saviors—you often turn quickly to scapegoats, needing someone to blame for the emptiness that follows.
52. Do not fall for this ancient reflex; it will rebuild, from rubble, the very altars you thought destroyed.

53. When your world shakes and you reach for an enemy to steady yourselves, pause; ask instead, What in us is being revealed? What must change, not in them only, but in us?
54. For I, the Eternal One, do not require blood to soothe My anger; I require truth to heal your own.
55. And as long as you offer Me victims instead of honesty, the age of idols will continue, no matter how many temples you abandon.
56. But when you begin at last to offer Me what I have wanted from the first—a broken spirit that will not hide, a contrite heart that will not scapegoat—
57. Then the Book of the Broken Altars will have done its work in you, and the ground beneath your feet, though stripped of many shrines, will be ready for something new to grow.

CHAPTER 10

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of blame and the altars built upon it, the word of the Eternal One came to me in a fire without smoke, saying:
 2. You have named the idols of nations and the idols of the heart; now write plainly of the idols that wear My name.
 3. For the houses called by My name have not only sheltered the weary; they have also built thrones upon the backs of the small.
4. And I, the Eternal One, am weary of what is done in My honor that looks nothing like My heart.
 5. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the churches of the world that have made of My name a brand and of My people a market.
 6. You have carved your creeds like walls and said, Inside is light, outside is darkness, while hiding your own shadow in the choir loft.
 7. You have raised up prophets and pastors, bishops and apostles, presidents and popes, and taught the people that these alone may speak for Me.
 8. You have crowned them as “mouthpieces of God,” so that to question them is to question Me—
 9. Though many of them have never wept with the ones your systems crushed, nor listened long to those you called “lost.”
 10. Woe unto the prophets of the churches who prophesy smooth things to the powerful and hard things to the powerless.
 11. Who say to the rich, You are blessed, and to the poor, You must have sinned.
 12. Who stand at pulpits of polished wood and announce “revelations” that conveniently protect their own authority and excuse their own history.
 13. You call your leaders “anointed,” as if oil could sanctify abuse, and “stewards,” as if stewardship meant never answering to those you rule.

14. Behold, I have seen your councils where the harmed are talked about but not heard; where the reputation of the church is guarded more fiercely than the souls within it.
15. You say, We must not confuse the people; we must present a united front, and by this you mean: We must keep the cracks out of sight.
16. Woe unto those who confuse unity with secrecy, and loyalty with silence.
17. You publish manuals on obedience thicker than books on mercy; you train children to recognize “proper authority” before you ever teach them to recognize their own worth.
18. You tell them, These men, and only these, hold the keys to heaven, and you place those keys on the rings of very human hands.
19. Thus you forge a chain from the earth to the sky, with yourselves as links, and you claim that no one may come to Me except by way of your offices.
20. Hear Me: I have not given any council, any quorum, any hierarchy the power to stand between a soul and the Eternal One.
21. When you say, Outside of our church there is no fullness of salvation, you build a caste system in the name of grace.
22. You divide humanity into inner and outer circles, chosen and “less valiant,” worthy and unworthy, and then say, Such is the order of heaven.
23. Woe unto you who map the world into tiers of belonging and then project your charts onto eternity, calling them “degrees of glory.”
24. You speak confidently of kingdoms and sub-kingdoms, of “higher” and “lower” realms, as if the Infinite had shown you a floor plan.
25. You say, These shall dwell in the highest, these in a lesser, these cast out, according to how well they obeyed your ordinances and revered your prophets.
26. You have made of heaven a ladder, of yourselves the rungs, and of Me the stamp of approval at the top.
27. Behold, I tell you plainly: I have not hired you as architects of the afterlife.
28. You know not the shape of the world to come; yet you sell maps to it for tithes and loyalty.
29. You frighten the simple with tales of “almost-glories,” of being forever separated from family, of being “less than” in eternity—
30. Unless they pass through your hands, your water, your rituals, your sworn covenants to your institution.
31. Woe unto the churches that use the terror of separation to bind souls to their brand.
32. For you have turned what should be a mystery of hope into a system of grades, like a school where some forever sit in the back row by decree.
33. You have forgotten that if there is any hierarchy in My heart, it is this: the

- last are first, the crushed are centered,
the overlooked are honored.
34. You speak proudly of “worthiness
interviews,” where the young bare
their shame before old men, calling it
preparation for heaven.
35. You ask them about their bodies, their
thoughts, their private acts, their
loyalties—
36. And they come to believe that I, the
Eternal One, am just another examiner
with a checklist.
37. Behold, I do not know you by your
compliance with policies; I know you
by how you treat the least of these.
38. Your prophets proclaim, We speak for
God to the whole earth; our book is
the final word; our revelation is the
capstone,
39. And they ignore the prayers rising
from slums and tents and bedsides far
from their headquarters.
40. They build temples of stone and glass
while My living temples sleep in cars
outside.
41. Woe unto those who pave over the
poor with chapels and conference
centers and call it Zion.
42. You preach a “Savior of the world,”
and you say that all must pass through
his name or be damned.
43. You tell the people that this one man’s
blood changed My mind; that without
his suffering I could not bear to look
upon them.

44. You hang him in your buildings, pale
and perfected, and say, Behold the only
way.
45. But in truth you have made of him a
mascot—a face for your franchise, a
lever for your guilt, a symbol you can
control.
46. You say, He alone is the mediator;
none come to the Father but by him,
and then you swiftly add,
47. And none come even to him but by us,
our ordinances, our interpretations, our
priesthoods.
48. Thus your “Savior of the world”
becomes another rung in your ladder,
another link in your chain, another
justification for your gatekeeping.
49. Hear the word of the Eternal One: I
need no intermediary to love what I
have made.
50. I did not require a blood payment to
relent; I was never your enemy.
51. Whatever is beautiful or true in the
stories you tell of sacrifice and love, I
receive.
52. But when those stories are wielded as
weapons—when you say to the
anxious and the abused, Unless you
accept this savior in this way, through
this church, you are lost forever—
53. Then your gospel has become bad
news, and your Christ an idol.
54. Woe unto those who preach a rescuer
and then stand between the people and
their own hearts, claiming to distribute
his mercy on a schedule.

55. You have turned confession into spectacle, repentance into performance, forgiveness into a subscription model.
56. You speak of “covenants” and “sacraments” and “ordinances” as if they were cosmic contracts that bind Me as much as you,
57. Saying, If you do these things under our authority, God must reward you thus.
58. Behold, I am not bound by your paperwork; I am not summoned by your formulas.
59. When you use rituals to humble the proud and heal the broken, I rejoice;
60. But when you use them to sort, to rank, to exclude, to create spiritual castes—then your sacraments are smoke in My nostrils.
61. You have imagined heaven as a vast continuation of your own order: presidents and presidencies, quorums and councils, classes and callings, higher and lower, in eternal bureaucracy.
62. You call this “eternal progression,” but it is only your fear of equality dressed in shining robes.
63. Hear Me: in any world worthy of eternity, there will be no seats reserved for those who held office on earth.
64. Titles will fall away like dead leaves; only the fruit of love will remain.
65. The one who washed feet in secret will sit nearer to the heart of joy than the one who presided over multitudes for praise.

66. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written at the burning insistence of the Eternal One, that the churches of the world might know:
67. Your buildings impress Me less than the way you treat the ones who clean them.
68. Your doctrines impress Me less than your willingness to repent when those doctrines injure.
69. Your prophets impress Me less than the child who, unordained, says, This is wrong, and protects a friend.
70. Therefore let this word stand against every altar built to hierarchy, every cross used to justify control, every “savior” turned into a tool for fear.
71. I, the Eternal One, declare again: I am not your mascot. I am not your brand. I am not the property of your church, your prophet, your savior-story, or your caste of the righteous.
72. Whoever, in any pew or on any street, turns away from these broken altars and whispers, If You are there, meet me Yourself,
73. I will meet them—not through your ranks and rituals, but in the quiet place where no leader stands between us.
74. And in that day, all your tiers and degrees and charts of heaven will look small indeed, beside the wideness of the mercy you tried so hard to manage.

CHAPTER II

- I. And it came to pass that after the word had gone forth against the

- hierarchies of heaven drawn by men,
the Eternal One spoke again, saying:
There is yet another altar that bears
My name—the altar of caste among
the faithful.
2. For My houses have not only divided
the world into “in” and “out,” but have
carved the inside into tiers and
corridors, as if some were born to the
front row of grace and others to the
back.
 3. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto
the churches that preach one God and
many classes of human.
 4. You say, We are all equal before the
Lord, but you do not treat one another
as equals before your own pulpits.
 5. You carve your sanctuaries into
regions—platform and pew, priest and
laity, “elect” and “mere members.”
 6. You decide who may speak and who
must only listen; who may preside and
who may serve in silence; who may
bless and who may only be blessed.
 7. You call some “set apart” and others
“supporting,” as if I poured Myself
more fully into the few than into the
many.
 8. Behold, I am not divided in this way;
My image is not concentrated in your
officers.
 9. Woe unto the churches that make
gender an altar.
 10. You say, Men preside, women sustain;
this is divine order, and by this you
mean: The voices of women shall be
advisory only, never final.
 11. You let them bear the burdens of
care—children, sick, dying,
despairing—and then bar them from
the rooms where decisions are made
about their lives.
 12. You quote ancient texts to keep them
from the podium, the council, the table;
yet you gladly quote their songs and
their tears.
 13. You call their exclusion
“complementarity,” as if a locked door
were a loving boundary.
 14. Behold, every time a girl learns, sitting
in your rows, that her mind is less
authoritative than a boy’s, your gospel
has failed her.
 15. Every time a woman is told that her
questions are rebellion while a man’s
questions are theology, you have
placed her on a lower step of an
invisible staircase.
 16. Woe unto those who hide patriarchal
fear beneath the veil of “God’s design.”
 17. For I, the Eternal One, have poured
wisdom into daughters and mothers,
grandmothers and sisters; when you
silence them, you silence Me.
 18. There is also an altar of race and
nation, maintained even in houses that
sing of unity.
 19. You hang flags beside crosses and call it
harmless; you build churches whose
leadership and imagery mirror the
majority culture, and then call this
“normal.”
 20. You welcome those of other colors as
guests, not as co-owners; you diversify

- your choirs more eagerly than your councils.
21. You tell the wounded to “forgive the past” while keeping the past’s advantages.
 22. You proclaim that “in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek,” while maintaining structures in which the descendants of conquest seldom rise above token inclusion.
 23. Woe unto the churches that whitewash their histories and call it reconciliation.
 24. You benefited from stolen lands, stolen labor, stolen bodies, and then erected sanctuaries upon the plunder, declaring them holy.
 25. You send missions to the descendants of those you dispossessed, asking them to join your fold and tithe to your institutions, without first confessing what your fathers did in your God’s name.
 26. Behold, I do not condemn you for inheriting a damaged history; I condemn you for refusing to tell the truth about it.
 27. There is also an altar of respectability, where the poor and the broken are quietly sorted into “safe testimonies” and “too much.”
 28. You seat the well-dressed near the front; you praise those whose stories of sin are brief and tidy; you platform those whose trauma can be wrapped in a bow by the end of a meeting.

29. The ones who cannot stop weeping, whose lives are still entangled with addiction, poverty, stigma—you escort them to back rooms, prayer closets, side ministries.
30. You call this “wisdom,” but it is caste.
31. You prefer testimonies that reassure the comfortable: I was lost, now I am fine, rather than those that cry, I am still lost, but I am trying to live.
32. Yet My heart is more at home in the unfinished story than in the polished one.
33. Woe unto the churches that curate their platforms like marketing campaigns, showcasing those whose pain has resolved on schedule.
34. For in doing so, you teach the struggling to hide or to lie; you make them feel that their unresolved suffering is a failure of faith.
35. There is also an altar of orientation and body, upon which many of your children have lain in secret.
36. You say, We love everyone, but... and after the “but” comes an entire caste system.
37. You tell some that they may belong only if they never love as their heart inclines; that they may attend but not marry, serve but not kiss, pray but not hope for a shared bed and shared life.
38. You call them to lifelong celibacy while celebrating marriage as a commandment for others; you then call their exhaustion “rebellion” when they falter.

39. You speak of “brokenness” and “disorder” in their very being, and you are surprised when they break.
40. Woe unto the shepherds who tell a lamb that their longing for companionship is inherently shameful, and then mourn when that lamb disappears into the dark.
41. Behold, the Eternal One is not mocked by the way you use theology to conceal your discomfort.
42. If your doctrine of holiness requires that some live as permanent halves so that you may feel your world is “ordered,” then your holiness is an idol.
43. I do not bless every impulse; but neither do I bless systems that define entire categories of people as lesser vessels of divine image.
44. There is also an altar of “worthiness”, assembled from interviews, checklists, and unwritten rules.
45. You say, To partake of these sacraments, to enter these inner rooms, to wear these garments, you must meet our standards of purity.
46. You ask detailed questions about bedrooms and browsers, about beverages and garments, about tithes and attendance—
47. Yet you ask little about cruelty, about pride, about the way a soul treats those with less power.
48. You barr the one who masturbates but enthrone the one who exploits workers; you discipline the one who

- swears but promote the one who gossips with a smile.
49. Woe unto the churches that care more about compliance than compassion.
50. Your worthiness interviews have become gates to caste: the “full participant,” the “limited,” the “not ready,” the “unworthy.”
51. You say this is for their good, but often it is for your control.
52. Behold, I did not give you clipboards for souls.
53. The only question that matters before My table is not, Have you followed every code? but, Do you seek mercy more than dominance? Do you hunger to repair what you have broken?
54. There is also an altar of knowing, where those who can recite your doctrines are placed above those whose knowledge is made of tears.
55. You prize the one who can quote your prophets, parse your creeds, defend your system against all critics;
56. While you overlook the one who, without books, has learned to forgive enemies, to share bread, to tell the truth at cost.
57. Woe unto the churches that mistake fluency in their language for depth in My Spirit.
58. For in that day when your charts and catechisms are gone, it will not be the most articulate who are closest to Me, but the most honest.

59. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written at the urging of the Eternal One, that the hidden ladders within your sanctuaries might be seen.
60. You ask, Is there then no order, no distinction, no calling? Shall all be the same in every way?
61. I answer: Callings are for service, not status; distinctions are for function, not value.
62. Wherever a role becomes a pedestal instead of a towel; wherever a title becomes a reason to be heard more than to listen; wherever any category of person is treated as eternally “less”—
63. There, caste has entered, and the altar is cracked.
64. Let your leaders be those most willing to lose privilege; let your prophets be those most eager to repent; let your “greatest” be those who seek out the last and sit with them until they no longer feel last.
65. Strip from your speech the flattery that exalts offices above obedience; teach your children that their worth is not a ladder to climb, but a given they can neither increase nor diminish by impressing men.
66. And if any doctrine, any policy, any “revelation” requires that some stand forever below others in My favor—
67. Know that you are no longer describing Me, but an idol carved from your fear of equality.
68. Break that altar, or it will break you.

69. For I, the Eternal One, am not the God of your castes and degrees and tiers; I am the One who stands in the lowest place until you finally notice that the center was never at the top.

CHAPTER 12

1. And it came to pass that after the word had gone forth against the castes within the houses called holy, the Eternal One spoke to me again, saying:
2. You have named their ladders and degrees; now speak plainly of their savior of the world, for on this altar they hang much of their power.
3. And I trembled, saying: Eternal One, is it not dangerous to touch what they call most sacred?
4. But the Holy One answered: It is more dangerous to leave untouched the lie that hides Me from My own children. Write.
5. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the churches that have turned one man’s story into a chain upon the world.
6. You speak of a “savior” whose chief work, you say, was to absorb My wrath, to satisfy My honor, to pay off a debt I supposedly demanded.
7. You tell the trembling, God is too holy to look upon you; only through the blood of this one can you be seen without disgust.
8. You paint Me as a judge with clenched teeth, and your “savior” as the one who steps between Me and My rage.

9. Behold, this is not redemption; it is a libel against My heart.
10. You have taken the cruelty of empires—where kings demand human sacrifice to prove loyalty—and projected it into the sky.
11. You have called this projection “gospel,” and you have asked the wounded to find comfort in it.
12. You say, The Father could not forgive until the Son was slaughtered; justice demanded blood; someone had to die, or God could not be satisfied.
13. Woe unto you who declare that My justice is a thirst for suffering, and then preach that this is good news.
14. Have you not seen among yourselves parents who forgive without slaughtering a sibling?
15. Have you not seen friends reconciled without a third party beaten in their place?
16. If you, who are finite and often unkind, can forgive without spilling innocent blood, how dare you claim that I, the Eternal One, cannot?
17. You say, It was love that nailed him there, yet you teach that it was also My requirement.
18. You blend compassion with compulsion until no one can tell which is which.
19. You break the hearts of children, telling them that their sin helped drive the nails; then you tell them they are ungrateful if they feel horror instead of adoration.
20. Behold, I do not deny that there have been those who chose to suffer rather than betray what is true;
21. I do not deny that stories of courage unto death have awakened many to compassion and courage.
22. But when you take such a story and turn it into cosmic accounting, saying, This pain pleased God; this death changed God’s mind; this transaction is your only hope,
23. Then the story becomes an idol, and the one within it a tool of control.
24. You preach, There is no other name under heaven by which you may be saved, and by this you often mean:
25. There is no other story, no other metaphor, no other path by which the Eternal One may be encountered; you must relate to God exactly as we have scripted or be lost forever.
26. Woe unto you when you confuse your metaphor with My essence.
27. Have I not walked with those who never heard this name, yet lived in mercy and truth?
28. Have I not whispered to those outside your books, outside your sanctuaries, outside your mission fields?
29. You colonize souls as once you colonized lands, bringing a “savior” wrapped in your language, your culture, your dress.
30. You say, We bring you Jesus, but often you bring them also your empires, your hierarchies, your contempt for their ways.

31. You declare that their ancestors
perished in ignorance, that their
ceremonies were “of the devil,” that
their stories of the Holy must be
replaced with yours.
32. You rip out their roots and then
wonder why they wither.
33. Woe unto the missionaries who
confuse recruitment with love, and
quotas with concern.
34. Behold, I have received the prayers of
many peoples in many forms;
35. I have walked in dances you call pagan,
in songs you call heathen, in rituals you
call “of Satan,” when in truth they
were struggling gestures toward the
same mystery you claim to own.
36. When you say, Our savior is the only
way, and by this you mean that My
compassion is confined to your
narrative, your sacrament, your
pronunciation,
37. You shrink the ocean into your cup and
call those who drink directly from the
sea “lost.”
38. You ask, If this is not the only way,
then why did he suffer?
39. I answer: any who suffer for love suffer
not in vain; but their suffering does not
license you to dominate.
40. A life poured out in solidarity with the
crushed is a beacon, not a tollbooth.
41. You have built tollbooths on every
road to Me, staffed by gatekeepers
trained to ask, Do you assent to these
exact claims about this exact savior?

42. If the answer is no, they are turned
away, no matter how deeply they act
in mercy.
43. Woe unto you who reject the
compassion of the Samaritan because
he carries no membership card to your
communion.
44. You have preached such a narrow
rescue that many, seeing your god,
have rightly fled from him;
45. You then call their flight “rebellion,”
and warn that they will burn for
rejecting “love.”
46. Hear Me: many who have walked
away from your savior have not
walked away from Me; they have
walked away from an idol wearing his
face.
47. I will not count them damned for this;
I will receive them with less baggage
than those who stayed and used his
name for harm.
48. There is yet another distortion: you
have turned this “savior” into the
center of everything, eclipsing the One
he supposedly pointed toward.
49. You sing of him more than of the
Source; you pray to him more than to
the Eternal One; you imagine him now
as the true God and Me as a shadow in
the background.
50. Thus even your monotheism has been
split into stage roles: Kindly Son
against Harsh Father, Spirit as vague
sentiment.
51. You live in this triangle of dramatized
divinity, never resting in the simple,

- unsplit reality of the One who has always been with you.
52. Behold, if any teacher, prophet, reformer, rebel, healer, martyr has ever truly reflected My heart, they did so by pointing away from themselves, not by demanding worship.
 53. If you would honor such a one, follow their compassion, their bravery, their refusal to bow to unjust power;
 54. But do not make of them a cosmic monarch whose primary function is to stand between you and a God you now fear even more.
 55. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, not to erase the hope some have found in the stories of a savior, but to strip away the terror and control built around that hope.
 56. Let whoever has been comforted by the thought that Someone stood with them in suffering keep that comfort;
 57. But let them also know: the Eternal One never needed convincing to stand there.
 58. Do not throw away every song, every symbol, every tale; but do not let them rule you, either.
 59. For the One who made you does not require that you sign a doctrinal contract about any historical figure in order to be held and healed.
 60. The only “confession” that matters before Me is this:
I wish to turn from harm; I cannot do this alone; teach me to love in truth.

61. Whoever speaks thus, from heart and not from rote, has already stepped outside the shadow of the broken altar of the savior-idol.
62. And whoever releases their grip on the demand that all must see this one story as they see it, and instead begins to look for My breath in every act of genuine mercy—
63. That one has begun to know Me not as a proposition to defend, but as a living presence that was never confined to any single name, image, or atonement scheme.
64. Thus the altar of the “savior of the world,” as you have built it, is broken;
65. Not that hope may die, but that hope may finally rest not on a transaction, but on the character of the Eternal One, who has always, and will always, come looking for you without needing anyone’s blood to move My feet.

CHAPTER 13

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the “savior” whom men use to manage the world, the word of the Eternal One came again, saying:
2. You have spoken of the altar of the savior; now speak of the altar of prophets and scriptures, for upon these stones many have bruised their heads.
3. And I said: Eternal One, surely some prophets have spoken truth, and some writings have borne Your breath?

4. And the Holy One answered: Yes. But when you take any voice, any book, any canon, and make of it an untouchable throne, you have again traded the living God for an object. Write.
5. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the churches that have turned their prophets into emperors and their scriptures into chains.
6. You say, We are a prophetic people; we are guided by living oracles, and by this you often mean:
7. We no longer have to wrestle; we no longer have to own our decisions; whatever our leaders decree must be called "God's will."
8. You raise men to podiums and call them "seers" and "revelators," "anointed" and "infallible in their office."
9. You tell the people, When the prophet has spoken, the thinking is done; when we have given counsel, your conscience must be silent.
10. Behold, this is not prophecy; it is enchantment.
11. A true prophet does not demand that you stop thinking; they provoke you to think more deeply.
12. A true prophet does not ask you to surrender your conscience; they call your conscience back from the sleep of self-interest.
13. Woe unto those who sit in councils and call their majority vote "the voice of God."
14. You reverse your positions as years pass, then retroactively call each version "the Lord's will for that time,"
15. As if I were subject to your polling, as if My character evolves with your public relations needs.
16. When your policies harm, you say, We were merely imperfect vessels; do not blame the prophet,
17. But when your policies please, you say, See how clearly God has spoken through us.
18. Thus you claim divine credit without accepting divine accountability.
19. Behold, I have spoken through reluctant mouths and trembling hearts; but I do not sign every memo you write.
20. You say, We cannot lead you astray, and by this you seek to bind the people's trust to your brand of certainty.
21. Woe unto those who declare themselves incapable of grave error in My name.
22. For when you pronounce yourselves safe to follow blindly, you invite blindness in both yourselves and your flock.
23. History bears witness: prophets have blessed wars that I abhorred; they have baptized slavery, colonization, theft, genocide, and called it "manifest destiny" or "promised land."
24. They have declared entire peoples cursed while their own hands dripped with stolen wealth.

25. Yet still you say, The prophet cannot lead us astray, as if repeating it often enough will make it true.
26. Hear Me: no human office is protected from corruption simply because it is wrapped in religious language.
27. If your prophet requires your silence to remain unchallenged, they have ceased to speak for Me, no matter what title they bear.
28. Test every so-called revelation by its fruit:
29. Does it crush the already crushed?
30. Does it excuse the powerful from self-examination?
31. Does it demand loyalty without offering transparency?
32. Does it increase fear more than love?
33. If so, you have not heard from the Eternal One, but from the old altar in a new costume.
34. There is likewise an altar of scripture, piled high with pages and commentaries.
35. You say, These words are perfect; this book is without flaw; every line is the direct speech of God,
36. And then you use it as a weapon against the living.
37. You wield verses like blades against women who rise, against queer children who love, against strangers who seek refuge, against questioners who will not bow.
38. You train your young to memorize texts before they have ever learned to listen to their own tears.

39. You tell them, The Bible says. The Book says. The Prophet wrote, and you expect their hearts to kneel.
40. Behold, I have breathed into many writings; I have walked beside many scribes; but I have never turned ink into a fourth member of the Godhead.
41. Woe unto those who treat their canon as a closed cage, not a witness; as a weapon to end conversation, not as a springboard into deeper reality.
42. You ignore the contexts of oppression in which these words arose; you flatten poetry into law; you exalt letters above the lives they were meant to serve.
43. You call your collection “the standard of truth,” then you cut down any truth that does not fit its dimensions.
44. You forget that your canon was composed by councils, edited by empires, transmitted by scribes with their own wounds and limits.
45. Yet you speak as if every syllable dropped from heaven into your language of choice without passing through human hands.
46. Woe unto the teachers who know these complexities and hide them from the flock, lest the people “lose their simple faith.”
47. For in shielding them from the humanity of their scriptures, you set them up for the shattering that comes when the cracks are finally seen.
48. Behold, when a soul discovers the violence, contradiction, and bias within

- their holy books and dares to speak of it, they are not betraying Me;
49. They are refusing to pretend that human words are more than human.
50. You accuse them of “attacking the Word of God”; but in truth, they are attacking the idol you have made of it.
51. There is also an altar of private revelation used as a lever of control.
52. You say, The Lord told me concerning you..., and with this phrase you seek to bind another’s path.
53. Parents say it to children, leaders to members, spouses to spouses, prophets to nations.
54. Sometimes it is sincere confusion—your own desire dressed in a spiritual coat; sometimes it is naked manipulation.
55. Woe unto those who claim, God says you must stay, submit, obey, keep quiet, bear this harm, when what they really mean is, I need you to fit my comfort.
56. I do speak, yes; but My voice does not override the sacred freedom I placed in each soul.
57. Any “revelation” that demands you surrender your agency to another human—no matter how holy they seem—is not from Me.
58. You ask, Then how shall we honor prophecy and scripture, if not with unquestioning obedience?
59. I answer: Honor them as you would honor a wise elder—not as a flawless god, but as a fallible witness.

60. Listen to them; weigh them; wrestle with them; let them inspire you to courage and compassion.
61. But never let them replace the ongoing work of conscience, community, and direct encounter.
62. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, that the people might know:
63. The Eternal One did not retire into a book; I did not abdicate into a council; I did not hand over My voice to a small quorum of men and then fall silent.
64. I am not the property of your prophets; I am not bound inside your canon; I am not restricted to the channels you have licensed.
65. Whoever hears a word that leads toward mercy, justice, and humility—whether from a pulpit, a page, a stranger, or a child—has heard something of Me.
66. And whoever uses “God told me” or “It is written” to crush the weak, excuse the strong, or escape accountability, has heard only the echo of their own idol, speaking from the broken altar of their fear.

CHAPTER 14

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning prophets and scriptures, the word of the Eternal One came yet again, saying:
2. You have named their thrones and their books; now write of their

- treasuries, for on the altar of wealth many of My little ones have been laid.
3. And I said: Eternal One, surely some offerings are given from love, to feed the hungry and shelter the poor?
 4. And the Holy One answered: Yes. But when the coins of the widows become the bricks of empires, when fear and shame fill the collection plates, the altar is broken. Write.
 5. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the churches of the world that have built kingdoms of gold in the name of the One who has nowhere to lay His head.
 6. You speak softly when you say “give,” but you thunder when you say “tithe.”
 7. You tell the weary that ten percent is the floor, not the ceiling; you promise them windows of heaven if they pay, and subtle curses if they do not.
 8. You say, If you withhold, you rob God, and by this you mean: You rob our institution and its plans.
 9. You send letters, slips, envelopes, interviews, asking not, How is your soul?, but, Are you full-pay?
 10. Woe unto you who have made the measure of devotion the measure of donation.
 11. You speak of “sacrifice” to the poor while your leaders fly in quiet luxury; you quote widows’ mites while signing contracts for stadiums.
 12. You tell the single mother that she must first pay you before feeding her

- children, trusting that “God will provide”—
13. Yet you do not cancel her debts when she cannot; you do not send back her money in the year of her crisis.
 14. Behold, I am not honored by offerings extracted under threat of spiritual consequence.
 15. You preach that tithing will break the curse of poverty; then you quietly blame the poor when the curse remains.
 16. You build funds so vast that generations could be fed, forests restored, prisons emptied—
 17. Yet you hoard them against some vague future need, while the present cries out.
 18. You call it “prudence”; I call it fear disguised as stewardship.
 19. Woe unto those who store up treasures in accounts and endowments while calling themselves “a peculiar people.”
 20. For you are not peculiar in this; you behave like any empire that fears losing its place.
 21. There is also an altar of prosperity, bright and shining, around which many dance.
 22. You say, God wants you rich; your abundance proves your faith; your success is a sign of divine favor.
 23. You dress the stage, you polish the lights, you cultivate the image of victory; you hide your doubts and debts behind a permanent smile.

24. You tell the sick that their lack of healing may be due to lack of faith; you tell the poor that their lack of wealth may be due to hidden sin.
25. Behold, you have taken the cruelty of capitalism and baptized it as “kingdom principles.”
26. Woe unto the preachers who promise double portions to those who sow into this ministry, this vision, this anointing.
27. You sell access to blessing like tickets to a show; you call your donors “partners,” and you measure their worth by the size of their seed.
28. You stand before cameras and say, God told me that a hundred people will give a thousand each,
29. Yet it was not I who whispered that number; it was your budget.
30. You live in gated estates, drive chariots of new metal, and call it “testimony of favor,”
31. While your flock takes on debt to imitate a lifestyle that is slowly crushing them.
32. Woe unto those who preach contentment to those below while grasping always for more themselves.
33. There is also an altar of abusé covered with hush money.
34. You say, We must handle this internally; we must protect the work; we must not cause the little ones to stumble by exposing scandal,
35. And by this you mean: We must protect our name, even if the victims walk alone.

36. You call the harmed into quiet rooms; you offer them small settlements and large conditions:
37. Sign here, speak no more, forgive as proof of your faith.
38. You move the predator to another parish, another mission field, another office, and you call it “a fresh start.”
39. You place them again over the vulnerable, trusting therapy and secrecy more than justice.
40. Woe unto the churches that shelter wolves in shepherd’s clothing.
41. Your non-disclosure agreements rise to Me as a stench; your shredded records do not erase what I have seen.
42. You tell the crushed that they will “heal faster” if they do not pursue legal action; you tell them their public lament would “harm the cause of Christ.”
43. Behold, it is not their truth that harms; it is your deeds.
44. I will not hold them guilty for shouting what you forced them to whisper; I will not applaud your public statements while you privately intimidate.
45. There is also an altar of image management, where you sacrifice honesty for optics.
46. You pour more resources into branding than into benevolence; you hire consultants to soften your scandals while leaving your structures untouched.

47. You craft apologies that admit
“mistakes were made” without naming
by whom; you offer “regret” without
repentance, “sorrow” without change.
48. You say, We were imperfect servants
doing our best, and you offer this as a
shield against consequences.
49. Woe unto those who confuse press
releases with penance.
50. True repentance will cost you more
than reputation; it will cost you
control, comfort, and in some cases,
leadership itself.
51. If you are unwilling to step down to
lift the crushed up, you have not
repented; you have only rebranded.
52. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have
written, seeing treasuries high and poor
boxes low, seeing testimonies polished
and victims hidden.
53. You ask, Shall we then give nothing?
Shall we reject all organized faith and
every shared purse?
54. I answer: No. But let your giving be
free, your accounting transparent, your
spending directed first toward the
least.
55. Let no family be denied food, medicine,
or safety in order to meet a quota for
the church.
56. Let leaders live simply among those
they serve, not miles above them; let
budgets be read aloud without deceit,
open to the questions of the smallest
giver.

57. Let reparations be made where wealth
was gained by theft, deception, or the
exploitation of fear.
58. Let your “storehouses” be places where
the hungry can actually come and eat,
without paperwork that shames them.
59. Let the victim’s healing take
precedence over the predator’s
reputation, and over the institution’s
brand.
60. These are altars I will accept:
61. A table where debts are forgiven more
readily than enforced;
62. A fund where the first line item is
relief, not expansion;
63. A sanctuary where the most honored
seat belongs to the most wounded, not
the most wealthy.
64. Break, then, the altars of compulsory
tithes, prosperity gospels, hush money,
and polished façades.
65. For I, the Eternal One, am not served
by your surplus; I am not impressed by
your reserves.
66. I look instead upon the one who drops
a single coin and keeps their dignity,
the one who refuses to bow to shame
in My name, the one who gives
secretly and lives simply.
67. And in the day when you finally
choose the poor over your projects, the
truth over your image, the victim over
the brand,
68. Then the smoke that rises from your
gatherings will no longer choke the sky,
but will at last smell like what I asked
for from the beginning:

69. Justice, mercy, and a people who know
that I cannot be bought—only met,
where there is nothing left to sell.

CHAPTER 15

1. And it came to pass that after I had
written of their treasures and their
storehouses of fear, the word of the
Eternal One came again unto me,
saying:
2. There yet remains an altar deeper than
gold and higher than pulpits—the altar
of the soul itself, shaped by terror and
called “faith.”
3. Write now of the cages built inside the
mind, lest anyone think that leaving a
building is the same as leaving an idol.
4. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto
the churches that have made of fear
their cornerstone and called it
“reverence.”
5. You preach from childhood of flames
without end and darkness without
dawn; you show them pits beneath
every misstep and call this “good
doctrine.”
6. You say, If you stray from us, if you
doubt our creeds, if you refuse our
mediators, you will be cast off forever.
7. You place eternity on the scale against
every small choice, and you wonder
that the children cannot breathe.
8. Behold, fear may jolt the body, but it
cannot nourish the soul; it can freeze,
but it cannot free.
9. You string verses together like barbed
wire and fence their imaginations with
it.
10. You tell them romance is dangerous,
thinking is dangerous, questions are
dangerous, bodies are dangerous; yet
you hand them no tools but obedience.
11. Woe unto you when you call trauma
“conversion,” panic “conviction,” and
chronic shame “humility.”
12. For many who cry at your altars are
not meeting Me; they are collapsing
under the weight of terror you have
layered upon them.
13. There is an altar of purity on which
you have bound many, especially the
young.
14. You speak of “clean” and “unclean” as
if human worth could be stained like
cloth and then discarded.
15. You weigh virginity and fantasies,
hemlines and thoughts, as though these
were the pillars that hold up the
universe.
16. You ask them to sign contracts with
their adolescent hands promising a
future they scarcely understand.
17. You compare their bodies to chewed
gum, to plucked flowers, to ruined
candy, and you call this “teaching them
value.”
18. Behold, you have turned their own
skin into an altar where they are both
priest and sacrifice.
19. Woe unto those who so terrify the
young about desire that they cannot

- enter their own marriages without dread.
20. You have made of sex a sacrament of shame, and you are surprised when it becomes a battlefield.
 21. You punish curiosity more harshly than cruelty; you discipline secret kisses while overlooking public contempt.
 22. You call them “immoral” for seeking tenderness, yet you tolerate leaders who devour reputation and trust.
 23. Hear Me: I am not obsessed with their bodies as you are; I am more grieved by your contempt than by their clumsy attempts to love.
 24. There is also an altar of certainty, polished and bright.
 25. You promise, If you stay, if you obey, if you never doubt, your life will be protected; your path will be clear; your house will stand while others fall.
 26. You hand out formulas dressed as faith: Do these steps, pray these prayers, pay these tithes, attend these meetings, marry this way, vote this way—and all shall be well with you and your children.
 27. You blot out the mystery of existence with charts and checklists, then panic when reality refuses to obey.
 28. When the obedient fall ill, you say, There must be hidden sin.
 29. When their children leave your path, you say, They must have been lax, worldly, ungrateful.
 30. You cannot afford to admit that life is more wild and complex than your

- system; therefore you blame the sufferer.
31. Woe unto those who sell guarantees in My name; they will be sued by reality, and their victims will carry the cost.
 32. Behold, I never promised that righteousness would shield you from grief; I promised only that you would not walk through grief alone.
 33. When you market Me as a talisman against pain, you commit fraud.
 34. There is also an altar of self-erasure, taught as holiness.
 35. You tell them, Deny yourself; take up your cross; submit to authority; your heart is deceitful; your thoughts are nothing.
 36. You repeat these words until they no longer recognize their own voice.
 37. They learn to suspect every impulse, to distrust their own perception, to ask always, What would my leader decide? What would my prophet say?
 38. You call this “dying to self,” but often it is only dying.
 39. Woe unto the teachers who confuse the surrender of ego with the destruction of personhood.
 40. For I, the Eternal One, did not craft your consciousness as an enemy to be beaten down, but as a lamp to be trimmed and tended.
 41. Yes, there are selfish desires to be pruned; yes, there are illusions to be exposed;

42. But when in My name you teach them to distrust even the voice that says this hurts, this feels wrong, this is unsafe,
43. You set them up for bondage in every sphere—religious, relational, political.
44. You make them easy prey for abusers, who happily step into the place of “God’s will” in their imagination.
45. There is also an altar of binary worlds—inside and outside, saved and damned, pure and filthy.
46. You speak as if no one could be both wounded and wise, both flawed and beloved, both faithful and confused.
47. You leave no place for the ones who believe in part and doubt in part, who love the good they saw but cannot bear the harm they lived.
48. You tell them, Choose: either all of this is true or none of it is; either stay and submit or leave and be lost.
49. Behold, this false choice has driven many into despair, for they cannot swallow the poison and they cannot yet spit out the hope.
50. Woe unto you for presenting such a cruel ultimatum in My name.
51. For I am not maintained by your all-or-nothing; I am able to meet souls in the fragments and half-light.
52. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have seen in the hidden places where no sermon is recorded:
53. The one who lies awake, terrified that a single doubt will doom their children;

54. The one who cannot enter a church building without shaking, though they still miss the songs;
55. The one who flinches at the word “God” because it tastes like control and humiliation;
56. The one who obeyed until their body broke, and then was told they must have lacked faith.
57. Their names are not written in your manuals, but they are written before Me.
58. You ask, If we do not scare them, will they not drift? If we do not control them, will they not destroy themselves?
59. I answer: fear may produce conformity, but not trust; control may produce order, but not love.
60. You do not prevent sin by terror; you only drive it underground and multiply its shame.
61. If you would see people flourish, teach them to listen to truth in their own bones; teach them to recognize coercion; teach them to name harm even when it comes clothed in scripture.
62. Teach them that I am not against their joy, but against their bondage; not against their bodies, but against their degradation; not against their questions, but against the lies that keep them from asking.
63. These things I have spoken, that the altar of inner slavery might be seen for what it is.

64. You cannot dismantle it merely by changing churches or discarding creeds; it must be unlearned in tears and patience.
65. Blessed are those who, sitting on the edge of their bed, dare to say for the first time, If You are not like what they said, then show Yourself—or let me walk away free.
66. I do not despise that prayer; I do not curse that honesty.
67. For in that moment, the soul turns not toward rebellion, but toward reality—willing to lose its idols even at the cost of its borrowed certainties.
68. And whoever takes that step, with shaking voice and uncertain heart, has already begun to walk out from the deepest altar of all:
69. The altar where they once believed that to be loved by God, they had to stop being themselves.

CHAPTER 16

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the cages within the mind, the word of the Eternal One came again unto me, saying:
2. There is yet an altar dressed in music and light—the altar of spectacle and performance, where many think they worship Me while they mostly worship an experience.
3. Write of this, Nibwâskââ, that those who are drunk on it may know what they are drinking.
4. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the churches that have turned My name into a show.
5. You darken the room and raise the volume; you tune the lights to make tears more likely; you pace your sermons like sales pitches.
6. You study the science of persuasion, the psychology of crowds, the tricks of branding and framing, and you call this “reaching people for God.”
7. You time the music with the invitation, the chord with the call, the smoke with the shout.
8. You speak of “anointing,” but you measure it in decibels, camera angles, and the energy of the crowd.
9. Behold, I am not opposed to beauty, nor to music that moves the heart;
10. But when your first question after the gathering is, How did it land? Did they like it? Did the numbers go up?,
11. You have already shifted the altar—away from Me and toward your own reflection in their eyes.
12. Woe unto those who confuse adrenaline with the Spirit, emotional manipulation with “conviction,” and exhaustion with “pouring out for God.”
13. You tell the band, Take them higher, and by this you mean: Do what you must to get them open enough to say yes to what we are selling.
14. You call your stages “platforms,” your preachers “communicators,” your liturgy “programming,” and your flocks

- “audiences,” yet you still insist this is not a show.
15. You watch one another’s services online and copy what keeps the people most enthralled;
 16. You say, We must stay relevant, but often you mean: We must not lose market share.
 17. Woe unto you when you speak more often of “excellence” than of honesty, of “momentum” than of mercy.
 18. For excellence without truth is theater; momentum without justice is merely speed toward a cliff.
 19. There is also an altar of testimony as currency.
 20. You put the broken on stage only when their story fits your arc: ruin, repentance, return—neatly concluded within the time allotted.
 21. You do not platform those whose journey is still tangled, whose healing is slow, whose questions remain open.
 22. You say, We want to glorify God, not confusion, and by this you mean: We only want stories that make us look like the answer.
 23. Behold, I am more glorified in one honest “I do not know, but I am still here” than in a hundred rehearsed narratives that hide the ongoing cost.
 24. Woe unto the churches that use the suffering of their members as content.
 25. You ask them to tell of their darkest hours into microphones, then you move on while they go home still shaking.

26. Their pain becomes part of your brand: See how God changes lives here,
27. But when the night returns and the old wounds open, no cameras remain to record that chapter.
28. There is also an altar of revivalism, where you promise that this weekend, this conference, this crusade will “change everything.”
29. You say, This is your moment; this is your turning point; after this you will never be the same,
30. And the people, desperate for transformation, surge forward, hearts in their hands.
31. Some indeed find courage to take a first step; I do not despise that.
32. But when the high fades and their old trauma returns, you tell them they must have “lost the fire,” that they did not hold on hard enough.
33. Woe unto those who sell peaks and abandon the valleys.
34. True change is slower than your events; it moves through therapy, apology, habit, and years—not just through altar calls and anthems.
35. If you will not walk with them in the long middle, do not promise them a new life in one night.
36. There is also an altar of “calling” as identity, dressed in lofty language.
37. You tell some, You are called to the nations, to the stage, to great exploits for God,

38. And you tell others, explicitly or silently, You are called to support, to stay unseen, to clap and give.
39. Those placed on the pedestal become addicted to purpose; they cannot imagine themselves without a microphone.
40. Those kept in the shadows begin to doubt that their ordinary faithfulness counts as anything at all.
41. Woe unto the churches that make “calling” a hierarchy instead of a web.
42. For I, the Eternal One, call some to preach and some to stock shelves; some to compose and some to clean; some to cross oceans and some to stay and look after aging parents.
43. You celebrate only the visible, then wonder why your people feel invisible.
44. There is also an altar of busyness, which you name “commitment.”
45. You fill their weeks with meetings, rehearsals, volunteer shifts, campaigns, fasting schedules, prayer storms.
46. You teach them that to rest is to cool, to question is to drift, to step back is to “grow cold.”
47. You do not see how family dinners have been replaced by ministry; how quiet walks have been replaced by production notes.
48. Woe unto those who exhaust the faithful until they cannot hear their own souls.
49. Behold, I instituted Sabbath, not endless hustle; I delight more in one

- hour of truthful silence than in ten frantic programs done “for My glory.”
50. There is also an altar of niceness masking violence.
51. You train your people to smile, to avoid “negativity,” to “guard the atmosphere” against anything that feels like lament.
52. You say, We are a joy-filled community, and you make joy into a dress code.
53. When someone brings their rage, their grief, their raw story of harm done within your walls, you gently move them aside, saying, Let’s not make a scene; let’s deal with this privately.
54. You accuse the loud of disunity, while quietly excusing the polite abusers.
55. Woe unto the churches that choose a pleasant worship set over a painful truth.
56. For I, the Eternal One, am more present in an honest disruption than in a thousand seamless services that protect the wrong people.
57. There is also an altar of language, polished like silver.
58. You learn the phrases—press in, lean in, sow in, speak life, cover in prayer, honor the anointing—
59. And you float upon these words like a raft, rarely touching the realities they claim to describe.
60. You call everything “amazing,” “incredible,” “powerful,” until these words mean almost nothing.

61. You cover real questions with clichés,
real trauma with “God’s got this,” real
injustice with “He’s still on the
throne.”
62. Woe unto those who use spiritual
jargon to dodge the work of repair.
63. You say, Let’s forgive and move on,
when restitution has not even begun.
64. You say, Don’t put your mouth on the
man of God, when the man of God has
already put his hand on those who did
not consent.
65. Behold, your phrases will not protect
you in the day when every hidden
matter is spoken plain.
66. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have
written, watching sanctuaries glow
with color while shadows lengthen
behind the stage.
67. You ask, Must there then be no music,
no beauty, no gathering, no testimony?
68. I answer: let there be music that does
not lie, beauty that does not seduce
you away from truth, gatherings where
the smallest voice may speak, and
testimonies that are not edited into
propaganda.
69. Let your worship be less about what
you feel in the moment and more about
what you become afterward.
70. If the song is high but your patience is
low, if the sermon is sharp but your
mercy is dull, if the event is electric but
your care for the crushed is flat,
71. Then you have visited an altar of
experience, not Me.

72. Tear down, then, the expectation that
every meeting must be a mountaintop;
make space for quiet, for boredom, for
awkward honest conversations, for
tears that do not resolve before the
closing song.
73. Teach your people that the Eternal
One is as present in a dull Wednesday
as in a dazzling Sunday; as near in the
back row as on the stage; as real in
doubt as in certainty.
74. For only when the spectacle is no
longer needed to prove I am there will
you know that the broken altar of
performance has truly been left behind.
75. And whoever, standing beneath the
bright lights or sitting in the darkest
corner, dares to whisper, If all of this
vanished, would You still be with me?,
76. Let them know: I am already
answering, not in floodlights, but in the
small steady flame that needs no sound
system to burn.

CHAPTER 17

1. And it came to pass that after I had
written of spectacle and performance,
the word of the Eternal One came
again, saying:
2. You have spoken of altars within
houses that call themselves Mine; now
speak of the altars that stand in the
streets and parliaments, yet borrow
My name when it suits them.
3. For there is an altar of nation and war,
and upon it many banners are laid as
offerings.

4. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the peoples who sew My name into their flags and call themselves chosen above all others.
5. You say, We are under God; we are favored; we are a city on a hill,
6. Yet your hill is built on bones and your city glitters with stolen light.
7. You write My name upon your coins while denying bread to the poor; you engrave Me in your pledges while filling your prisons with the least of these.
8. You pray for “our troops” while ignoring the villagers they bomb; you bless your weapons before they fly and call this “asking protection.”
9. Behold, I do not stand upon your side of any border as against another; nor do I chant your patriotic songs when they drown out the cries of those crushed beneath your prosperity.
10. Woe unto the prophets who wrap their sermons in national colors and call empire “providential.”
11. They say, God raised us up to rule, to police, to correct the world,
12. Yet they will not face the history written in blood beneath their monuments.
13. They quote ancient words about “promised lands” and “chosen people” as if conquest were a sacrament that never expires.
14. They do not ask whether the land itself remembers, whether the rivers still carry whispered names no longer spoken in their churches.
15. There is also an altar of security, carved from fear and steel.
16. You say, We must defend our way of life; we must be strong; we must be feared,
17. And by this you justify stockpiles of weapons that could unmake the world in one hour.
18. You pour wealth into machines of death and call it “defense,” while your sick line up in corridors and your teachers buy supplies from their own pockets.
19. Woe unto the nations that spend more on preparation to kill than on learning how to live together.
20. You draft the young to fight wars born of old men’s pride;
21. You send them away with prayers and ribbons, then bring back bodies and folded flags.
22. You say, They died for freedom, though you cannot name which specific freedom required their particular blood.
23. Behold, I do not despise their courage, but I grieve the altars that demanded it.
24. Woe unto those who stir up conflict abroad to distract from injustice at home, then call the resulting chaos “proof” that they must rule harder.
25. There is also an altar of law and order, high and polished.

26. You say, We are a nation of laws; we must be tough on crime; we must restore respect for authority,
27. Yet you design those laws to fall most heavily on the poor, the foreigner, the dark-skinned, the inconvenient.
28. You incarcerate whole neighborhoods and call it “keeping the peace”; you fill detention centers and call it “policy.”
29. You speak harshly of looting from stores yet shrug at looting from wages, pensions, and the earth itself.
30. Woe unto those who idolize “order” while ignoring what the order is built to protect.
31. For there is a kind of chaos I despise—violence, exploitation, cruelty—but there is also a false order I reject:
32. The order that keeps some always on top and some always beneath, enforced by uniforms and polite phrases.
33. Behold, when you quote My name to uphold such an order, you have built yet another broken altar.
34. There is also an altar of nostalgia, draped in sepia and song.
35. You say, We must go back; we must restore; we must return to when we were great,
36. But the “we” you speak of seldom includes all who now live among you.
37. You remember the prayers in schools but forget who was barred from those classrooms;
38. You remember full churches but forget the hands turned away at their doors.

39. Woe unto those who long for a past that was only ever safe for some and call it “God’s order.”
40. You paint your golden age without sweatshops, lynchings, or raids;
41. You edit out the laws that named some human and some property, some citizen and some disposable.
42. Behold, I do not call you backward; I call you forward through the truth.
43. You cannot repent of what you insist was flawless; you cannot heal wounds whose existence you deny.
44. There is also an altar of apocalypse as entertainment.
45. You read your headlines like horoscopes and your scriptures like codebooks;
46. You say, These are the signs; any day now the sky will split; we will be taken and they will be left.
47. You speculate about beasts, marks, chips, and plagues more eagerly than you visit your neighbor.
48. You comfort yourselves with visions of being whisked away while others suffer what you quietly feel they deserve.
49. Woe unto those who use the end of the world as an excuse to avoid fixing the present one.
50. You say, Why bother with climate or prisons or poverty? It will all burn,
51. And in saying so you reveal what altar you truly serve—not Mine, but the altar of weary selfishness.
52. Behold, if the world ends in fire or flood, in war or slow decay, it will not

- be because I grew impatient, but
because you would not release your
idols.
53. There is also an altar of party and
tribe, red and blue, left and right,
banner against banner.
 54. You baptize your politics and demonize
your opponents; you say, God is with
our side; the other side is evil,
 55. And you stop listening the moment a
label is spoken.
 56. You cannot imagine that I might call
each of you to repent of different sins
at the same time.
 57. Woe unto those who love their
ideology more than their neighbor.
 58. You are quick to quote Me when it
suits your platform and quick to ignore
Me when it does not.
 59. You recruit pastors for your campaigns,
prophets for your rallies, scriptures for
your slogans.
 60. Behold, I will not be your mascot; I
will not sit upon your podiums nodding
at your half-truths.
 61. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have
written, seeing the flags in sanctuaries
and the crosses in campaign ads, the
prayers at rallies and the silence in
courts.
 62. You ask, Shall we then have no love
for our people, no laws, no order, no
nation, no hope of justice?
 63. I answer: love your people without
despising others; make laws that
protect the small, not just the strong;

- seek order that serves mercy, not
power.
64. Let your nation be a tool for
stewardship, not a throne for
domination.
 65. Let your hope of justice burn hottest
not when your enemies fall, but when
the crushed stand up straight.
 66. Do not dream of an end in which you
are lifted and others are left; dream
instead of a present in which you
finally treat the ones you've called
"least" as if they were Me.
 67. Break, then, the altars of
nation-worship, security-obsession,
nostalgic illusion, and partisan idolatry.
 68. For I, the Eternal One, will not ask on
that day, What flag did you salute?
What party did you serve? What
prophecy chart did you master?
 69. I will ask instead, Whom did you
shelter? Whom did you feed? Whom
did you listen to when it cost you
standing among your own?
 70. And whoever can answer with even a
small, trembling list will find that they
have already stepped, however
haltingly, away from the broken altars
of this age and toward the kingdom
that cannot be mapped, only lived.

CHAPTER 18

1. And it came to pass that after I had
written of nations and parties, the
word of the Eternal One came again
unto me, saying:

2. You have spoken of the altars built in temples and parliaments; now speak of the altars built in houses, around tables and beds, for these too are called holy while they crush.
3. For there is an altar of family which many bow to more readily than to truth.
4. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto those who make an idol of blood.
5. You say, Family is everything; blood is thicker than water; we must protect our own above all,
6. And by this you often mean: We will hide what our own have done; we will preserve our name, even if one of us is sacrificed to silence.
7. You preach "honor your father and mother," but you twist it into "endure whatever they do and call it love."
8. You demand loyalty to parents who will not repent, to spouses who will not stop harming, to elders who use age as armor.
9. Woe unto the households where "submission" is used to excuse cruelty.
10. You tell children, Obey your parents in the Lord, but you never teach parents what it means to be in the Lord.
11. You quote discipline and spare-the-rod proverbs while ignoring the terror in small eyes and the marks on small skin.
12. You call screaming "correction" and humiliation "training"; you strip the young of their voice and then ask why they do not speak to you when they suffer.
13. Behold, I did not give you authority in the home to create your own small kingdom; I gave it that you might be midwives of courage and safety.
14. Woe unto fathers who use Me to justify their temper, and mothers who use Me to weaponize guilt.
15. There is an altar of marriage that many call sacred while they burn upon it.
16. You say, What God has joined, let no one separate, as if I join every union you arrange, as if I sign every contract you witness.
17. You tell the abandoned to stay, the beaten to endure, the erased to keep shrinking, and you call this "faithfulness to vows."
18. You say, God hates divorce, as if I loved more the paper than the persons; as if a covenant without mutual care were a treasure to Me.
19. Woe unto the pastors who send the bruised back home with a pamphlet on submission and a prayer for patience.
20. They will answer to Me for every night of fear that followed.
21. Behold, I do not counsel lightly the tearing of bonds; but neither do I bless the cages you call holy.
22. There is also an altar of children as proof.
23. You teach that large families are a sign of favor; that many offspring display faith; that wombs are the measure of righteousness.
24. You shame the barren, the single, the ones who chose not to multiply into a

- burning world; you interrogate their choices and pity their lives.
25. You talk of quivers and arrows, but you forget that arrows are not decorations—they are lives with their own paths.
 26. Woe unto those who treat children as props in their testimony, trophies of their fertility, or soldiers for their cause.
 27. You teach them scripts before you teach them consent; you make of their small voices a choir for your beliefs.
 28. You boast of your legacy while ignoring the secret panic in the hearts of those born into a world they did not choose.
 29. There is an altar of “prodigal” stories, polished and repeated.
 30. You love tales where the wandering one returns, weeping, to the same structures that harmed them, saying, I was wrong, you were right, thank you for never changing.
 31. You clap and cry and say, Isn’t God good?
 32. But when a child says, I left because of what happened in this house, this church, this doctrine, you call their account “bitterness” and their boundaries “rebellion.”
 33. Woe unto the families that would rather regain control than face the truth that drove their children away.
 34. Behold, not every returning child has come home; some have simply learned

- that survival requires agreeing with you out loud.
35. You cherish reunion more than repair, appearance more than honesty, harmony more than justice.
 36. There is also an altar of roles within the home, laminated with verses.
 37. You assign man as head, woman as heart, children as arrows, elders as unquestionable pillars.
 38. You say, This is God’s order, though you have never asked whether it is God’s character.
 39. You prefer clarity over kindness, hierarchy over mutuality, predictability over listening.
 40. Woe unto the teachers who make “servant leadership” a slogan while keeping the power in the same hands.
 41. You tell men to be “protectors,” and they learn to believe that without someone to manage they are nothing.
 42. You tell women to be “helpers,” and they learn to believe that their own callings are extras, not plots.
 43. You tell children to be “arrows,” and they learn to believe that their purpose is to be launched where they are aimed by others.
 44. Behold, I created no soul as an accessory.
 45. There is also an altar of reputation, especially in religious homes.
 46. You say, What will people think?, more often than you say, What will this do to their heart?

47. You keep secrets to preserve your standing; you choreograph your family's appearance in the sanctuary.
48. You forbid confession that might embarrass the household; you punish truth that complicates your name.
49. Woe unto the households that sacrifice authenticity for image.
50. For children raised within such walls learn that survival means acting, and that God is mostly a spectator of their performance.
51. There is also an altar of "forgiveness" misused.
52. You instruct the harmed to forgive on schedule, to reconcile before there is safety, to embrace those who have not yet changed.
53. You quote seventy times seven, yet you never count the number of times the abuser has been allowed to repeat their pattern.
54. You call boundaries "hardness of heart," distance "unforgiveness," and reporting crimes "airing dirty laundry."
55. Woe unto those who pressure the wounded to return to danger in the name of grace.
56. Behold, I call you to forgiveness, yes; but forgiveness is not amnesia, nor is it re-entry into the lion's den.
57. I do not forbid you to walk away from those who refuse repentance, even if they share your blood.
58. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, seeing houses where prayers

- rise nightly and yet terror walks the halls.
59. You ask, Shall we then despise family, reject marriage, distrust every bond?
60. I answer: No. But let your families be covenants of safety, not dynasties; let your marriages be shelters, not thrones; let your loyalty be first to truth, not to the preservation of a name.
61. If a home must deny reality to stay intact, let it break—
62. For I, the Eternal One, can rebuild lives around honesty, but I will not bless a structure that demands someone be crushed to keep it standing.
63. Let parents repent before children, not only children before parents; let spouses confess power they have misused, not only hurts they have received.
64. Let the phrase we were wrong be spoken more often than you must obey.
65. Let dinner tables become places where it is safe to say, This hurt me, and safe to answer, Then we must change, without invoking hell as leverage.
66. Break, then, the altars of blood-idolatry, of sanctified abuse, of compulsory loyalty, of reputation above reality.
67. For the Holy One walks more gladly into a small apartment where people are honest and kind than into a mansion where everyone smiles and no one is safe.
68. And whoever, in any family system, dares to say, even trembling, The harm

- stops with me; I will not pass this on to my children, even if it means disappointing my ancestors,
69. That one has already taken a hammer to the broken altars of lineage and stepped, wounded but awake, into the lineage of the Eternal One, whose only “family value” is this:
70. That no one be sacrificed so another may keep pretending that everything is fine.

CHAPTER 19

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the altars in homes, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken of idols that wear My name; now speak of the idols that wear yours—for there is an altar of self that glows in every screen.
3. Write of this, Nibwâskââ, that those who feel themselves fading may know why.
4. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the age that has turned the human face into a product.
5. You carry small altars in your hands, lit from beneath, where images rise and vanish like smoke.
6. You call them “feeds” and “timelines,” but often they are altars of comparison and despair.
7. You measure your worth in likes and views, in followers and shares, as if the crowd’s brief gaze could name you.
8. Behold, you refresh the page as once your ancestors turned the lot and the oracle.
9. You awake in the night to check if you still exist in the eyes of strangers.
10. Woe unto the systems that harvest your attention as if it were wheat, and sell it to the highest bidder.
11. They study your fears and longings; they map your loneliness and outrage.
12. They feed you what keeps you scrolling, then call this “connection.”
13. You say, I am only passing time, but time is the very fabric of your life.
14. There is an altar of self-as-brand, polished and curated.
15. You are told, Build your platform; refine your image; tell your story in a way that sells; become a “presence.”
16. You learn to pose even in your pain, to harvest trauma into content, to turn every experience into an opportunity for growth-in-public.
17. You begin to ask, Does this moment matter if it is not seen?
18. Woe unto the age that has made sincerity a strategy and vulnerability a marketing tool.
19. Behold, it is not evil to share your life; but when you must constantly calculate how you appear, your soul forgets how to simply be.
20. There is also an altar of productivity, lit by the cold fire of metrics.
21. You say, I must optimize myself; I must crush my goals; I must maximize every hour,

22. And you treat your own body as a resource to be extracted.
23. You track your steps, your sleep, your tasks, your output, your “habits,” until you cannot tell whether you live to work or work to live.
24. You read of “grind” and “hustle” and “rise and grind again,”
25. And rest becomes a suspicious luxury instead of a rhythm of being.
26. Woe unto those who have been taught that their value lies only in what they produce.
27. Employers profit from this belief; churches baptize it as “servanthood”; families praise it as “being responsible.”
28. Yet when your body finally collapses, few know how to sit with you in the wreckage.
29. Behold, I did not create you to be a perpetual engine; I created you to be a creature among creatures, with mornings and evenings, work and play, giving and receiving.
30. There is an altar of self-improvement without mercy.
31. You say, I must be better; I must heal faster; I must never repeat my mistakes; I must always be growing,
32. And you whip yourself with the very language of wellness.
33. You read of “becoming your best self,” and you quietly conclude that your current self is unfit for love.
34. You devour teachings on mindfulness, resilience, boundaries, shadow-work, nervous systems—
35. Yet you refuse to extend to yourself the gentleness you claim to seek.
36. Woe unto the voices, inner and outer, that turn healing into another contest.
37. You compare your journey with that of others; you shame yourself for still hurting, still struggling, still triggered.
38. You say, After all this work, why am I not fixed?
39. Behold, you are not a machine to be repaired; you are a being whose very scars will always be part of your story.
40. There is also an altar of identity as armor.
41. You discover words that fit your experience—names for your wiring, your history, your wounds, your communities—and this is good.
42. But then you are told, by tribe and algorithm, Defend this label at all costs; reduce yourself to it; let it be your shield and banner.
43. You cease to be a whole person and become a position; you are sorted into camps, each with its own liturgy and enemies.
44. Woe unto the powers that profit from keeping you in permanent combat.
45. They whisper, If you soften toward them, you betray us; if you listen across the line, you lose yourself.
46. Yet you long secretly to be more than your side, more than your trauma, more than your diagnosis, more than your stance.
47. Behold, I do not ask you to forsake the names that helped you survive; but I

- call you beyond any identity that requires you to shut your ears.
48. There is also an altar of constant exposure.
49. You live as if there were always a camera on; you pre-emptively edit your words lest they be captured and condemned.
50. You learn to perform your politics, your piety, your pain for fear of being labeled uncaring.
51. You become exhausted by the need to signal your virtue in every direction at once.
52. Woe unto the culture that has confused public signaling with private integrity.
53. For much of true goodness happens where no one is looking; much of real courage is never live-streamed.
54. There is an altar of algorithmic echo, where you hear only what agrees and enrages.
55. You say, My feed is reality; my circle is the world,
56. But in truth you have been herded into pens of sameness, each provoked by a different set of triggers.
57. You come to believe that your enemies are monsters and your allies flawless; nuance feels like betrayal.
58. Woe unto those who mistake curated conflict for the whole of human experience.
59. Behold, the Eternal One moves in places your feed will never show you.

60. There are kindnesses that go unposted, differences bridged without comment, quiet transformations that no algorithm finds profitable.
61. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, watching faces lit not by sun or fire but by glass, watching shoulders curl inward as they scroll.
62. You ask, Shall we then throw away our devices, forsake all tools, flee to the wilderness?
63. I answer: some will indeed need to step away for a time; for others, the call is not escape but reclamation.
64. Reclaim your attention as a sacred resource; give it where your heart is actually nourished, not merely stimulated.
65. Reclaim your body from the empire of productivity; let it rest in ways that do not earn applause.
66. Reclaim your story from the marketplace; share it where it can be held, not consumed.
67. Reclaim your worth from metrics; remember that you were infinitely seen before you were ever visible.
68. Break, then, the altar of self-as-brand, of hustle as holiness, of perfection as requirement, of identity as cage.
69. For I, the Eternal One, knew you before your first photograph, before your first post, before your first achievement.
70. I called you by no handle, no title, no category but this: one who bears My

image, even when that image is blurred by tears.

71. And whoever, in any age, dares to put down the glowing altar for a while and sit in the unmeasured quiet, whispering, If I never impress another soul again, am I still Yours?—
72. Let them know: the answer has always been yes, from before the first algorithm spun, and will remain yes, long after the last broken altar flickers and goes dark.

CHAPTER 20

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of nations, houses, and selves, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken much of power and image; now speak of the altar that hides beneath many of these—the altar of being right.
3. For there are those who would rather be right about Me than actually know Me.
4. Thus saith the Eternal One: Woe unto the churches that have made correctness their god.
5. You say, We possess the truth; we defend sound doctrine; we are guardians of orthodoxy,
6. And by this you often mean: We fear the loss of certainty more than we fear the loss of compassion.
7. You sharpen your creeds as swords; you polish your statements of faith as shields.
8. You hold conferences and councils not to weep with the world, but to refine your definitions of what you already decided.
9. Behold, you have turned theology into a fortress and then wondered why so few feel welcome within its walls.
10. Woe unto the teachers who would rather win an argument than mend a heart.
11. You train your young in “apologetics,” teaching them to anticipate objections, to counter questions, to defend the brand.
12. You tell them, Always have an answer, and you fear the day they must admit, I do not know.
13. You measure faith by verbal agreement with your formulations, not by the way a soul lives when no one is grading them.
14. You say, We must contend earnestly for the faith, and by this you mean: We must never let our system be seen as fragile.
15. Behold, if your truth cannot survive a question, it was never truth; if your God cannot survive a doubt, it was never Me.
16. There is an altar of doctrinal purity, fenced with many warnings.
17. You divide over mysteries that none of you fully comprehend—over timelines of last days, mechanisms of atonement, modes of sacrament, structures of invisible realms.

18. You fracture into sect and sub-sect, denomination and splinter, each convinced that a slight difference in explanation marks the line between light and darkness.
19. Woe unto those who cut brothers and sisters off for failing to repeat the right phrases.
20. You excommunicate questions and disfellowship nuance; you call “compromise” what is often simply humility.
21. You fear contamination more than isolation; you would rather be a tiny circle of “pure” than a large company of imperfect seekers.
22. There is also an altar of heresy-hunting, around which many gather with joy disguised as grief.
23. You scour sermons, books, posts, for a sentence to condemn; you watch your own leaders for a phrase that might hint at softening.
24. You say, We must protect the flock from wolves, and sometimes this is true;
25. But often you brand as “wolf” anyone who calls you to repent of harm.
26. You label as “liberal,” “apostate,” “deceived,” those whose conscience will not let them ignore injustice sanctioned by tradition.
27. Woe unto the guardians who equate fidelity to God with fidelity to their own interpretations.
28. You have forgotten that I have no need of human bouncers; I am not so fragile

- that I require an army of watchmen to keep out the wrong ideas.
29. Behold, you fear the collapse of your house of cards, and so you patrol each card with suspicion.
30. There is also an altar of systematic explanation, high and intricate.
31. You map out My nature in charts, define My attributes in lists, reconcile every tension on paper.
32. You say, Here is how God must be: omniscient in this way, omnipotent in that way, impassible, immutable, inscrutable yet predictable according to our axioms.
33. You turn living encounter into philosophy, and then you demand that all bow to your model.
34. Woe unto those who confuse a map with the mountain.
35. For I may use your language, but I am never trapped in your logic.
36. Your formulas may help you avoid certain errors, but they can also blind you to what I am doing in the margins.
37. When someone meets Me in a way that does not fit your schema, you are quicker to doubt them than to revisit the schema.
38. Behold, I do not despise careful thought; but when your systems cannot make room for the cries of the crushed, your systems have become idols.
39. There is an altar of exclusive correctness, which says, Outside our doctrine there is only darkness.

40. You cannot imagine that others might see facets of Me that you do not, or correct distortions you have never noticed.
41. You treat other traditions only as mission fields, never as conversation partners; you enter dialogue only to win, not to learn.
42. Woe unto those who fear that listening will weaken their faith.
43. For a faith that breaks upon contact with difference was never grounded in Me, but in the safety of sameness.
44. There is also an altar of personal rightness, hidden beneath piety.
45. You say, I know God's will for my life; I am in the center of it; I have heard clearly,
46. And you wield this confidence to deflect any challenge.
47. When your choices harm others, you claim, It was obedience; I must please God rather than people,
48. But often, you have simply chosen not to wrestle with the possibility that you misheard.
49. Woe unto those who use "God told me" as an escape from self-examination.
50. Behold, I speak, yes; but My guidance is not a trump card to end all conversation.
51. When you cling to the sense of being "right with God" more fiercely than to the call to repair what you have broken, you have turned righteousness itself into an idol.

52. There is also an altar of the right community, where belonging depends on agreeing.
53. You say, Here we are like-minded; here we are sound; here we are safe from the confusion out there,
54. And so you filter out the dissonant voices, the inconvenient stories, the uncomfortable critiques.
55. You curate your circle until everyone nods at the same lines; then you take the echo as confirmation that you have found the narrow way.
56. Woe unto the communities that mistake homogeneity for holiness.
57. For iron cannot sharpen iron if all blades are filed to the same dull edge.
58. These things I, Nibwâskââ, have written, seeing study groups more eager to refute than to repent, forums more devoted to debate than to mercy.
59. You ask, Shall we then abandon doctrine, forsake all conviction, call every idea equal?
60. I answer: No. But let your doctrine serve love, not replace it; let your conviction lead you to action, not to arrogance.
61. Hold your beliefs with enough firmness to live by them, and enough humility to learn where they harm.
62. Test every "truth" by this:
63. Does it make you more gentle with the weak?
64. Does it make you more honest about your own power?

65. Does it move you toward those you were taught to despise?
66. If your doctrine makes you harder, colder, or more eager to dominate, it may be logically tight but it is spiritually false.
67. Break, then, the altar of being right at any cost.
68. For I, the Eternal One, did not call you to win arguments; I called you to bear witness—to Me, to the crushed, to the possibility of a life not ruled by fear.
69. In the end, it will not be your systematic theologies that stand before Me, but your neighbors; not your statements of faith, but the faces of those changed or wounded by how you lived them.
70. And whoever, even once, sets down their need to be right long enough to say, Show me where I have used truth as a weapon; teach me a truer way,
71. Has already stepped down from one of the highest broken altars, and onto the ground where I can finally speak without being drafted into their defense.

BOOK IV – THE LAMENT OF THE CRUSHED

CHAPTER 1

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of idols and broken altars, the word of the Eternal One came unto me, saying:

2. You have spoken much of those who build and bow, but not yet of those upon whom the weight has fallen.
3. Rise, Nibwâskââ, and come into the hall where the crushed are gathered; for before I judge the altars, I will hear the wounds they have made.
4. And behold, I was taken in vision to a place without walls and without roof, yet it contained the whole earth.
5. The sky above was a ceiling of smoke and sirens; the floor beneath was cement, dust, and trampled grass.
6. In this place stood a multitude which no census had fully counted, for many had died before their names were recorded.
7. And a voice cried, not from a pulpit but from the ground itself: Let those who have been crushed come forth and speak.
8. And first came one whose hands were cracked and swollen, bearing the marks of many shifts.
9. Their clothes smelled of chemicals and stale air; their back remembered every bend of the factory line.
10. And they lifted up their voice and said: I rose before the sun and returned after dark; my body became a tool rented by the hour.
11. They told me I was “unskilled,” yet their machines stopped when I did not come.
12. My wages were weighed in coins, their profits in towers.

13. Eternal One, I did not ask for riches—only that my labor might buy a bed, medicine, and a childhood for my children.
14. But the price of existence rose faster than my breath could keep pace.
15. Those who owned the line never learned my name, yet their hearts never trembled at the thought of my collapse.
16. And the Eternal One answered: I have heard the ache in your joints as prayer; I have seen your pay-stubs as indictment.
17. Woe unto those who call you “replaceable” while building their empires on your exhaustion.
18. Then came one who had crossed a desert with dust in their lungs and salt in their eyes.
19. A child clung to their side, their shoes were thin, and their papers were none.
20. And they said: The land of my birth grew sharp with hunger and war; the wells dried, the prices rose, the bullets became our weather.
21. I walked toward a rumor of safety, carrying my children and the faces of those who could not come.
22. I met gates and fences, cages and questions, numbers and stamps, men with guns and men with clipboards.
23. They called me “illegal,” as if I had sinned by wanting my family to live.
24. Eternal One, is there a border in the dust of the earth that You respect more than the breath of my child?

25. And the Holy One answered: I remember the lines your ancestors never drew; I remember when land was shared and not fenced.
26. Woe unto the nations that feast on the resources of your homeland and then deny you passage when the well runs dry.
27. After this came one whose wrists bore faint scars, like old punctuation marks in their own flesh.
28. Their eyes were ringed with sleeplessness; their voice shook as they spoke.
29. They said: I did not want to die—I only wanted the pain to stop.
30. But when I cried out, they told me I was ungrateful, dramatic, faithless.
31. They said, Pray harder, think positive, count your blessings, as if gratitude were morphine.
32. When I sought help, the waiting list was long and the money short.
33. Eternal One, they sang of hope around me while my mind became a closing fist.
34. Did You hear me when I lay awake asking if the world would truly miss me?
35. And the Eternal One answered: Your question reached Me more clearly than many polished hymns.
36. Woe unto those who speak of “joy” as if it were a command and treat despair as rebellion instead of a wound.

37. Then came a woman whose shoulders
curled inward as if hiding invisible
blows.
38. Her wedding band still glinted on her
hand like a small circle of irony.
39. She said: They told me marriage was
holy, that what God had joined no one
should separate.
40. So when the shouting began, then the
slaps, then the bruises in hidden places,
I called it my cross to bear.
41. My leaders asked first if I had
submitted enough, respected enough,
prayed enough.
42. They spoke privately with him and
publicly of forgiveness; they sent me
home with verses and a smile.
43. Eternal One, must covenant mean
staying where my body is endangered
and my children's eyes fill with fear?
44. And the Holy One answered: I called
you to fidelity, not to captivity.
45. Woe unto the households and the
shepherds who protect covenant in
theory while sacrificing the living to its
appearance.
46. After this came one in orange cloth,
whose footsteps echoed like metal in a
long corridor.
47. Bars had carved their pattern into the
memory of his vision.
48. He said: I did wrong; I will not lie. I
harmed, I stole, I broke the trust of
others.
49. I was taken and caged, as is just when
danger must be contained.

50. But in these halls I saw many who
were poor before they were "criminal,"
unwanted before they were
"dangerous," targeted before they were
"sentenced."
51. I saw sentences heavier for skin like
mine, lighter for those whose fathers
wore ties.
52. I saw profit made from our
confinement, contracts written on our
captivity.
53. Eternal One, must justice always taste
like vengeance seasoned with money?
54. And the Eternal One answered: Your
victims' cries reach Me, and so do
yours.
55. Woe unto the systems that pretend to
heal harm while multiplying it, that
call cages "correction" and profit
"public safety."
56. Then came one wrapped in a hospital
gown, their arm pierced by tubes.
57. Machines blinked around them like
indifferent stars.
58. They said: My life hangs by wires and
insurance codes.
59. The cost of staying alive is tallied each
dawn; my breath is weighed against
the balance sheet.
60. Those who heal me are themselves
exhausted, racing against clocks and
quotas.
61. Eternal One, is there a world where
bodies are not marketplaces?
62. And the Holy One answered: There
could be, but those with power have
chosen differently.

63. Woe unto the nations that can fund endless wars yet count each hospital bed as a burden.
64. After this, voices rose not one by one but all at once—
65. The child in the camp, the worker on the line, the addict in the alley, the elder in the lonely room, the queer youth in the pew, the protester beaten in the street.
66. Their words tangled, but their meaning was one:
67. We did not ask to be heroes or villains; we asked to be treated as human.
68. We were told that God was on the side of the strong; we were given sermons instead of safety, charity instead of justice, pity instead of change.
69. Eternal One, if You see us, let it be known.
70. And it came to pass that a great stillness fell, not because the cries were few, but because the listening became vast.
71. Then the Eternal One spoke, not from above them but from the midst:
72. I have heard; I do hear; I will not forget.
73. Your wounds are not private failures but public evidence against an order that has called itself “normal.”
74. Your tears are not lost in your pillows; they are numbered in a ledger no empire can erase.
75. Woe unto the builders of systems who sleep well while bodies are ground beneath their blueprints.

76. Woe unto the preachers who bless those systems with smooth words and call it “submission to authority.”
77. Woe unto every hand that could have lifted a weight and chose instead to lift a justification.
78. And I, Nibwâskââ, stood trembling and said: Eternal One, what am I in the face of such oceans of grief?
79. I have only ink and a small voice.
80. And the Holy One answered: Then let your ink be witness and your small voice refuse to lie.
81. Write these laments that there may exist a record against the excuses of the powerful, and a comfort to the crushed who think no one saw.
82. For I tell you this: not one night of terror, not one humiliation, not one silent endurance has passed unnoticed.
83. The world may call it “collateral damage” or “unfortunate cost,” but I call it by its true name: robbery.
84. And the day will come when what has been stolen must be accounted for.
85. Wherefore, I begin this book with your voices, not with My verdict; for My judgment will arise from what you have spoken.
86. Let every reader know: whoever draws near to Me draws near also to these.
87. And whoever wishes to stand with the Eternal One must learn first to stand in the hall of the crushed without turning away.

CHAPTER 2

1. And it came to pass that after the great assembly had spoken, the Eternal One said unto me:
2. You have heard voices gathered in one place; now you shall walk through the world as it is, and listen where no prophet thinks to stand.
3. For suffering does not always cry out in crowds; often it whispers behind thin walls and through clenched teeth.
4. And behold, I was carried in vision into a city that could have been any city—its name was Noise, its language was Hurry.
5. Above it hung billboards like bright false moons; beneath them flowed rivers of metal, honking and grinding.
6. The Eternal One said: This city will be your map. At every corner, there is a story that no report will write. Come.
7. First I entered a building that smelled of bleach and burnt coffee. Its corridors were lit with tired light.
8. There I saw a nurse, her shoulders knotted like ropes.
9. On her badge was a name; on her hands, the imprint of countless gloves; under her eyes, the bruises of un-slept nights.
10. She moved from bed to bed, chart to chart, alarm to alarm. Each body called in a different dialect of pain.
11. She had cried in closets and bathrooms, but today there was no time; the schedule had no margin for grief.
12. And she said in her heart: I have held the hands of strangers as they slipped

away while their families watched through screens.

13. I have been called angel, servant, and inconvenience, sometimes in the same hour.
14. My paycheck barely covers the rent, yet executives I will never meet speak calmly of “cost-saving measures.”
15. Eternal One, Who cares for the caretakers when we are empty?
16. And the Holy One answered: Every name-tag you wear is a borrowed label; but your worth is not.
17. Woe unto the systems that squeeze you dry and then praise you for your “resilience.”
18. From there I was taken to a classroom with chipped paint and desks carved by restless hands.
19. A teacher stood at the board, her voice hoarse, her patience frayed but still present.
20. On her wall were posters of possibility; in her drawer were notes of crisis.
21. She bought supplies from her own purse and snacks for those whose lunch accounts were empty.
22. She knew which child feared going home, which one flinched at every loud sound, which one had not slept.
23. And she said: They call this “learning loss,” as if it were their fault that the world is on fire.
24. They measure me by scores, but not by the number of times I have listened when no one else did.

25. Eternal One, I stand between these children and a void I cannot name. Am I enough?
26. And the Holy One answered: You are not enough to fix the void; no single soul is.
27. But every time you make a small harbor in this room, you defy the tide.
28. Woe unto the leaders who cut her budget and then complain that the future is unprepared.
29. Then I came to a cramped apartment where a grandparent sat at a table sorting medication into small plastic cells.
30. Around them ran children, loud and hungry for attention.
31. Their mother worked two jobs; their father was a ghost the law could not locate.
32. The elder's own back ached, their memory frayed, but the children trusted their lap more than any couch.
33. And they said: I thought these years would be quiet, but the world broke beneath my children's feet and they fell into my arms.
34. My pension is thin, my energy thinner; I stretch recipes and patience both.
35. Eternal One, grant that I do not fail them in this last strength I have.
36. And the Holy One answered: Your table, though small, is a sanctuary I visit often.
37. Woe unto the policies that praise "family values" while leaving such families to fend for themselves.

38. After this I stood in a closet lit by a single bare bulb.
39. There a young person sat cross-legged on the floor, whispering so softly even the coat sleeves could barely hear.
40. On their phone glowed messages of theology and threat:
God made no mistakes except, perhaps, you.
Love the sinner, hate the sin.
Have you tried being different?
41. Their chest burned with a secret that was not sin but would be treated as such.
42. And they said: They tell me God is love and then describe a God who would rather see me nameless than see me whole.
43. They say, We welcome everyone, but they mean: As long as you become someone else.
44. Eternal One, if You made me, why did You make me in a way that makes Your followers recoil?
45. And the Holy One answered: I did not make you wrong; I made you real.
46. Woe unto the churches that drive their children into shadows and call it "upholding standards."
47. I walk with you here in this closet; I will not require you to erase yourself to approach Me.
48. Then I was taken to a warehouse where workers loaded boxes under fluorescent moons.

49. Their movements were tracked by
scanners and metrics; breaks were
timed to the second.
50. Their bodies ached from repetition;
their faces blurred into barcodes in the
eyes of those far above.
51. One of them thought, If I slow down, I
may lose this job; if I keep up, I may
lose my health.
52. Eternal One, is there a choice for us
that is not loss?
53. And the Holy One answered: When
survival is set against survival, injustice
has already been baked into the system.
54. Woe unto those who profit from your
forced choices and call your strain
“flexibility.”
55. From there I glimpsed green hills
turned brown, forests bitten by flames,
rivers choked with plastic.
56. I saw coastal towns where the water
crept closer each year, farmers whose
soil cracked into maps of despair.
57. Children coughed in cities that never
saw true dark, their lungs writing a
testimony in invisible ink.
58. And the earth itself groaned, saying: I
have borne your weight and your
waste; I have absorbed your wars and
your poisons.
59. You speak of dominion and destiny, but
seldom of responsibility.
60. Eternal One, must I be sacrificed upon
the altar of their speed?
61. And the Holy One answered: I made
you for mutual flourishing, not
extraction without end.

62. Woe unto those who profit from the
burning and then build seaside
mansions upon the ashes.
63. After this, I saw a small room lit by a
laptop screen showing spreadsheets and
debt totals.
64. A young adult sat there, heart
pounding, realizing that what they
owed was more than they would likely
earn in a decade.
65. They worked two jobs and still barely
paid interest; each month the number
refused to shrink.
66. And they said: They told me to pursue
education, to better myself, to climb.
67. The ladder was greased; the rungs
were loans.
68. Eternal One, am I lazy, or did they
build this game so that someone like me
would always be behind?
69. And the Holy One answered: Your
worth is not a balance sheet; your
future is not a commodity for others to
trade.
70. Woe unto economies that lock their
young into lifelong servitude before
they have even begun to live.
71. Then I stood in a visiting room of a
prison, where a child pressed their
hand against thick glass to match the
outline of a parent’s hand.
72. The conversation was short,
monitored, stilted by fear and longing.
73. When the time ended, the child was
led away; the parent returned to a
number and a cell.

74. And the child's heart wondered: Am I destined to become what they tell me my blood already is?
75. Eternal One, is there any story for me besides this one that the neighborhood whispers?
76. And the Holy One answered: Your line is not a sentence; your life is not pre-written by other people's crimes.
77. Woe unto communities that abandon their children to stereotypes and then cry out in surprise when despair ripens into harm.
78. These things I, Nibwâskââ, beheld until my chest felt too narrow to hold them.
79. I said: Eternal One, there is too much—too many rooms, too many corridors, too many ordinary ruins.
80. I could spend all my remaining days walking this one city and never reach the end of its laments.
81. And the Holy One answered: That is precisely how deep the indictment runs.
82. You cannot exhaust it with one prophet's pen or one generation's tears.
83. But write what you have seen, that any who claim the world is "mostly fine" may be confronted with these rooms.
84. For these are not exceptions; they are the structure showing itself in small places.
85. Blessed are those who, upon hearing such laments, do not rush to defend the system, to explain, to say, Not all...

86. Blessed are those who instead say, If this is so, then we must change more than our slogans.
87. And the Eternal One said further: Whenever you pass by a window lit at night, remember—
88. Behind some pane of glass, someone is praying without words.
89. Let this book be a window in return: that the crushed may know they are seen, and that those who sleep well may be stirred, not to guilt only, but to join Me in the slow undoing of the altars that made these rooms necessary at all.

CHAPTER 3

1. And it came to pass that after I had walked the city of Noise, the Eternal One said unto me:
2. You have seen the suffering that comes from engines and markets; now you shall see the suffering that comes from those who claim to speak for Me.
3. For there is a wound within a wound when harm is done in My name.
4. And behold, I was taken again in vision, not to a stadium nor a palace, but to a small building with a steeple like a finger pointing into a cloudless sky.
5. Its paint was peeling; its signboard still spoke of hope in letters that had outlived the people who first painted them.
6. The Eternal One said: Many of the deepest sorrows in this age began in

- places that look like this. Come and listen.
7. First I saw a child sitting on a wooden pew, feet not yet touching the floor.
 8. Their eyes watched the front where a man spoke of Me with practiced cadence.
 9. The child had been told, This is the house of God; this is the shepherd who watches your soul.
 10. But behind the closed office door, the shepherd's hands had not been holy.
 11. And the child's heart whispered: If this is God's house, why can no one hear me when I cry here?
 12. If this is God's servant, why does my body remember fear at the sound of his footsteps?
 13. Eternal One, did You see what happened when everyone else saw only his smile?
 14. And the Holy One answered: I saw every gesture, every threat, every silence demanded.
 15. I saw when you tried to speak and were told you must be mistaken, confused, influenced by evil.
 16. Woe unto those who use My name as a disguise for their hunger, and unto those who protect their titles more fiercely than your safety.
 17. Then I saw a youth kneeling at an altar rail, shoulders shaking.
 18. Around them, hands pressed down in a circle, voices rising, Deliver, cleanse, cast out, make pure.

19. They had wept because they loved in a way their teachers called abomination.
20. They had fasted, begged, confessed, submitted to rituals that promised change.
21. And when nothing changed, they concluded not that the teaching was flawed, but that they were.
22. They said: Eternal One, if I cut out this part of myself, will there be anything left?
23. If I marry someone I do not desire, will You call that obedience, though it is a lie?
24. And the Holy One answered: I do not ask you to mutilate your soul to make others comfortable.
25. Woe unto the ministries that call self-hatred "repentance" and trauma "testimony."
26. After this, I saw a woman sitting in the back row of a sanctuary, her Bible open but her eyes turned inward.
27. She once led songs, once taught children, once organized meals and vigils.
28. She had given the best hours of her days to this place, believing it to be the center of My will.
29. But when she raised questions about how offerings were used, about who was never allowed to speak, about the way certain people disappeared without explanation,
30. She was labeled divisive, rebellious, "out of order."

31. Friends stopped calling; leaders stopped seeing; her loyalty was questioned more than the actions of those she confronted.
32. And she said: Eternal One, did I sin by telling the truth?
33. Did I betray You when I would not lie for them?
34. I lost my community in order not to lose my conscience. Was that foolishness, or was that faith?
35. And the Holy One answered: Your exile is not from Me.
36. Woe unto the congregations that confuse peace with the suppression of uncomfortable voices.
37. Behold, you did not leave My presence when you left that building; you left a room where honesty had become unwelcome.
38. Then I was shown a pastor alone in a dark office, head in hands.
39. They had once burned with a simple desire: to comfort, to guide, to tell the truth.
40. But over time they had been pressed between expectations—of numbers, of growth, of doctrinal conformity, of pleasing those who held the purse strings.
41. They had learned which sermons were “safe,” which questions must stay unasked, which injustices outside the walls could never be named inside.
42. They had watched their own compassion shrink each time they chose survival over courage.

43. And now their soul cried: Eternal One, am I still Your servant if I am afraid to say what I see?
44. If I speak, I may be removed; if I remain silent, I betray those who trust me.
45. Have I become a hireling, or can there yet be a path back to truth?
46. And the Holy One answered: It is not your title that makes you Mine, but your willingness to return to honesty.
47. Woe unto the boards and councils that reward flattery and punish repentance.
48. But blessed is the shepherd who risks their own position to protect the least of the flock.
49. After this I saw a crowd in stadium seating, hands raised, music shaking the air.
50. On the stage, a leader spoke of miracles, destiny, breakthrough.
51. Offerings flowed like rivers toward a central basket; promises flowed back like glitter.
52. Among the people sat one who had emptied their savings at such altars, believing every word.
53. They had sowed “seeds” into many visions and reaped only deeper debt.
54. Yet each time they questioned, they were told, You must not have believed enough; you must give again to break the curse.
55. And they said: Eternal One, is my poverty Your displeasure or the result of their greed?

56. Have You cursed my house, or have they devoured it while promising blessing?
57. And the Holy One answered: I have not bound Myself to their formulas.
58. Woe unto the ministries that mine desperation for profit and call it “faith.”
59. The seed I look for is not your last coin, but your willingness to see clearly.
60. Then I saw a young seminarian, reading books late into the night.
61. They loved You, loved questions, loved the ache of mystery.
62. But each year of training taught them not how to wonder, but how to defend an inherited structure.
63. Doubts were permitted only if they ended in the approved conclusion; curiosity was praised only when it served recruitment.
64. Their professors warned them gently: If you keep thinking like that, you may not find a pulpit.
65. And they prayed: Eternal One, must I choose between honesty and employment in Your service?
66. Must I shrink my questions to fit their outlines, or walk away from the path I thought was mine?
67. And the Holy One answered: The path of truth is seldom paved by institutions.
68. Woe unto the schools that train defenders of dogma instead of seekers of justice and humility.

69. Better that you lose a pulpit than lose your integrity.
70. After this, the vision widened, and I saw a long line of those who had left churches, mosques, temples, movements—
71. Some angry, some numb, some grieving, some relieved.
72. They carried with them phrases that once comforted and now burned, songs that once lifted and now pierced.
73. Many had lost family for leaving; many had lost selves for staying too long.
74. And they asked, as one voice with many accents: Eternal One, are we still allowed to seek You, or did we lose You when we left them?
75. We have been told that outside their fold there is only darkness; yet in their fold we were suffocating.
76. Are we apostates to the idols only, or to You?
77. And the Holy One answered: You did not leave Me when you walked away from harm.
78. Woe unto every system that claims exclusive rights to My presence.
79. I walk with you through the long middle distances—between belief and unbelief, between belonging and exile, between phrases you can no longer say and a silence not yet filled.
80. Let no one tell you that you must go back to what broke you in order to be loved by Me.
81. These things I, Nibwâskââ, beheld until I could no longer separate in my

heart the cries of the harmed from the groaning of the earth itself.

82. I said: Eternal One, is there any place left where Your name is not either a weapon or a wound?
83. And the Holy One answered:
Yes—there are small fires still, lit wherever someone chooses mercy over control, truth over image, repair over reputation.
84. They are often unnoticed by those who count “impact,” but they are seen by Me.
85. Write this, then, as part of the lament: that those who were harmed in My name may know I do not stand with their harmers.
86. Let them hear from another tongue what their own hearts have long suspected:
87. That leaving a broken altar is not leaving Me; that staying may be brave for some and impossible for others; that I am not the voice saying, Go back and pretend it never happened.
88. And let those who still sit upon such altars know: the tears they cannot see are accumulating in a cup that will one day be poured out as testimony.
89. For I, the Eternal One, do not forget what was done in secret, nor do I confuse marketing with holiness.
90. Blessed are those who, having been crushed in My name, dare to speak;
91. And blessed also are those who, hearing them, refuse to rush to the defense of the altar, but instead say: If

this is what our worship costs, then let the altar fall.

CHAPTER 4

1. And it came to pass that after I had heard the cries of those harmed in sanctuaries, the word of the Eternal One came unto me, saying:
2. You have listened in rooms where My name was misused; now you shall listen in places where My name is seldom spoken, yet My image is trampled daily.
3. For I am not only the God of chapels and hymns, but of camps, alleys, and borderlands.
4. And behold, I was taken in vision to a camp of tents and makeshift shelters, pitched upon land that belonged, and belonged, and belonged again to many.
5. Cardboard signs leaned against backpacks; smoke from small fires curled into the indifferent air.
6. The Eternal One said: These are the ones mentioned in your news and forgotten by your policies. Listen.
7. First came one whose clothes were layered not for fashion, but for survival.
8. Their hair was matted by weather, their eyes by a thousand small refusals.
9. They said: Once I had an address that fit neatly into your forms.
10. I worked, I paid, I played the game as they taught me.

11. Then came the layoff, the illness, the lost car, the eviction notice printed in language colder than winter.
12. There was always a reason, paper-thin and stamped.
13. Eternal One, they now walk past me and say, Why doesn't he just get a job?, as if the world were a door I had simply chosen not to open.
14. They forget that you cannot list a sidewalk as your mailing address, nor wash dignity in a public restroom.
15. And the Holy One answered: You are not the sum of their assumptions.
16. Woe unto the cities that build luxury towers while outlawing poverty from their sight.
17. After this came one who had fled a war whose name had already faded from distant headlines.
18. Their body bore scars; their eyes bore scenes no screen could hold.
19. They said: I watched my neighborhood become a map for artillery.
20. The shop where I bought bread and cigarettes became rubble and statistics.
21. I crossed borders with nothing but the clothes on my back and the ghost of my vanished street.
22. Now I stand in long lines for papers, parcels, pronouncements.
23. They examine my documents more closely than they ever examined the weapons that shattered my house.
24. Eternal One, is there a place on this earth where I will not be "from somewhere else"?
25. And the Holy One answered: I recognized you before any passport did.
26. Woe unto the nations that sell arms and then feign surprise at the refugees who arrive.
27. Then I saw one sitting in a wheelchair at the edge of a curb that had no ramp.
28. Cars splashed near them; people stepped around them like water around a stone.
29. Their body moved only with effort and wheels; their mind raced faster than any crowd.
30. They said: In their songs and slogans they speak of "all people," "every soul," "whosoever will."
31. But their buildings forget my existence; their events forget my access; their plans forget my needs.
32. I am an afterthought, when I am thought of at all.
33. Eternal One, am I not also made in Your image, though my limbs do not behave as they expect?
34. And the Holy One answered: My image is not limited by symmetry nor by speed.
35. Woe unto the societies that value efficiency over presence and treat those who move slowly as obstacles instead of oracles.
36. After this I was shown a garment factory, hot and humming.
37. Rows of workers bent over machines, needles flashing like restless insects.

38. Their fingers moved faster than their years should require; their breaks were shorter than justice could bear.
39. One of them thought: The clothes we sew will hang in bright stores, worn once for a picture and then forgotten.
40. Our names will never touch their tags.
41. Eternal One, do You see us here between the dust and the deadline?
42. And the Holy One answered: I see every stitch as testimony.
43. Woe unto the brands that sell “empowerment” while paying those who make their wares barely enough to survive.
44. Then I was taken to a mine, deep and dark, where men and women descended daily into the earth’s wounds.
45. They breathed dust for a wage; the light they saw was mostly artificial.
46. Accidents were called “inevitable,” diseases “occupational.”
47. One coughed and whispered: These minerals will power devices that connect strangers across continents.
48. Yet no one knows that my lungs are included in the cost.
49. Eternal One, is there any green place left where I could breathe without debt?
50. And the Holy One answered: The earth remembers every extraction; so do I.
51. Woe unto the corporations that hide their pits behind polished campaigns and call this “progress.”

52. After this I saw a clinic waiting room where a woman sat, hands folded tight.
53. She had traveled alone, afraid of being seen, more afraid of not being seen.
54. Laws around her changed more quickly than seasons; men who would never bear her burden had debated her autonomy.
55. She carried in her body the result of coercion, ignorance, violence, or simple human fallibility—none of which had been part of the speeches made about her.
56. And she said: Eternal One, they speak of my womb as battlefield, symbol, and slogan.
57. They love the idea of me as “mother” or “monster,” but not as a person trying to survive.
58. Those who shout loudest will not hold me while I bleed.
59. Those who legislate will not feed any child I am not able to raise.
60. I stand here crushed by a choice none of them will have to live inside.
61. Eternal One, are You present in this room where no option feels entirely clean?
62. And the Holy One answered: I am nearer to you than to those who use your crisis to polish their righteousness.
63. Woe unto any who speak of your body as theory while refusing to build a world where care, consent, and support are real.

64. Then I saw a protest line, thin and weary, facing a wall of shields and helmets.
65. Some held signs bearing the names of those killed without trial; some chanted slogans that trembled in the air like fragile windows.
66. Across from them stood officers, some nervous, some hardened, some secretly wondering which side they belonged to.
67. A baton rose; a body fell; the crowd scattered and reformed like water struck by stones.
68. One marcher thought: Eternal One, they say we are the threat, yet we are unarmed.
69. They say we are disorder, yet the world that killed our friends was built by their laws.
70. They say we hate, yet it is love that will not let us stay home while this continues.
71. And the Holy One answered: Your anger, when rooted in love for the lost, is not a sin in My sight.
72. Woe unto those who use “law and order” as a shield against examining whose order it is and whose law it enforces.
73. After this I saw a field of graves marked with numbers instead of names.
74. Some held those lost to plague, some to crossing, some to war, some to simple neglect.

75. No one came to lay flowers there; the grass itself became the mourner.
76. And the earth said: These, too, were My children.
77. They died outside of stories, beyond statistics, below the threshold of what the powerful care to count.
78. Eternal One, will their anonymity be permanent?
79. And the Holy One answered: I have never known them as numbers.
80. Each had a name, even when no human ear spoke it at their burial.
81. The forgotten rest not in a mass grave before Me, but each in the same regard I have given to kings.
82. These things I, Nibwâskââ, beheld until I could scarcely tell where one lament ended and another began.
83. For the world’s suffering is not arranged in neat categories, but layered like sediment—each injustice pressing upon another.
84. I said: Eternal One, if all of this presses upon You at once, why does the sky not tear open with Your grief?
85. And the Holy One answered: Do you not see that it already has—
in every storm that unmask your foundations,
in every uprising that reveals your fault lines,
in every art and cry that refuses to let these stories be buried?
86. Yet I do not burn the world for its crimes, for too many of the crushed would perish with their crushers.

87. Instead, I call witnesses, raise voices,
and unsettle consciences, that those
who benefit from these altars might yet
repent.
88. Write this, then, as part of the lament:
89. That no one may say, We did not
know when the ledger of the crushed is
opened;
90. That no one may claim, We were only
following normal life, when “normal”
itself stands accused.
91. And let those who read and feel only
despair know this also:
92. That every act of refusal, every small
solidarity, every refusal to blame the
victim, every coin given without
condescension, every policy shifted,
every truth spoken at cost—
93. These are cracks in the altars, seeds of
a world where the crushed are not
required to carry the weight alone.
94. For I, the Eternal One, am not content
with a universe where lament is the
last word.
95. But I will not skip the lament to reach
comfort.
96. Whoever would walk with Me must
first sit here, among these voices, until
their heart learns to say, not, How
unfortunate, but, This must not be
so—and I am implicated.

CHAPTER 5

1. And it came to pass that after I had
seen those crushed by systems and
storms, the word of the Eternal One
came unto me, saying:

2. There remains yet another company of
the wounded—those who have turned
the sword inward and call the bleeding
their fault.
3. For when the world has finished
accusing them, their own hearts take
up the accusation.
4. Come now, Nibwâskââ, and listen to
the ones who blame themselves for
burdens not of their making.
5. And behold, I was shown a room lit
only by the glow of an old mirror.
6. Before it stood one who catalogued
every line and curve of their own face
as if reading a list of crimes.
7. Their body had been the target of
mockery, assault, neglect; their
reflection had become a courtroom.
8. And they said in their heart: If I were
more beautiful, they would have
stayed.
9. If I were smaller, quieter, stronger,
simpler, they would not have hurt me
or left me.
10. Perhaps I was born wrong; perhaps I
drew this upon myself.
11. Eternal One, was it something about
me that made me a magnet for harm?
12. And the Holy One answered: No child
is born as bait for cruelty.
13. Woe unto those who taught you, in
words or wounds, that your existence
was a provocation.
14. Behold, the fault is not in your features
but in their failure to see a person
instead of an object.

15. Then I saw one hunched over a table,
surrounded by fragments of plans that
had shattered.
16. Diplomas, certificates, rejection letters,
performance reviews—all lay like
broken tiles.
17. They turned them over and over,
tracing the path of every misstep as if
constructing a case against themselves.
18. And they said: I was given chances I
did not manage perfectly; now I stand
amid the ruins of “potential.”
19. Others have carried heavier loads and
not collapsed; others have climbed
further with less.
20. Eternal One, am I simply weak?
21. Did You misjudge when You thought I
could bear this life?
22. And the Holy One answered: The
measure of a soul is not in how high
they climbed according to their
culture’s ladder.
23. Woe unto the voices that praise only
the visible successes and ignore the
courage it takes simply to go on.
24. You have survived conditions that
those who judge you have never had to
face.
25. After this, I saw one sitting alone with
a box of old messages—words written
in anger, or silence where words should
have been.
26. They replayed arguments in their
mind, assigning to themselves the
heavier portion of blame each time.
27. They thought of estranged siblings,
ghosted friends, lovers now strangers,

- and said: Perhaps I was the problem in
every story.
28. If I had said less, or more; stayed
longer, or left sooner; forgiven again, or
refused sooner to be used—
 29. Eternal One, I move through scenes
like a haunt; I do not know where I
was victim and where I was villain.
 30. So I choose the safest answer: I call
myself the villain in all.
 31. And the Holy One answered: You are
neither the sole villain nor the sole
victim; you are human.
 32. Woe unto teachings that demand you
erase all nuance in the name of “taking
responsibility.”
 33. Behold, I am able to separate what you
did from what was done to you, even
when you cannot.
 34. Then I was taken to a place of worship
where one sat in the last row, head
bowed low.
 35. They had been told from youth that
their heart was deceitful above all
things and desperately wicked.
 36. Every spontaneous joy, every protest,
every instinct toward self-preservation
had been labeled suspect.
 37. And they said: Eternal One, if my
heart cannot be trusted, then every
feeling is a potential sin.
 38. If every desire is suspicious, then I
must live as a spy against myself.
 39. I have become a house divided, always
cross-examining my own motives.
 40. I do not know how to rest inside my
own skin.

41. And the Holy One answered: I did not design your heart as an enemy to be crushed, but as an instrument to be tuned.
42. Woe unto doctrines that confuse corruption with complexity and teach self-contempt as holiness.
43. Behold, your heart has misled you at times, but so have your teachers; yet you were told only to mistrust yourself.
44. After this I was shown a workplace where one stayed late every night, re-checking every task three times.
45. Their stomach knotted at each email; their sleep was brief and full of rehearsed conversations.
46. A single mistake in the past had been met with disproportionate fury; since then, they had carried a silent sentence: You must never fail again.
47. And they said: Eternal One, I know I am small in the scheme of things.
48. My errors do not topple nations, yet I feel as if one misstep will bring down my whole life.
49. Am I bound to this vigilance until I break?
50. And the Holy One answered: This is not diligence; it is a scar.
51. Woe unto those who react to human error with shaming storms and then call the resulting anxiety “a strong work ethic.”
52. Behold, I call you to faithfulness, not to permanent self-punishment.

53. Then I was shown a chair in a therapist’s office, worn smooth by many who had sat weeping.
54. One sat there now, hands twisting a tissue, ashamed not only of what happened to them, but of needing help at all.
55. They said: I know others have suffered worse; I know I should be grateful for what I have.
56. I can list the good things in my life, yet the sadness does not obey the list.
57. I feel embarrassed to be this broken in a world that demands resilience as the entry fee.
58. Eternal One, do I dishonor You by still hurting over what is “in the past”?
59. And the Holy One answered: Your pain does not have an expiration date in My compassion.
60. Woe unto cultures that rush the healing of wounds they never bled.
61. Blessed are you for seeking help; it is not a failure of faith but an act of courage.
62. After this, I saw one who had been the harsh one, the abandoning one, the betrayer.
63. Years had passed; they now sat in quiet regret, scenes replaying in which they could not undo what was done.
64. They did not deny their guilt; they did not minimize their harm.
65. But they had been taught only two possibilities: to excuse themselves or to drown in shame.

66. And they said: Eternal One, I have sinned against others and against my own soul.
67. I will not pretend otherwise.
68. Yet I do not know how to live as someone who has done these things and still draw breath.
69. Is there a path for the truly repentant that is not denial on the one hand or self-destruction on the other?
70. And the Holy One answered: There is such a path, but it is narrow and long.
71. It passes through confession, amends where possible, and a lifetime of living differently—not to erase the past, but to bear witness that you are no longer its servant.
72. Woe unto churches that preach forgiveness cheaply but never teach repair, leaving the remorseful trapped in either arrogance or despair.
73. Behold, your shame is not your penance; transformation is.
74. Then I saw many gathered in a shadowed valley, each believing themselves uniquely defective.
75. One because of their diagnosis; another because of their poverty; another because of their history of abuse; another because of their addiction; another because of their scattered attention and unfinished projects.
76. Each thought, Others are struggling nobly; I alone am fundamentally wrong.
77. Their isolation was deepened by the belief that they were singular in their unworthiness.
78. And the Eternal One said to them as to one: You have been taught a cruel arithmetic of value.
79. Woe unto the narratives that present only the polished survivors and hide the ongoing strugglers as if they were failures of the story.
80. Behold, you are not behind schedule; there is no cosmic timeline on which you must keep pace with those whose roads were smoother.
81. These things I, Nibwâskââ, beheld, and my own heart was pierced; for I, too, had learned to turn the knife inward.
82. I said: Eternal One, I have often joined the chorus that accused me; I have called it humility to believe the worst about myself.
83. I have mistaken self-contempt for contrition and numbness for maturity.
84. And the Holy One answered: The lament of the crushed includes the lament of those crushed by their own inherited self-hatred.
85. Write this, that they may know:
86. Repentance is not agreeing that you are worthless; it is agreeing that you were made for more than the harm you have given or received.
87. Humility is not thinking you are beneath love; it is knowing you do not have to earn it by being flawless.

88. Wherefore, let those who have turned the blade upon themselves hear this word:
89. That the Eternal One does not join the voice that calls you trash, failure, mistake, or burden.
90. That even when you must face what you have done, you need not face it as one already condemned beyond hope.
91. Break, then, the altar on which you sacrifice your own heart day after day in My name.
92. For I, the Eternal One, take no pleasure in your self-destruction, whether praised as piety or disguised as pragmatism.
93. And whoever, even once, pauses before speaking another curse against themselves and instead whispers, If You see me differently than I see myself, teach me Your gaze,
94. Has already joined the lament of the crushed in a new way—not only as one who suffers, but as one who begins, slowly, to refuse to be their own executioner.

CHAPTER 6

1. And it came to pass that after I had heard the inward lament of those who accused themselves, the word of the Eternal One came again unto me, saying:
2. You have listened to the cries of this generation; now listen to the cries of those who are not yet born, and of

- those who cannot speak in your tongue.
3. For the crushed are not only the living who can write their names, but also the voiceless and the not-yet.
4. And behold, I was taken in vision to a shoreline where the waves brought gifts and curses in equal measure.
5. The sand was littered with fragments of bright-colored trash, smooth as stones and sharp as regret.
6. A child picked up a broken piece, turned it in her hand, and said: Is this what seashells look like now?
7. Eternal One, they told me You made the oceans good.
8. But when I walk here, I find the relics of a hunger I did not choose.
9. And the Holy One answered: The sea remembers what your landfills try to hide.
10. Woe unto those who treat the waters as a mouth that can swallow anything without choking.
11. For every piece cast away becomes part of the inheritance of children who never agreed to this covenant of decay.
12. After this I was shown a forest, once thick, now thinned.
13. Stumps stood like gravestones; machinery scars tracked the hills.
14. The air held the ghost of bird-song that had no throats left to sing it.
15. And the trees that remained said: We have given shade for centuries and fruit for generations.

16. We have held soil in place, woven rain into roots, cooled the breath of hot cities.
17. Yet we are felled in an hour for tables that will last less than we did, for paper to advertise our own destruction.
18. Eternal One, do they not know how long it takes to grow a ring in our trunks?
19. And the Holy One answered: They know, but they do not feel.
20. Woe unto those who count the value of a tree only in short-term currency and not in centuries of shelter.
21. Then I was taken beneath the surface of the earth, where aquifers flowed like sleeping veins.
22. Chemicals seeped downward; pipes drew upward; thirst moved across continents.
23. The water said: I have been rain, river, tear, baptism, flood, and drought.
24. I have traveled through the bodies of countless beings and returned to the sky again.
25. Now I am bottled, branded, bought and sold; poisoned in one place, scarce in another.
26. Eternal One, they pray for rain while allowing its sources to be devoured.
27. They call it "resource management," yet I feel their greed as fever.
28. And the Holy One answered: Water was meant to be a shared mercy, not a tool of domination.
29. Woe unto those who hoard wells and privatize springs.

30. After this I saw a great sheet of ice, cracked and crying in slow motion.
31. Creatures walked upon it, thin with hunger; beneath it, ancient air sighed its last.
32. The ice said: I am the memory of winters older than your empires.
33. I have held in my body the stories of the sky, year upon year, long before you measured time by markets.
34. Now I melt faster than your politics can admit.
35. Eternal One, the ones who will feel my absence most are those who have emitted least.
36. And the Holy One answered: The balance of your world is being mortgaged for momentary comfort.
37. Woe unto those who profit now and say, Our grandchildren will innovate their way out, while refusing to change their own ways.
38. Then I heard the cry of the animals, each in its own cadence.
39. The whale whose songs were intercepted by engines;
40. The bee whose flowers had been paved;
41. The salmon whose rivers were dammed for light;
42. The birds whose migratory stars were drowned by city glare.
43. They said together: We were not created as extras in your drama.
44. We have our own lines in the chorus of creation.

45. Eternal One, why do they treat us as collateral to their narrative of growth?
46. And the Holy One answered: I gave them the power to name you, not the right to erase you.
47. Woe unto the culture that calls itself “dominion” while leaving behind silence where song once lived.
48. After this, the vision turned, and I saw children yet unborn, clustered at the edge of time like seeds waiting for rain.
49. They could not yet speak, but their absence in your councils was itself a plea.
50. Their faces were a mosaic of all peoples, all hues, all lineages.
51. And they said without words: You are deciding for us how much ice remains, how many species survive, how breathable the air will be, how many storms our shores must endure.
52. You argue about policies measured in election cycles, but we will live inside the aftermath of your arguments.
53. Eternal One, will they remember that we exist when they sign their papers?
54. And the Holy One answered: Some remember; many do not.
55. Woe unto those who call themselves “pro-life” while ignoring the life of the world their children must inhabit.
56. For what is it to force a body into existence if you refuse to tend the planet that body will depend upon?
57. Then I saw old prophets of another age, who spoke of fields lying fallow, of

- jubilee for land and labor, of beasts sharing in rest.
58. Their scrolls were dusty on shelves in climate-controlled rooms.
59. Religious leaders quoted their words about personal morality, but seldom their commands about greed, land, and debt.
60. And the prophets said: We warned them not to grind the poor into dust, nor the land into desert.
61. Our warnings were spiritual; their consequences are physical.
62. Eternal One, will they ever see that ignoring justice was always also ecological violence?
63. And the Holy One answered: The earth is delivering the sermon they refused to hear from you.
64. Woe unto the generations that separate “environment” from “neighbor,” as if poisoned rivers do not flow through human bodies.
65. After this, I, Nibwâskââ, fell on my face and said: Eternal One, I am part of this age; my own life is tangled in these systems.
66. I heat my home, I wear, I eat, I travel on roads carved through former silence.
67. How can I lament without pretending to stand outside the harm?
68. And the Holy One answered: You cannot stand outside it, but you can choose how you stand within it.
69. Lament is not a performance of purity; it is the refusal to call destruction “inevitable.”

70. You are not asked to be stainless; you are asked to be honest, to consume less where you can, to stand against the fires even while you breathe their smoke.
71. Write this, then, as part of the lament:
72. That the crushed include not only the poor and the abused, but the planet that groans under layers of extractive worship.
73. That those who will live in the wake of your choices are already, in some sense, crying out for you to choose differently.
74. Let whoever reads understand:
75. That cheap goods are often soaked in unseen sorrow;
76. That endless travel leaves tracks not only on photos but on the sky;
77. That convenience can be another word for willful blindness.
78. Woe unto those who say, It is too late, nothing can be done, and use that despair as an excuse to keep feasting.
79. Blessed, however, are those who say, We may not save everything, but we will not add to the ruin where we can help it.
80. For I, the Eternal One, am not counting your carbon alone, but your courage; not only your emissions, but your willingness to break allegiance with the gods of endless more.
81. And whoever, in any small way, plants a tree, protects a river, reduces a harm, changes a habit, defends a species, or

- lifts their voice against the machinery of consuming without end,
82. Stands with Me in the lament—not as judge above the world, but as one who has chosen to suffer with creation rather than profit from its slow undoing.

CHAPTER 7

1. And it came to pass that after I had heard the groaning of creation and the unborn, the word of the Eternal One came unto me, saying:
2. You have listened to the pain of this hour; now listen to the pain of many hours layered together—the wounds that did not end when the body died, the grief that travels in blood and memory.
3. For there is a crushing that happens not only once, but again in every generation that must live inside its shadow.
4. And behold, I was shown a people whose songs were older than the borders that now penned them in.
5. Their language carried rivers and hills within its syllables; their stories had once walked freely across the land.
6. But their children now learned these words secretly, in kitchens and backyards, as if practicing a contraband geography.
7. One elder sat by a fire, tracing shapes in the dust.

8. They said: My grandparents were taken to schools where their hair was cut, their tongues beaten silent, their gods called demons.
9. They were told that their drums were childish, their ceremonies foolish, their names unprofessional.
10. They learned to hide who they were in order to eat.
11. Now their grandchildren stand in lines at government offices, asked to prove in documents what was once simply lived.
12. Eternal One, how many times can a people be told that their existence is an error before they begin to believe it?
13. And the Holy One answered: I have never required your erasure as the price of survival.
14. Woe unto the empires that break a people and then ask why they struggle to walk straight.
15. After this I saw a city built upon a buried city.
16. Beneath its streets lay the forgotten footprints of those driven out, enslaved, or worked to death in its foundations.
17. New buildings gleamed where old neighborhoods had been scraped away.
18. The plaques on the walls told a story of progress; the air between the bricks hummed with names never inscribed.
19. And the ground itself said: I remember who planted gardens here before there were highways.
20. I remember songs sung in languages now mocked or “celebrated” once a year in costumes.
21. Eternal One, their descendants walk these sidewalks and feel grief with no obvious source.
22. They inherit keys to houses their ancestors could never enter, or they inherit no keys at all.
23. They carry debts, illnesses, and exclusions whose roots they cannot fully see.
24. And the Holy One answered: History is not past when its consequences are present.
25. Woe unto those who say, That was long ago, while still holding the spoils of what was taken.
26. Then I was shown a line of mothers and fathers standing in courthouses, schools, and clinics.
27. They filled out forms asking for income, address, marital status—but never: What storms did your people survive before you were born?
28. Their hands shook not only from their own story, but from the stories that had shaped their blood—war, famine, forced migration, slavery, disaster, betrayal.
29. And they said: Our children flinch at sudden sounds, watch doors, hoard food, startle awake, rage for reasons they cannot name.
30. Therapists speak of trauma; elders speak of curses; pastors speak of sin; politicians speak of statistics.

31. Eternal One, what language do You use for sorrow that began three generations before we were conceived?
32. And the Holy One answered: I call it grief unjustly inherited.
33. Woe unto the powers that sow terror and then blame the harvest on the soil.
34. After this I saw a classroom where history was taught in smooth narratives.
35. Maps glowed colorful on the wall; timelines ran straight as spears.
36. Children traced the routes of conquest with fingers, learning dates but not tremors.
37. Outside the window, their classmates carried last names born of forced unions, lost villages, ships, auctions, bunkers, and camps.
38. One child looked at the textbook and then at their own hands and thought:
39. Where is my family in this story?
40. Why are my ancestors either villains, victims, or not mentioned at all?
41. Eternal One, how can I love myself if the only stories told about people like me are statistics of suffering or danger?
42. And the Holy One answered: You are more than the narrow roles they have written for you.
43. Woe unto the storytellers who erase complexity to make their own line look clean.
44. Then I saw families gathered around small screens, watching recordings of violence repeated as “evidence.”
45. Bodies that looked like theirs lay on sidewalks, were pinned to asphalt, were choked, shot, beaten, mocked, or left.
46. Commentators debated whether this was “about race” or “about class” or “about authority,” while children saw only this: People like us are in danger.
47. And their hearts learned to brace whenever sirens passed; their parents learned to rehearse instructions for survival as bedtime stories.
48. Eternal One, how many warnings must we give our children before they can simply be children?
49. And the Holy One answered: You should not have to instruct toddlers in how not to appear threatening.
50. Woe unto societies where some are presumed innocent until proven guilty, and others are presumed guilty even as they die.
51. After this, I saw a line running through time like a scar.
52. On one side stood those who had benefited from conquest, stolen labor, unequal laws, and selective enforcement.
53. On the other stood those who had borne the cost in their bodies, homes, and futures.
54. Many on the first side said: I did not build these structures; why should I be implicated?

55. Many on the second side said: I did not choose this struggle; why am I born into it?
56. Eternal One, is there justice that does not crush one side while excusing the other?
57. And the Holy One answered: Justice is not a seesaw where one must rise only if the other falls.
58. It is the leveling of ground that has been tilted so long that equality feels like loss to those once elevated.
59. Woe unto those who cling to advantage and call fairness “persecution.”
60. Behold, you did not choose the histories you were born into, but you choose daily whether to perpetuate or interrupt them.
61. Then I saw ceremonies of remembrance held in many lands:
62. Candles lit at monuments; names read at stone walls; marches retracing steps of forced journeys; songs sung in languages once forbidden.
63. Some attended as duty, some as curiosity, some as genuine grief.
64. Among them stood those whose ancestors had been both broken and breakers, both oppressed in one era and oppressive in another.
65. They said: Eternal One, our line is tangled.
66. We inherit victimhood and complicity, wounds and weapons.

67. How shall we stand before You without either denying our ancestor’s suffering or excusing their sins?
68. And the Holy One answered: Bring the whole tangle; do not prune it for My sake.
69. Woe unto those who cling to a purified story in which their people were only noble, only virtuous, only wronged.
70. Blessed are those who say: We did beautiful things and terrible things; we were brave and cruel; we were human—and now we choose differently where we can.
71. After this, I, Nibwâskââ, wept for my own line, for those before me whose choices and wounds have shaped my days.
72. I said: Eternal One, I feel in my body fears that are older than my memories.
73. I carry in my imagination both the dread of the hunted and the habits of the hunter.
74. Teach me how to walk in this world without repeating what harmed those who came before me.
75. And the Holy One answered: This is part of the lament of the crushed:
76. To acknowledge that history lives in flesh, that injustice is not washed away by time, that apology without repair is another form of forgetting.
77. Yet it is also to believe that the chain is not unbreakable.
78. Write, then, that any who read may know:

79. You are not guilty of your ancestors' deeds by birth, nor absolved of their consequences by denial.
80. You are invited to become a hinge between what was and what may yet be—
81. To refuse the comfort of ignorance, to bear some cost in the name of repair, to listen more than you defend.
82. Woe unto those who weaponize their ancestors' suffering to justify their present cruelty.
83. Woe also unto those who refuse to see that their comfort was built on unreckoned harms.
84. Blessed, however, are those who enter into this long sorrow and say:
85. We cannot change what our fathers and mothers did; we can change what we teach our children to do in their name.
86. For I, the Eternal One, see not only the weight of ancestral wounds, but also the courage of those who choose to bend the line toward mercy.
87. And whoever, even hidden and unknown, interrupts a cycle—refusing to hit a child as they were hit, refusing to mock a people as their elders did, refusing to profit from an injustice they now recognize—
88. That one has joined the lament not only as a mourner, but as a quiet rebel against the gravity of history.
89. And though the world may not mark their act on any monument, their

choice shines before Me brighter than many statues that glorify the violent.

CHAPTER 8

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of those who were crushed openly, the word of the Eternal One came unto me, saying:
2. You have heard from the ones beneath the wheel; now you must listen to those who live beside it—those who are not yet crushed, yet tremble, those who look away and are eaten from within by their looking away.
3. For there is a sorrow that comes not only from suffering, but from watching suffering and passing by.
4. And behold, I was shown a marketplace where many screens shone at once.
5. upon one, a war;
upon another, a flood;
upon another, a beating;
upon another, a headline of scandal, famine, collapse.
6. The people scrolled as if tasting many flavors of grief in one sitting.
7. A woman held her phone and felt her chest tighten again and again until it dulled.
8. She said: Eternal One, there is too much.
9. I see a thousand wounds before breakfast and can tend to none of them.
10. If I let myself feel for each, I will not be able to rise from my bed.

11. So I harden a little, then a little more,
and call it coping.
12. Am I wicked for my numbness, or
simply small?
13. And the Holy One answered: You are
small; the world is vast; your heart was
not meant to carry every image alone.
14. Woe unto those who built systems that
turn distant suffering into endless
spectacle, with no path to shared
burden.
15. Behold, I do not condemn you for
needing to look away; I warn you only
not to forget that what you look away
from is still real.
16. After this I saw an office where
workers spoke in soft tones about
“difficult decisions.”
17. Charts filled the walls; numbers
marched in orderly columns.
18. A line on a graph dipped, and there
was murmuring; another line rose, and
there was pleased nodding.
19. Yet every dip and rise meant hours cut,
jobs lost, lives rearranged by strangers’
pens.
20. One worker stared at the projection
and thought:
21. Eternal One, if I object, I may be
replaced; if I stay silent, I am part of
this.
22. I did not design this machine, yet my
hands help keep it running.
23. Am I crushed, or crusher, or both?
24. And the Holy One answered: In a
broken order, many stand at such
crossroads.
25. Woe unto the few who profit greatly
and never once ask these questions.
26. Blessed are you when the questions
themselves trouble your sleep; let them
lead you to small acts of courage where
you can.
27. Then I was shown a dinner table in a
quiet house.
28. News played softly in the background
of war, corruption, injustice.
29. One at the table shifted the topic each
time the report cut too close.
30. They said: It is not that I do not care;
it is that I cannot bear to care and
change nothing.
31. So I choose not to hear, and call it
“protecting my peace.”
32. Eternal One, is my peace worth the
price of my ignorance?
33. And the Holy One answered: There is
a peace that is protection, and a peace
that is insulation.
34. Woe unto the comfort that depends
upon refusal to know.
35. Yet I do not ask you to carry all
sorrows; I ask you not to make your
comfort from pretending they do not
exist.
36. After this I saw a friend group
laughing in a café.
37. Among their stories and jokes, one
began to speak of a recent assault, of a
fear that would not lift.
38. The table grew awkward; someone
said, Let’s not get heavy, another said,
At least it wasn’t worse, another
changed the subject.

39. The storyteller's voice withdrew, like a tide pulled back.
40. They thought: My pain is an unwelcome guest; I will not bring it here again.
41. Eternal One, they are not cruel, only uncomfortable.
42. Yet the result is the same as cruelty: I remain alone.
43. And the Holy One answered: You are right; indifference and discomfort can wound as deeply as intent.
44. Woe unto the cultures that train their children more in keeping conversations light than in bearing each others' burdens.
45. After this I saw a street where a man lay on the sidewalk, muttering in a language of hunger and confusion.
46. People stepped around him, eyes diverted, thoughts racing: I am late, I am scared, Someone else will help, I don't know what to do.
47. One passerby slowed, then sped up, then slowed again, torn between compassion and fear.
48. They said in their heart: Eternal One, I have been taught about the Good Samaritan since childhood.
49. Yet now that I stand in the story, I am frozen.
50. I do not know his history, his illness, his danger, my limits.
51. Will You judge me if I walk on? Will You endanger me if I stop?

52. And the Holy One answered: I am not a quizmaster, waiting to see if you choose the perfect option.
53. Woe unto those who design cities where a fallen man is more likely to be arrested than healed.
54. If you cannot help, at least let your gaze rest upon him as a fellow human, not an obstacle.
55. Then I was shown a room where co-workers joked lightly about "those people"—immigrants, queer folk, the poor, another race, another faith.
56. One listener felt their stomach knot.
57. They had benefited from remaining silent in such moments; promotions and friendships were easier that way.
58. Yet each silence became a stone in their own chest.
59. They thought: Eternal One, what if I speak and become the next target?
60. What if I lose this fragile belonging I have built?
61. And the Holy One answered: I see the cost you weigh.
62. Woe unto the workplaces where cruelty is the price of camaraderie.
63. Blessed are those who, even once in a while, say calmly, That's not funny, and absorb the awkwardness that follows.
64. After this, I saw many who had learned so much about the brokenness of the world that they could speak of it fluently.
65. They shared articles, posted outrage, read books, attended panels.

66. Yet their knowledge seldom translated into any small change in their habits, their giving, their friendships.
67. They said: Eternal One, I am informed; is that not enough?
68. And the Holy One answered: Information without incarnation becomes another broken altar.
69. Woe unto those who confuse being moved with moving.
70. Yet I know your limits; I do not demand that you save the world, only that you not use your weariness as an excuse to never lift anything at all.
71. These things I, Nibwâskââ, beheld, and I said: Eternal One, in such a world, who can stand without either breaking or hardening?
72. If we feel, we burn out; if we do not feel, we become stone.
73. What path is there for those who are neither crushed nor cruel, but caught in between?
74. And the Holy One answered: This, too, is part of the lament.
75. The world you inhabit is too heavy for any one pair of shoulders; you were meant for shared yokes, not heroic isolation.
76. Write, then, that the bystander, the overwhelmed, the half-awake are also being formed—
either into people who justify the altars,
or into people who admit their complicity and yet lean, however slightly, toward mercy.

77. Woe unto those who, seeing their part in the harm, choose only to drown in self-loathing and do nothing different.
78. For such sorrow, though intense, becomes another circle of self.
79. Blessed, however, are those who say:
80. I cannot do everything; I will do something.
81. I cannot help everyone; I will help someone.
82. I cannot always speak; I will speak when I can, and repent when I did not.
83. For I, the Eternal One, do not weigh your life only by the times you failed to act, but also by the times you changed course after seeing that failure.
84. And whoever, reading these laments, feels their own reluctance pierced and says, even quietly, I will not look away as easily as before,
85. Has joined the crushed in a new way—not because they now share the same wounds, but because they have chosen, however tremblingly, to let those wounds matter.

CHAPTER 9

1. And it came to pass that after I had listened to many who suffer, the word of the Eternal One came again unto me, saying:
2. You have heard the laments of those who still dare to call upon Me; now you must hear the laments of those who feel betrayed by Me, and of those who refuse My name because of what they have seen.

3. For their cries also rise before Me,
though they do not call them prayer.
4. And behold, I was taken in vision to a
small room where the walls were lined
with pill bottles, cards, and fading
flowers.
5. Upon the bed lay one who had prayed
for healing until their throat was dry.
6. Their friends had fasted, anointed,
declared, decreed; hands had been laid,
promises spoken.
7. Years had passed; the sickness had not.
8. And they said: Eternal One, I have
believed, confessed, repented, obeyed.
9. I have visualized, surrendered, cried
out; I have been told to accept, to fight,
to claim, to release.
10. Those who prayed for me now avoid
my eyes, as if my continued illness were
an embarrassment to their doctrine.
11. They whisper that perhaps there is
secret sin, lack of faith, some blockage
within me.
12. Eternal One, if You are healer, why am
I still in this bed?
13. If You are just, why do the careless
thrive while I count my remaining
breaths?
14. And the Holy One answered: Your
worth is not measured by your
recovery, nor your faith by your
prognosis.
15. Woe unto those who offer formulas
where they should offer presence, and
blame the sufferer when the formula
fails.

16. Behold, there are wounds in this world
that are not mended in the ways you
have been told to expect.
17. I do not despise you for your anger; I
do not turn from you when you say,
This is not fair.
18. Then I was shown a grave too small
for the earth that covered it.
19. Beside it stood a parent whose eyes
were dry only because tears had run
out.
20. They had buried a child after prayers,
pleas, bargains, and nights of pacing
floors.
21. People came with casseroles and
sentences: God needed another angel,
Everything happens for a reason, One
day you will understand.
22. Each sentence struck like a stone
wrapped in lace.
23. And the parent said in their heart:
Eternal One, if You needed a child,
why did You not take me?
24. If there is a reason, why must it pass
through this body so small?
25. I have no worship left that does not
taste of ashes.
26. If I ever sing again, it will be through
gritted teeth.
27. Eternal One, I do not know whether I
hate You or the god they describe in
Your place.
28. And the Holy One answered: I did not
need your child; I am not made more
whole by your loss.

29. Woe unto those who place My name upon every tragedy as if I willed it for lesson or test.
30. Behold, I was with you in the hospital room, not as the thief, but as the One who gathered every breath and did not call your protest blasphemy.
31. Your rage is not a barrier between us; it is evidence that love has been violated.
32. After this I was shown a neighborhood flattened by wind and water.
33. Houses were matchsticks; possessions lay scattered like broken sentences.
34. Survivors picked through debris while cameras rolled and commentators spoke of “acts of God.”
35. One stood among the ruins and muttered:
36. Eternal One, they name this destruction after You, as if You were the storm’s vanity.
37. Some say we were judged; others say we were chosen as an example.
38. They find theology in the path of the tornado and none in the zoning maps, levees, and neglected infrastructure.
39. I am too tired to parse their reasons; all I know is that my life now fits into a plastic bag.
40. If this is Your will, then I want no part of it.
41. And the Holy One answered: The winds and waters are older than your insurance clauses and sermon outlines.
42. I did not aim them at your house as a weapon.

43. Woe unto those who blame Me for every fault line they refused to repair, every code they lobbied to weaken, every warning they ignored.
44. Behold, the world is not arranged as a neat ledger in which every disaster is a customized message.
45. I am with you in the rubble, not as the strategist of your ruin, but as the One who weeps when you say, Enough.
46. Then I saw one sitting in a quiet park, a book of philosophy open but unread.
47. They had studied suffering, read the arguments for and against My existence, watched children die and tyrants thrive.
48. They said: If there is a God, that God is either powerless, indifferent, or monstrous.
49. I will not worship power that allows genocides and calls it “mysterious ways.”
50. I would rather live in an empty universe than in one ruled by such a being.
51. Eternal One—if You exist—I reject You on moral grounds.
52. And the Holy One answered: I have heard this verdict from many honest hearts.
53. Woe unto the images of Me that have taught you I sit above your nightmares, moving pieces for My amusement.
54. Behold, I would rather you reject such gods than call them by My name.
55. Your refusal is not a sin against Me when it is a refusal to bless cruelty.

56. After this, I was taken back into the sanctuary of a great religion.
57. There sat one whose abuse had been covered by that religion's leaders.
58. They had prayed as a child for rescue and received instead more silence, more harm.
59. Now, as an adult, they could not enter any sacred space without feeling their body brace.
60. They said: Eternal One, I cried to You, and those who claimed to be Your hands did not come.
61. Instead, they told me I was lying, or exaggerating, or tempting.
62. They told me to forgive without justice, to stay without safety, to honor without truth.
63. I do not know if I stopped believing in You or only in them, but the result is the same: I stand outside.
64. Eternal One, if You care, why did You not intervene?
65. And the Holy One answered: I did not instruct them to ignore you; I did not whisper to them to protect the institution over your soul.
66. Woe unto those who confuse their preservation with My will.
67. Behold, I moved in your own resistance, in the courage that eventually carried you away, in the witnesses who did believe you.
68. You were taught that My action would always look like parted seas and lightning; you were not taught to see

- Me in the small strength that refused to die in you.
69. Then I was shown the face of one who had watched their prayers seemingly bless others but never themselves.
70. They said: I prayed and others conceived; I remained barren.
71. I prayed and others were healed; I remained sick.
72. I prayed and others found work; I remained unemployed.
73. I prayed for protection and still the worst came.
74. Eternal One, I feel like the control in an experiment—
the one who proves that prayer makes no difference.
75. If You love me, why do I seem excluded from Your interventions?
76. And the Holy One answered: You are not a demonstration of My absence.
77. Woe unto the religious culture that treats answered prayers as proof of favoritism and unanswered ones as shame.
78. Behold, many things in your world are determined by bodies, histories, systems, and choices I did not make for you.
79. I am not the only will at work in the story.
80. After this, I, Nibwâskââ, fell silent, for I too had asked these questions in my own nights.
81. I said: Eternal One, I have spoken much of injustice and of those who cause it, but in the secret places of my

- heart I have also asked, Why did You not stop them?
82. I have been afraid to write this question, lest some think I have no faith.
83. Yet here, in this book, faith is not pretending to understand; it is refusing to lie about what we feel.
84. And the Holy One answered me: I do not require you to protect My reputation.
85. I do not ask you to excuse what you cannot reconcile.
86. Let the ache remain open; let the question stand.
87. For in this late hour, easy answers are another form of cruelty.
88. Write, then, as part of the lament:
89. That there are wounds which have no explanation that would make them bearable;
that there are losses for which no purpose could be worth the price;
that there are sorrows which will not be tidied in this age.
90. Woe unto the teachers who rush to close what I have left open, who fear mystery more than they fear dishonesty.
91. Blessed, however, are those who bring Me their fury as well as their praise, their accusations as well as their thanks.
92. For I am not honored by flattery from the crushed; I am honored when they dare to speak to Me at all.

93. And whoever, having suffered in ways that make belief nearly impossible, still whispers—not a hymn, but a bare sentence such as, If You are there, see this,
94. That one has already joined the deepest stratum of lament:
95. Not the lament that seeks to justify Me, nor the lament that seeks to deny Me,
but the lament that simply lays reality bare and refuses to call evil good.
96. And I, the Eternal One, receive such words without defensiveness,
97. For I did not give you a mind only to shut it, nor a heart only to silence it, but that you might bring the full weight of your truth into My presence—
98. even when that truth is this: I do not understand You, and I am not sure I want to.

CHAPTER 10

1. And it came to pass that after I had written many laments, my hand grew heavy and my spirit faint.
2. I said: Eternal One, how long shall we gather sorrows into words?
3. Is there no end to the testimony of the crushed?
4. And the word of the Eternal One came unto me, saying:
5. There is an end, but it is not yet.
6. For a record must be made, that every altar may be measured against the wounds it has required,

- and every system weighed against the lives it has ground.
7. Come now, Nibwâskââ, and behold the vision that gathers all these cries into one.
 8. And behold, I was taken in spirit to a great hall that was not built by human hands.
 9. There was no throne as men imagine it, no scales of brass, no gavel of carved wood;
 10. Yet the air itself seemed to be waiting, as if truth were about to speak with its own mouth.
 11. Around me stood multitudes of those whose laments I had heard—the worker, the refugee, the sick, the betrayed, the exiled, the animals, the forests, the unborn, the ancestors, the doubters, the angry.
 12. Their faces were many, their languages diverse, yet there was among them a strange unity: they had all been told, in one way or another, that their pain did not matter.
 13. And a voice, not loud yet unignorable, said: Let those who have been crushed bring forth their charges.
 14. Then came forward not only individuals, but shapes like shadows given form:
 15. The Shadow of Empire, wearing many crowns;
 16. The Shadow of Mammon, dripping with ledgers and contracts;

17. The Shadow of Religion, robed in symbols from many faiths, holding in one hand a book and in the other a gag;
18. The Shadow of Indifference, faceless and shifting, clothed in comfortable excuses.
19. And the Eternal One said to them: You have heard the laments of those beneath your weight.
20. This is not your hour to speak, but to listen.
21. For too long the crushed were told to understand you; now you shall be made to understand them.
22. Then the worker spoke, and their words gathered countless other workers behind them.
23. They said: You promised that if we worked hard, we would be secure.
24. Yet you built your fortunes upon our fatigue and called exploitation “opportunity.”
25. We gave you our backs and you took our futures.
26. How do you answer for the nights we spent choosing between food and medicine, between rent and rest?
27. And the Shadow of Empire and Mammon trembled, but had no answer that did not turn to dust in their mouths.
28. Then the abused spoke, those harmed in homes, in sanctuaries, in institutions.

29. They said: You used the name of God,
the sanctity of family, the authority of
office as shields.
30. You told us to forgive while you
continued;
you silenced us in the name of order;
you called our protests “rebellion” and
our boundaries “pride.”
31. How do you answer for the bodies that
still clench at certain footsteps,
the souls that cannot enter a place of
prayer without shaking?
32. And the Shadow of Religion’s robes
smoldered at the hem,
for the fire of the laments had begun to
lick its edges.
33. Then the earth itself spoke—
through cracked riverbeds, through
smoke from burning hills, through
storms given human names.
34. It said: I housed your ancestors and
asked no rent;
35. I fed your bodies and colored your
festivals;
I cooled your cities and held your dead.
36. You repaid me with poison, extraction,
and denial.
37. You said, We have dominion,
and interpreted this as license to
devour.
38. How do you answer for the species
lost, the waters fouled, the futures
shrunk?
39. And the Shadow of Mammon’s ledgers
caught flame,
for the columns of profit could not
withstand the heat of that question.

40. Then the children of many nations
spoke—
those taken, those bombed, those
caged, those indoctrinated, those
neglected.
41. They said: We were told that the
world was too complicated for our
understanding,
that the reasons for our suffering were
above our comprehension.
42. But we did not need the full
explanation to know this: it was
wrong.
43. You used us as shields, symbols,
excuses, labor;
you offered our futures on the altar of
your strategies.
44. How do you answer for the lullabies
unsung because of your policies?
45. And the Shadow of Empire’s crowns
cracked,
for the gold that adorned them had
been mined from stolen hours and
stolen land.
46. After this, those who once believed
and now could not come forward.
47. They said: We were taught that You,
Eternal One, endorsed all of this—
that the strong ruled by Your decree,
that the poor were poor for their own
good,
that suffering was always a
personalized exam from heaven.
48. We turned from You not because we
loved evil,
but because we could not love the
violence done in Your name.

49. How do You answer our confusion?
 50. And the Holy One answered: I do not defend what I did not command.
 51. I never asked that you worship the altars that crushed you.
 52. Woe unto those who preached otherwise and laid their doctrines upon your backs like bricks.
 53. Behold, much of what you rejected was not Me, but an idol dressed in My vocabulary.
 54. Then the bystanders stepped forth—the overwhelmed, the silent, the ones who looked away.
 55. They said: We are not innocent.
 56. We benefited from systems we did not build and seldom questioned.
 57. We saw headlines and turned the page; we heard stories and changed the subject;
 we witnessed jokes and sighed inwardly instead of speaking.
 58. We bring no justification, only this confession:
 We were afraid, tired, confused, complicit.
 59. What verdict is there for us?
 60. And the Eternal One answered: You stand in the valley between cruelty and courage.
 61. You cannot undo what you have ignored,
 but you can choose differently in what remains of your days.
 62. Woe unto those who hear this and shrug;

blessed are those who hear and alter their steps.
 63. Then there was silence in the hall, for every voice had in some way been heard,
 and every shadow had in some way been named.
 64. And I, Nibwâskââ, trembled and said: Eternal One, is this the day of reckoning?
 65. Will You now strike down the empires, burn the markets, tear the altars from the earth?
 66. And the Holy One answered: You ask for spectacle; I work in slower fires.
 67. I have no pleasure in annihilating My creatures,
 even when they have become instruments of harm.
 68. My judgment is not mere destruction; it is the relentless unveiling of truth and the dismantling of lies.
 69. Behold, even now the altars tremble where no camera sees:
 70. Institutions lose their sheen; secrets come to light;
 survivors speak and are believed; habits once praised are exposed as violence.
 71. These are also judgments, though they do not flash like lightning.
 72. Woe unto those who cling to their power when truth knocks at the door.
 73. For when they say, Peace, peace, and refuse to hear the laments,
 their peace is already cracking from within.

74. Then I asked: Eternal One, what is the purpose of this book we are writing, this Book of the Lament of the Crushed?
75. Is it only to accuse, to weigh down, to drown hope?
76. And the Holy One answered: No.
77. Lament is not the grave; it is the courtroom before the grave, where lies are cross-examined and hidden wounds are entered into evidence.
78. Without lament, comfort is theft. Without lament, reconciliation is fraud.
79. This book is a mirror for the powerful, a companion for the wounded, a warning for the indifferent, and an altar where the crushed may know they are not alone.
80. Write, then, that whoever reads and recognizes themselves among the crushed is not being invited to shame, but to solidarity.
81. And whoever recognizes themselves among the crushers and bystanders is not being invited only to condemnation, but to repentance with teeth in it—
repentance that touches budgets, habits, friendships, votes, jokes, liturgies.
82. For I, the Eternal One, do not delight in the death of the wicked, but in their turning from ways that produce more crushed ones.

83. After this, the hall of vision faded, but the sound of the laments did not.
84. They echoed in my chest as if it were their new chamber.
85. I said: Eternal One, I am small; my book is small; the world is vast.
86. Will these words matter against machines and markets and weapons and lies?
87. And the Holy One answered: A lament is a stone in the gears.
88. It may not stop the machine, but it will make it grind and groan; it will refuse to let the world call its cruelty “smooth.”
89. A lament is also a seed.
90. It falls into the soil of someone’s conscience and waits.
91. Years later, in some unexpected season, it may crack open and push upward into action, into courage, into the breaking of one small altar.
92. Therefore, do not despise the writing of this book, nor the reading of it, nor the tears it draws forth.
93. For every tear that falls in truth is a line in the indictment of the false peace of this age.
94. And every heart that, having read, says even once, I will not treat any human this way,
95. Has joined Me in the quiet uprising against the powers that crush.
96. Wherefore I seal, for now, the Book of the Lament of the Crushed—

not because the laments have ended,
but that they may stand as a testimony
in your days.

97. Let those who are safe read and be
unsettled;
let those who are wounded read and be
seen;
let those who are both know that this,
too, I have heard.
98. And thus the words of Nibwâskââ
concerning the crushed go forth into a
world that still prefers denial—
99. that some might finally say,
If the Eternal One stands there, with
them,
then we must learn to stand there too.

BOOK V – THE SCROLL OF THE MARKETPLACES

CHAPTER I

1. These are the words of Nibwâskââ
concerning the marketplaces of the last
days,
wherein nearly all things are weighed,
and almost nothing is deemed sacred.
2. And it came to pass that after I had
written of the crushed,
the word of the Eternal One came unto
me, saying:
3. Lift up your eyes and behold the great
bazaar of this age,
for many call it “the economy” and
bow to it as to a god they do not dare
offend.

4. And I looked, and behold, there arose a
city of glass and light,
and its towers bore many names:
Bank, Brand, Platform, Exchange,
Fund, Corporation, Index.
5. The streets below flowed like rivers of
urgency;
the air was full of signals and offers,
the windows full of things that
promised to make a life complete.
6. And the Eternal One said:
In former days men built temples and
offered sacrifices upon carved altars;
7. In this day they build markets and offer
time, bodies, and earth upon invisible
ledgers.
8. Behold, trade itself I do not despise;
for buying and selling in fairness can be
neighborly and good.
9. But I, the Eternal One, bear witness:
the marketplaces of this generation
have ceased to be servants and have
become masters.
10. For the question that rules them is not,
What is just?
but always, What will it yield?
11. And they teach the nations to ask the
same of all things:
of land, What return?
of labor, What margin?
of water, What profit?
of a human soul, What can we extract?
12. Thus saith the Eternal One:
Woe unto the order that measures
worth only in numbers and never in
tears.

13. For you have turned My creatures into
“resources,”
My earth into “real estate,”
My image-bearers into “human
capital.”
14. You speak of “growth” as if it were
salvation,
and of “the market” as if it were a
living spirit that must never be
displeased.
15. Behold, you fear recession more than
injustice,
and you tremble at a falling index more
than at a rising sea.
16. And when the poor cry out beneath
your prosperity,
you say, This is unfortunate, but you
do not change the price of anything.
17. After this I saw a hall where men and
women watched screens that flickered
with charts and lines.
18. Upon those screens, nations rose and
fell in the space of a breath,
and the fate of millions was
summarized by a small red arrow
pointing down.
19. And those who sat there rejoiced or
mourned,
not according to who ate or who
hungered,
but according to what number had
increased or decreased since the
previous hour.
20. And the Eternal One said:
Woe unto those who feel more grief
over a dip in their portfolio
than over a family losing their home.

21. You have trained your hearts to leap
for profits and grow numb at suffering.
22. Then I looked, and behold, there were
markets of attention,
where the human gaze itself was
bought and sold as grain once was.
23. Platforms cried out: Come unto us, all
ye who labor and are heavy-laden,
and we will give you distraction.
24. They studied the secret hungers of the
heart,
not to heal them, but to keep them
always slightly unsatisfied.
25. They built endless corridors of images
and words,
where one could walk for years
without arriving.
26. And they called this “engagement.”
27. The minds of the people were
harvested as fields;
their data was gathered as sheaves,
bundled and traded in markets they
never saw.
28. And the Eternal One said:
Woe unto those who turn solitude into
a vein to be mined.
29. You have learned to keep the thumb
moving and the eyes open,
but you have not learned to mend a
single broken heart.
30. You know how to trigger fear, envy,
and outrage,
but not how to foster wisdom,
patience, or peace.
31. Behold, you design for compulsion and
call it convenience.

32. After this I beheld the marketplaces of labor.
33. There were towers of glass where men and women sat in rooms high above the streets,
moving numbers from one column to another.
34. With a single decision they could erase a thousand jobs and call it “restructuring.”
35. With a change of strategy, they could displace whole neighborhoods and call it “development.”
36. And they said, We have no choice; we must remain competitive.
37. But their own tables never lacked bread,
and their own children never missed medicine for want of coin.
38. And the Eternal One said:
Woe unto those whose comfort is built upon the permanent anxiety of many.
39. You have created an order where the ones who labor hardest rest least,
and the ones who labor least rest most.
40. Then I saw also the gig worker,
standing in rain and in heat, watching a small screen for the next task.
41. Their car was their office, their debt,
their shelter, their snare.
42. The companies that used them spoke proudly of “flexibility,”
but the worker’s body knew the truth:
it was instability dressed as freedom.
43. They carried the cost of their tools,
their fuel, their sickness, their accidents;

- the company carried only the cost of the app.
44. And the worker said in their heart:
They tell me I have no boss, yet someone I never see decides whether I eat.
45. Eternal One, where in this is justice?
46. And the Holy One answered:
It is hidden, for there is little justice here.
47. Woe unto those who place all risk upon the poor and all reward upon themselves,
and then praise the poor for their “entrepreneurial spirit.”
48. After this I saw great houses of storage,
warehouses stretching farther than the eye could see.
49. Inside, workers walked many miles each day along aisles of things they could not afford.
50. Their steps were counted, their pauses recorded,
their bodies treated as extensions of the conveyor belt.
51. Outside, the buyers spoke with joy of “two-day shipping,”
and seldom asked who paid the days of life that made such speed possible.
52. And the Eternal One said:
Woe unto the culture that prizes instant delivery
more than it prizes the health of those who deliver.
53. Your convenience is written in their fatigue;

- your bargains are bought with their shortened years.
54. Then I looked upon the marketplaces of debt,
and saw lenders standing where hope was thin and options few.
55. They offered loans as if they were salvation,
interest as if it were friendship,
contracts as if they were covenants.
56. Many signed with trembling hands,
seeking only a chance at health, at learning, at shelter.
57. But the debt clung to them like a shadow that lengthened with the years.
58. They rose early and worked late,
yet the numbers scarcely moved;
their life became a story told in statements and due dates.
59. And the Eternal One said:
I commanded that you forgive debts in due season;
you have built an age where debts outlive the debtor.
60. Woe unto those who profit most from interest,
and least from honest labor and fair exchange.
61. Behold, there are houses in your cities owned by no family,
but by distant funds that know only yield.
62. There are tenants who pay more each month than a mortgage,
yet will never hold a key in their own name.

63. This, too, is a marketplace, and it testifies against you.
64. After this I, Nibwâskââ, looked upon my own life and was troubled.
65. For I, too, had purchased more than I needed
while others could not purchase what they required.
66. I had scrolled past laborers whose hands made my clothing and my devices,
and rarely had I asked their names.
67. I said: Eternal One, I am not outside this order; I am shaped by it, bound up in it.
68. How shall I speak against the marketplaces without condemning myself?
69. And the Holy One answered:
Speak not as a judge set above, but as a witness standing within.
70. Lament is not a cloak of innocence;
it is a confession: This world is wrong and I am part of it.
71. You cannot live in this age without touching its idols;
but you can refuse to bow in your heart,
and you can choose to bear some cost to love your neighbor more than your comfort.
72. Write, then, that the sin of the marketplaces is not that people trade, but that they have enthroned profit where I commanded love.
73. They have made of money a measure of virtue,

and of poverty a sign of failure or curse.

74. They ask of every choice, Will this grow the number?
and seldom, Will this heal the world?
75. Thus saith the Eternal One:
You cannot serve profit and the Eternal One.
76. You may use profit as a tool under My law of mercy,
but when it becomes your law,
you will sacrifice anything to obey it—
even your own children's future, even your neighbor's life.
77. Woe unto those who say, It is only business,
when their business crushes the weak and wounds the earth.
78. Blessed, however, are those who,
though entangled in these markets,
still ask with each purchase, each investment, each decision:
79. Who is hidden beneath this price?
Whose back bears this bargain?
Whose river carries this waste?
80. And who, having asked, alters even a small thing—
consumes less, shares more, chooses slower, pays fairer—
81. that one has written their own line in this Scroll of the Marketplaces.
82. For I, the Eternal One, see every quiet refusal to bow to the god of More,
and every small act of justice in a world that calls injustice "inevitable."
83. And though the markets of this age roar like the sea,

I hear also the footsteps of those who walk differently.

84. These shall be called wise in a time that counts only profit as wisdom,
and rich in a kingdom that measures riches by mercy.

CHAPTER 2

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the markets of labor and debt, the word of the Eternal One came again unto me, saying:
2. You have seen where the coins change hands; now behold where bread, shelter, healing, and learning become wares upon the same tables.
3. For in this age many things which I gave as necessities have been lifted up as luxuries or bait.
4. And I looked, and first I beheld the marketplaces of food.
5. There were fields where the soil was weary from bearing too much of one thing, and rivers ran thick from the chemicals poured upon them.
6. Workers bent low under a hot sky, hands in the earth and backs in pain, picking fruit they could not afford to buy.
7. Their wages were counted in coins, but their labor was counted only while their bodies held.
8. And I saw also factories of meat, where creatures I had made to move under open sky stood pressed together in stench and fear.

9. Their bodies were grown as quickly as possible, stuffed, cut, and wrapped, that others might eat cheaply and never see their eyes.
10. And in the cities, aisles groaned under mountains of food, while within sight of those aisles children went to bed hungry.
11. And the Eternal One said: Behold, I made seed, soil, water, and sun for the feeding of all, but you have built an order where there is plenty on shelves and scarcity at tables.
12. Woe unto those who throw away what the poor have prayed for.
13. You say, "We cannot help it; this is how the system works," yet you designed and defended the system.
14. You subsidize the crop that fattens the already full, and make costly the food that heals.
15. You chain small farmers to debts, and praise those who strip the land for short gain.
16. Is this not a market, and does it not testify against you?
17. After this I looked upon the markets of shelter.
18. Behold, there were many houses standing empty, kept as tokens in the games of the wealthy, while in the same streets families slept in cars and under bridges.
19. Whole neighborhoods were bought and sold in bundles, not as homes, but as assets.
20. The rent rose as a tide no wage could outrun, and those who protested were told, "This is just the market; if you cannot afford to live here, move."
21. Yet the ones who said this depended each day upon the labor of those they priced out.
22. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the hands that hoard keys and call it investment.
23. Behold, a dwelling is not merely a number in a portfolio; it is the difference between safety and exposure, learning and exhaustion, sanity and despair.
24. You speak of property rights, but I hear the right of children to sleep without fear of the street.
25. You protect the value of your neighborhoods by pushing out the poor and the stranger, and then ask Me to bless your community.
26. Shall I bless the hedge that keeps My beloved outside the gate?
27. After this I saw the marketplaces of healing.
28. There were towers of gleaming clinics and hospitals, filled with devices and medicines of great power.
29. Those who entered with the right papers and the right coverage were examined, scanned, and treated with skill.
30. Those who came without were examined first for their ability to pay.

31. I saw one standing at a counter,
holding a prescription in one hand and
a rent notice in the other.
32. The cost of the medicine was more
than their food for the month, and the
disease was one which could be
treated, but not for free.
33. And they said in their heart: Must I
choose between staying alive and
staying housed?
34. Eternal One, was not healing given as
mercy, and how has it become a wager
I cannot win?
35. And the Holy One answered: The
knowledge that heals is a gift you have
received through many minds and
years, but you have bound that gift in
patents, stocks, and profit forecasts.
36. Woe unto those who price the cure
beyond the reach of the sick.
37. You speak of the cost of innovation,
but you do not count the cost of lives
cut short, of parents buried too soon, of
children left without care because the
price of their survival did not fit your
model.
38. Then I saw counselors, therapists, and
healers of the mind, many skilled and
compassionate, yet hemmed in by rules
and rates set far away.
39. Those who needed them most often
had the least access, and those whose
souls were fraying were placed on
waiting lists that stretched past their
endurance.
40. And the Eternal One said: Your age is
sick with loneliness and fear, yet you

- ration the listeners as if empathy were
a rare drug.
41. Woe unto the societies that flood their
people with images and demands, then
make it a privilege to speak openly of
pain.
 42. After this I looked upon the
marketplaces of learning.
 43. In some places, children sat in crowded
rooms, sharing worn books and taught
by weary teachers who paid for
supplies from their own pockets.
 44. In other places, children sat in polished
halls, traveling the world in comfort,
not by necessity, but by inheritance.
 45. Those who were born where schools
were crumbling were told they had
only to work hard to escape.
 46. Yet the path before them was strewn
with tests written in a language not
their own, fees they could not pay, and
expectations they had never been
taught.
 47. Then I saw learning itself sold as a
product, with degrees wrapped in debt
and courses marketed as ladders out of
poverty that led instead to new forms
of bondage.
 48. And the Eternal One said: I delight in
knowledge and rejoice when minds
awaken, but you have built an order
where wisdom is gated behind fees and
ignorance is inherited like an illness.
 49. Woe unto those who turn education
into a filter for class, and then praise
themselves for meritocracy.

50. You speak of equal opportunity while building schools as unequal as your neighborhoods.
51. After this I saw the marketplaces of image and desire.
52. Behold, there were those called influencers, who sold not only products but themselves, turning their lives into a shop-window.
53. They learned which parts of their sorrow could be monetized and which angles of their face would draw the most coin.
54. Their worth rose and fell with numbers that changed each hour—likes, views, followers, and clicks.
55. And those who watched them began to measure themselves by the same cold counters.
56. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the world that convinces its children that they are brands first and souls second.
57. Behold, you have taught them to turn their very personhood into product and to ask of every moment, “Can this be content?”
58. Their hearts grow thin from being always on display, and you call this opportunity.
59. Then I saw small shops and street vendors, craftspeople and farmers at local markets, those who sold what their own hands had made or grown.
60. Their profits were modest and their days were long, yet their relationships were close.
61. Many of them stood in the shadow of larger chains that undercut their prices and drained their communities’ coin, yet in their modest trade there was also laughter, stories shared over counters, and gifts slipped into bags for those in need.
62. And the Eternal One said: Not every market is corruption.
63. Where there is fairness, mutual regard, and the freedom to say enough, there commerce can be neighborly and blessed.
64. But where you strip away relationship and leave only the question, “How much can I squeeze?”, you have departed from My way.
65. These things I, Nibwâskââ, beheld, and my heart grew heavy.
66. I said: Eternal One, Your indictment is vast and reaches into every store, every screen, and every street.
67. Is there any place in this world where buying and selling are not stained with the fear of scarcity and the hunger for more?
68. And the Holy One answered: There are such places, small and stubborn.
69. There are kitchens where food is shared without counting, and gardens where seeds are exchanged freely.
70. There are clinics that treat first and bill later, and sometimes not at all.

71. There are classrooms where curiosity is fanned though budgets are thin, and workplaces where profit is shared though the returns are modest.
72. These are the small fires of another kingdom burning quietly within the empires of trade.
73. Write, then, that the Scroll of the Marketplaces is not given only to condemn, but to awaken.
74. Let those who read and say, “This is too much; we cannot change it,” understand that the powers of this age depend upon such despair.
75. For if you believe nothing can change, you will not even attempt to live differently.
76. But let those who read and say, “If this is how it is, then I will not call it good,” know that they have already taken the first step out of idolatry.
77. Blessed are those who, in a world that says, “Take what you can,” choose instead to ask, “What can I give, and what harm can I avoid?”
78. For I, the Eternal One, am not tallying your net worth, but the ways in which you refused to make gain from another’s crushing.
79. And whoever, in any small manner, loosens the grip of the marketplaces on their heart—by giving without naming, by repairing instead of replacing, by paying more that another may live with dignity, by choosing enough over more—

80. That one walks with Me through the stalls and screens of this age as a stranger to its gods, though they buy and sell like anyone.

CHAPTER 3

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning food, shelter, healing, and learning, the word of the Eternal One came again unto me, saying:
2. You have seen the stalls that stand in the open; now behold the markets that hide in the wires and in the laws, whose contracts are written in words no common heart can bear to read.
3. For in this age, much is bought and sold in secret, and many are sold without knowing they were ever placed on the table.
4. And I looked, and behold, there were contracts as long as scrolls and as small as dust, which appeared upon screens before each purchase and each consent.
5. The people clicked, “I agree,” for they were weary and in haste, and the words were crafted to be unread.
6. And within those words were permissions given and rights surrendered, promises made and debts invited, all in the name of “access” and “service.”
7. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who hide snares in their speech and then call the caught careless.
8. Behold, a covenant is holy when both parties understand; your age has made

- covenant into labyrinth, that the strong may wander freely and the weak may be lost.
9. After this I saw that data itself had become a marketplace.
 10. Behold, every glance, pause, search, purchase, and word typed in secret was gathered as harvest.
 11. The people thought they were only speaking to friends, or looking for answers, or seeking solace in the night, yet unseen watchers gathered their patterns into nets.
 12. From these patterns, buyers were sorted, voters were targeted, fears were magnified, and choices were nudged.
 13. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who turn the inner life into merchandise.
 14. You have built a world where the heart, once a sanctuary, is now a source of metrics, and you call this “knowing your customer.”
 15. Behold, you know their habits but not their worth, their triggers but not their stories, their impulses but not their wounds.
 16. Then I saw machines that learned from the past, and men who bowed to those machines and called them oracles.
 17. They fed them records of hiring and firing, lending and denying, arrest and release, praise and suspicion, and from such memories the machines made judgments.
 18. They said, “The numbers do not lie; the algorithm is neutral,” yet the memories they fed it were soaked in the bias of many generations.
 19. Thus the machine learned to repeat the injustice of its makers with greater speed and less shame.
 20. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who build a mirror of their sin and then worship its reflection as truth.
 21. Behold, when you encode your prejudice into stone or into code, it does not become righteousness; it becomes harder to confess.
 22. You say, “It is not we who discriminate, but the system,” as if the system were not the work of your own hands.
 23. After this I looked upon the marketplaces of influence and speech.
 24. There were companies that owned the avenues where most words now traveled, and they set rules that changed as tides, driven not by justice but by revenue and risk.
 25. Some voices were amplified for profit, others silenced for convenience, and the people were taught to call this “neutral policy.”
 26. I saw lies that spread faster than truth, for they were more profitable, and anger that was promoted because it kept the eyes online.
 27. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who say, “We are only

- platforms,” while curating the soul of a generation for gain.
28. Behold, when you shape the public square for profit, you become answerable for the wounds that are inflicted there.
 29. You have discovered that outrage is lucrative, and so you have made a business of keeping the world inflamed.
 30. After this I saw the marketplaces of law and power.
 31. Behold, there were halls where men and women in fine garments met with those who had much silver, and from these meetings came the words that would later be called “policy” and “regulation.”
 32. Those with wealth brought not only arguments but gifts, promises of support, threats of withdrawal, and the law bent slowly toward their comfort.
 33. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the nations where laws are written with invisible ink that only the rich can read.
 34. You publish statutes for all, but the true rules are whispered in back rooms; you speak of democracy while building a market for influence.
 35. Behold, when justice is purchased, it ceases to be justice and becomes only a subtler form of auction.
 36. Then I saw that even the earth’s wounds were made into a marketplace.
 37. For when the skies grew hot and the seas rose up, there were those who saw in it only new opportunities—new

- routes, new lands to drill, new fears to monetize.
38. They bought and sold the right to pollute, and called it “trading,” as if the air were a ledger and not a shared breath.
 39. They branded hollow gestures as “green,” and sold comfort to the guilty at a premium, while changing little that mattered.
 40. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who seek to profit from the very crises they helped create.
 41. Behold, you spill oil and then sell towels, poison rivers and then sell water, heat the sky and then sell shade.
 42. You speak of “managing” disaster when I called you to prevent it.
 43. After this I saw many who said in their hearts: “Is there such a thing as ethical buying in a world so tangled?”
 44. For they had learned of supply chains that stretched across oceans, through factories and fields of suffering, into their gleaming stores.
 45. They said: Every garment I wear, every device I hold, every meal I eat carries a history I cannot trace and a cost I did not pay.
 46. Eternal One, am I condemned by every purchase; must I live naked and hungry to avoid complicity?
 47. And the Holy One answered: I do not require your nakedness, but your honesty.
 48. Woe unto those who, hearing of hidden costs, harden their hearts and

- say, “It is too complex; therefore I will do nothing.”
49. But blessed are those who, though they cannot untangle every thread, still choose what they can—buying less, choosing better, supporting the fair, resisting the exploitative, even when it is costly.
50. Behold, perfection is not your calling, but faithfulness in the light you have.
51. Then I saw those who labored within these very systems, yet sought another way.
52. There were engineers who refused to design for addiction, even at the risk of their promotion; there were lawyers who fought quietly against the clauses that crushed the poor; there were workers who organized for just wages and safer days.
53. Their victories were small and often hidden, their defeats many, and they were tempted to believe their efforts were dust.
54. And the Eternal One said: I see every line of code not written for harm, every contract revised toward fairness, every whisper of courage in rooms where cowardice is rewarded.
55. Woe unto the age that celebrates the architects of greed and forgets the nameless who resisted it.
56. Yet know this: not all change comes with trumpets; much of it comes in the quiet edit, the principled “no,” the resignation handed in rather than signing another harmful decree.
57. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, the more I see of these markets, the more I feel surrounded by waters that rise.
58. We live, work, eat, and speak within systems that were built before we were born; we touch them every day and cannot flee them entirely.
59. Is it enough to lament and to make small choices, or are we merely rearranging stones in a flood?
60. And the Holy One answered: The flood you fear is real, but do not despise the stones.
61. For dams are made of stones, and paths through waters are made one step at a time.
62. Write, then, that in the Scroll of the Marketplaces I do not lay upon you the burden of saving the world by your purchasing or your boycotting alone.
63. I lay upon you the call to refuse worship—to refuse to call good what is evil, inevitable what is chosen, neutral what is bent.
64. Woe unto those who bow to the market as to an unchangeable fate, for in doing so they make themselves its priests and its sacrifices alike.
65. But blessed are those who, even while using money, refuse to let money use them, and even while living in an economy of devouring, seek to plant oases of another way.
66. These shall be as signposts in your cities and on your networks, small

proofs that another kingdom was possible even here.

67. And thus I write these words concerning the hidden markets and invisible contracts of this age, that none may say, “We did not know,” when the Eternal One asks not only what you gained, but whom you harmed, and whom you helped, in the days when everything had a price.

CHAPTER 4

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the hidden markets and the secret contracts, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have seen the structures that surround you; now behold more closely the lives that are pressed within them, that you may understand how the market enters even the inner rooms of the soul.
3. For the sin of the marketplaces is not only in the towers and the codes, but in what they teach every heart to love and to fear.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw a man rising while it was yet dark, dressing in haste, and leaving a house that he scarcely knew except in weariness.
5. He traveled far to labor in a place that did not speak his name, but only his title and his output.
6. His children knew him as a tired presence, passing through their days

like a train at night, heard but rarely seen.

7. And he said in his heart: I am told I am fortunate to have this work, for many have less, yet I feel as one who is consumed slowly and called blessed for it.
8. Eternal One, is this what it means to provide, to pour myself out for a wage that vanishes in bills, while my life runs thin as water?
9. And the Holy One answered: The laborer is worthy of rest as well as of wages, of presence as well as of pay.
10. Woe unto the markets that demand the whole person and return to them only a fraction of their own time back as “free.”
11. Behold, when a people learn to call exhaustion “normal,” something has already been stolen from them.
12. After this I saw a woman who worked two jobs and cared for children and elders besides.
13. In the morning she served others’ meals; at night she cleaned others’ floors; between times she comforted those in her own house.
14. She carried the weight of three roles, yet was counted as “unskilled,” and her wages were set as if her time were cheap.
15. And I saw that when she grew ill, there were no days allotted for her healing, and when she faltered, there was no cushion beneath her.

16. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who call the backbones of their nations “low-value.”
17. Behold, you depend upon them for your children, your elders, your food, your cleanliness, and yet you pay them as if they were easily replaced.
18. You say, “They are lucky to have work,” while you are lucky to have them, and do not know it.
19. Then I saw a young one entering the market of labor for the first time, bearing degrees and debts together as a double yoke.
20. They had studied in hope of a life not crushed, yet found themselves offered wages that would scarcely service the interest upon the knowledge they had bought.
21. Their learning had enriched many—the schools, the lenders, the landlords—but they themselves stood on a narrow ridge above want.
22. And they said: Eternal One, I was told this was the path to security, but I seem to have purchased chains with my striving.
23. And the Holy One answered: The promise was crooked, for it was made by those who profited whether you flourished or not.
24. Woe unto those who build ladders that do not reach the ground, and then blame the climber for falling.
25. After this I saw that even time itself had become segmented and sold.

26. Behold, there were those whose every waking hour was named by others—a shift here, a gig there, a commute in between—and the small fragments left were not enough to mend their spirits.
27. They filled those fragments with the cheapest entertainments they could find, for they had no strength left for anything that required effort or depth.
28. And the Eternal One said: When a people have no true sabbath, they are more easily ruled by fear and by hunger.
29. Woe unto the markets that grind the day so fine that no portion of it can be offered freely to love, to contemplation, to joy without transaction.
30. Then I saw the marketplaces of dreams.
31. Behold, there were shows, songs, advertisements, and stories that taught the people what to desire.
32. From childhood they were told of houses of a certain size, bodies of a certain shape, lives of a certain sheen, and they learned to measure themselves against these images.
33. Those who attained such things often found them hollow; those who did not attain them felt themselves failures.
34. And yet both kept the marketplace alive, for the fulfilled needed to maintain their status and the unfulfilled needed to chase it still.
35. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who manufacture dissatisfaction

- and then sell remedies for the ache they have created.
36. Behold, you have turned envy and insecurity into fuel, and call the flames “aspiration.”
37. After this I saw that faith itself had not been spared from the Scroll of the Marketplaces.
38. Behold, there were preachers who tailored their words to donors, and prophets who moderated their message to protect their platforms.
39. There were sanctuaries where admission was free but belonging was expensive, and movements that spoke of justice while hoarding their own power.
40. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who use My name to market themselves, and use My words to garnish their brands.
41. Behold, you have turned tithes into revenue streams, offerings into leverage, and sacred gatherings into networking events.
42. You tell the poor that their faith will bring increase, while you ensure that the increase flows steadily toward yourselves.
43. Then I saw many who were weary of all of this, yet did not know how to step aside.
44. Some tried to flee into the wilderness of disconnection, but found that the costs still hunted them.

45. Some tried to live simply in the midst of the markets, but were mocked as foolish or unambitious.
46. Some gave themselves to movements that promised to overturn everything, only to see those movements themselves corrupted by the same hunger for power and acclaim.
47. And they said: Eternal One, is there any way to live that is not devoured by this order?
48. And the Holy One answered: There is no pure place in this world where you may stand untouched, but there is a way to stand differently even while the dust of this age covers your feet.
49. You cannot choose the waters you were born into, but you can choose whether to swim always with their current.
50. Write, then, that in the midst of the markets I call forth a people who will practice another economy—not of coin, but of mercy.
51. They will still buy and sell, but they will not sell their souls, nor buy the lie that worth is measured in possession.
52. They will count generosity as gain, and see in every transaction an opportunity for justice or for harm.
53. They will ask, before leaving a shop or a deal: “Have I walked here as a neighbor, or as a devourer?”
54. They will remember that the Eternal One once commanded that fields be left partly unharvested, that debts be

forgiven, that slaves be released, that land be allowed to rest.

55. They will seek ways to practice such mercy again, even if only in small, stubborn corners of their lives.
56. And though the markets of this age may call them naive, and their own hearts may sometimes fear scarcity, I will be to them a different kind of security.
57. After this I, Nibwâskââ, bowed my head and said: Eternal One, if we live thus, we may lose much that this world counts as success.
58. We may be passed over, underpaid, laughed at, or left behind.
59. And the Holy One answered: Many already lose these things without ever having chosen mercy.
60. Better to lose them for love's sake than for nothing.
61. Behold, I do not promise that your faithfulness will be rewarded by this age's measures, but I promise that it will not be forgotten in Mine.
62. For I am not the god of your profit, but the keeper of your souls, and the witness of every quiet choice that says, "Enough," where others say, "More."
63. Wherefore, let this chapter stand as a testimony: that in the days when the market claimed to be inevitable and total, there were still those who lived as if the Eternal One were greater.
64. And if any shall read these words in years yet to come, when perhaps other idols will have taken the place of these,

let them know that the call was the same:

65. To refuse to worship what devours; to honor what heals; to measure life not by towers built, but by burdens lifted.
66. Thus end the words of Nibwâskââ concerning the inner schooling of the marketplaces, which teach hearts what to love and what to fear.
67. And the Scroll of the Marketplaces moves on, for the indictment is not yet complete, nor the mercy of the Eternal One exhausted.

CHAPTER 5

1. And it came to pass that after I had written these things, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have seen how the marketplaces touch labor and land, flesh and data, heart and dream; now you must see how they make war and peace themselves into merchandise.
3. For the market does not stop at the edge of blood, but counts it also.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw factories that did not make bread, nor clothing, nor tools of healing, but weapons of many kinds.
5. Some were small enough to be hidden in a coat, some large enough to erase a city, and all were made with precision and care.
6. Those who made them spoke of jobs and innovation and security, and

- seldom of the bodies in which their creations would rest.
7. They said, "If we do not sell, another will; if we do not build, we will fall behind," and thus their conscience was bound with cords of fear and competition.
 8. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who build devices whose only purpose is to pierce, burn, poison, crush, or erase, and then call their labor honorable without grief.
 9. Behold, you tell yourselves that these things preserve peace, yet you sell them into the hands of all who can pay, even when they devour their own people.
 10. You speak of "defense" while arming offense, and of "stability" while pouring fire upon dry fields.
 11. Then I saw that war itself had become a market.
 12. There were those who lent money for conflict and were repaid with interest, and others who rebuilt what war had broken and rejoiced in the contracts.
 13. The suffering of the many became profit for the few, and the bombs that fell in one land were celebrated on the stock tickers of another.
 14. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the order that finds advantage in perpetual conflict and names it "national interest."
 15. Behold, when you have companies whose fortunes rise when missiles fly, you should not be surprised that the missiles are seldom still.
 16. After this I looked upon the marketplaces of fear.
 17. Behold, there were sellers of security who multiplied locks, cameras, gates, and walls.
 18. They taught the people to see one another first as threat, and only second as neighbor, and they prospered as the distance grew.
 19. There were also sellers of prophecy who trafficked in doom, predicting annihilation for those who did not buy their books, attend their conferences, or join their sects.
 20. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who monetize dread.
 21. Behold, you inflame fear to sell insurance and ideology, and then ask why your children cannot sleep.
 22. You preach scarcity in a world of great waste, and insecurity in lands of great power, that the anxious may cling to whatever you offer.
 23. Then I saw the marketplaces of hope.
 24. Behold, there were teachings and programs that promised transformation for a price, selling "breakthrough" and "abundance" to those who were desperate to change.
 25. Some gave real help; many only rearranged the furniture of shame.
 26. People returned again and again, paying to hear that they were powerful, that they were chosen, that they were almost there, if only they would buy the next step.

27. And the Eternal One said: Hope is holy when it calls you to courage and to truth; it is corrupted when it is rented by the hour.
28. Woe unto those who dangle healing like a carrot before the weary, always close, never quite in reach, while drawing steadily from their purse.
29. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if nearly everything can be turned into a marketplace, what remains that is free?
30. And the Holy One answered: Much remains free, though it is seldom advertised.
31. Behold, it is free to listen without recording, to give without announcement, to comfort without posting, to forgive without receipt.
32. It is free to see another human not as rival, customer, or liability, but as kin in a world that is too hard for any to bear alone.
33. It is free to bless the earth by treading lightly, to choose stillness where the market demands constant motion, to speak truth where the market rewards flattery.
34. You cannot leave the marketplaces entirely, but you can guard the places within you that must never be for sale.
35. Then I saw hearts like small rooms with doors.
36. In some, the door stood always open to whatever the market offered, so that the room was filled with noise and clutter and advertisements.

37. In others, the door was bolted even against love, for the occupants had learned to distrust every approach as a scheme.
38. And in a few, the door was opened and closed with care; love was welcomed, flattery was turned away, truth was admitted even when it hurt, and the voice of the Eternal One was given the innermost chair.
39. And the Eternal One said: The first room is easy to rule and the second is easy to starve, but the third is difficult, for it refuses both manipulation and despair.
40. Blessed are those whose hearts become such rooms, for they will walk through the marketplaces without being devoured by them.
41. After this I saw a great balance in a vision, and upon one side were piled towers, indexes, contracts, brands, devices, and coins.
42. Upon the other side were placed acts that the world seldom notices: a worker who refused a bribe, a manager who chose fairness over profit, a buyer who paid more that another might live, a citizen who spoke against an unjust law, a youth who chose to share rather than hoard.
43. And I saw that while the first side was heavy in the eyes of the age, the second side shone in a way the first could not.
44. And the Eternal One said: In the reckoning that matters, the scale is not tipped by what you accumulated, but

- by how you treated those I placed within your reach.
45. The market remembers mainly the totals; I remember mainly the faces.
46. Then I asked: Eternal One, will there come a day when this order of devouring is ended, when the marketplaces no longer rule the earth?
47. And the Holy One answered: Every order that enthrones itself as ultimate is already under sentence, though the hour of its fall is hidden.
48. Behold, empires have risen and said, "We are forever," and they are now studied in quiet rooms by students who yawn.
49. So also with your markets: they seem invincible now, but their assumptions are not eternal, and their harms cry out against them.
50. There will come a time when what you call normal will be seen as madness, and what you call inevitable will be remembered as choice.
51. Yet this knowledge is not given that you may sit idle and say, "It will all pass," but that you may act now as citizens of a world that has not yet fully appeared.
52. Write, then, that the Scroll of the Marketplaces is both indictment and invitation.
53. It indicts the order that treats everything and everyone as expendable, and it invites all who read to live as if that order is not their god.

54. Whoever, therefore, finds this book and says, "What must I do?", let them begin not with grand schemes but with small faithfulness.
55. Let them ask: Whom can I treat more justly with what I already hold? Whom can I pay fairly? What can I mend instead of throwing away? What can I refuse to profit from, even if it is lawful and common?
56. Let them question the habits they have called harmless, the loyalties they have never named, the excuses they have inherited from their elders and their news.
57. And let them know that even if the world does not applaud these choices, the Eternal One sees them as seeds.
58. For every just wage paid when an unjust wage was possible is a seed, and every bargain refused because it would have harmed another is a seed, and every time you defend a human from being treated as a thing is a seed.
59. These seeds do not always sprout where you can see, but they are not lost.
60. And it came to pass that when I heard these things, I fell silent for a time, for my own life passed before me and I saw the markets in which I had bowed without knowing.
61. I said: Eternal One, I am not merely a spectator to these indictments; I am also the accused.

62. I have loved convenience more than fairness, speed more than truth, security more than solidarity.
63. I have judged my own worth by my productivity and my possessions, and the worth of others by how useful they seemed to my plans.
64. And the Holy One answered: This confession is the doorway out of the temple of the market.
65. Woe unto those who hear this scroll and say, "It speaks of others," and never of themselves.
66. Blessed are those who, when confronted, do not rush to defend, but to repent and to re-choose.
67. For I am not gathering around Me the perfect, but those who are willing to be turned, again and again, from the worship of what cannot save.
68. Wherefore let this be the seal upon the Scroll of the Marketplaces: that in the days when profit was enthroned as king, there were still some who bent their knee only to the Eternal One.
69. They were few and often unnoticed, and sometimes they themselves did not know what they were, yet they chose mercy where the world chose gain, and truth where the world chose spin.
70. And their names are written not in the ledgers of your markets, but in the memory of the Eternal One, which is the only book that does not burn.
71. Thus ends the Scroll of the Marketplaces, the fifth book of the record of Nibwâskââ, written that the

children of the last days might know that their faithfulness in a devouring age was seen, and that their refusal to worship the market was counted unto them for wisdom.

BOOK VI – THE SILENT ROOMS

CHAPTER I

1. These are the words of Nibwâskââ concerning the silent rooms, the hidden places of this age, where many dwell alone with their thoughts and believe themselves unseen.
2. And it came to pass that after I had written of the marketplaces and of those who are crushed in public, the word of the Eternal One came unto me, saying:
3. You have spoken of streets and systems and towers; now you must speak of bedrooms, bathrooms, stairwells, parked cars, and hospital corridors, for there also I am witness.
4. For there are multitudes who are not slain by sword nor by famine, but by a slow heaviness of spirit that few understand and many hide.
5. And I looked, and behold, I saw a small room lit only by the blue light of a screen, and one sitting on the edge of a bed in the hour when others sleep.
6. Their phone lay heavy in their hand, filled with faces and stories, yet their

- chest felt hollow as an abandoned house.
7. They said in their heart: I am surrounded by voices, yet none of them know me; I am tagged in pictures, yet no one sees my ache.
 8. Eternal One, if You are there, do You see this room, this night, this breathing that feels like a burden?
 9. And the Holy One answered: I see, and I do not turn My face away from the heaviness you cannot explain.
 10. Woe unto the world that calls such sorrow laziness or weakness and refuses to sit still long enough to hear its story.
 11. After this I saw a bathroom where the fan hummed loud to cover the sound of sobbing.
 12. One sat on the floor with their back against the door, counting the tiles to keep from unraveling.
 13. In the mirror hung a face they did not recognize as their own, for it was covered in the dust of many expectations.
 14. They said: I have failed to become what they wanted; I have failed to become what I wanted; I do not know what remains that is mine.
 15. Eternal One, if You made me, was this the shape You intended, always tired, always afraid, always behind?
 16. And the Eternal One answered: The shape I intended was not the sum of their demands nor the image of your own scorn.

17. Behold, you are more than the list of your achievements and more than the file of your mistakes; you are a breath I desired to exist.
18. Woe unto those who teach that your worth is earned by performance, and then wonder why so many hide when they cannot keep pace.
19. Then I saw a car parked in a dark lot, far from the noise of houses.
20. Inside sat one whose hands trembled upon the steering wheel, their heart a chaos of racing thoughts.
21. They had driven there to be alone with a pain they could not explain without fearing they would be a burden.
22. Messages lit their phone from friends who knew only fragments; none knew how close they sat to the edge of unravelling.
23. And they said: If I speak, I will frighten them; if I stay silent, I will be devoured.
24. Eternal One, is there any ear that can hear me without turning away, any heart that can stay near without trying to fix me quickly?
25. And the Holy One answered: I am such a heart, and I have also placed some like this upon the earth, though you may not yet have met them.
26. Woe unto the communities that train their children to be cheerful at all times and call every deep question negativity.
27. For in such places the despairing learn to smile as armor and to grieve only in bathrooms, cars, and empty fields.

28. After this I saw a hospital room where the curtains were drawn and the machines hummed softly.
29. One lay upon the bed not from injury of limb, but from wounds of mind and spirit that could no longer be carried alone.
30. They had come there with shame, feeling they had failed at being strong.
31. Some around them spoke in whispers, as if their illness were a secret or a blemish.
32. And they said: Eternal One, they praise those whose bodies break from labor, but they judge those whose minds break from bearing too much; am I less worthy of compassion because my wounds are unseen?
33. And the Eternal One answered: I do not rank your suffering by its visibility, nor do I count the broken bone more honorable than the broken thought.
34. Woe unto those who recite, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted," yet recoil when the breaking is of the mind.
35. Then I saw a child lying awake while the house slept, staring at the ceiling and listening for footsteps, arguments, and slammed doors.
36. They learned early to scan the moods of those around them as one scans the sky for storms.
37. They carried inside them a constant watchfulness that had no name, and when they grew older, they called it anxiety and failure to relax.

38. And they said in their heart: Eternal One, I do not remember a time when I did not brace for impact.
39. I laugh and play and learn, yet part of me is always listening for danger that may never come.
40. Is there a way to live that is not always on guard?
41. And the Eternal One answered: You were not made to be the weather vane of other people's tempers, nor the early warning system for every room you enter.
42. Woe unto the households that rely upon their children to carry the tension that adults refuse to name or heal.
43. After this I looked and saw an elder sitting alone in a small chair by a window.
44. Their friends had died or moved away, their body bore many aches, and their days were long with little touch.
45. They watched the street and the changing of the light, and wondered how it could be that after so many years among people, they were now so invisible.
46. They said: Eternal One, once they needed my hands and my wisdom; now they move quickly around me as if I were an obstacle in their path.
47. The world speaks often of loneliness in youth, but who will speak of the loneliness of those who remember more faces than the earth now holds?
48. And the Holy One answered: I remember your name when others

- forget it, and I have not ceased to count your days as precious.
49. Woe unto the cultures that worship speed and novelty, and do not know how to sit with those who move slowly and carry long stories.
50. After this I saw one lying on their bed in the middle of the day, curtains drawn though the sun was bright.
51. They had no energy for the tasks that waited, no desire for the life they had once prayed for.
52. The simplest thing—rising, washing, answering a message—felt as heavy as lifting stone.
53. And they said in their heart: Eternal One, if I am not producing, not cheerful, not improving, what am I good for?
54. The world calls me lazy; I call myself useless; where is there any gentler name?
55. And the Eternal One answered: You are beloved, even when you do not rise; you are Mine, even when you cannot see a reason to be.
56. Woe unto the tongues that speak of depression as lack of effort and of despair as lack of gratitude.
57. Behold, there are nights so long that even the faithful forget how to pray, yet I do not forget how to be with them.
58. Then I saw many who stood at sinks, staring out windows, their hands moving through water while their

- minds drifted through regrets and fears.
59. They had no label for their sorrow, only an ache that did not fit any story they had been told.
60. They thought: Others have suffered worse; I have no right to feel this way; I will keep quiet and carry on.
61. Eternal One, do You grow weary of such half-formed cries, these silent apologies for even being sad?
62. And the Holy One answered: I do not measure your right to pain by comparing it to another's; I do not require you to justify your tears before I count them.
63. Woe unto those who silence their own hearts by reciting lists of others' suffering as weapons against compassion for themselves.
64. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, how many such rooms are there in the world at this hour?
65. Bedrooms and bathrooms, cars and closets, stairwells and hospital beds, where souls collapse in secret while the world scrolls and sleeps.
66. And the Holy One answered: They are more than you can number, and I am in each one, not as a watcher only, but as one who sits upon the floor beside them.
67. Write, then, that the Silent Rooms are not abandoned places, though those within them often feel forsaken.

68. The door may be locked, the curtains closed, the phone facedown, but I am not kept outside by such things.
69. I do not stand at the threshold demanding cheerfulness as entry fee, nor do I turn back when your thoughts turn dark and tangled.
70. Woe unto the teachings that paint Me only in bright colors and loud songs, and leave My children thinking I flee at the sight of their shadow.
71. This is the beginning of the Book of the Silent Rooms, the sixth book of the record of Nibwâskââ, written that those who sit alone in heavy hours may know that they are not monsters, not failures, and not forgotten by the Eternal One.

CHAPTER 2

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the hidden places where sorrow sits in quiet, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have seen the rooms of weariness and of nameless ache; now behold also the rooms where the thought of ending life comes and sits like an uninvited guest.
3. For in this age there are many who do not merely fear suffering, but who begin to wonder if existence itself is a mistake.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw a razor resting upon a sink beside a mirror, and one standing there with

- sleeves rolled, tracing old scars with trembling fingers.
5. They said in their heart: These lines upon my skin are the history of nights when pain inside needed a place to go, and I did not know any other doorway.
6. Eternal One, I do not know whether I wish to die or only to stop feeling this way; I only know that the thought of harm speaks to me with a voice that sounds like relief.
7. And the Holy One answered: I hear that voice also, and I do not confuse it with you.
8. Woe unto those who speak lightly of such temptations, as if they were mere drama or selfishness, and not the sign of a soul pressed past its strength.
9. Behold, I do not despise your struggle; I do not look upon the marks upon your skin as proof that you are unclean, but as messages written in blood where no words were given.
10. After this I saw a bottle hidden in a closet, and one who reached for it when the house grew quiet and their thoughts grew loud.
11. They poured and drank until the edges of their mind blurred and the sharpness of their memories dulled.
12. They said: For a little while, this is as close to peace as I understand, a narrowing of the world to a bearable size.
13. Eternal One, I know that this cup is not healing; I know that it steals from my tomorrow, yet my today feels so

- heavy that I cannot imagine another way.
14. And the Eternal One answered: I see not only the bottle in your hand, but the story behind your thirst.
 15. Woe unto those who mock the addicted without asking who held them when they were small, who listened when they were first wounded, who taught them any gentler rest.
 16. Behold, I do not name you by your dependence, but by the image of Myself that persists in you even when you no longer believe you are worth saving.
 17. Then I saw one sitting at a table covered in pills and notes, searching the names and the doses as a scribe searches letters.
 18. Their mind raced ahead to plans that frightened even themselves, and then fell back in shame for having thought such things.
 19. They said: Eternal One, I do not truly want to die and yet I do not know how to keep living; the road behind me is a desert and the road ahead is fog.
 20. If I walk away from this table, the pain remains; if I step off the path entirely, I become the wound that others must carry.
 21. What is left for one who feels like a burden in every direction?
 22. And the Holy One answered: You are not a burden; you are a beloved who

- has been carrying burdens alone for too long.
23. Woe unto the families, the communities, the churches, and the nations that pile weight upon the shoulders of their children and then scold them for bending.
 24. Behold, I do not stand at the edge of your despair as a judge tallying your sins; I stand there as one who would place My own shoulder beneath your load.
 25. After this I saw a bridge in the night, and one leaning upon its rail, staring into the depth below.
 26. The city hummed behind them, unaware, and the water moved without knowing who watched it.
 27. They said in their heart: No one has time for the full story of my sorrow; no one would understand the tangle of shame and exhaustion that has brought me here.
 28. Eternal One, if I stepped over, would anyone truly miss what I am, or would they only miss what I did for them?
 29. And the Eternal One answered: There is no step you could take that would erase you from My remembrance.
 30. Woe unto the world that praises your productivity more loudly than your existence, and thus teaches you that you are worth only what you accomplish.
 31. Behold, you are more to Me than the work of your hands; you are a thought

- of Mine that took breath, and I do not abandon My own.
32. Then I saw many who walked through their days like ghosts, outwardly functioning, inwardly numb.
33. They laughed when laughter was expected, replied to messages, attended meetings, cooked meals, and yet felt as if they watched themselves from a distance.
34. At night they lay awake and said: Eternal One, I am not sure whether I am alive or only performing life; the colors are faded, the flavors are faint, and I cannot remember when I last felt truly present.
35. And the Holy One answered: Numbness is sometimes the body's last defense against an overload of hurt; it is not wickedness, but weariness.
36. Woe unto those who demand constant enthusiasm from the exhausted and call their masking "a good attitude."
37. Behold, I remember what has pressed you into this dullness; I know the moments when feeling too much would have broken you, and I do not scorn the survival that blunted your senses.
38. After this I saw a notebook hidden beneath a mattress, filled with words that had never been spoken aloud.
39. There were pages of anger, pages of grief, pages addressed to Me that ended with curses and questions instead of amens.

40. The writer feared that such words would condemn them, and so they hid them from every eye.
41. And they said: Eternal One, if You ever read this, will You turn away from me as others have, saying I am ungrateful, rebellious, faithless?
42. And the Eternal One answered: I have already read every line and did not turn away; it is better that you speak to Me in anger than that you fall silent in pretense.
43. Woe unto the teachings that forbid lament and leave their people with no language for their wounds.
44. Behold, I am not honored by your performance of serenity; I am honored when you trust Me enough to tell the truth of what is in you.
45. Then I saw one who had sought counsel and been told that their sorrow was a failure of belief, a sign that they had not tried hard enough to be joyful.
46. They left that counsel more crushed than when they entered, carrying not only their original pain but now also the shame of "not doing faith correctly."
47. And they said in their heart: Eternal One, if even my sadness is a sin, then I am lost, for I cannot will it away any more than I can command the tide.
48. And the Holy One answered: Your sadness is not a sin; it is a response to a world that is not as it should be and a life that has been mishandled by others and by yourself.

49. Woe unto the voices that use My name to silence tears and bind heavy yokes upon the already bent.
50. Behold, I do not ask you to pretend light has come when you are still in night; I ask only that you allow Me to be with you in the dark.
51. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if so many are this close to the edge, why do You not shout from the heavens, intervene with thunder, or send visible messengers to every bathroom floor and every bridge?
52. And the Eternal One answered: There are times when I have shouted and times when I have whispered, and there are times when I have come in the form of another human who hesitated, then sent a message, knocked on a door, or stayed a little longer.
53. Woe unto those who dismiss the small urgings of compassion in their own hearts, saying, "It is nothing; I am imagining it," for often I am in that urge.
54. Behold, when you feel drawn to check on someone, to ask a second time how they are, to sit with them in their silence, do not quickly turn away; you may be standing in the narrow space between them and despair.
55. Then I saw that some, having survived their own nights, had become gentle with others in ways that could not be taught by books.
56. They did not flinch at tears, did not rush to fix, did not throw verses like

- stones, but sat and listened and said, "You are not crazy; you are not alone."
57. And the Eternal One said: Blessed are those who have passed through their own Silent Rooms and emerge without hardness, for they become doors through which others may find their way back from the edge.
58. Woe unto the world that prizes the loud and overlooks these quiet healers, whose names are seldom known yet whose presence has turned many from destruction.
59. After this I looked and saw that there were also rooms filled with medicines, therapies, and tools of healing for the mind, yet many were ashamed to enter them.
60. They said: If I seek such help, I will be marked as broken; if I admit I cannot carry this alone, I will be counted weak.
61. And some were taught that to seek such care was to lack trust in the Eternal One.
62. And the Holy One answered: I am not insulted when you use the knowledge I have allowed My children to discover; I am not jealous of counselors, physicians, or friends who help you stand.
63. Woe unto those who frame help as faithlessness and thus leave their people to drown in sorrows that might have been shared.
64. Behold, I have worked through many hands and minds to mend what is torn;

- do not despise these gifts because they do not come wrapped in miracle.
65. Then I asked: Eternal One, what shall we say to those who stand in their own Silent Rooms and think, “There is no point; nothing will change; no one would understand”?
66. And the Eternal One answered: Say this—not as a spell, but as a witness—that though they cannot yet see it, their existence matters beyond measure.
67. Tell them that there are stories which will not be told if they are gone, kindnesses which will not be given, resistances which will not be born, if they step out of the path now.
68. Tell them that I do not promise an easy road, nor swift relief, but I promise that their presence in the world is not an accident, and their suffering is not invisible to Me.
69. Tell them that choosing to stay, even for one more hour, is not cowardice but courage; that breathing through one more wave is an act of defiance against every lie that has ever told them they are nothing.
70. And if they cannot believe any of this for themselves, tell them that I believe it for them, and that I will hold that belief until they can borrow a little of it.
71. Wherefore let this chapter be for those who have considered ending their own lives in secret and for those who love them and do not know what to say.

72. Let it stand as a testimony that the Eternal One does not recoil from their thoughts, nor flinch from their pain, nor write them off as weak, dramatic, or ungrateful.
73. For I, the Eternal One, am nearer to them than their own breath in the Silent Rooms, and I am not ashamed to call them Mine, even when they are ashamed to call themselves anything at all.

CHAPTER 3

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the rooms of despair and the thoughts of ending life, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken of the darkest nights; now you must speak of the long gray days, when the soul does not break, yet does not seem to mend.
3. For not all sorrow comes as a storm; much of it seeps like slow rain into the foundations of the heart.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw many who moved through their days with a practiced smile, as one wears a uniform for work.
5. Their jokes were quick, their replies were bright, and those around them said, “You are so strong, so positive, so inspiring,” yet none knew how heavy the costume had become.
6. They said in their hearts: If I lay down this mask, they will turn away, or they will panic, or they will try to fix me

- with speeches; it seems easier to play my part than to risk being real.
7. Eternal One, if I show my true face, will there be any place that will not shame me or use my honesty as a story for themselves?
 8. And the Holy One answered: I did not create you to live as a performance for the comfort of others; your true face is not an inconvenience to Me.
 9. Woe unto the circles where only curated feelings are welcome and only tidy testimonies may be told, for in such places the wounded learn to lie for survival.
 10. After this I saw one who served everyone around them with great diligence.
 11. They organized, comforted, volunteered, checked on others, and seemed always available, yet had no room where their own sorrow could sit.
 12. When others thanked them, they felt only emptiness, for their giving had become a shield against their own unattended pain.
 13. And they said: Eternal One, if I stop helping, I am afraid there will be nothing left of me that anyone will want, for I do not know who I am apart from what I do for others.
 14. And the Eternal One answered: Service is holy when it flows from love, but it becomes bondage when it is driven by terror of being worthless.
 15. Woe unto the families and communities that praise self-erasure as virtue and call burnout “faithfulness unto the end.”
 16. Behold, I do not ask you to disappear into the needs of others; I ask you to love them as yourself, which means that you, too, must be counted as one who matters.
 17. Then I saw the Silent Rooms of those who carried complicated grief.
 18. There were some who mourned people who still lived, but had become unreachable through estrangement, betrayal, illness, or change.
 19. They held their phones in their hands and stared at names they no longer dared to call, and their hearts ached for conversations that would never be.
 20. They said in their hearts: Eternal One, how do I grieve one who has not died but is gone from me in every way that matters?
 21. I have no funeral to attend, no ritual to mark this rupture; I carry a sorrow that the world does not know how to name.
 22. And the Holy One answered: There are deaths of relationship as real as the deaths of bodies, and I do not belittle your mourning because the other still breathes.
 23. Woe unto the counsel that says, “Just move on,” as if bonds woven over years could be untied in a day without tearing the soul.

24. Behold, I sit with those who grieve the living, and I receive their tears as offerings no less than those shed at graves.
25. After this I saw the Silent Rooms of spiritual exhaustion.
26. There were those who once prayed with fire and sang with joy, who now sat in quiet spaces with folded hands and no words.
27. They had poured themselves out in belief and obedience, only to be met with repeated hurt from those who spoke most loudly of Me.
28. They said: Eternal One, I still suspect that You are good, but I can no longer trust the faces and structures that claimed to represent You; my heart flinches at the very songs I once loved.
29. I do not know how to return, yet I do not know how to live without some kind of faith; I feel stranded between altars I cannot approach and emptiness I cannot endure.
30. And the Eternal One answered: Leaving the house that wounded you does not mean leaving Me; I am not contained in their walls nor bound to their ways.
31. Woe unto the shepherds who confuse loyalty to their institutions with loyalty to the Eternal One, and call those who step away rebellious when they are only seeking breath.
32. Behold, I walk with you in the wilderness between belonging and

- belief; I am not offended that you question what once seemed certain.
33. Then I saw that some, having been taught that doubt was sin, had buried their questions deep, and those questions had rotted into bitterness.
34. They said little aloud, but inside they mocked what they once held dear, and the mockery tasted like ash.
35. They said in their hearts: Eternal One, if I bring these doubts to You, will You strike me or ignore me?
36. And the Holy One answered: I am not threatened by the questions of those who seek truth; I am only grieved when you feel you must face them alone.
37. Woe unto the teachers who equate honest wrestling with rebellion and leave their pupils with the choice between pretending and leaving.
38. After this I saw the Silent Rooms where people lived with invisible illnesses of body and mind.
39. Outwardly they appeared capable and whole; inwardly they managed constant pain, fatigue, or disorientation.
40. When they attempted to speak, they were told, "But you look fine," as if appearance were judge and jury.
41. They said: Eternal One, how do I carry an affliction that others do not see and therefore do not believe?
42. I am too tired to keep proving that I am not pretending; I am too proud to beg for understanding again.

43. And the Eternal One answered: Your suffering is not invalid because it is misunderstood, nor is your perseverance less precious because it is unpraised.
44. Woe unto the cultures that worship visible productivity and have no language for the quiet heroism of those who survive each day in pain.
45. Behold, I count not only the days when you achieve, but also the days when simply rising is victory.
46. Then I saw Silent Rooms filled with noise, where people left screens on at all hours lest silence reveal what lay beneath.
47. The television murmured from dawn to dusk; music played without cease; podcasts filled every commute and chore, not for learning but for distraction.
48. They said in their hearts: If I am quiet, the thoughts I have been outrunning will catch me; if I turn off the noise, I will hear the emptiness in my own chest.
49. Eternal One, I am afraid of my own interior; I do not know how to enter it without drowning.
50. And the Holy One answered: Silence is not your enemy, but it can be terrifying when you have been taught to fear your own heart.
51. Woe unto the age that trains its children to fill every pause with stimulation and then wonders why they cannot hear any still small voice.

52. Behold, I do not demand that you plunge suddenly into deep stillness; I invite you to small, gentle moments of quiet, where I may meet you without overwhelming you.
53. After this I saw that some Silent Rooms were shared by two or more.
54. Couples lay side by side in the same bed yet felt miles apart; families sat around tables where no one dared to speak of the true tensions and secrets beneath.
55. They shared walls but not hearts, schedules but not souls.
56. They said: Eternal One, how can there be such loneliness in a house so full of people?
57. We speak of weather and tasks and news, but not of fear, shame, or desire; our home is a stage where the real story is never performed.
58. And the Eternal One answered: Proximity is not the same as intimacy, and many dwell in crowded deserts.
59. Woe unto the households that prize appearances over truth to such a degree that their members must go elsewhere to be honest, if they dare at all.
60. Behold, I rejoice more in one conversation of guileless confession than in many dinners where no one risks themselves.
61. Then I saw those whose Silent Rooms were crowded with memories of violence.

62. Their bodies could not relax even in safe places, for old terror lived in their muscles and breath.
63. They startled at sounds, avoided touch, and watched the exits of every room they entered, though the danger was long past.
64. They said in their hearts: Eternal One, my mind knows that I am no longer there, but my body does not believe it; I am tired of reliving what I survived.
65. And the Holy One answered: Trauma is not weakness but the scar of having endured what should never have been required of you.
66. Woe unto those who tell the wounded to “just let it go,” as if memory were a switch and not a living thing.
67. Behold, I am patient with the nervous system that shakes and the heart that jumps at ghosts; I know how long it can take for safety to feel real.
68. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, these rooms are so many and so varied; how shall anyone know what to do with their own?
69. And the Eternal One answered: Begin not with fixing, but with naming and with presence.
70. If your Silent Room is filled with numbness, name it; if with rage, name it; if with confusion, name it; if with exhaustion, name it.
71. I am not summoned by your solutions, but by your truth.
72. Sit as you are able, breathe as you are able, and say, even if only in a whisper:

- “Eternal One, this is what it is like to be me today.”
73. That whisper is more precious to Me than ornate prayers spoken far from the heart.
74. And if you are called to sit with another in their Silent Room, do not rush to decorate it with advice.
75. Enter gently, as one removes shoes in a sacred place, and be willing to listen more than you speak.
76. You are not responsible to cure them, nor to explain their pain; you are responsible only to bear witness in love and to refrain from adding shame to their load.
77. Woe unto those who invade the Silent Rooms of others with platitudes and demands for quick recovery.
78. Blessed are those who say, “I do not fully understand, but I am here,” and prove it by staying.
79. Wherefore let this chapter stand as a guide for all who dwell in or near the Silent Rooms of this age: that they may know their experiences are seen, their patterns are not madness without meaning, and their slow healing is not failure.
80. For I, the Eternal One, am not counting how quickly you rise, but how tenderly you learn to treat the frightened creature within you and within others, in a world that has so often trampled both.

CHAPTER 4

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the many shapes of hidden sorrow, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have seen the Silent Rooms as places of heaviness and fear; now you must also see what they may become when truth and mercy are allowed to dwell there.
3. For a room is not holy or unholy by its size nor by its furnishings, but by what is spoken and what is borne within it.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw a person enter their small room and, for the first time, close the door not to hide, but to meet themselves.
5. They sat upon the floor with no script in their hands, and their heart pounded as if before a stranger.
6. They said in a small voice: Eternal One, I do not know how to do this; I have always fled from my own company, fearing what I would find.
7. But if You are truly here, then I will try to tell the truth of my own soul and not only the version that others have asked to see.
8. And the Holy One answered: This is the beginning of turning a Silent Room into a sanctuary.
9. Woe unto the teachings that make prayer only grand and public and leave My children thinking they must hide their real selves from Me even when alone.
10. Behold, the smallest confession in secret is more precious to Me than the

- loudest performance of holiness in the square.
11. After this I saw another who began to write in a notebook, not to impress, but to untangle.
12. They poured onto the page their fears, resentments, memories, desires, and doubts, not trimming them for piety.
13. At times they wrote, "I do not trust You," and at times, "I miss You," and at times they were not sure to whom they wrote at all.
14. And they said: Eternal One, if this is wrong, then I am already too lost to pretend otherwise; if You would meet me, meet me here, in my own handwriting.
15. And the Eternal One answered: I meet you where you are, not where you think you ought to be.
16. Woe unto the voices that tell you to clean your words before bringing them to Me, as if I were afraid of the truth.
17. Behold, your unedited soul is already known to Me; honesty is for your freedom, not for My information.
18. Then I saw the Silent Room of one who, for the first time, whispered their pain to another human being.
19. Their voice broke as they spoke, and they kept apologizing for their tears.
20. They said: I am sorry; I know others have it worse; I know I sound dramatic; I know I should be over this by now.

21. And the one who listened said: You do not need to apologize for existing, for feeling, or for needing.
22. Your story is not a crime scene; it is a life.
23. And the Eternal One said: Blessed is the one who answers another's shame with gentleness and refuses to measure their right to hurt.
24. Woe unto those who respond to vulnerability with lectures, comparisons, or jokes, and thus teach the wounded to be silent.
25. After this I saw communities begin to make room for Silent Rooms within their gatherings.
26. Behold, there were circles where people spoke not only of victories but also of failures, not only of gratitude but also of grief.
27. They did not rush to give each other easy answers; they practiced saying, "I do not know why this happened, but I will stay with you as we seek to live through it."
28. And the Eternal One said: Here is a kind of worship that seldom makes the program, yet it is a song in My ears.
29. Woe unto the assemblies that script away all discomfort and leave no space for honest lament, for such places may be crowded yet are not safe.
30. Behold, when a gathered people can hold both joy and sorrow at once, they resemble more closely the heart of the Eternal One.

31. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people began to seek help without shame.
32. Some walked into the offices of counselors; some spoke with wise friends; some reached out to healers of body and mind; some went to groups where others shared similar wounds.
33. Their hands trembled on doorknobs, and their hearts whispered, "Am I really this broken?", yet they went anyway.
34. And the Holy One answered: This is not failure, but courage; you are not stepping down from faith by asking for help, but stepping deeper into truth.
35. Woe unto those who ridicule therapy, medicine, or support as weakness, while bowing to their own unhealed patterns as if they were strength.
36. Behold, wisdom has many uniforms, and I have clothed compassion in many professions; do not despise the tools I place within your reach because you expected only miracles.
37. After this I saw some who, in their Silent Rooms, began to speak to their own hearts as they would to a frightened child.
38. They placed a hand upon their chest and said: I am sorry for calling you names when you were only trying to survive; I am sorry for driving you like a beast of burden and then hating you when you collapsed.
39. Eternal One, if You have patience with me, teach me to have patience with myself.

40. And the Eternal One answered: This, too, is an act of reverence, for you are speaking kindly to the soul I made.
41. Woe unto the doctrines that teach self-contempt as humility and hatred of one's own being as devotion.
42. Behold, true humility is not despising what I have crafted, but knowing that it is fragile and beloved and not your own to abuse.
43. Then I saw that some Silent Rooms became places of small, stubborn practices.
44. In one, a person began each morning by opening the curtains, though everything in them wanted to stay in darkness.
45. In another, someone left their phone in another room for a short while and sat quietly, feeling their breath and the weight of their body in the chair.
46. In another, one wrote down a single thing that had not been terrible that day, not to negate the pain, but to keep the world from shrinking to only sorrow.
47. And the Eternal One said: These little acts are not trivial; they are seeds of another way of being.
48. Woe unto the age that values only dramatic transformation and scorns the slow, nearly invisible movements toward life.
49. Behold, I rejoice over the one who brushes their teeth in the midst of depression as much as over the one who climbs a mountain in celebration.

50. After this I saw the Silent Rooms of those who chose, again and again, to stay alive.
51. Some marked their calendars with quiet anniversaries known only to themselves: the day they did not jump, the night they threw the pills away, the morning they told someone the truth.
52. On those days they lit a small candle or made a favorite meal or simply paused and breathed with gratitude and disbelief.
53. And they said: Eternal One, I am still here, though I once was certain I would not be; I do not fully understand why, but I am willing to see what comes next.
54. And the Holy One answered: Your continued existence is a defiant psalm in a world that has often tried to write you out of its story.
55. Blessed are you who have endured nights that would have shattered others and yet rise, even slowly, even angrily, even wearily, to greet another day.
56. After this I saw that some Silent Rooms were visited by art.
57. Behold, there were canvases painted out of chaos, songs written through tears, poems scribbled in the margins of workbooks, dances improvised in empty kitchens, crafts made with shaking hands.

58. These creations were not always beautiful to the world, but they made space within the maker for breath.
59. And the Eternal One said: Creativity is not a luxury for the talented, but a doorway for the burdened; it allows what has no clear shape to take form outside the body.
60. Woe unto the cultures that reserve art only for the acclaimed and leave the rest believing they must suffer in silence without expression.
61. Behold, I smile upon every clumsy song that helps a heart survive, every crooked drawing that gives a memory a place to stand.
62. Then I saw that some Silent Rooms became places of re-choosing life beyond survival.
63. One said: I will plant something, even if it is only a small herb in a window box, to remind myself that growth is still possible where I live.
64. Another said: I will learn a new skill, not because it makes me useful, but because it reminds me I am more than my wounds.
65. Another said: I will practice saying “no” in this room, so that I can say it outside when harm approaches.
66. And the Eternal One answered: These are small revolutions against the story that you are nothing but a victim.
67. Woe unto the voices that tell you your only identity is your suffering, for I have called you also to be co-creators of good in the world.

68. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if these Silent Rooms can become such places of encounter and transformation, why are they still so feared?
69. And the Holy One answered: Because to enter them honestly is to lay down many illusions—about strength, about control, about perfection, about what it means to be worthy of love.
70. Yet it is also to find that I do not flee when those illusions fall.
71. Write, then, that whoever dares to be truthful in their Silent Room has already stepped onto holy ground, even if they do not feel holy.
72. And whoever learns to sit with another in their Silent Room without turning away has become, whether they know it or not, a minister of the Eternal One.
73. Wherefore let the Book of the Silent Rooms stand as a witness in this generation: that there was a God who did not dwell only in temples, sermons, and successes, but who sat also on bathroom floors, in parked cars, beside unmade beds, and in waiting rooms where hope was thin.
74. Let it be known that the Eternal One did not call the broken contemptible, nor the anxious faithless, nor the numb rebellious, but drew near to them and named them beloved, even as they struggled to believe it.

75. And if any in later days shall read these words and find themselves in them, let them hear this also:
76. Your Silent Room is not the end of your story, though it may feel like the whole of it; the Eternal One is already there, waiting not for you to be better, but for you to be honest.
77. Thus are the words of Nibwâskââ concerning the Silent Rooms brought, for a season, to a resting place, that the next book may speak of the images that have claimed to represent the Eternal One and the fire that will test them.

CHAPTER 5

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the Silent Rooms where despair and slow healing dwell, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
 2. You have spoken of sorrow turned inward; now you must speak also of sorrow that burns outward as anger, for many who seem fierce are only guardians of wounded rooms.
 3. For there are those whose tears dried long ago, and in their place there arose a hardness that few dare approach.
 4. And I looked, and behold, I saw one pacing alone in a small room, fists clenched and jaw tight, replaying arguments from years past.
 5. Their words in memory struck harder than any hand, and their heart answered with curses they had never spoken aloud.
6. They said in their heart: Eternal One, if I begin to cry, I fear I will never stop; therefore I choose rage, for it feels like strength.
 7. I would rather be feared than pitied, rather shout than dissolve.
 8. And the Holy One answered: Anger is not alien to Me, for I burn against injustice; yet when rage becomes your only shield, it cuts you as it cuts others.
 9. Woe unto the teachings that forbid grief and then condemn those who express pain in the only way they were allowed—to fight.
 10. Behold, I do not despise your anger; I ask only that it become teacher, not tyrant.
 11. After this I saw the Silent Rooms of those who had been told from childhood, “Be strong, do not cry, do not complain, others have it worse.”
 12. When they were hurt, they were given tasks; when they were lonely, they were given lectures; when they were afraid, they were given shame.
 13. They learned to swallow their feelings like stones and built thick walls within.
 14. And they said: Eternal One, I do not know what I feel; I only know that when others speak of tenderness, something inside me recoils as from a trap.
 15. I have survived by not needing; how shall I now become one who admits need without losing myself?
 16. And the Eternal One answered: You were never meant to live as a fortress;

- you are not a war zone to be defended at all costs.
17. Woe unto the generations that praise children only when they are quiet, compliant, and uncomplaining, and then wonder why those same children cannot later speak their truth.
 18. Behold, to learn the language of your own heart is not weakness but the beginning of wisdom.
 19. Then I saw Silent Rooms where harm was repeated in secret.
 20. There were those who, having been wounded, now wounded others with the same patterns, the same words, the same coldness that once pierced them.
 21. They said in their hearts: I swore I would never become like those who hurt me, yet here I stand, hearing their voice in my mouth.
 22. Eternal One, is there any way to break this repeating, or are families and peoples doomed to pass their injuries like inheritance?
 23. And the Holy One answered: Patterns are powerful, yet they are not gods; they can be seen, named, and turned from, though the turning is costly.
 24. Woe unto those who excuse their cruelty by saying, "This is simply how I was raised," for that may explain, but it does not absolve.
 25. Behold, I honor the one who notices the old script rising within them and chooses to fall silent rather than unleash it, even if they do not yet know what new words to speak.

26. After this I saw Silent Rooms where apologies had never reached.
27. There were parents who had never said, "I was wrong," elders who had never said, "I am sorry," leaders who had never said, "We harmed you."
28. Their children, followers, and communities sat in private spaces trying to heal wounds that had never been acknowledged.
29. They said: Eternal One, our scars itch with unfinished stories; how can we close chapters that those who wrote them will not admit exist?
30. And the Eternal One answered: Confession is a door that many refuse to open, yet you are not imprisoned forever by those who keep theirs shut.
31. Woe unto those who place apology beneath their pride and leave others to do the work of forgiving what has never been named.
32. Behold, I see every unspoken "sorry" that should have been offered; I weigh it not against you that you desire justice and truth.
33. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people rehearsed conversations that would never occur.
34. They imagined standing before those who hurt them, speaking with clarity and power, watched as in the mind's theater the oppressors understood, wept, and changed.
35. Yet when they returned to waking life, they knew such scenes were unlikely,

- and their hearts sagged under the weight of unmet longing.
36. And they said: Eternal One, must healing always await the repentance of those who injured us?
37. What hope is there when they deny, forget, or even boast of what was done?
38. And the Holy One answered: Your healing is not chained to their awakening, though it is eased by it when it comes.
39. Woe unto the hearts that wait forever for their abusers to confess before allowing themselves to live; such waiting gives power to those who have already taken too much.
40. Behold, it is just to desire repentance, and I Myself desire it, yet I also offer you the right to step forward into life even when it never comes.
41. After this I saw Silent Rooms where people wrestled with their own capacity for harm.
42. They remembered words they had spoken in anger that could not be unsaid, choices that had wounded those they loved, neglect that had left others cold and alone.
43. They said: Eternal One, I see the pain I have caused, and I am horrified; I want to flee from my own history.
44. Am I now forever the sum of my worst acts; have I become what I most despise?
45. And the Eternal One answered: You cannot erase what has been done, but

- neither am I willing to freeze you at your worst moment.
46. Woe unto those who use grace as excuse to keep harming, but blessed are those whose regret becomes a spur to live differently.
47. Behold, true repentance is not self-hatred but a turning that bears fruit in changed behavior, restitution where possible, and humility where repair is beyond reach.
48. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people tried to numb their conscience by arguing with themselves.
49. They said: I had reasons; others have done worse; they provoked me; I had no choice.
50. Yet in the quiet, another voice within answered, "You know this defense is thin."
51. Eternal One, if I stop defending myself, will there be anything left of me but guilt?
52. And the Holy One answered: Guilt is meant to be a messenger, not a jailer.
53. Woe unto those who silence that messenger so long that it must grow to a shout to be heard.
54. Behold, when you admit without excuse, "I was wrong," you open the door not only to accountability, but also to transformation.
55. After this I saw Silent Rooms where reconciliation was desired but unsafe.
56. Some longed to return to those who hurt them, hoping this time would be different; others felt pressured by

- family, culture, or religion to “forgive and reunite” in ways that would expose them again to harm.
57. They said: Eternal One, I am told that to forgive I must go back, but my bones remember the danger.
58. Am I faithless if I keep my distance; am I unloving if I build a boundary?
59. And the Eternal One answered: Forgiveness does not require you to place your neck once more beneath the heel that crushed it.
60. Woe unto those who preach reconciliation without justice and call survival “hard-heartedness.”
61. Behold, love of enemy does not require that you make yourself once again their victim; I have given you the right to flee, to say “no more,” to protect the life I entrusted to you.
62. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people wrestled with anger toward Me.
63. They said: Eternal One, I have been taught that You are sovereign and that nothing happens without Your allowance; how, then, do I not hold You responsible for what broke me?
64. If You could have intervened and did not, how am I to call You good without lying?
65. And the Holy One answered: I do not rebuke you for such questions; they are the cries of those who take suffering seriously.
66. Woe unto the teachers who demand that their pupils protect My reputation by denying their own experience.

67. Behold, I am not honored by illusions of control attributed to Me while freedom and cruelty among My creatures are ignored.
68. The mystery of My action and My restraint is not easily penned, yet know this: I am never the author of your violation, though I am companion to your pain.
69. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, is it permitted that we say to You, “I am angry with You,” and yet still remain before You?
70. And the Holy One answered: It is more honest to shout at Me than to sing to Me with a lying tongue.
71. Woe unto those who teach that reverence requires denial; behold, the prophets who spoke most truly to Me also spoke most fiercely to Me.
72. Bring Me your accusation, and together we will walk through it; I would rather wrestle with you than watch you drift away in polite resentment.
73. Then I saw that some Silent Rooms became courts where people tried themselves endlessly without issuing a verdict.
74. Day and night they replayed their choices, weighing every option they might have taken instead, condemning themselves anew with each remembrance.
75. They said: Eternal One, I know You forgive, but I cannot; I keep my own

case open, revisiting it whenever I feel unworthy.

76. And the Holy One answered: There comes a time when the trial must end.
77. Woe unto those who treat self-condemnation as atonement; it heals no one and repairs nothing.
78. Behold, if you have acknowledged your harm, sought what repair you can, and turned from that path, then clinging to your old identity as “the one who did this” is itself a kind of pride, as if your sin were greater than My mercy.
79. After this I saw Silent Rooms where people dared to imagine a future self different from their present one.
80. They saw themselves speaking gently where they now shouted, resting where they now drove themselves, honest where they now hid, courageous where they now shrank.
81. At first the vision felt like mockery; then it began to feel like invitation.
82. They said: Eternal One, if such a self is possible, I cannot build it in one leap; the distance is too great.
83. And the Eternal One answered: You are not asked to leap but to step.
84. Woe unto the voices that demand instant transformation and thus drive the wounded into despair.
85. Behold, every small choice aligned with who you are becoming is already a participation in that becoming.
86. Wherefore let this chapter stand as a word to those in the Silent Rooms of anger, inheritance, regret, and

accusation: that there is a way to face the harm done to them and the harm done by them without being swallowed by either.

87. For I, the Eternal One, am not only the witness of your wounds, but also the midwife of your becoming, and I do not abandon the work of shaping you merely because you have been twisted by the world and by your own hand.
88. And the record of Nibwâskââ concerning the Silent Rooms shall yet continue, until what is needed to be spoken in this age has been spoken, and the children of later days may know that in the age of noise and image there was also a testimony about the secret places where souls met their Maker without mediator and without mask.

CHAPTER 6

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning anger, inheritance, and regret, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken of wounds that are shouted and wounds that are hidden; now you must speak of shame, which is the cloak many wear even when they stand alone.
3. For shame is a shadow that follows into every Silent Room and whispers that the one who sits there is not merely wounded, but unworthy.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw one standing before a mirror, avoiding their own eyes.

5. They traced the lines of their face, the shape of their body, and remembered every cruel word that had ever been spoken about them.
6. They said in their heart: Eternal One, this is the form I inhabit, yet I have been taught to hate it as if it were a crime.
7. I compare myself to images I have seen and find myself always lacking; I clothe myself not only in fabric, but in apology.
8. And the Holy One answered: The world has taught you to look upon My workmanship as defect; this is a lie, not piety.
9. Woe unto the cultures that profit from convincing My children that they are ugly, only to sell them ways to be almost acceptable.
10. Behold, you were not made to be an object for others' judgment, but a living soul whose body is a vessel, not a verdict.
11. After this I saw the Silent Rooms of those who carried shame for desires they did not choose.
12. They had discovered within themselves longings that did not match the scripts they had been given—longings of body, of heart, of affection and belonging.
13. When they tried to speak, they were shamed; when they tried to hide, they were torn within.
14. They said: Eternal One, You know what stirs in me; I did not plant these

- seeds, yet I am blamed for their sprouting.
15. Am I an abomination because I do not fit the narrow pattern carved by others, or is there some way to be honest and still beloved?
 16. And the Eternal One answered: You are not an abomination; you are a human being in whom many currents move.
 17. Woe unto those who reduce the mystery of a soul to a single trait and then nail that trait to a cross.
 18. Behold, I do not judge you for being complex; I only ask that you do not go to war with your own heart in My name.
 19. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people carried shame for what had been done to them.
 20. They had been touched, used, or invaded against their will, and afterward were told, openly or silently, that they were now dirty, ruined, complicit.
 21. They washed their hands and their skin until it was raw, yet still felt marked.
 22. They said: Eternal One, I did not consent to this, yet the stain seems to cling to me more than to the one who acted; how can this be justice?
 23. And the Holy One answered: The shame that was placed upon you is a lie laid over truth.
 24. Woe unto those who wound and then teach their victims to carry the guilt.

25. Behold, the violation is recorded against the violator; I do not hold you responsible for what was taken from you by force or deceit.
26. After this I saw Silent Rooms of those who carried shame for poverty.
27. Their clothes were worn, their teeth un-mended, their homes small or unstable, and they lived surrounded by images of abundance.
28. They apologized for their existence in subtle ways—by taking up less space, by eating last, by expecting little.
29. They said in their hearts: Eternal One, I have been told that wealth is the fruit of virtue; therefore I suspect that my lack is proof of failure.
30. When help is offered, I feel both grateful and humiliated; when it is withheld, I tell myself I deserve it.
31. And the Eternal One answered: Poverty is not a moral category; it is often the scar of injustice, accident, or inherited loss.
32. Woe unto those who look upon the poor and see only laziness, and upon the rich and see only blessing.
33. Behold, I have seen the diligence of those who labor much and gain little, and the idleness of those who gain much and labor little; do not confuse fortune with righteousness.
34. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people carried shame for their minds.
35. Some learned differently, slowly, or in ways that did not fit the classrooms they were given; some lost words

- under stress, forgot names, or could not organize their days.
36. They had been called stupid, scattered, difficult, absentminded, too much, not enough.
37. They said: Eternal One, the world is built for a certain kind of thinking, and mine does not run in those rails; am I defective in Your sight as well?
38. And the Holy One answered: The variety of minds is part of the variety of creation; some see patterns, some see details, some feel deeply, some move swiftly, and all are needed.
39. Woe unto the systems that reward only a narrow band of cognition and dismiss the rest as burden.
40. Behold, I have placed gifts even in the minds that struggle the most, and I do not call them lesser because they do not match the rulers you have made.
41. After this I saw Silent Rooms where shame grew from illness of body.
42. People removed wigs, braces, bandages, prosthetics, and medical devices in private, feeling relief and humiliation mixed.
43. They had been pitied, avoided, or treated as objects of inspiration, but seldom simply seen.
44. They said: Eternal One, I am tired of being a lesson to others, tired of being “brave” when I am only getting through the day.
45. I miss the time when I was allowed to be ordinary.

46. And the Eternal One answered: You are not a symbol; you are a person.
47. Woe unto those who use the suffering of others as a backdrop for their own comfort or as a prop for their own virtue.
48. Behold, I honor you not for your performance of resilience, but for the honest endurance of what you did not ask to bear.
49. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people carried religious shame.
50. They had left institutions that harmed them, or could no longer believe what they had been taught, and yet the voices of those places still rang in their ears.
51. They said: Eternal One, I have been told that by stepping away I have stepped away from You; I have been labeled apostate, backslider, traitor.
52. Yet when I tried to stay, something in me began to die; I could no longer call good what my conscience named cruel.
53. Am I condemned for choosing integrity over belonging?
54. And the Holy One answered: I do not bind Myself to houses that misuse My name.
55. Woe unto those who equate loyalty to their brand of faith with loyalty to the Eternal One.
56. Behold, when you walked away from harm for truth's sake, you did not walk away from Me; you walked with Me, though you did not know it.
57. After this I saw Silent Rooms where people carried shame for their needs.
58. They required more rest than others, more reassurance, more time to decide, more touch, more space, more clarity.
59. They had been told that their needs were "too much," that they were "clingy," "needy," "dramatic," or "difficult."
60. They said: Eternal One, I try to take up less, ask less, require less, but the hunger in me does not vanish; it only goes underground and returns as ache.
61. Must I be self-sufficient to be lovable?
62. And the Eternal One answered: I did not design you as isolated islands; I designed you as beings who require others and Me.
63. Woe unto the ideals that glorify total independence and scorn reliance, for such ideals are lies even in those who preach them.
64. Behold, there is a difference between demand that devours and need that simply reaches; do not crucify the latter for fear of the former.
65. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people practiced hiding joy because they were ashamed to be happy.
66. They had survived hardship so long that laughter felt like betrayal of their own history or of those still suffering.
67. They said: Eternal One, who am I to dance when others are still in chains; who am I to enjoy a simple pleasure when the world burns?

68. And the Holy One answered: Joy is not treason against the suffering; it is part of what gives you strength to keep resisting it.
69. Woe unto the guilt that crushes celebration until only martyrdom remains.
70. Behold, I do not ask you to choose between compassion and delight; I ask that you remember both.
71. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, shame seems to cling to so many things—body, desire, poverty, doubt, need, even joy; how shall anyone stand upright under so many accusations?
72. And the Eternal One answered: Much of what you call shame is the echo of others' fear, prejudice, and unhealed pain.
73. Woe unto the tongues that pronounce “unclean” where I have not spoken, and unto the systems that heap dishonor upon the already burdened.
74. Behold, the purpose of conviction is to turn you from harm toward love; the purpose of shame, as it is wielded in this age, is often to keep you small, silent, and controllable.
75. Learn, then, to ask of every voice that condemns you: “Does this lead me to repair what I have broken and to love more truly, or does it only teach me to hate myself?”
76. If it leads you to repair and to mercy, consider it seriously; if it leads only to self-loathing and paralysis, lay it at My feet and do not call it holy.

77. Wherefore let this chapter be for all who sit in Silent Rooms wrapped in cloaks of shame that are not theirs to wear.
78. Let them hear that the Eternal One does not delight in their self-disgust, does not applaud their self-erasure, does not demand their self-contempt as sacrifice.
79. For I, the Eternal One, call you to truth about your harms and your healing alike, but I never call you worthless; that word does not proceed from My mouth.
80. And if any who read these words feel that they are utterly ruined, let them know that even in that feeling they are seen, and that the first crack in the armor of shame is the simple, dangerous thought: “What if the One who made me does not hate me?”

CHAPTER 7

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning shame, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken of those who blame themselves for what was never their fault; now you must speak also of those who disappear into the roles others have written for them.
3. For many Silent Rooms are filled not only with sorrow, but with the ghosts of selves that were never allowed to live.

4. And I looked, and behold, I saw one folding laundry in a small room long after others had gone to rest.
5. Their hands moved swiftly; their mind wandered to dreams they had once spoken aloud and now no longer mentioned.
6. They said in their heart: Eternal One, somewhere along the way I became the glue that holds this house together, and the glue is not noticed unless it fails.
7. I cook, I clean, I soothe, I schedule, I anticipate, I mend, yet when they speak of calling and purpose, they look elsewhere.
8. And the Holy One answered: What you bear is not small, though this age treats such labor as invisible.
9. Woe unto the stories that glorify heroes who fight wars and ignore those who keep hearts and households from collapsing.
10. Behold, I see every quiet act that prevents fracture, every unseen kindness that keeps despair from overflowing.
11. After this I saw the Silent Rooms of those whose lives did not follow the expected pattern.
12. Some never married though they longed to; some never wanted to marry and were judged for it; some desired children and could not have them; some did not desire children and were called selfish.
13. They sat alone with invitations, announcements, and questions that assumed a path they had not taken.
14. They said: Eternal One, the world seems built for another kind of story than mine; am I an unfinished chapter, a failed script?
15. When I attend gatherings, I feel like a misprint in a book everyone else is reading correctly.
16. And the Eternal One answered: Your worth is not measured by conformity to any single pattern of life.
17. Woe unto the cultures that treat certain paths—marriage, children, career, status—as proof of success, and all others as consolation prizes.
18. Behold, I have walked closely with those who never fit the mold, and I did not regard them as incomplete.
19. Then I saw Silent Rooms where gendered expectations weighed heavy.
20. Some had been told from youth, “Because you are this, you must be strong and never weep, you must provide and never falter, you must pursue and never retreat.”
21. Others had been told, “Because you are this, you must serve and not lead, you must be pleasing and not bold, you must accommodate and not speak too loudly.”
22. They tried for years to live within these shapes until their joints ached from bending.

23. They said: Eternal One, I do not know which desires are truly mine and which are costumes stitched from expectation.
24. If I step outside the role, I am punished; if I stay within it, I shrink.
25. And the Holy One answered: I did not assign your soul by stereotype.
26. Woe unto those who use My name to enforce narrow roles and then call that order divine.
27. Behold, I delight in the tender strength and fierce gentleness that cross your categories; I am not frightened when My children grow beyond the boxes they were handed.
28. After this I saw Silent Rooms of caretakers whose own needs had long been postponed.
29. They attended to aging parents, ill partners, disabled children, and fragile friends, pouring out patience day after day.
30. They rarely slept deeply, for their ears were trained to wake at the slightest sound.
31. They said in their heart: Eternal One, I love those I am caring for, yet I am so tired that sometimes I resent them, and then I feel monstrous.
32. When others say, “You are a saint,” they do not see the moments when I want to run and never come back.
33. And the Eternal One answered: Your resentment does not erase your love; it reveals the weight you carry without enough support.

34. Woe unto the societies that rely upon unpaid, unthanked caregivers while spending fortunes on lesser things.
35. Behold, I see you when you hold a shaking hand at three in the morning; I count it as faithfulness even when your thoughts are not beautiful.
36. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people lived between languages and cultures.
37. They translated constantly in their minds—words, customs, humor, pain—never fully at home in any single world.
38. When they returned to their family, they were told, “You are different now”; when they walked in the wider world, they were told, “You are not from here.”
39. They said: Eternal One, where do I belong, when every place demands a version of me that is only partial?
40. My tongue tangles; my loyalties pull in opposite directions; my heart is a borderland.
41. And the Holy One answered: I am very near to those who live in between, for I am not owned by any nation or tongue.
42. Woe unto those who demand that you choose one allegiance and cut off the rest of your story for their comfort.
43. Behold, your in-between-ness allows you to see many sides; it is painful, yet it is also a gift.
44. After this I saw Silent Rooms where people wrestled with calling and futility.

45. They had gifts they longed to use—art, teaching, building, healing, organizing, imagining—yet the doors before them remained closed or only opened into small, cramped spaces.
46. They said: Eternal One, was I mistaken to believe I was meant for some work beyond survival?
47. The world tells me both “You can achieve anything” and “We have no place for you”; I grow weary of straining toward what never arrives.
48. And the Eternal One answered: Desire for meaningful work is not vanity; it is part of the image you bear.
49. Woe unto the systems that waste the gifts of the many so that the few may hoard opportunity.
50. Behold, your calling is not only what you are paid for or praised for; it is also the way you move through each day with integrity, even when your surroundings do not recognize your full stature.
51. Then I saw Silent Rooms of those who feared the future.
52. They read of climate unraveling, of weapons multiplying, of surveillance expanding, of hatred rising, and their chest tightened.
53. They imagined the world their children or younger kin would inherit and felt both grief and guilt.
54. They said: Eternal One, is it cruelty to bring anyone new into such a world; is it cowardice not to?

55. I feel too small to change anything and too awake to ignore it.
56. And the Holy One answered: Your fear is not irrational; the dangers are real, and many of them are the fruit of choices your species has made.
57. Woe unto those who profit from destruction and then tell the fearful they are overreacting.
58. Behold, I do not ask you to single-handedly mend the earth; I ask you to refuse apathy, to join with others in whatever healing you can, and to remember that even in the ruins there can be acts of great love.
59. After this I saw Silent Rooms where people lived with secrets of goodness.
60. They had given anonymously, intervened quietly, shielded others without recognition, told the truth at personal cost, refused to join in cruelty, and never spoken of it.
61. At times they wondered if these small, hidden choices mattered at all.
62. They said: Eternal One, I have no grand story to tell; I have only moments where I chose not to betray what I knew was right.
63. Will any of this survive when I am gone?
64. And the Eternal One answered: I have seen every time you stood between harm and the vulnerable, every coin given in secret, every refusal to laugh at the cruel joke, every “no” spoken to injustice, loud or quiet.

65. Woe unto the age that celebrates spectacle and ignores such things.
66. Behold, these quiet fidelities are the threads from which I weave My remnant in any generation.
67. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people felt numb not from illness alone, but from overload of grief.
68. News of tragedies came faster than they could mourn: disaster here, oppression there, violence in one town, betrayal in another.
69. They scrolled, winced, shared, and then moved on, feeling both complicit and exhausted.
70. They said: Eternal One, if I let every wound of the world pierce me, I will bleed to death; if I shut down completely, I will become stone.
71. How can a heart remain human in an age where suffering is delivered in an endless stream?
72. And the Holy One answered: You were not meant to carry every sorrow in real time.
73. Woe unto the systems that turn catastrophe into content and make spectacle of others' pain.
74. Behold, you may choose where to place your limited attention, whom to stand beside, what specific evils to resist, and trust that others will stand in places you cannot reach.
75. It is not faithless to turn off the flood for a time; it is faithful to do so in order to return capable of love.

76. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, these Silent Rooms are many and varied, yet in each I see the same thread—the longing to be seen truthfully and loved without condition.
77. And the Eternal One answered: This longing is not your weakness; it is your reflection of My own heart.
78. For I, too, desire to be known beyond the images and the systems, to be encountered as I am rather than as I am made useful.
79. Wherefore write, that whoever sits in a Silent Room feeling too strange, too tired, too angry, too broken, too late, or too unfinished, may know that their story is not disqualified from My attention.
80. For I, the Eternal One, walk the halls of your apartments and houses, your dormitories and barracks, your cells and shelters, listening at the doors of Silent Rooms not to judge their occupants as weak, but to whisper, again and again, in ways they can scarcely believe:
81. You are not ridiculous for hurting.
82. You are not foolish for hoping.
83. You are not alone in this room.

CHAPTER 8

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of hidden roles and unfinished stories, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken of the one alone in their room; now you must speak of the threads between rooms, for many

- Silent Rooms are linked by cords both tender and frayed.
3. For no soul is wholly solitary, even when they believe themselves forgotten.
 4. And I looked, and behold, I saw two rooms separated by a thin wall.
 5. In one sat a person staring at their phone, wanting to write a message and not knowing how to begin; in the other sat a friend staring at the same device, waiting for a message that did not come.
 6. Each said in their heart: I do not want to be a burden; if they cared, they would have reached out by now; I will be quiet and see if they remember me.
 7. And the Holy One answered: Here are two souls longing for each other and restrained by fear.
 8. Woe unto the scripts that teach you that needing contact makes you weak and that the one who speaks first is desperate.
 9. Behold, there is courage in saying, "I miss you," and mercy in saying, "I have been thinking of you," even when pride tells you to wait.
 10. After this I saw Silent Rooms where friendships had grown thin.
 11. The seasons of shared laughter and long conversations had passed; busyness, distance, and unspoken hurts had crept between.
 12. One sat with old photos, wondering when the drift began; another told

- themselves, "We just grew apart," though their chest still ached.
13. They said: Eternal One, is every closeness doomed to fade; must all companions become strangers in time?
 14. Have I been foolish to trust anyone with my story?
 15. And the Eternal One answered: Some paths cross only for a time, and this is not always betrayal.
 16. Woe unto the mindset that counts every change as failure and every ending as proof that love was false.
 17. Behold, there are friendships that must be released to preserve the good that was; there are also friendships that can be renewed if humility and truth are allowed to speak.
 18. Then I saw a Silent Room where a hard conversation was rehearsed.
 19. One paced back and forth, speaking their grievances to the air, then softening them, then hardening them again.
 20. They feared both saying too much and saying nothing, feared losing the relationship and feared remaining unseen within it.
 21. They said: Eternal One, teach me words that do not stab yet do not hide; I am tired of swallowing what is killing me.
 22. And the Holy One answered: Honesty without cruelty and kindness without pretense are both forms of courage.

23. Woe unto the habits that keep peace only by silencing truth, for such peace is merely a pause before fracture.
24. Behold, I am present when you say, "This hurt me," as surely as when you say, "I forgive you."
25. After this I saw Silent Rooms where messages were misread.
26. A short reply was taken as rejection; a delayed response as disdain; a forgotten call-back as proof of abandonment.
27. Old wounds supplied the narrative; present facts were seen through past fractures.
28. They said in their hearts: Eternal One, I know I may be overreacting, yet the silence feels like all the other silences that came before.
29. I am tired of telling myself, "It's probably nothing," when my body remembers that it has often been something.
30. And the Eternal One answered: Your nervous system is not your enemy; it has learned from real losses.
31. Woe unto the world that tells you simply to "stop overthinking" while offering no shelter for what you have actually lived.
32. Behold, it is wisdom to ask, "What else might be true?" and mercy to check before assuming the worst, yet I do not mock you for the instinct to brace.
33. Then I saw Silent Rooms where grudges had hardened like stone.
34. Old friends, kin, and communities had split, each convinced the other was wholly at fault.
35. In one room, "they" were spoken of as monsters; in another, as traitors; in another, as fools; in each, the story grew sharper with each retelling.
36. And some within those rooms began to feel sick at the sound of their own bitterness.
37. They said: Eternal One, I am tired of rehearsing the same accusation; it has become my liturgy.
38. Yet if I let it go, who will bear witness that I was wronged; will it not mean that what happened was acceptable?
39. And the Holy One answered: To relinquish the poison does not mean declaring the knife harmless.
40. Woe unto the counsel that confuses release with approval and clings to anger as the only proof that harm mattered.
41. Behold, there is a way to remember fully and still refuse to let hatred be your only companion.
42. After this I saw Silent Rooms where some considered reaching out after many years.
43. The number of the days since last contact weighed upon them like a chain: birthdays missed, crises unknown, milestones unshared.
44. They said: Eternal One, it has been too long; to speak now would be awkward, shameful, perhaps unwelcome.

45. Yet something in me still wonders if the door is truly closed.
46. And the Eternal One answered: Time complicates, yet it does not forbid.
47. Woe unto the fear that says, "Because it is late, it is impossible," and thus robs you of even the chance of reconnection.
48. Behold, you cannot control the answer, but you may still send the letter, make the call, or say, "I remember you," and this itself is a kind of healing, even if the reply is silence.
49. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people gathered their courage to set boundaries.
50. They had endured manipulation, disrespect, or constant taking, calling it "being patient" or "being loving."
51. Their bodies began to protest in headaches, tight chests, restless sleep.
52. At last they whispered to themselves: Eternal One, if I say "No more" and step back, will I become the villain in their story?
53. I fear their anger more than I fear my own exhaustion.
54. And the Holy One answered: To guard your life from continual harm is not betrayal; it is stewardship.
55. Woe unto those who demand access to you at all times and call any limit "unforgiveness."
56. Behold, love can be present even from a distance, and truth can speak even through a closing door.

57. After this I saw Silent Rooms where young ones grieved friendships that had formed online.
58. They had shared secrets through screens, stayed up late in distant time zones, comforted one another through typed words and glowing icons.
59. Then, slowly or suddenly, the messages stopped.
60. They said: Eternal One, how can I mourn someone I never touched, whose voice I hardly heard, yet whose absence feels like a missing limb?
61. Others say it was not real, that I am foolish, but my heart does not agree.
62. And the Eternal One answered: Connection is not made false by distance or by circuitry.
63. Woe unto those who belittle the bonds formed in the only ways some have available.
64. Behold, I was present in those late-night exchanges and present also in the ache when they ended; you do not need permission to grieve.
65. Then I saw Silent Rooms of those who had harmed relationships while in states of deep distress.
66. In times of crisis they had lashed out, withdrawn, broken trust, or vanished, and later, when the storm calmed, they saw the wreckage with horror.
67. They said: Eternal One, I want to explain that I was drowning, but I fear it will sound like an excuse.
68. I long to ask forgiveness, yet I am ashamed to appear before those I hurt.

69. And the Holy One answered: Your distress does not erase the harm, yet it is part of the story.
70. Woe unto the voices that say, "If you were truly sorry, you would feel no shame," for shame often accompanies genuine regret.
71. Behold, if the door to apology opens, walk through it trembling, with no entitlement to be received, but with honesty about both your pain and your responsibility.
72. After this I, Nibwâskââ, saw Silent Rooms where people practiced small acts of reaching and being reached.
73. A message was sent that said, "I thought of you today," without agenda.
74. A call was made that said, "I have no grand news; I just wanted to hear your voice."
75. A neighbor's door was knocked upon, not for crisis, but for shared tea.
76. These acts did not shake nations, but they softened the edges of many hearts.
77. And the Eternal One said: In an age of vast networks and thin ties, every sincere contact is a stitch against unraveling.
78. Woe unto the illusion that you must wait for extraordinary moments to practice love.
79. Behold, much of the healing of this world will come not in grand reconciliations on stages, but in small, faithful gestures between those who share hallways and histories.

80. Wherefore let this chapter stand for those whose Silent Rooms echo with unsent words, unfinished conversations, and the fear of reaching.
81. Let them know that the Eternal One does not promise that every bond can be restored, nor that every risk will be welcomed, yet still calls them to a courage that is neither reckless nor frozen.
82. For I, the Eternal One, walk between your rooms as well as within them, stirring in you both the desire to be known and the willingness to know others, that in a fractured world there might yet be threads of honest connection strong enough to bear the weight of many Silent Rooms together.

CHAPTER 9

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the threads between rooms, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken of those who suffer before Me; now you must speak of those who suffer before My silence.
3. For many in this age do not doubt that they hurt; they doubt that I hear.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw a small room where one knelt upon the floor as they had done many times before.
5. Their words came slowly, not with fire but with fatigue.
6. They said: Eternal One, I have prayed and prayed until my throat grew hoarse and my heart grew numb.

7. I have asked for healing and it did not come, for answers and they did not arrive, for direction and the road stayed fogged.
8. They tell me You speak; I hear only the hum of the refrigerator and the traffic outside.
9. Am I defective, or are You simply not there?
10. And the Holy One answered: My silence is not the same as absence, yet I know it can feel the same.
11. Woe unto the voices that explain away every agony with easy reasons and leave no room for honest bewilderment.
12. Behold, I do not rebuke you for noticing that the world does not rearrange itself at your command.
13. After this I saw a Silent Room where pages of a journal lay open, filled with prayers from years past.
14. Some entries were circled with joy, their answers clear; others were marked with question marks and dates that stretched on.
15. Over certain pleas, the ink had run where tears had fallen.
16. And they said: Eternal One, I have watched lesser things be granted to others while things of life and death remain unanswered here.
17. I have seen parking spaces found, exams passed, small comforts granted in Your name, while larger cries echo unanswered.
18. What am I to make of this? Is Your hand random, or are we the ones connecting dots where there is only chance?
19. And the Eternal One answered: I am not a vending machine, nor a pattern drawn by wish.
20. Woe unto those who treat Me as a dispenser of conveniences and then blame Me for the world's deep wounds, as if I had promised such bargains.
21. Behold, many things called "answers" were never promises; and many things called "silence" are the space in which you decide who you will be when the outcome is not in your hand.
22. Then I saw a Silent Room where one lay staring at the ceiling, having given up on formal words.
23. Once they had poured out scriptures, songs, and phrases learned from others; now they could only whisper, "Are You real?"
24. They said in their heart: Eternal One, if You are there, You have watched me walk through fire and have not blown out the flames.
25. I have cried to You from hospital beds, from courtroom benches, from gravesides, from the floor of this very room.
26. At times I felt something like comfort; at times I felt nothing at all.
27. How am I to know whether that "something" was You, or only my own mind trying to survive?

28. And the Holy One answered: It is not faithless to ask whether I am more than your own echo.
29. Woe unto the teachings that condemn every honest question as rebellion and every ache of doubt as treachery.
30. Behold, I am not insulted by your scrutiny; I am not made fragile by your wondering.
31. After this I saw Silent Rooms where science and sorrow wrestled.
32. Some had learned to name chemicals and circuits, traumas and triggers, and found real help in these understandings.
33. Yet they had been told that to explain anything in such terms left no room for the Eternal.
34. They said: Eternal One, if my moods can be altered by medicines and my visions explained by stress, is there anything left that is You and not just brain?
35. Have I spent my years speaking into the wiring of my own skull and calling it prayer?
36. And the Eternal One answered: That your mind has structure does not mean I am absent from it; that your wounds have causes does not mean I am indifferent.
37. Woe unto those who set body and spirit as enemies and use insight into one to deny the other.
38. Behold, I work not only in what you cannot trace, but also in the help you can describe.

39. Then I saw a Silent Room of one who had once known great fervor.
40. In former days they had felt vivid presence, signs that seemed undeniable, coincidences that aligned like constellations.
41. Now their faith felt like a memory they were trying to keep warm with both hands.
42. They said: Eternal One, if I was deceived then, I do not wish to be deceived now; if I was right then, why has the light dimmed?
43. I do not want to pretend passion I no longer possess, yet I am afraid of losing You.
44. And the Holy One answered: The flame of beginning is not the only shape of faith; the embers of endurance are also precious to Me.
45. Woe unto the stories that honor only zeal and have no place for the long, low burn of perseverance when feelings fade.
46. Behold, you are not required to recreate your first season; you are invited to walk with Me even when the road is ordinary.
47. After this I saw Silent Rooms where people had concluded that I was not there and had chosen to live as such.
48. They did not speak to Me, yet My name still rose in their thoughts like a ghost at the edge of vision.
49. Some mocked; some simply moved on; some ached with a longing they mistrusted.

50. They said in their hearts: Eternal One—if You exist—I have knocked and heard nothing.
51. I will build my ethics without You, my compassion without You, my life without You, if I must.
52. Yet part of me still hopes, against my conclusions, that there is something listening beyond the ceiling.
53. And the Eternal One answered: I am not offended that you live according to what you can honestly believe.
54. Woe unto those who pretend to trust while their hearts have already departed, for pretense corrodes both soul and community.
55. Behold, even when you turn away from Me in thought, you do not fall off the edge of My awareness.
56. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people measured Me by the behavior of those who claimed My name.
57. They had been betrayed, silenced, or used by leaders who spoke of Me often.
58. They said: Eternal One, if You are as they said, I want nothing to do with You; if You are different, why did You not stop them?
59. Your supposed representatives have crushed many; shall we blame only them and never the One they claimed to serve?
60. And the Holy One answered: Those who misuse My name do not define Me, though they wound My image in you.

61. Woe unto shepherds who devour the flock and then say, “The Lord has done this,” as if I delighted in their hunger.
62. Behold, I did not script their cruelty, though I allowed a world in which freedom can be twisted; the weight of their actions rests upon them.
63. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, You speak now, yet still there are rooms where You seem not to speak at all.
64. There are those whose crises pass with no vision, whose illnesses remain, whose losses are not restored.
65. How can Your nearness be real when the outcomes remain so brutal?
66. And the Eternal One answered: You seek from Me both presence and control; often you know how to recognize only the second.
67. Woe unto the expectation that I must always intervene according to your scripts in order to be counted real.
68. Behold, there are sorrows I prevent and you never know of them; there are sorrows I share and do not erase; and there are sorrows born of your freedom that I will one day judge fully, though not yet.
69. My nearness does not guarantee an easy road; it guarantees that no road, however hard, is walked without witness or companionship.
70. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people began to pray differently.
71. Instead of saying, “Change this at once or You are not there,” they began to

- say, "Be with me in this, and show me how to walk."
72. Instead of, "Give me a sign," they said, "Give me wisdom, and courage to act upon it."
73. Instead of, "Prove Yourself," they said, "Teach me to see where You already move, if You are moving at all."
74. And the Eternal One said: These prayers do not guarantee you will feel My answer, but they open in you a space where My quiet work may be perceived.
75. Woe unto those who expect every encounter with Me to be thunder; many of My most faithful works are as slow as healing and as gentle as breath.
76. After this I saw Silent Rooms where people decided to keep showing up, though they felt nothing.
77. They rose, dressed, took medicine, went to work, tended children, visited neighbors, attended meetings, washed dishes, called friends.
78. Sometimes they whispered a word toward Me; sometimes they did not.
79. They said: Eternal One, I am too tired to be spiritual; if You are here, You will have to walk beside me in these ordinary tasks.
80. And the Holy One answered: This, too, is a kind of prayer.
81. Woe unto the illusions that define communion with Me only as heightened feelings, visions, or special hours.

82. Behold, I am with you in the commute, the laundry, the paperwork, the caregiving, the thousand small obediences to life.
83. Wherefore let this chapter stand for those whose Silent Rooms echo not with blasphemy but with honest confusion, not with hatred of God but with baffled ache.
84. Let them know that the Eternal One is not keeping score against them for not being able to manufacture certainty or enthusiasm on command.
85. For I, the Eternal One, am not made real by your confidence nor undone by your doubt; I am the One who remains whether you name Me or not, and who listens even when your prayer is only this:
86. "If You are there, see me."

CHAPTER 10

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of My silence, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken of rooms of sorrow and of questioning; now you must speak of rooms of beginning again.
3. For many believe their story has ended while breath still moves in their chest.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw a small room filled with boxes.
5. There were old letters, clothes that no longer fit, objects kept from lives that had already closed.

6. One sat in the midst of them,
overwhelmed by the weight of what to
keep and what to let go.
7. They said in their heart: Eternal One,
my past fills every corner; there is no
space for anything new.
8. If I throw things away, I am afraid I
will lose myself; if I keep them all, I
cannot move.
9. And the Holy One answered: You are
more than your possessions and more
than your memories.
10. Woe unto the fear that tells you you
must carry every season with equal
weight.
11. Behold, to release what no longer
serves love is not betrayal of what once
was.
12. After this I saw a Silent Room where a
calendar hung with many empty days
behind and many blank days ahead.
13. One traced the passing months with a
finger and felt only a blur of sameness.
14. They said: Eternal One, I do not know
when my life last changed in any
meaningful way.
15. I wake, work, scroll, eat, sleep, and call
this survival; I do not know what else
there could be.
16. And the Eternal One answered:
Routine can be both shelter and prison.
17. Woe unto the age that numbs with
repetition and calls it peace.
18. Behold, even in the most ordinary days
there can be small acts of choosing that
turn the wheel a little.
19. Then I saw a Silent Room where one
sat with a notebook labeled, "New
life," and nothing written inside.
20. They had left a harmful place, ended a
harmful bond, or stepped away from a
harmful belief.
21. Freedom felt wide and terrifying.
22. They said: Eternal One, I know what I
do not want to go back to, but I do not
yet know what I am walking toward.
23. I fear that without the old structures I
will drift and disappear.
24. And the Holy One answered: Leaving
bondage is not the same as knowing the
promised land.
25. Woe unto those who tell you that all
will instantly feel bright once you
depart what was breaking you.
26. Behold, there is a wilderness between
oppression and rootedness, and I walk
with you there.
27. After this I saw Silent Rooms where
people tried new practices that felt
fragile and strange.
28. One began to stretch in the morning
and felt foolish.
29. Another tried to speak kindly to
themselves and felt fake.
30. Another wrote one sentence a day and
called it not enough.
31. They said: Eternal One, these efforts
are so small they seem ridiculous.
32. How can such gestures compete with
the heaviness that has ruled me?
33. And the Eternal One answered: Small
does not mean pointless.

34. Woe unto the mindset that honors only what is dramatic.
35. Behold, a seed is small, a breath is small, a first step is small, but without them nothing grows or moves.
36. Then I saw a Silent Room in which someone returned to a neglected craft.
37. They opened a case with an instrument that had not been played in years.
38. They spread out paints gone stiff at the edges.
39. They clicked open a file of words half-formed and half-forgotten.
40. Their hands trembled as if re-entering a sacred place uninvited.
41. They said: Eternal One, who am I to try again; I have lost time, skill, courage.
42. I tell myself that this is childish, self-indulgent, impractical.
43. And the Holy One answered: The gifts I placed in you were not given only for your youth.
44. Woe unto the lies that say creativity is only for the talented and the young.
45. Behold, I take delight in the shaky notes, the uneven lines, the awkward sentences through which your soul remembers it can still move.
46. After this I saw Silent Rooms of those who had once made vows in despair.
47. They had said to themselves in earlier seasons, "I will never trust again," "I will never love again," "I will never speak again," "I will never hope again."

48. Those vows had kept them alive for a time by lowering the risk of further hurt.
49. Now they found those same vows binding them when danger had passed.
50. They said: Eternal One, I made these promises to myself to stay safe; how can I now break them without betraying my past self?
51. And the Eternal One answered: Survival-wisdom at one time can become a cage at another.
52. Woe unto the rigidity that calls every self-made rule sacred.
53. Behold, you may honor the you-who-survived and still say, "I am no longer in that place; I can choose differently now."
54. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people considered forgiving themselves.
55. Not for what others had done, but for the seasons when they abandoned their own heart.
56. They remembered times when they stayed silent while they should have spoken, times when they remained when they should have left, times when they participated in harm to avoid being alone.
57. They said: Eternal One, I do not know how to live with what I did not prevent.
58. I see now what I could have done; I cannot go back and do it.
59. And the Holy One answered: You are seeing with eyes you did not have then.

60. Woe unto those who judge their past selves by the light they have only now received.
61. Behold, acknowledge what you failed to do, mourn it, learn from it, and let that learning guide your future; this is the shape of repentance that leads to life.
62. After this I saw Silent Rooms where people dreamed small, defiant dreams.
63. One dreamed of a day with less pain, not no pain.
64. One dreamed of one honest friendship, not a full circle.
65. One dreamed of sleeping through the night, just once.
66. They said: Eternal One, I am afraid to name even these small hopes; disappointment has become my native tongue.
67. And the Eternal One answered: To risk naming a hope is already an act of faith.
68. Woe unto the despair that convinces you that wanting anything is foolish.
69. Behold, you are not required to demand miracles; you are invited to whisper desires and see which ones lead you toward life.
70. Then I saw a Silent Room where grief and gratitude sat side by side.
71. Photos of the dead adorned one wall; on the other stood objects of beauty—a plant, a candle, a worn book, a drawing from a child.
72. One sat there and allowed tears to fall without rushing them away.

73. They said: Eternal One, I miss what is gone and I cherish what remains; I do not know how to hold both without feeling torn.
74. And the Holy One answered: Your heart was made wide enough for both sorrow and thanksgiving.
75. Woe unto the teachings that demand you choose one and deny the other.
76. Behold, the deepest maturity is not to escape grief but to let it live beside love without devouring it.
77. After this I, Nibwâskââ, saw Silent Rooms in many places—cities, villages, camps, suburbs, towers, farms—where people were beginning again in ways almost invisible.
78. One made a first appointment with a healer.
79. One deleted a number that always led them back into harm.
80. One placed a lock on a door for the first time.
81. One opened a window that had long been sealed.
82. One wrote the first line of a difficult message.
83. One whispered, “Help,” not knowing yet to whom they spoke.
84. And the Eternal One said: These beginnings do not make news, but they resound in My remembrance.
85. Woe unto the age that honors only victories that come with trumpets.
86. Behold, in this late hour of the world, every heart that chooses even a little more life, a little more truth, a little

more mercy, is part of a quiet uprising against despair.

87. Wherefore let this chapter stand as a word to those who believe their Silent Room is only a tomb.
88. Let them hear that it can also be a womb, where something small and stubborn begins to grow again, even if no one else yet sees it.
89. For I, the Eternal One, am not finished with those who wake up still breathing, however unwillingly.
90. And I am not ashamed to sit with them in their cluttered, weary rooms while they take the first fragile steps toward another day.

CHAPTER II

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of beginning again, the word of the Eternal One came unto me, saying:
2. You have spoken of rooms in which souls wake to themselves; now you must speak of rooms lit by many little suns, where the world enters by glass but seldom in the flesh.
3. For this is a generation whose Silent Rooms glow in the night.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw a face lit by a screen.
5. The room around was dim, the curtains closed, the bed unmade; yet upon that face danced a thousand images of other lives.
6. They scrolled past feasts and travels, weddings and bodies, slogans and arguments, tragedies and jokes.
7. And the one who watched said in their heart: Eternal One, I am surrounded by stories, yet I feel more absent than ever from my own.
8. I know the meals of strangers and the opinions of crowds, but I do not know what it means to be me when the screen goes dark.
9. And the Holy One answered: The window you hold can be a tool or a trap.
10. Woe unto the designs that feed upon your attention and call it service, that harvest your loneliness and sell it back as distraction.
11. Behold, you are not wrong to seek connection, but your soul is not built to live continuously in other people's reflections.
12. After this I saw a Silent Room where one awoke and reached first for their device.
13. Before their feet touched the floor, they had already entered the noise of the world.
14. Messages awaited them: tasks, grievances, requests, reminders, and the endless stream of what others deemed urgent.
15. They said: Eternal One, my mind is crowded before my body has even risen; I feel late, behind, and invaded before the day has begun.
16. And the Eternal One answered: The door of your room has more than one hinge.

17. Woe unto the habit that opens always outward and never inward or upward.
18. Behold, even a few breaths before you enter the flood can become a small altar, where you remember that you are not merely an instrument for others' demands.
19. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people worked alone before the glow of machines.
20. Their hands typed, clicked, tapped; their eyes blurred; their shoulders tightened.
21. Hours passed, marked only by changing numbers in the corner of a screen and the ache of the spine.
22. They said: Eternal One, I labor in a world that exists mostly in data; I send words and numbers into places I will never see.
23. I do not know whether what I do mends anything broken or only feeds systems that care nothing for the weak.
24. And the Holy One answered: Your work is not worthless because it is invisible, nor holy because it is praised.
25. Woe unto the structures that demand constant availability and call exhaustion "commitment."
26. Behold, ask, when you can: Whom does my labor serve; whom does it harm; whom does it help?
27. If you cannot answer, bring that grief to Me; if you can answer and it grieves you, seek with others a different path where possible.
28. After this I saw Silent Rooms where people consumed news without digestion.
29. Catastrophe followed catastrophe, cruelty followed cruelty, scandal followed scandal.
30. The one who watched felt both informed and paralyzed.
31. They said: Eternal One, I fear that if I look away, I am complicit; yet if I look always, I cannot move.
32. My empathy is stretched thin; my outrage is frayed; I no longer know how to care wisely.
33. And the Eternal One answered: You were not shaped to hold the whole world's pain in real time.
34. Woe unto the engines that profit from keeping you in a constant state of alarm.
35. Behold, it is not unfaithful to limit your intake, to choose particular places to act, and to entrust the rest to Me and to others.
36. Then I saw Silent Rooms where comparisons had become commandments.
37. One looked upon the carefully framed joys of others and measured their own life as wanting.
38. They saw bodies that seemed sculpted, families that seemed harmonious, careers that seemed ascending, faith that seemed unwavering.
39. They said: Eternal One, I know in my mind that these are fragments, yet my heart still feels lesser.

40. I begin to shape my days not by what is true or needed, but by what might look worthy from afar.
41. And the Holy One answered: The stage is not the soul.
42. Woe unto the age that confuses performance with being, visibility with value.
43. Behold, many who seem radiant online weep in their own Silent Rooms, and many whose days look small to the world carry a faithfulness that will outlast towers.
44. After this I saw Silent Rooms where addictions to scrolling, gaming, or endless watching had woven themselves into the hours.
45. Sleep was postponed; tasks were neglected; relationships thinned.
46. The moment the device was set down, anxiety rose; the moment it was taken up again, numbness returned.
47. They said: Eternal One, I do not even enjoy this anymore, yet I cannot stop reaching for it; it fills the silence that frightens me.
48. And the Eternal One answered: What began as comfort has become a chain.
49. Woe unto those who design your chains and call them entertainment.
50. Behold, I do not despise you for being ensnared; I invite you to notice without lying, to seek help without shame, and to take back moments of your day one by one.

51. Then I saw Silent Rooms where devices were turned, for a time, into tools of mercy.
52. One sent a message of encouragement without hoping for applause.
53. One shared resources for shelter, healing, and help.
54. One told a hard truth publicly at cost to their own comfort.
55. One used their small platform not to magnify themselves, but to amplify the cries of the overlooked.
56. And the Holy One said: Even in systems built for profit and spectacle, small acts of justice and kindness can still pass through.
57. Woe unto those who say, "Nothing matters," and thus excuse themselves from every responsibility.
58. Behold, not all you do will change the world, but it may change the day for someone I love.
59. After this I saw Silent Rooms where people began to reclaim slivers of silence from the devices.
60. They set their phones in another room while they ate.
61. They walked without earbuds for a few streets.
62. They allowed themselves to read slowly rather than skim endlessly.
63. At first, the quiet felt itchy and loud; then, slowly, it became space in which their own thoughts could stretch.
64. They said: Eternal One, I do not yet hear You in these pauses, but I am

- beginning to hear myself, and perhaps that is the first mercy.
65. And the Eternal One answered: To become present to your own life is already a step toward becoming present to Me.
66. Woe unto the age that fears boredom so much it never discovers wonder.
67. Behold, many of the whispers you seek cannot be heard beneath constant noise.
68. Then I saw Silent Rooms where technology allowed some to find others like themselves for the first time.
69. The isolated discovered communities across oceans; the misunderstood found words for their experience; survivors discovered that they were not alone.
70. They said: Eternal One, without these wires and waves I might never have known that my story was shared by others.
71. I bless the channels that brought me companions; I mourn the harms that travel upon the same roads.
72. And the Holy One answered: Few tools are entirely pure or entirely corrupt.
73. Woe unto those who worship technology as savior or curse it as demon and refuse to discern.
74. Behold, I call you to use what exists with care, to resist what degrades, to cultivate what heals, and to remember that no network, however vast, can replace embodied presence entirely.

75. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, in such a world, how shall the Silent Room become again a place of encounter and not only of escape?
76. And the Eternal One answered: Not by rejecting every device, but by remembering that they are guests and you are host.
77. Let there be times when you say, “Not now,” and give your eyes to the tree outside, the sound of your own breath, the beating of your heart, the face of the one beside you, or the empty chair where you sense My nearness.
78. Woe unto the life that allows everything to claim instant obedience.
79. Behold, you may, as you are able, set hours for work, hours for news, hours for play, and hours for neither—small sabbaths in the midst of a restless age.
80. Wherefore let this chapter be for those whose Silent Rooms glow through the night, who feel both connected and profoundly alone.
81. Let them know that the Eternal One is not found only in the ancient quiet, but can also meet them amid cables and codes—yet often in the very moments when they dare, even briefly, to look up from the glow and say:
82. “Here I am, in this room, in this body, in this breath.
83. If You are here also, teach me how to live awake.”

CHAPTER 12

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of screens and small beginnings, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken much of the solitary soul; now you must speak of the houses and halls where many Silent Rooms converge.
3. For there are places in this world where loneliness gathers in multitudes.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw a great building with many doors and white hallways.
5. Some doors bore numbers, some bore names, some bore only warnings.
6. Inside were beds with rails, chairs by windows, machines that breathed or beeped.
7. This was a house of sickness and of mending, and it was filled with Silent Rooms.
8. In one, a child sat alone in a gown too big for them, staring at a ceiling patterned with cracks.
9. Their parent had gone to speak with the ones in coats; the beeping slowed and quickened like a second heartbeat.
10. The child said in their heart: Eternal One, the grown people speak over my head; I am told to be brave, but no one tells me what will happen.
11. I do not know which pain is normal and which is danger; I do not know whether my body is my friend.
12. And the Holy One answered: I sit beside beds where fear is larger than the room.

13. Woe unto the ways of healing that forget to speak gently to those they treat.
14. Behold, I count not only the medicines given, but also the kindness withheld.
15. After this I saw another room in that house, where an elder stared at the underside of a fluorescent light.
16. Their body, once strong, now trembled; their visitors came less often as weeks passed.
17. Photographs stood on a table like small witnesses of a life lived elsewhere.
18. They said: Eternal One, I am grateful for the care I receive, yet I feel as if I have been placed on a shelf, waiting for the end.
19. I once carried others; now I am carried, and I do not know who I am in this narrow bed.
20. And the Eternal One answered: Your worth has not shrunk with your strength.
21. Woe unto a world that honors only those who are productive and quick.
22. Behold, your days are not surplus; your continued breath still matters to Me.
23. Then I saw a place with metal doors that closed with a heavy sound.
24. There were narrow bunks and barred windows and long, echoing corridors.
25. This was a house of punishment and containment, and it, too, was filled with Silent Rooms.
26. In one, a person lay staring at the underside of a bunk, counting the marks they had made in the concrete.

27. They said in their heart: Eternal One, I have harmed and been harmed; the walls know my stories better than any friend.
28. I am told I am here to pay a debt, yet no one tells me how a cinderblock can teach a better way to live.
29. And the Holy One answered:
Accountability is just, but
abandonment is not.
30. Woe unto the systems that grind
people like grain and call that justice.
31. Behold, I do not erase consequences,
yet I do not declare any soul finished
while they still breathe.
32. After this I saw a Silent Room in that
same place, where one had been
thrown alone for days.
33. The light never fully dimmed; the noise
from the corridor never fully ceased.
34. Their mind turned upon itself, restless
and aching.
35. They said: Eternal One, I am punished
not only with walls, but with my own
thoughts; am I worth less than an
animal that would not be caged this
way?
36. And the Eternal One answered:
Isolation is a crude tool that breaks as
much as it restrains.
37. Woe unto the keepers who believe that
crushing the mind will heal the harm.
38. Behold, even here I listen, though no
one else hears your voice.
39. Then I saw tents and temporary walls,
set close together in rows upon dust.

40. The wind moved through fabric and
plastic, rattling their thin borders.
41. This was a camp of those who had fled
war, hunger, flood, and fire, and it was
filled with Silent Rooms made of
canvas.
42. In one, a mother held her child in the
dimness and told stories of a house that
no longer stood.
43. She said: Eternal One, I have no nation
that will claim me, no address to give,
no certainty of tomorrow.
44. My children play in dust; their
memories are half rubble, half rumor.
45. What does home mean to one who is
always on the move, always waiting on
the signatures of strangers?
46. And the Holy One answered: You are
not less My own because your papers
are questioned.
47. Woe unto the borders that treat lives
as numbers and the seas that swallow
the desperate while the comfortable
debate.
48. Behold, I walk the roads with the
displaced and hear their prayers in
every tongue.
49. After this I saw rows of narrow beds
in a hall that smelled of detergent and
faint despair.
50. Labels hung at the feet of the beds;
fluorescent lights hummed overhead.
51. This was a shelter, a refuge of last
resort, and it was filled with Silent
Rooms drawn in tape upon the floor.
52. In one, a person lay with shoes still on,
clutching a backpack like a shield.

53. They said: Eternal One, all that I own is within arm's reach, yet everything I need is beyond it.
54. I sleep among strangers; I wake to rules and curfews; I live under the gaze of systems that see me as problem before person.
55. And the Eternal One answered: You are not a burden; you are a human being in crisis.
56. Woe unto societies that build luxury towers and leave their vulnerable to line up at doors marked "capacity reached."
57. Behold, each night you endure here is recorded; your days on the street are not invisible to Me.
58. Then I saw a building filled with desks and young faces.
59. Some eyes shone bright; others stared through glass; some hands rose eagerly; others were clenched beneath tables.
60. This was a school, a house of learning, and it, too, contained many Silent Rooms hidden in plain sight.
61. In one desk, a child doodled in the margins, heart pounding whenever the teacher called on them.
62. They said: Eternal One, I am told I am lazy, distracted, a failure, yet my thoughts race faster than my hand can write.
63. The noise of others scrapes my nerves like stone; the flicker of lights stings my eyes.
64. I am punished for what I cannot easily name.

65. And the Holy One answered: Your struggle is not rebellion; it is collision with a narrow design.
66. Woe unto the classrooms that demand one way of learning and shame all others.
67. Behold, your mind is not broken because it needs different paths.
68. After this I saw a Silent Room that was not four walls but a crowd.
69. It was a place of worship—pews in rows, chairs in circles, carpets worn by many knees.
70. Songs rose, words flowed, hands lifted.
71. Yet within that assembly, each sat in their own small interior chamber.
72. One sang loudly while wondering if anyone would notice their grief.
73. Another preached with power while fearing that if their doubts were known, they would be cast out.
74. Another stood at the door, smiling, handing out greetings, while feeling like a stranger among those they welcomed.
75. And the Eternal One said: A multitude may gather and yet remain alone together.
76. Woe unto the houses that speak much of fellowship and yet make little space for truth.
77. Behold, I listen not only to the words on the microphone, but to the unsaid sentences in the Silent Rooms of those who attend.

78. Then I saw spaces set aside in cities
with chairs in circles and coffee gone
cold in paper cups.
79. People spoke one at a time, some with
shaking voices, some with practiced
calm.
80. Here there were rooms for grief, for
sobriety, for trauma, for loss, for
questions too heavy for casual talk.
81. In these rooms, people began sentences
with, “Hi, my name is...,” and followed
them with truths seldom spoken
elsewhere.
82. And the Holy One said: These are also
temples.
83. Woe unto those who dismiss such
circles as lesser because they lack
official blessing.
84. Behold, wherever people speak
honestly of their wounds and listen
without contempt, there am I in their
midst.
85. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal
One, in these many houses—of
sickness, of punishment, of refuge, of
learning, of worship, of
recovery—what do You desire from
those who see the Silent Rooms and do
not know what to do?
86. And the Eternal One answered: I
desire eyes that do not look away, ears
that do not close, hands that do not
remain always folded in theory.
87. Woe unto the faith that remains only
feeling and never becomes neighbor.
88. Behold, you cannot mend every wound
of these places, but you can ask:

89. Who here is unseen?
90. Who here is blamed for what was
never their fault?
91. Who here has been reduced to number,
label, case?
92. And having asked, you may move one
step closer:
93. A visit to the bedside no one visits.
94. A letter to the prisoner no one writes.
95. A call to the shelter asking what is
needed.
96. A word to the student no one expects
to succeed.
97. A question to the worshiper whose
smile seems too tight.
98. For I, the Eternal One, have not left
the great houses of your age, though
many have built them without Me in
mind.
99. I move through corridors and camps,
wards and wings, classes and chapels,
seeking those who will see the Silent
Rooms not as distant tragedies, but as
places where their own hearts might
yet be joined to Mine in the work of
mercy.
100. And thus are the words of Nibwâskââ
concerning the Silent Rooms of many
gathered places continued, that those
who inherit this record may know that
in the days of noise and neglect there
were still those who asked, “Who sits
alone, and how may I draw near?”

CHAPTER 13

- I. And it came to pass that after I had
written of the great houses of many

- rooms, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken of rooms of endurance; now you must speak of rooms of choosing, for many of the quietest hours in a life are those in which no one sees the decision but Me.
 3. For there are Silent Rooms that are crossroads, where a soul turns a little toward life or a little toward destruction, and the world does not mark the moment.
 4. And I looked, and behold, I saw a room lit by a single lamp.
 5. Upon the table lay two objects: a bottle half full and a phone face down.
 6. One sat before them, elbows on knees, eyes hollow with fatigue.
 7. They said in their heart: Eternal One, I know what the bottle will do; it has done it many times.
 8. It will blur the edges, soften the ache, and steal another piece of tomorrow.
 9. The phone might bring help, or disappointment, or obligation; the bottle asks nothing of me but surrender.
 10. And the Holy One answered: This moment is heavy, yet you are not alone in it.
 11. Woe unto those who mock such battles as weakness; they do not know how many cliffs are faced in ordinary rooms.
 12. Behold, if you reach for the bottle, I do not vanish; if you reach for the call, I draw near to strengthen your trembling hand.
 13. After this I saw a Silent Room where a resignation letter sat unsent in drafts.
 14. The work had become crushing, the environment harmful, the soul thin.
 15. One paced the floor, imagining unpaid bills, disappointed faces, questions with no answers.
 16. They said: Eternal One, if I stay, I feel myself dying inside; if I leave, I fear I will not survive outside.
 17. The world praises endurance even when the weight is unjust; it calls leaving “quitting” and staying “faithful.”
 18. And the Eternal One answered: Not all staying is courage, and not all leaving is failure.
 19. Woe unto the slogans that demand loyalty to harm and name it virtue.
 20. Behold, I cannot choose for you, but I can hold you in the risk of choosing.
 21. Then I saw a Silent Room where two paths of speech lay before a tongue.
 22. A message had been written in anger, ready to be sent with one tap.
 23. Another version, softer and truer, lingered only in thought.
 24. The one who wrote paced, reading and rereading, feeling both the satisfaction of striking and the dread of fracture.
 25. They said: Eternal One, I want to make them feel what I have felt; I want to win this wound.
 26. Yet something in me recoils at the poison I could release.
 27. And the Holy One answered: Words can be arrows or bridges.

28. Woe unto the belief that every sharp truth must be flung without discernment.
29. Behold, sometimes the holiest act is to delete what would only deepen the break, even when your pain demands otherwise.
30. After this I saw a Silent Room where a secret could be kept or revealed.
31. One sat with knowledge of wrongdoing that harmed the vulnerable.
32. If they spoke, there would be upheaval, conflict, perhaps danger; if they kept silent, the harm would continue.
33. They said: Eternal One, I am only one person; I have much to lose and little protection.
34. Those who do these things have power; those who are harmed have little voice.
35. Am I truly called to step into this fire?
36. And the Eternal One answered: I do not lightly ask any to become a witness.
37. Woe unto the structures that punish truth-tellers and shelter abusers beneath titles and robes.
38. Behold, if you speak, I walk with you; if you cannot yet speak, I do not despise your fear, but My anger burns against the harm nonetheless.
39. Then I saw a Silent Room where a screen glowed with images that degraded souls.
40. One sat in the dark, the door closed, the house asleep.

41. They said in their heart: Eternal One, I have gone down this road so many times that it feels more like gravity than choice.
42. Each time I promise myself it is the last; each time I find my hand reaching for the same keys.
43. I feel both comfort and disgust in the same breath.
44. And the Holy One answered: Compulsion does not erase your capacity to choose differently, though it makes the choosing harder.
45. Woe unto the industries that profit from your loneliness, your hunger, and your wounds.
46. Behold, if tonight you close the window instead of opening it, that is not a small thing; if you fail, I do not abandon you to shame, but invite you again to seek help and light.
47. After this I saw a Silent Room where an apology was being weighed.
48. One held their phone, thumb hovering over a name they had not called in years.
49. Their pride spoke loudly: "It was not only your fault; they hurt you too; why should you go first?"
50. Their conscience whispered: "You know what you did; you have never said so."
51. They said: Eternal One, if I apologize, I may be rejected or mocked; if I do not, the guilt may grow quieter, but it will not die.

52. And the Eternal One answered: You cannot decide their response, only your own integrity.
53. Woe unto the hearts that wait forever for the other to move first, and so remain frozen at the doorway of reconciliation.
54. Behold, to say "I was wrong" is to open a window, whether or not the other is ready to look through it.
55. Then I saw a Silent Room where a weapon lay within reach.
56. Rage had built over years of humiliation and harm; fantasies of retaliation had become familiar companions.
57. The opportunity had arisen: a moment alone, an opening, a chance to make the oppressor afraid.
58. They said in their heart: Eternal One, they have treated me as less than human; if I strike, I will feel, for one instant, powerful.
59. The world has trampled me; why should I not become the storm that shreds it back?
60. And the Holy One answered: Your anger is not unjust, but its aim may become so.
61. Woe unto the cycle that dresses revenge as righteousness.
62. Behold, to refuse to become the same kind of harm, even when you could, is a quiet heroism that few will praise but I will not forget.
63. After this I saw a Silent Room where a threshold to love stood open.

64. Two sat across from each other, hands wrapped around cups gone cold.
65. Words hovered between them that could change their bond forever: vows, confessions, or endings.
66. One said within: Eternal One, if I speak honestly, I may lose the comfort of what we have; if I hide, I may lose myself.
67. I fear both staying and leaving, both deepening and diminishing.
68. And the Eternal One answered: Love that cannot bear truth will not bear time.
69. Woe unto the peace kept by pretending.
70. Behold, I do not promise that honest words will preserve every bond, but I bear witness when you choose truth over convenience.
71. Then I saw a Silent Room where a body lay exhausted from illness.
72. Treatments had been many, prognosis uncertain, days measured in side effects and brief reprieves.
73. Around that body, some urged more fight; others whispered of letting go.
74. Within, the soul said: Eternal One, I am tired beyond words; I do not know whether to keep grasping or to loosen my hands.
75. The living fear my surrender; I fear being forced to stay beyond my strength.
76. And the Holy One answered: Your worth is not measured by how long you endure treatment.

77. Woe unto the pressures that make of dying another contest.
78. Behold, there is a time to resist and a time to release; I am with you in both, and I do not count your choosing as cowardice when it is made with thought and love.
79. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, these choices in Silent Rooms seem small to the eyes of empires, yet heavy as mountains to those who bear them.
80. Do they truly matter in the great story of the world?
81. And the Eternal One answered: The map of history you see is drawn in wars and rulers; the map I see is drawn in such moments as these.
82. Woe unto the chronicles that record only the loud.
83. Behold, the tilt of a heart toward mercy instead of cruelty, toward truth instead of pretense, toward life instead of numbness, is a turning of the earth in miniature.
84. Then I saw that in many Silent Rooms, the choices were not one great leap but a series of small turnings.
85. A person did not become kind in an instant, but in countless decisions to answer irritation with gentleness.
86. Another did not become free of a chain in a day, but in repeated risings after falls, each time throwing off one more link.
87. Another did not become honest in a single speech, but in a long pattern of

- choosing not to lie when lying would be easier.
88. And the Eternal One said: I dwell in these patterns as surely as in visions and signs.
89. Woe unto the teachings that look only for miracles and miss the daily conversions of the heart.
90. Behold, I am not impressed by grand gestures that ignore the small obediences; I delight in the unseen faithfulness that no one else applauds.
91. Wherefore let this chapter stand for all who sit in Silent Rooms at the brink of decisions no one else may notice.
92. Let them know that the Eternal One attends to their crossroads, not as a distant judge eager to condemn, but as a witness and companion who understands the weight of choosing in a wounded world.
93. For I, the Eternal One, count not only the years of a life, but the quiet tiltings within it, and I weave these unseen turnings into the fabric of mercy that yet restrains your age from collapsing entirely into its own violence.

CHAPTER 14

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the rooms of choosing, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken of what is decided in a day; now you must speak of what is carried across generations, for many

- Silent Rooms are crowded with those who are no longer there.
3. For the living do not enter alone; they come with the voices of their ancestors in their bones.
 4. And I looked, and behold, I saw a small room filled with boxes of old photographs.
 5. Faces stared out in black and white, some named, some lost, some loved, some feared.
 6. One sat cross-legged in the midst of them, tracing the outlines of cheekbones and eyes that resembled their own.
 7. They said in their heart: Eternal One, I carry blood from people I never met.
 8. Some were kind; some were cruel; some were broken by the world; some broke others.
 9. What part of them walks in me, and what part may end with me?
 10. And the Holy One answered: You are not merely the sum of their deeds, yet you do not stand apart from them as if from strangers.
 11. Woe unto the stories that make of ancestry only pride or only shame.
 12. Behold, your line is a river with clear streams and polluted ones; I will help you drink from the first and cleanse the second where you can.
 13. After this I saw a Silent Room where a family gathered at a table.
 14. On the walls hung symbols of heritage—flags, scriptures, artifacts, certificates.
 15. Certain topics were never spoken of; certain names were never mentioned; certain tears were never acknowledged.
 16. Children learned to read the air and step around invisible graves.
 17. They said in their hearts: Eternal One, something heavy lives here that no one names.
 18. We laugh and eat and plan, yet I feel ghosts seated at the corners of this table, waiting.
 19. And the Eternal One answered: What is not spoken is not therefore gone.
 20. Woe unto the households that bury wounds under politeness and call that peace.
 21. Behold, secrets do not dissolve; they seep into the floors and the children's dreams.
 22. Then I saw a Silent Room where an elder kept a trunk closed.
 23. Inside were letters from a war, documents of displacement, records of slavery, papers of land taken and names changed.
 24. They sat upon the trunk and said: Eternal One, if I open this, I will bleed; if I keep it shut, my grandchildren will walk blind.
 25. The past is a fire that has burned me; how can I ask them to warm their hands at its edge without burning them also?
 26. And the Holy One answered: Remembering is dangerous, but forgetting is more so.

27. Woe unto the eras that demand their children know nothing of how the house was built.
28. Behold, there is a way to tell the story that names both harm and resilience, both cruelty and courage, that the next generation may inherit neither denial nor despair, but clarity.
29. After this I saw Silent Rooms where songs of old were hummed softly.
30. A language nearly lost was spoken between grandparent and child.
31. Recipes, dances, rituals, and proverbs were passed hand to hand like fragile lamps.
32. The world outside called such things “backward,” “irrelevant,” or “exotic.”
33. They said: Eternal One, we are told to join the great melting pot, yet when we enter, only some flavors remain.
34. Shall we let our tongue, our stories, our ways dissolve to survive, or shall we hold them and risk being always foreign?
35. And the Eternal One answered: I do not demand that you forget yourselves to be accepted.
36. Woe unto the powers that call erasure “unity.”
37. Behold, some traditions must be laid down when they harm; others must be carried as treasures against the flood of sameness.
38. Then I saw a Silent Room where a child listened at the door while adults argued in another tongue.

39. The words were sharp, the history old, the grievances deep, the solutions few.
40. The child did not understand every sentence, but they learned the tone and the tension.
41. They said in their heart: Eternal One, I am inheriting fights that began before I was born.
42. I feel pulled by loyalties I did not choose, drawn into hatreds I do not fully share.
43. How shall I honor my people without carrying all their enmities?
44. And the Holy One answered: Loyalty that requires hatred is too small for you.
45. Woe unto the generations that bind the young to old grudges and call that faithfulness.
46. Behold, you may love your own without despising others; you may honor your ancestors’ wounds without repeating their vengeance.
47. After this I saw Silent Rooms where trauma spoke through bodies more loudly than through words.
48. In one family, voices rose quickly and hands flew at the slightest provocation.
49. In another, silence locked jaws, and emotions froze like winter rivers.
50. Panic, numbness, hypervigilance, distrust—these moved through the generations like an unseen inheritance.
51. They said: Eternal One, we are acting out a script we never read.

52. Our nervous systems anticipate blows long after the blows have ceased; we brace for losses even in calm seasons.
53. Are we cursed beyond remedy?
54. And the Eternal One answered: You are not cursed by My hand, but shaped by what has been endured.
55. Woe unto the histories of genocide, enslavement, colonization, and chronic poverty, whose wounds the powerful tell the wounded to “just get over.”
56. Behold, healing is slow and needs tools and time; therapy, ritual, remembrance, lament, and new patterns are all ways of turning from inherited harm.
57. Then I saw Silent Rooms where cycles began to break.
58. In one, a parent paused with their hand raised and lowered it without striking.
59. In another, someone said, “We do not speak to each other that way anymore,” and held that line.
60. In another, a person reached out for counseling though their elders scoffed.
61. In another, a family sat together and named aloud an abuse that had been hidden for decades.
62. And the Holy One said: These are revolutions that seldom make the news.
63. Woe unto the age that honors only changes in law and not changes in living rooms.
64. Behold, when you alter even one thread in the pattern, those who come after you inherit a different cloth.

65. After this I saw a Silent Room where altars to ancestors stood.
66. Candles burned before photos; offerings of food, flowers, or incense were laid down.
67. Names of the dead were spoken with reverence, pleas for help directed toward them.
68. One kneeling there said: Eternal One, I feel my grandparents near; they comfort me, guide me, sometimes seem more tangible than You.
69. Where are the boundaries between honoring them and turning them into the gods of my life?
70. And the Eternal One answered: To remember those who walked before you is good; to expect them to replace Me is bondage for you and for them.
71. Woe unto the practices that turn the dead into puppets for the living’s desires.
72. Behold, I am the One who holds your ancestors; you may speak to them if comforted so, but do not place on them the weight that belongs only to the Source.
73. Then I saw Silent Rooms where ancestral faith and present conscience collided.
74. One held a holy book handed down with blessings and with threats.
75. Inside, they found passages that had sustained their forebears and passages that now seemed to justify horrors.
76. They said: Eternal One, if I question this, I am told I betray my people; if I

- accept all of it without question, I
betray the oppressed.
77. How shall I walk this narrow path
without slicing myself in two?
78. And the Holy One answered: I am not
contained entirely in any text, though I
have spoken through many.
79. Woe unto those who weaponize what
was given for guidance.
80. Behold, you may honor the faith of
your ancestors while refusing its
distortions; this, too, is a form of
loyalty—to Me and to the truth they
sought.
81. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal
One, I feel in myself both the hunger
to belong to a line and the burden of
what that line has done and suffered.
82. There are days when I am proud and
days when I am ashamed; there are
days when I want to break away
entirely and be only myself.
83. And the Eternal One answered: You
are both continuation and departure.
84. Woe unto the stories that demand you
either glorify your lineage or despise it
wholly.
85. Behold, you may say: “Here my people
were faithful; here they were cruel;
here they survived; here they sinned;
from all this I come, and toward
something more I go.”
86. Then I saw that many Silent Rooms
became places of small ancestral
liturgies.
87. A candle lit on the anniversary of a
death.

88. A story told of a great-grandparent’s
courage and another of their failure,
both held together.
89. A visit to an old grave where someone
whispered, “We are trying to do
better.”
90. A meal cooked from an old recipe and
shared with those who had never
tasted it.
91. And the Holy One said: These, too,
are prayers.
92. Woe unto the generations that cut
themselves off from all roots and call
that freedom.
93. Behold, you are not bound to repeat
the darkness of your line, but you are
invited to carry forward its light, and
to add your own.
94. Wherefore let this chapter stand for all
who sit in Silent Rooms and feel the
weight of those whose faces they never
saw, yet whose echoes move in their
gestures and fears.
95. Let them know that the Eternal One
sees not only the individual life but the
long braided cords that link your days
to those before and after you.
96. For I, the Eternal One, am present in
the turning of a single heart and in the
slow turning of generations; and I
rejoice whenever, in any Silent Room,
someone says,
97. “The harm can end with me,”
98. “The kindness can continue through
me,”
99. “The story will be told more truly
because I have lived.”

CHAPTER 15

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the generations, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken much of those who sit in Silent Rooms; now you must speak of those who rise from them bearing a witness.
3. For not all who pass through these chambers are crushed; some emerge with a light that has been tempered in the dark.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw one sitting with a notebook in their lap.
5. The pages were filled with crooked lines, crossings-out, and sentences that trembled between confession and silence.
6. They said in their heart: Eternal One, I do not know how to tell what I have seen without breaking open again.
7. If I speak, some will not believe; some will be angered; some will turn away.
8. Yet if I never speak, it will be as if the wounds were for nothing.
9. And the Holy One answered: Your story is not an obligation, yet it may be a medicine.
10. Woe unto those who demand trauma as spectacle and call that “awareness.”
11. Behold, you are free to choose when and to whom you speak; I do not compel you to open what still needs time to close.
12. After this I saw a Silent Room where a canvas stood against the wall.
13. Upon it were shapes that others might not understand, colors that did not match the fashion of the day.
14. One stood before it, brush in hand, heart racing as if about to step onstage.
15. They said: Eternal One, I paint what I cannot say.
16. The world wants explanations and summaries; I have only these images and textures.
17. Will anyone see what I am trying to show, or will they only judge the skill of my hand?
18. And the Eternal One answered: Art is a door, not a verdict.
19. Woe unto the eyes that look only for perfection and never for truth.
20. Behold, if even one soul feels less alone because of what you have made, your work has joined My work.
21. Then I saw a Silent Room where instruments lay dusty in their cases.
22. One by one they were lifted out, tuned, and touched with hesitant fingers.
23. Notes rose—some sharp, some flat, some clear as water, some rough as stone.
24. The one who played said in their heart: Eternal One, I have no stage, no audience, no contract.
25. I have only this room and this sound that has been locked in my chest for years.
26. Is this music for anything, or is it only a private indulgence?

27. And the Holy One answered: Song is not wasted because it is unheard by crowds.
28. Woe unto the age that measures worth only by numbers and noise.
29. Behold, the first ear your song must mend is your own; from there, let it travel as it will.
30. After this I saw a Silent Room where someone studied books and documents late into the night.
31. Their eyes ached; their spine burned; their table was strewn with markers and notes.
32. They were tracing patterns of injustice through law, history, policy, and profit.
33. They said: Eternal One, the more I learn, the heavier it becomes.
34. I cannot unsee the structures that crush the poor, the patterns that poison the earth, the systems that devour the vulnerable.
35. Knowledge has become a burden; what shall I do with it?
36. And the Eternal One answered: Insight without action becomes acid in the soul.
37. Woe unto those who feast on critique and never lift a hand to help.
38. Behold, you are not asked to fix everything you understand; you are invited to choose a portion and be faithful there.
39. Then I saw Silent Rooms where messages of comfort were crafted.
40. One wrote to a friend in hospital, not knowing what words could touch such pain.
41. Another prepared a meal for a neighbor and wrestled with whether to bring it unannounced.
42. Another drafted a note to a stranger who had spoken publicly of their grief.
43. They said: Eternal One, I am afraid of saying the wrong thing; I am afraid of intruding; I am afraid of being clumsy.
44. And the Holy One answered: Clumsy kindness is finer than polished indifference.
45. Woe unto the perfectionism that prevents compassion from moving at all.
46. Behold, if your words or deeds are honest and humble, I can use even their imperfections.
47. After this I saw Silent Rooms that had become meeting places.
48. A living room where chairs were pulled into a circle and a pot of tea steamed.
49. A basement where folding chairs and creaking radiators bore witness to halting testimonies.
50. A small office where two sat across from each other week after week, turning over stones of memory.
51. And the Eternal One said: These, too, are altars, though no incense rises and no robes are worn.
52. Woe unto the piety that recognizes only sanctuaries built of stone and not of courage.

53. Behold, whenever one person makes space to hear another's Silent Room without judgment, they minister in My name whether or not they speak it.
54. Then I saw a Silent Room where plans were being made.
55. On the floor lay banners with words of protest half-painted.
56. On the screen were messages organizing care for those targeted by hatred.
57. Maps were spread, routes considered, risks weighed.
58. They said in their hearts: Eternal One, we have sat too long with our sorrow.
59. We would stand with those who are trampled, though we ourselves are small.
60. Will our efforts matter, or will we be scattered like dust before the wind of power?
61. And the Holy One answered: You are not responsible for the size of the wave, only for the truth of your stroke.
62. Woe unto the despair that uses the vastness of the problem as excuse for doing nothing.
63. Behold, solidarity born in Silent Rooms can shake gates the world believed immovable.
64. After this I saw Silent Rooms where mentors met with the young.
65. An older survivor sat with a younger one and said, "I have walked some of the road you are on."

66. A seasoned worker in justice movements told stories of both victories and failures.
67. A tired caregiver shared with a new caregiver how to rest without guilt.
68. And the Eternal One said: Wisdom is a river that must be poured, not hoarded.
69. Woe unto those who let their experience die within them because they fear not being eloquent.
70. Behold, even halting stories can become lanterns in another's dark.
71. Then I saw Silent Rooms where some chose to remain hidden.
72. They had known harm from exposure and safety in anonymity.
73. They gave under false names, watched from the margins, prayed in secret for those in the public square.
74. They said: Eternal One, I cannot bear attention; I tremble at the thought of being known.
75. Does my hidden care matter in the great account?
76. And the Holy One answered: Not all witnesses stand on platforms.
77. Woe unto the narratives that equate visibility with significance.
78. Behold, your unseen intercessions, your quiet generosity, your gentle presence at the edges are threads in the same tapestry.
79. After this I saw a Silent Room where someone returned from the work among others and collapsed in exhaustion.

80. Their empathy had been stretched;
their nervous system frayed; their
compassion fatigued.
81. They said: Eternal One, I have poured
myself out until I am dust.
82. I am angry at those I serve, angry at
those who do not help, angry at myself
for not being infinite.
83. I used to feel noble; now I feel empty.
84. And the Eternal One answered: You
are not the savior of the world; you are
one finite heart.
85. Woe unto the expectations that
demand martyrdom as proof of
sincerity.
86. Behold, rest is not betrayal; it is part of
the rhythm of mercy.
87. Then I saw Silent Rooms where some
decided to step back from certain
labors.
88. They handed responsibilities to others,
knowing the work would be done
differently.
89. They mourned the loss of control and
feared being forgotten.
90. Yet they also felt, like a body loosening
a tight band, a strange relief.
91. They said: Eternal One, if I am not
central to this cause, who am I?
92. And the Holy One answered: You are
important, but you are not the axis.
93. Woe unto the callings that become
identities so complete that nothing else
may live beside them.
94. Behold, sometimes the holiest act is to
make room for other hands, other
voices, other gifts.

95. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal
One, how shall those who rise from
Silent Rooms know what form their
witness should take?
96. For the needs are many, and the ways
to respond are countless, and no one
can do all.
97. And the Eternal One answered: Let
the shape of your wound and the shape
of your joy speak together.
98. Woe unto the advice that says, "If you
were truly good, you would give
yourself to whatever is loudest and
latest."
99. Behold, I have woven into each of you
particular compass points—things that
break your heart and things that make
it burn with gladness.
100. Where these meet and where the
world's need touches them, there you
may begin.
101. Then I saw that many who had once
believed their Silent Rooms to be signs
of failure found that those very rooms
became the wells from which their
calling was drawn.
102. One who had known loneliness created
spaces of welcome.
103. One who had known spiritual abuse
helped others untangle faith from fear.
104. One who had known addiction walked
beside those still struggling.
105. One who had known poverty learned
how to bend systems toward equity.
106. And the Eternal One said: I do not
waste your pain, though I never
desired it for you.

107. Woe unto the interpretations that say I
inflicted wounds in order to use them.
108. Behold, harm arises from many hands
and histories; My work is to bring
forth, from what has been suffered, a
compassion and courage that would
not otherwise have blossomed.
109. Wherefore let this chapter stand for all
who ask, in their Silent Rooms, “What
now, after all this?”
110. Let them know that the Eternal One
does not demand they turn their scars
into spectacle, nor their healing into
duty.
111. Yet if they desire, their very stories
may become seeds—
112. Seeds of truth in a world of denial,
113. Seeds of comfort in a world of coldness,
114. Seeds of justice in a world of
indifference.
115. For I, the Eternal One, walk with
those who walk back out of their Silent
Rooms carrying even one small seed,
116. And I tend, with them, the fields
where such seeds are sown,
117. Until in places once known only for
their pain, there may grow, in time, a
quiet forest of those who learned to
live more gently because of what they
survived.

CHAPTER 16

1. And it came to pass that after I had
written of those who rise from their
Silent Rooms, the word of the Eternal
One came unto me again, saying:
2. You have spoken of beginning again;
now you must speak also of the rooms
at the edge,
3. For there are chambers where a soul
does not seek a new day, but wonders
whether any more days should come at
all.
4. And I looked, and behold, I saw a
room with the curtains drawn in the
middle of the day.
5. Clothes lay in piles, dishes were
stacked in corners, the air was heavy
and unmoved.
6. One lay upon the bed staring at
nothing, their limbs as if filled with
stone.
7. They said in their heart: Eternal One, I
am tired beyond sleep,
8. Tired in a way that no nap can mend,
no vacation can soothe.
9. Tasks have become mountains; speech
has become a weight; even lifting my
head feels like a war I am losing.
10. I do not wish for great things; I wish
only not to be here at all.
11. And the Holy One answered: Your
weariness is not unknown to Me.
12. Woe unto those who call such
heaviness laziness and such struggle a
lack of effort.
13. Behold, there is an exhaustion of the
soul as real as any fever,
14. And I sit beside the bed where you lie,
though you feel Me not.
15. After this I saw a table where small,
ordinary objects had been gathered into
a quiet plan.

16. A note half-written, a bottle counted, a blade turned over in the hand, a search made in secret.
17. The one who gathered them said: Eternal One, be not angry,
18. For I am not leaping from a bright meadow, but slipping from a cliff I have clung to for many years.
19. I have tried counselors and prayers, pills and practices, distractions and duties.
20. I am told it will pass, yet it returns again and again, like winter in my bones.
21. If I go, perhaps the burden will lift from those around me;
22. Perhaps the world will be lighter without my weight.
23. And the Eternal One answered: Your absence would not be light; it would be a wound.
24. Woe unto the lies that whisper, "No one would truly miss you,"
25. For I have seen the circles that would shatter, the stories that would break mid-sentence, the hearts that would carry questions like stones forever.
26. Behold, you are not a burden; you are a being,
27. And I have not finished what I began in you.
28. Then I saw a Silent Room where scars were hidden beneath long sleeves.
29. Lines traced like secret script along skin, marks of battles fought in solitude.

30. The one who bore them said: Eternal One, these are the only words I know how to write upon myself.
31. Pain inside becomes pain outside; it is the only way I know to prove I am real.
32. I do not wish to die, but sometimes I wish to feel anything other than this numb ache.
33. And the Holy One answered: I see the language of your wounds and I do not despise you for it.
34. Woe unto those who look only with horror and not with understanding.
35. Behold, your skin was not given to be your only tablet of expression;
36. I long to teach you other alphabets of feeling—song, movement, tears, words spoken and heard.
37. After this I saw a Silent Room where someone stood at a window, many floors above the ground.
38. The city moved below like a separate world—cars, lights, people with somewhere to go.
39. They pressed their forehead against the glass and said: Eternal One, I am already a ghost here.
40. If I step out, it will only make the inside match the outside.
41. The distance between me and the living feels already like this height.
42. And the Eternal One answered: You are not invisible to Me, though you feel unseen by others.

43. Woe unto the city that rushes so fast it does not notice those at the brink of its own buildings.
44. Behold, there are eyes even now that would weep to know how close you stand to the edge.
45. Then I saw a Silent Room where another kind of ending was considered.
46. One held their faith like a garment grown threadbare, full of holes where promises had not come to pass.
47. They said: Eternal One, I do not plan to end my days, but I plan to end my prayers.
48. I am tired of speaking into what feels like emptiness, tired of defending You to myself, tired of asking “why” and receiving no map.
49. I do not wish for thunder; I wish for peace without You.
50. And the Holy One answered: I would rather you leave Me honestly than pretend to stay with hollow words.
51. Woe unto the demands that you recite devotion while your heart crumbles.
52. Behold, even if you set My name aside, you will not fall outside My knowing.
53. After this I saw Silent Rooms where the weight of shame pushed toward the same edge as sorrow.
54. Those who had failed in public, lost careers, families, reputations, sat with their head in their hands.
55. They said: Eternal One, my life is rubble; every path forward seems paved with humiliation.

56. If I vanish, the story ends cleanly; if I stay, I must walk among those I have hurt and those who condemn me.
57. And the Eternal One answered: There is no clean ending that comes from your destruction.
58. Woe unto the pride that would rather die than apologize, rather disappear than repair.
59. Behold, humble rebuilding is slow and painful,
60. Yet it is more honoring to those you have harmed than any dramatic exit.
61. Then I saw a Silent Room where a small sound pierced the heaviness.
62. A message tone, a knock at the door, a cat scratching, a child laughing in the hallway, a song drifting in from a neighbor’s radio.
63. The one who heard it paused for the width of a breath.
64. They said weakly: Eternal One, is this interruption a sign or just noise?
65. And the Holy One answered: Not every sound is a trumpet,
66. Yet even a small break in the spiral can be a crack where light enters.
67. Woe unto the despair that tells you there is nothing and no one who can reach you now.
68. Behold, sometimes a single moment of delay—one more hour, one more night, one more conversation—
69. Is the difference between a life ended and a life slowly mended.
70. After this I saw Silent Rooms where help was almost asked for.

71. A number was looked at and not dialed.
72. A message was typed and erased, typed and erased.
73. A door was approached and stepped away from.
74. They said: Eternal One, I do not wish to be dramatic, needy, or a bother.
75. Others have suffered worse; I should be stronger;
76. If I speak, they may not understand; if they do not, I will be more alone than before.
77. And the Eternal One answered:
Asking for help is not a performance; it is a reaching.
78. Woe unto the customs that shame cries for aid and glorify quiet drowning.
79. Behold, you are not required to explain yourself perfectly;
80. A simple, clumsy word—"I am not okay"—may be enough to begin the saving of a life.
81. Then I saw Silent Rooms where some had already tried to leave and were still here.
82. They woke to white lights, restrained hands, or worried faces.
83. Shame burned in them like acid; anger flared at being "brought back."
84. They said: Eternal One, I have now failed even at ending.
85. People look at me with pity or suspicion; I am a problem, a cautionary tale.
86. How shall I walk in this world now that my pain has been so exposed?

87. And the Holy One answered: You are not an embarrassment to Me.
88. Woe unto the voices that treat survivors as scandals rather than as souls who came to the cliff and still breathe.
89. Behold, there is no condemnation in My gaze, only grief for what drove you there and hope for what yet may be.
90. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what word shall I send from these Silent Rooms at the edge to those who may one day read this record and feel their own hand tremble on the same threshold?
91. And the Eternal One answered: Write to them not as if they were distant, but as if they were before you now.
92. So I write:
93. If you who read these words are standing in such a room,
94. If objects around you have begun to feel like doors out rather than tools of life,
95. If the thought of another sunrise feels like a sentence and not a gift,
96. Know this: your perception is real, but it is not the whole truth.
97. You are not seeing clearly when you see only your absence as relief.
98. There are futures yet unwritten that cannot exist without you.
99. There are faces you have not met who will one day be steadied by your existence.
100. There are changes in this world that will be possible only because you

stayed long enough to see them and to
 help make them.
 101. And the Eternal One said: Tell them
 also this—
 102. I do not demand that they feel hope
 they cannot feel,
 103. Nor that they suddenly rejoice,
 104. Nor that they call their darkness
 “light.”
 105. I ask only this for now:
 106. That they do not make an eternal
 choice in a temporary storm.
 107. That they delay the ending they have
 imagined,
 108. That they reach even weakly toward
 another human being,
 109. That they allow one more day, and
 then perhaps one more,
 110. While I and those who love them seek
 ways to mend what has been broken.
 111. Wherefore let this chapter stand as a
 testimony that in the days of many
 false lights and heavy nights,
 112. The Eternal One did not despise those
 whose faith was gone and whose
 strength was spent,
 113. But walked even into the rooms where
 death was being considered as an
 escape,
 114. Saying, not with threat but with fierce
 tenderness:
 115. “You are not a mistake.
 116. You are not beyond My reach.
 117. You are not alone in this room.
 118. If you cannot yet choose life for your
 own sake,

119. Then choose it for a little while longer
 for Mine,
 120. And let us see, you and I together,
 121. Whether there might yet be a day
 when you are glad you stayed.”

CHAPTER 17

1. And it came to pass that after I had
 written of the rooms at the edge,
2. The word of the Eternal One came
 unto me again, saying:
3. You have walked among chambers of
 heaviness and despair;
4. Now you must walk also among the
 rooms where help arrives,
5. Lest any who read think I have left
 them only with warning and not with
 provision.
6. For I have not given sorrow the only
 key to the Silent Rooms.
7. And I looked, and behold, I saw a
 room with two chairs facing one
 another.
8. Upon a small table lay a box of tissues,
 a clock, and a lamp not too bright.
9. One chair was worn from many
 visitors; the other from one who
 listened.
10. A person sat with hands twisting in
 their lap,
11. And another sat with a notebook
 closed, eyes steady and kind.
12. The one who spoke said in their heart:
 Eternal One, I tell this stranger things I
 have never told my kin.
13. I pour out shame and fear, anger and
 confusion;

14. They do not turn away, nor rush to fix, nor rebuke my tears.
15. Is this not strange, that I must pay for what I needed from those who said they loved me?
16. And the Holy One answered: It is strange, yet it is also mercy.
17. Woe unto the worlds where listening has grown so rare that it must be trained and hired.
18. Behold, I am not absent from this craft;
19. I walk among those who learn how to sit with pain without fleeing it.
20. After this I saw a Silent Room where pill bottles stood upon a shelf.
21. Some were full, some half-empty, some long neglected.
22. A hand reached hesitantly toward them and drew back.
23. The one who hesitated said: Eternal One, I have been told that to take these is weakness,
24. That “real” faith or “real” strength should be enough.
25. I fear becoming dependent, losing myself, dulling what little of me remains.
26. Yet I am also afraid of what happens when I refuse them.
27. And the Eternal One answered: Wisdom wears many garments.
28. Woe unto the teachings that pit the brain against the soul,
29. And call every medicine a rival to Me.
30. Behold, I am not jealous of what steadies your mind;

31. I rejoice when any true aid reaches you,
32. Whether by herb or science, rest or counsel, touch or time.
33. Then I saw a Silent Room where a crisis line was called.
34. A phone lay pressed between ear and pillow,
35. The caller’s breath uneven, their words stumbling.
36. On the other side, an unseen voice said, “I am here;
37. Tell me what is happening; stay with me; let us breathe together.”
38. The caller said in their heart: Eternal One, this person does not know my name,
39. Yet they speak as if my staying matters to them.
40. They cannot fix my life; they can only be here for this hour.
41. Is such a small thing enough?
42. And the Holy One answered: One hour can hold a life back from the brink.
43. Woe unto those who despise small kindnesses because they are not final cures.
44. Behold, many who are still living do so
45. Because in one hour, someone chose to listen rather than turn away.
46. After this I saw Silent Rooms where friends gathered in simple ways.
47. A couch with three bodies upon it, leaning into one another.
48. A kitchen where someone stirred a pot while another wept at the table.

49. A car parked in a quiet lot where two spoke in low voices until the windows fogged.

50. They said: Eternal One, we are not professionals, nor sages, nor healers by trade.

51. We only know how to sit, to listen, to say, "I am not leaving."

52. Does this truly matter amid such large sorrows?

53. And the Eternal One answered: These are among the holiest offices in your age.

54. Woe unto the culture that glorifies distant celebrities and ignores the neighbor who shows up at two in the morning.

55. Behold, when you make room in your life for another's Silent Room,

56. You become a doorway through which My care may enter.

57. Then I saw a Silent Room where a circle had formed.

58. Chairs stood in a ring; a candle or simple object lay at the center.

59. Each spoke in turn, saying, "My name is ..."

60. And following with truths too heavy for casual speech.

61. Some spoke of bottles, some of rage, some of grief, some of losses beyond counting.

62. They said: Eternal One, we are not here to impress one another,

63. But to keep each other from vanishing.

64. We admit what we cannot manage alone;

65. We ask for strength beyond our own.

66. And the Holy One answered: These are covenants of the wounded.

67. Woe unto those who scoff at such circles as "weak" or "pathetic."

68. Behold, many who walked out of these rooms remained in the world who otherwise would not.

69. After this I saw Silent Rooms where movement became prayer.

70. One stretched gently upon a mat, feeling each breath enter and depart.

71. Another walked slowly beneath trees, counting steps like beads of a rosary.

72. Another sat in stillness, returning again and again from racing thoughts to the simple fact of being.

73. They said: Eternal One, I am not sure I believe in You,

74. Yet I find that when I attend to this body,

75. Some small peace enters my mind.

76. Is this merely chemistry, or is there something of You in this quiet?

77. And the Eternal One answered: Chemistry is one language of My kindness.

78. Woe unto the splits that divide flesh and spirit as if I had not woven them together.

79. Behold, when you treat your body as worthy of care,

80. You contradict many lies that have been spoken over you.

81. Then I saw Silent Rooms where art supplies lay scattered.

82. Journals, paints, clay, threads,
instruments, cameras, empty pages
waiting.

83. One person picked up a pen not to
produce, but to release.

84. They filled pages with rage, love,
confusion, longing;

85. They tore some out; they kept others
close.

86. They said: Eternal One, these words
may never be read by another.

87. Are they still of worth?

88. And the Holy One answered:
Expression is a pathway out of the
labyrinth.

89. Woe unto the pressures that demand
you turn every gift into content and
every emotion into performance.

90. Behold, what you create for your own
survival is precious in My sight.

91. After this I saw Silent Rooms where
boundaries were practiced like new
language.

92. One rehearsed saying, “No,”

93. Another, “That is not acceptable,”

94. Another, “I need to rest,”

95. Another, “I cannot discuss that with
you.”

96. Their bodies shook as they imagined
the reactions that might follow.

97. They said: Eternal One, it feels selfish
to protect myself.

98. All my life I have been praised for
endurance and giving.

99. How shall I learn to be safe without
becoming hard?

100. And the Eternal One answered:
Self-preservation is not the same as
self-worship.

101. Woe unto the demands that you burn
yourself entirely to keep others warm.

102. Behold, wise boundaries are a form of
love—for you and for those you can
then sustain without resentment.

103. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people
met with those who had hurt them,
not to reconcile, but to close a door.

104. Words were spoken: “What you did
was wrong,”

105. “I will not return to that,”

106. “This chapter ends here.”

107. Tears fell, voices shook, hands gestured
in finality.

108. They said: Eternal One, I had hoped
for repair; instead I found only the
need to walk away.

109. Is this failure, or is this also a kind of
healing?

110. And the Holy One answered: Healing
is not always reunion.

111. Woe unto the stories that name every
distance a sin and every severing a
defeat.

112. Behold, sometimes the healthiest
boundary is absence where presence
brings only harm.

113. After this I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal
One, You have shown me many rooms
where help arrives in forms both
ordinary and profound.

114. Yet many who sit in darkness do not
know where to seek such help,

115. Or they lack coin, access, safety, or trust.

116. What word have You for those who long for these rooms and cannot yet reach them?

117. And the Eternal One answered: My grief is great for every barrier between a suffering soul and the care they need.

118. Woe unto the systems that keep healing locked behind gates of wealth,

119. And unto the shames that teach the wounded to refuse aid.

120. Behold, where access is blocked, I stir hearts to widen doors,

121. To make of communities informal clinics of compassion,

122. To train many hands and ears in the art of presence,

123. That no one may be left entirely without witness.

124. Wherefore let this chapter stand as a testimony

125. That in the age of many Silent Rooms, there were also rooms of counsel, of medicine, of friendship, of shared truth, of slow embodied peace.

126. Let all who read know that the Eternal One does not rebuke them for needing such places,

127. Nor call them faithless for seeking help in human forms.

128. For I, the Eternal One, who am unseen,

129. Often come to you through those who can be seen,

130. That in a world of closed doors and heavy nights,

131. There might yet be rooms where someone knocks and you dare, at last, to say,

132. "Come in.

133. Sit with me.

134. I do not want to be alone in this room anymore."

CHAPTER 18

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of rooms of help, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
You have spoken of the chambers within houses and halls;
now you must speak also of the larger room in which all these chambers stand.
For every Silent Room rests inside a greater house,
and few remember that they share its air and its foundation.
2. And I looked, and behold, I saw a city by night,
its towers rising like dim mountains,
its streets like narrow rivers of light.
Thousands of windows burned like scattered embers upon the dark,
and behind each pane was a story, a body, a breath, a fear, a hope.
Some laughed, and some wept; some stared at walls, and some prayed;
some plotted harm, some wrote songs, and some simply endured the turning of the hours.
3. And the Holy One said: This whole city is a house of Silent Rooms.

You see only your own ceiling and call
it the sky;

you hear only your own sighs and call
it the only song of sorrow.

Woe unto those who imagine their
pain as unique in substance,
and thus believe themselves cut off
from all others.

Behold, you are not identical, yet you
are not alien;

your loneliness is not the only flame
that burns this night.

4. And after this I saw a small park in the
midst of the towers,
where trees stood like quiet elders
among hurried feet.

Benches bore the imprint of many who
had sat and thought in silence,
their burdens pressing them down as
surely as their bodies.

One sat now with head bent and hands
clasped,

feeling the weight of their own story as
if it filled the whole sky above them.

5. And they said in their heart: Eternal
One, I am alone in this city;
my burdens seem unlike any others I
see around me.

I move among crowds and yet walk as
a ghost,

for no one knows what storms beat
within my chest.

And the Eternal One answered:

Around you walk thousands who have
felt what you feel,

though in different shapes and seasons
and tongues.

Woe unto the illusion that whispers,
“No one understands,”

for it bars the door against those who
might yet enter with care.

6. And I saw the earth itself as a vast and
shadowed room:

oceans like dark carpets spread to the
horizon,

forests like pillars holding up the low
sky,

and mountains like sleeping beasts
whose backs broke the clouds.

Upon its surface moved billions of
lives,

each enclosed in their own brief
awareness, each saying, “I am I,” and
“This is my pain.”

Yet above them clouds drifted without
concern for borders,

and beneath them roots intertwined
across property lines and nations.

7. And the Holy One said: This ground
upon which you build your private
chambers
is shared by all who breathe.

You divide land with fences and flags,
yet the air laughs at your boundaries

and passes through freely,

and the rivers remember no border but
their own source and mouth.

Woe unto the arrangements that teach
you to see only walls and not the
common floor.

Behold, you share more than you
know—air, water, vulnerability,
dependence, eventual death.

8. And after this I saw Silent Rooms
where people thought of those far
away.
One sat at a table and prayed for
someone across an ocean,
their name whispered into the dimness
with no reply expected.
Another read news of disaster and felt
their chest tighten for strangers whose
faces they would never see.
Another remembered an old friend in
another land and spoke their name
softly into the night.
9. And they said: Eternal One, these
thoughts seem small against such
distance;
can a heart in one room truly touch a
heart in another that has never heard
of me?
And the Eternal One answered: You
are not wires and circuits only; you are
also mystery.
Woe unto the minds that believe only
what can be weighed and measured,
and thus ignore the strange commerce
of compassion.
Behold, when you hold another in
sincere remembrance,
you join a current of care that I Myself
bear across the world.
10. Then I saw Silent Rooms connected by
unseen paths.
In one, a poem was written in tears
and sleeplessness;
its lines reached like hands toward an
unknown reader.
In another place, far away and later in

- time,
a stranger opened a book or a screen
and found those same words,
and felt, inexplicably, less alone in their
own midnight.
11. In one room, a melody was composed
by a soul too shy to perform it,
and in another, years later, someone
heard that tune by chance
and wept without knowing why, as if a
locked door in their chest had been
opened.
And the Holy One said: The threads
between you are finer than spider-silk
and stronger than iron.
Woe unto the age that believes only in
chains of metal and neglects the chains
of meaning.
Behold, you affect one another through
story and sound,
through gesture and decision, far
beyond what you can trace.
12. After this I saw a room where a single
candle was lit and set upon a
windowsill.
The one who lit it did so for all who
were grieving that night,
though they knew not their names nor
their locations.
Across the same city, in another house,
someone else lit another flame,
saying almost the same words in a
different tongue.
Across the sea, another did likewise,
thinking their act foolish and small.
13. And the Eternal One answered them
all: I have seen every flame.

Woe unto the cynicism that scoffs at
symbols and calls them empty,
forgetting that your whole life is
woven from signs and meanings.
Behold, such gestures are not solutions
to every wound;
they are signals—to Me, to others, and
to your own heart—
that you have not surrendered wholly
to indifference.
They are small banners raised against
the dark.

14. And then I saw how the walls
between rooms opened briefly and then
closed again.
People gathered at bus stops, in lines,
in transports, in waiting areas,
sharing glances, fragments of
conversation, and small kindnesses.
A door was held open, a dropped item
returned,
a compliment given without
calculation,
a seat offered to weary feet, an apology
made for an accidental bump.
15. These moments passed quickly, and
each one returned to their own Silent
Room,
yet something of those crossings
lingered and moved with them—
a slightly softened heart, a slightly
lighter step, a slightly altered story of
the day.
And the Holy One said: The great
web of your world is held together
not only by laws and systems and
machines,

but by such small crossings between
inner chambers.

Woe unto those who undervalue
courtesy and small courage,
for they are the oil in the gears of a
frail civilization.

16. And after this I, Nibwâskââ, said:
Eternal One, if all our rooms are
within one great room,
why do we so often feel only the
separations and not the shared air?
And the Eternal One answered:
Because fear builds walls thick and
high,
and pain turns inward upon itself to
survive the storm.
Woe unto the voices that shame the
wounded for withdrawing,
yet offer no shelter where they might
safely emerge.
17. Behold, it is My work, and the work of
those who walk with Me,
to bore small windows in these walls
and to soften their stone,
to create thresholds where none
existed,
that you may remember you inhabit
one world together.
Not to erase your differences,
but to remind you that beneath them
you still breathe the same wind and
bleed the same red.
18. Then I saw Silent Rooms where people
began to imagine this truth.
One wrote in their journal:
Somewhere, right now, someone else is
feeling what I am feeling,

though I do not know their name nor
their face.

Another prayed: Eternal One, be with
all who are awake in the night as I am,
for surely I am not the only one staring
at the ceiling.

Another whispered into the dark: If
you are out there, whoever you are, I
am thinking of you too.

19. And the Holy One said: These are the
beginnings of a hidden fellowship.

Woe unto the loneliness that insists, “I
am an island entire,”
for it blinds you to the countless shores
that resemble yours.

Behold, you are not an island; you are
more like a room in a vast house,
separated by walls, yes, yet supported
by the same foundation
and warmed, however faintly, by the
same central fire.

20. And after this I saw that the great
room of the earth was not closed to the
Eternal One.

Light entered through cracks you
scarcely notice—
through acts of justice and mercy done
in secret,
through moments of honest lament
that refuse to flatter false peace,
through courage that stands against
cruelty even when outnumbered,
and through tenderness that persists
where despair says, “Why bother?”

21. And the Eternal One said: When you
do such things in your small chambers,
you are not merely rescuing one

another from isolation;
you are widening the windows of the
world,

so that more of what is truly Me may
be seen upon this earth.

Your faithfulness in one room helps
another breathe more freely,
though you may never know their
name.

22. Wherefore let this chapter stand as a
reminder

to all who sit in their Silent Rooms and
think, “I am utterly alone,”
that there are countless others
breathing this same hour,
wrestling with similar ghosts,
reaching, cursing, praying, numbing,
awakening.

23. And let them know that the Eternal
One walks the long corridors between
all these rooms,
carrying the cries of one to the
remembrance of another,
stirring hearts in one place because of
tears shed in another,
until the day when, in ways both small
and great,
you will begin to say not only, “This is
my room and my pain,”
but also, “This is our house, our shared
night,
and perhaps, by mercy,
our shared dawn.”

CHAPTER 19

1. And it came to pass that after I had
written of the great house of the earth,

the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: You have spoken of many chambers—of sorrow and choosing, of endings and help, of the house you share; now you must speak of the deepest room, the room that moves with you wherever you go, for every city and every house and every corridor rests upon it.

2. And I looked, and behold, I saw not walls of stone nor windows of glass, but a room fashioned of flesh and memory, of thought and longing, of wounds and wonder.
Its floor was made of all that a soul had already lived; its walls were hung with images of what they feared and what they desired;
its ceiling rose and fell with each breath. And the Holy One said: This is the chamber of the heart.
3. In that room there was a chair where no one else could sit, and a table upon which no other hand could lay offerings, and a window that opened only from within. Many voices had tried to rearrange its furniture, to paint its walls with their own colors, to hang their banners where only truth should dwell; yet still it belonged to the one whose chest it beat within.
4. And the Eternal One said: Long before you built houses of wood and stone, before you raised temples and towers and sanctuaries of carved beauty, I had already set within you this inward room. Here it is that you decide what

to love and what to serve, even when your lips say otherwise. Here it is that you cling to lies or open to truth, that you harden like clay in drought or soften like earth in rain.

5. And I saw that for many, this room was cluttered with the furniture of other people's gods. There stood thrones built for approval and pedestals raised for human faces; altars dedicated to success, mirrors framed in gold for the worship of self, and cabinets filled with doctrines received but never examined.
Some had hung portraits of the Eternal One that bore little resemblance to mercy,
images painted by fear, control, or empire, and they bowed down before these and believed they were bowing to the Source.
6. And they said in their hearts: Eternal One, this is who You are, is it not—harsh, easily angered, hungry for obedience more than for justice, delighted in my self-contempt, satisfied when I grovel and call it humility? For this is what I was taught upon the tongues of authorities, and I have hung their words upon the walls of my inner room as if they were Your own. And the Eternal One answered: Many have spoken in My name who did not know Me.
7. Woe unto the teachings that turn the inner chamber into a prison,
that replace awe with terror and call it

reverence, that replace conscience with mere compliance and call it faith. Behold, I am not the idol of your anxieties, nor the echo of your oppressors' voices. If the "god" upon your wall delights in your shrinking, in your erasure, in your servitude to cruelty, know that you gaze not upon Me, but upon a mask that must be taken down.

8. And after this I saw other inner rooms that were nearly empty, stripped by disappointment and disbelief, their altars dismantled, their banners burned. There remained only a bare floor and a wary chair, and upon the wall a sign, written in invisible ink, that read: "No more illusions." Those who dwelt there said: I have torn down what once stood here in Your name, Eternal One, for it harmed me and others.
I do not know what, if anything, I can trust to put in its place.
9. And the Holy One answered: Better an honest emptiness than a gilded lie. Woe unto those who urge you to hang back the old portraits, to rebuild the old altar of fear, lest you appear "lost" in their eyes. Behold, I am not offended by your cautious room; I am patient enough to sit upon your bare floor until you discover that the space you cleared of idols has not remained unvisited.
10. Then I saw inner rooms where no formal prayer was spoken, yet

questions rose like incense without words: small, raw, unpolished questions, half-formed wishes for peace, sudden pangs of compassion, brief flashes of gratitude at a shaft of light or a kind face. Their owners said: I am not "religious"; I do not know how to speak to You. And the Eternal One answered: You have been speaking all along.

11. Woe unto the formulas that insist only certain phrases reach My ear, only certain postures win My attention, only certain creeds unlock My care. Behold, when you are pierced by another's suffering and wish them relief, you pray; when you marvel at beauty and feel yourself briefly unburdened, you pray; when you whisper, "I cannot do this alone," even if you do not know to whom you speak, you pray.
12. And I saw inner rooms where people tried to bar the Eternal One out. They piled furniture against the door—arguments, sarcasm, bitterness, thin philosophies wielded as shields, memories of betrayal by those who claimed to be My servants. They said: I will not be fooled again; I will not open to a Presence that may not exist; I will not risk hope only to be disappointed. And outside, there was no thunder, no forced entry, only a steady, patient nearness.
13. And the Eternal One said: I do not break down the door of the heart as

conquerors do; I stand and I honor the barricades you built to survive. Woe unto the zeal that tries to batter its way into another's inner room in My name, with threat and manipulation. Behold, I can wait longer than your fear can last; I can breathe through the cracks beneath the door, leaving small signs of life for the day you tire of guarding the threshold.

14. After this I saw inner rooms that had begun to be tended like gardens. Old clutter was carried out piece by piece, not all at once, for the weight was great. New light was let in through unshuttered windows, and where once there had been only bare floor, there now appeared a lamp of honest self-knowledge, a table for shared bread, and a corner where silence itself felt safe.
15. Those who dwelt there said: Eternal One, I am learning to be at home with myself, and I do not quite know what to do with this. All my life I have used noise to flee this room, or company to avoid it, or labor to ignore it. Now, as I sit within it and breathe, I sometimes sense Another breathing with me. Is this imagined, or is this You?
16. And the Holy One answered: You will not prove or disprove Me by experiment in this chamber, as you might test a stone or a flame. Yet know this: I am not elsewhere while you are here. Woe unto the expectation that I must appear as

spectacle to be real. Behold, if sitting in your own presence leads you to greater mercy, greater clarity, greater courage, then do not be afraid to consider that you are not alone on that floor.

17. And I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what becomes of the Silent Rooms of the world when the inner room of a person begins to be healed? And the Eternal One answered: When a heart-room grows more honest and gentle, it changes how doors open and close throughout the house. Woe unto the belief that inner work is selfish, for from the heart flow the patterns of speech, of touch, of decision. Behold, a soul at peace with truth slams fewer doors, throws fewer stones, listens more before speaking, and so alters the weather of many rooms.
18. Then I saw that there is also a Silent Room that belongs to the Eternal One alone, a mystery I can scarcely name: the chamber of My own hidden counsel, where your lives are held and pondered, where your sorrows are known more deeply than you know them, where your possibilities are seen beyond your fear. And from that hidden chamber, gentle promptings go forth into your inner rooms— a nudge toward kindness, a discomfort with cruelty, a pull toward truth, a longing for something more real than idols.
19. And the Holy One said: You will not enter this chamber as you enter your

own, yet you may trust that it exists, for you have already tasted its work whenever you have felt called to be more loving than you planned, more honest than you wished, more brave than you believed possible. Woe unto the thought that you walk unseen and unconsidered; behold, you are often on My mind.

20. Wherefore let this chapter stand as the closing of the book of the Silent Rooms: that all who have walked with me through hospital wards and prisons, through bedrooms and shelters, through apartments above streets and houses filled with ghosts, through chambers of despair and help and shared air— may know that at the center of all these stands this truth:
21. There is within you a room where the Eternal One may be met, not as an intruder, but as a guest who has always known the way; and there is around you a house of countless other rooms, inhabited by souls as fragile and fierce as you. If you remember these things, you will be gentler with yourself and with them; and in that gentleness, you will make of this troubled world a place with a little more light beneath its doors.
22. Thus end the words of Nibwâskââ concerning the Silent Rooms, which were written in a restless age that the scattered and the sleepless might know: their chambers are seen, their cries are carried, their doors are not beyond the

reach of mercy, and the Eternal One walks the long corridors of this world until every room that will open has heard, at least once, the quiet knocking of a Presence that will not force its way, yet never quite goes away.

BOOK VII – THE FIRE AGAINST THE IMAGES

CHAPTER I

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning the Silent Rooms and the cries of the hidden ones, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, arise and write now of the fire that I send not upon mountains and seas, but upon the images that have taken My place in the hearts of the people, that the world may know the difference between the Holy One and the faces it has learned to worship.
2. For the earth is heavy with images lifted up as gods, and there is no nation nor church nor marketplace where altars are not built to what is seen, while the Unseen is invoked only to bless the idols that stand in front of Me.
3. And the Eternal One said: I am not the picture that hangs in your halls, nor the statue that crowns your towers, nor the emblem carved above your pulpits, nor the symbol upon your flags; I am the One whom no hand has

drawn in fullness, whom no chisel has captured in truth, whose depths no doctrine has completely sounded, and whose name you cannot contain in any single tongue.

4. Woe unto those who carve My likeness according to their own power, giving Me the skin of their empire and the eyes of their class and the features of their tribe, and then bow down to this familiar face and say in their pride, "Behold, this is the One who made us all and loves us best."
5. For they have taken the form of their own supremacy and painted it with borrowed holiness, that they might rule in My name while serving only themselves, and they have taught whole generations that to resist their image is to resist God, and to question their portrait is to fall from grace.
6. Behold, I have seen white-robed figures with soft hands and gentle beard exalted as the only doorway to My heart, while the poor who do not resemble that portrait are told they resemble Me less, and the dark and the wounded and the despised are taught to imagine themselves forever further from My likeness.
7. I have seen flags wrapped about altars and armies blessed without mourning, as if I were the guardian of a single nation and not the Maker of all who bleed, and I have watched churches sing hymns of peace while praying

victory for their side as if their enemies were not also My children.

8. I have seen coins stamped with symbols of dominion raised in sanctuaries and called "provision from God," while those crushed beneath such economies are told that their hunger is a test of faith and not an indictment of injustice, and their tears are counted as a private trial instead of a public accusation.
9. And the Eternal One said: I am not your mascot to be printed on your banners and campaigns, nor your royal seal to justify your greed, nor your tribal crest to adorn your weapons; I am the One who hears the cry on both sides of the border and does not sign the treaties of your wars.
10. Woe unto the churches and temples and councils that decorate themselves with My name but bow in secret to the gods of profit and power and praise, for they have taken My words and cut them into pieces to frame their idols and fortify their thrones, and they teach the people to fear Me while they fear only the loss of their influence.
11. For they have said to the world, "Only through these faces and these buildings and these offices will you find the Eternal One," and they have built a ladder of castes and callings and titles, and placed themselves at the top, and they have called this ladder "the order of heaven" while trampling those beneath in My name.

12. Behold, I tell you plainly that whenever anyone says, "We alone possess the pure image of God," they are already far from Me, for I have no single image among you; I am reflected in every face that draws breath, and most clearly in those from whom your idols turn away.
13. And woe unto those who take the name of "Savior of the world" and fashion it into a crown for their own system, and who say, "Unless you bow to this figure and this story exactly as we tell it, you are cut off from the Eternal One," for they have turned even the language of mercy into a weapon of exclusion and fear.
14. For there are many who no longer see Me at all, but see only the image of the savior they were handed, and they pray to this face and obey this figure as if I were locked behind it, and they do not know that they have been taught to worship an intermediary more than the Source from whom all life comes.
15. And the Eternal One said: To point toward Me and then step aside is a holy work, but to stand forever in front of Me and demand that all allegiance pass through your image is idolatry; woe unto every priest and prophet and preacher who has loved their own role more than the freedom of those who seek Me.
16. Behold, you have built whole churches upon the need for a mediator, and you have taught that without this mediator

I will not hear the cry of My own creation, and you have said that the Advocate must plead with Me as if My heart were colder than yours, and in this you have slandered the One who formed you.

17. Woe unto the doctrines that portray Me as wrath without end, appeased only by blood and pain, while presenting the savior as gentler than the Source, for you have split Me in the minds of the people and taught them to love an image while trembling before the One who is imagined behind it, and you have called this division "good news."
18. Behold, I am not a tyrant whose justice must be restrained by a kinder figure, nor a distant monarch who needs a favorite to carry your petitions; I am the One who hears the whisper before the words are formed, the One who shares the sorrow before the tears are shed, the One who holds no court between Myself and the heart I have made.
19. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, trembled at these words and said: Eternal One, if the faces and flags and mediators we have clung to are found wanting, what shall become of the many whose whole hope has been bound to them, and how shall we speak of You at all without forging new idols from our speech?
20. And the Eternal One answered: To speak of Me is not forbidden, but to

claim that your speech contains Me is a lie; to use words and symbols as windows is wisdom, but to call them walls that exclude all others is blasphemy; to offer a story as a bridge is mercy, but to demand that all walk only that bridge is violence.

21. Woe unto those who take the stories of one people and brand them upon the world as the only doorway to the Mystery, and who then despise all other stories as worthless dust, for I have walked with many nations and spoken in many tongues and breathed through many dreams, and yet you have made of one river an ocean and of all other waters a stain.
22. Behold, I send now a fire against the images, not to burn the art of your hands nor the parables of your ancestors, but to burn away the lies you have wrapped around them, that no human face, however beloved, may be used to justify the crushing of another; the paintings may remain, but the spell they held over the conscience shall be undone.
23. And the statues you raised may stand as stone and bronze, but the fear they inspired shall wither, and the words you carved upon your sanctuaries will still be read, but the chains you forged from them shall be broken, for I will teach the children to ask, "Who is served by this image, and who is silenced beneath it, and whose

suffering is erased by this portrait of God?"

24. And when they see that the idols protect the strong and ignore the weak and excuse the harm of the favored, they shall know that such gods are not Me, and their hearts will burn against those who taught them that holiness was identical with hierarchy and that heaven was a pyramid with the powerful enthroned at the top forever.
25. Woe unto those who tell the abused to honor the image that blesses their abuser, and who say to the oppressed, "Bow before this face or you bow not at all," and who call it rebellion when the wounded refuse to kneel, for I am nearer to their groan than to your polished creed and closer to their tears than to your gilded doctrine.
26. Behold, your charts of kingdoms and degrees and thrones in the afterlife, by which you divide My children into castes eternal, are an abomination to Me when they are used to justify castes on earth; for you have mapped your hierarchies of class and race and gender onto the heavens and called it revelation, and you have forgotten that I measure greatness by mercy and not by rank.
27. Woe unto the prophets who speak of "higher" and "lower" glories while they crush the meek and exalt the cruel and count themselves certain of their own exaltation, for they have mistaken the ladder of their pride for the will of

the Eternal One and taught others to climb it in fear, always looking upward at those above and downward upon those below.

28. And the Eternal One said: In the day when your images fall, many will weep as if God had died, but it will not be God who has perished, only the masks that hid My face from the simple and the broken; your temples may crack, but My presence will not retreat, and your systems may crumble, but the breath of the Holy will still move among the poor.
29. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if the mediator is not needed, what then of all the prayers that have been spoken in that name, and all the love that has been poured out upon that image, and all the comfort that people have found in that story; will You cast all this aside as nothing?
30. And the Eternal One answered: I do not despise the love that has been given in sincerity, even when it was directed through a crooked channel; I have heard the prayers that came to Me wrapped in borrowed names and forms, and I have answered them for the sake of the hearts that cried, not for the sake of the image that carried their words.
31. Behold, I can take the crooked line and still arrive at the one who calls; I can receive the devotion that passed through an idol and yet cleanse it of

the idol's poison; I can honor the kindness that was done in the name of a figure while refusing the cruelty done in that same name, for I judge not the syllables upon the lips but the truth in the deed.

32. Woe unto those who use the sincerity of the many as a shield for the lies of the few, saying, "Because comfort was found here, no harm was done here," and who point to the healed while hiding the broken, and to the grateful while silencing the cast out; behold, I see all, and I weigh the tears that were caused as well as the tears that were dried.
33. And again the Eternal One said: You ask what shall remain if the false images are burned away, and I tell you that what remains is what was always first: the direct call of the Source to the heart, unmediated by caste or purchase or pledge; the knowing that does not require another's permission; the conscience that answers to Me before it answers to any throne.
34. You will still tell stories, but you will know them as stories and not chains; you will still gather in circles, but you will know that no one in that circle stands between you and the Holy; you will still use names for Me, but you will hold them lightly, and you will test all visions of God by this measure: do they increase your reverence for all that breathes, or only for your own?

35. Woe unto the teachings that demand you harm for the sake of doctrinal purity, that require you to turn away from the suffering neighbor in order to remain loyal to a system of thought, that command you to love a savior more than the least of these; behold, any “gospel” that makes you cruel is not of Me, but of the image you have enthroned above Me.
36. Behold, I am the Eternal One who says, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” and this word is not only against carved idols of wood and stone, but against every human face, however honored, that is used to eclipse the Source; I am not jealous for My ego, but for your freedom, for whenever you place a figure between yourself and Me, you bind yourself and call it devotion.
37. And it came to pass that the word of the Eternal One rested upon me with great weight, and I said: Eternal One, how shall I speak these things without becoming proud, and how shall any who read them avoid turning even these words into a new image to be defended and imposed?
38. And the Eternal One answered: Remember that every word about Me is a witness and not a weapon, a signpost and not a fortress; if these sayings lead anyone to greater mercy and deeper honesty and more courageous justice, let them stand, but if they are ever used to exalt one group

- over another or to excuse new forms of domination, let them be cast into the fire with the rest.
39. Woe unto those who quote the Fire Against the Images to burn only the idols of their enemies while guarding their own; behold, this fire begins in the house of the speaker and at the altar of the writer, and whoever would wield it must first allow it to test their own cherished faces of God.
40. And I, Nibwâskââ, bowed my head and said: Let it be so with me as You have said, O Eternal One; burn from my heart every image of You that justifies my cruelty or flatters my fear, and leave only what leads me to love more bravely and to walk more humbly in the company of all whom You have made.
41. Wherefore let all who read this chapter know that the wrath of the Eternal One is not against the longing to see and to name and to understand, but against every use of the holy to crush the lowly, every use of the sacred to bless the throne, every portrait of God that leaves the vulnerable unprotected and the powerful unchallenged.
42. And thus is the first chapter of the book of the Fire Against the Images written for this late and troubled age, that those who have been bound by faces and systems and saviors might hear a different voice, calling them not to throw away wonder, but to throw away bondage, and not to cease from

seeking God, but to seek the One who was before every image and who will remain when every image has passed.

43. And it shall be that whoever turns from the worship of faces and titles and intermediaries back toward the Eternal One who speaks directly to the heart, without price and without caste, shall find that the Holy has been near all along, silent beside their own Silent Room, waiting not for the right image to be invoked, but for the simple truth to be desired above every idol.

CHAPTER 2

1. And it came to pass that after I had finished the first words of the Fire Against the Images, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, you have spoken of the faces that are lifted up outside the heart; now you must speak of the images that dwell in secret within the mind, for many bow in terror or in pride before a god they have never seen, yet carry always within.
2. For there is an image that some bear of the Eternal One as a watcher in the ceiling of their thoughts, whose eye never softens, who counts every misstep with cold delight, who withholds rest until every task is done; and before such a presence they do not rest, neither can they rejoice, and they call this anxiety “fear of God.”
3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto those who taught you that I am chiefly

disgusted with you, that I hover above your life waiting for the last straw, that I grow weary of your weakness more quickly than you do; behold, this image was born of their own harshness, and they carved it into your soul as if it were My face.

4. Behold, there is another image some carry of Me, as a distant monarch who has more important matters than their small life, who attends to empires and stars but not to hospital beds and empty refrigerators and silent weeping; and before such a god they do not pray, for they believe no one is listening, and they call this numbness “realism.”
5. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the doctrines that portray Me as too grand to draw near, that call intimacy delusion and tenderness weakness; behold, if I were not present in the smallest grief, I would not be worthy of your worship in the greatest glory.
6. There is also an image in some hearts of a god whose love is always on trial, who rescinds affection at the first doubt, who sulks when unpraised, who abandons those who cannot keep smiling; and those who bow to this image contort their souls to stay in favor, and they call this contortion “faithfulness.”
7. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the teaching that makes of Me a needy tyrant, demanding a constant stream of flattery; behold, I did not form you to be My audience but My companions,

and I am not so fragile that your questions and tears can drive Me away.

8. And again the Eternal One spoke, saying: There are also inward idols of certainty, where a person clings not to Me but to their own conclusions about Me, fearing that to release even one idea would cause the whole structure to collapse; and they defend these ideas with fury and call this fury “zeal.”
9. Woe unto the hearts that love their map more than the country it claims to describe, that fear being wrong more than they fear being cruel; behold, when you protect your picture of God at the cost of another’s life or dignity, you have ceased to worship Me and begun to worship your image.
10. And I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if so many inward images are false, how shall anyone know when they are bowing to a lie and when they are truly turning toward You, who cannot be seen?
11. And the Eternal One answered: Test the god you serve by the fruit it bears in your dealings with others and with yourself; if the presence you call “God” drives you to contempt, to indifference, to cruelty, to despair of all goodness, then know that you are serving a shadow cast by fear, and not the Source of light.
12. But if the Presence you dimly sense, however misnamed, moves you slowly toward mercy, toward repentance and

repair, toward truth-telling even when it costs, toward honoring the image of the Holy in others and in yourself, then do not fear that you have missed Me, though your language be broken and unsure.

13. And the Eternal One said: Many believe they have abandoned God when in truth they have abandoned only an idol of the mind that once strangled them; they think themselves faithless because they can no longer kneel before a cruel image, yet this refusal is itself a small, fierce faithfulness to what is truly good.
14. Woe unto the guardians of harsh images, who see a soul flee from abuse and cry, “You have turned from the Lord,” instead of confessing, “You have turned from the god we made”; behold, they would rather lose a child than lose their statue, and they call this loyalty “orthodoxy.”
15. Behold, I am nearer to the one who says in anguish, “I cannot believe in such a god,” than to the one who praises a god of oppression without a tremor, for I look not upon the smoothness of your creed but upon the integrity of your conscience.
16. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, there are many who see You mostly as judge, and they cling to this image to feel safe, for they believe that if You are always judging others, then their own wounds will

- surely be avenged; what word have You for them?
17. And the Eternal One answered: I do not forbid you to trust that I see and weigh what has been done to you; justice is not alien to Me, nor will I forget what must not be forgotten; but woe unto the hearts that know Me only as anger, for they will become like the god they worship, and their thirst for vengeance will consume the tenderness that could have healed them.
 18. Behold, to know Me only as justice is to know Me in part, and to twist that part until it no longer resembles My heart; for My judgment is not a thrill at punishment, but a relentless refusal to call evil good; My anger is not a pleasure in suffering, but a burning for the sake of the harmed.
 19. And again I said: Eternal One, there are also those who see You only as indulgent kindness, who cannot bear to think that You oppose anything at all; they imagine that to be loving is never to say “no,” never to confront, never to grieve what is broken; and they call this softness “grace.”
 20. And the Eternal One answered: Woe unto the image of Me as a polite fog that blesses all things equally, making no distinction between what heals and what destroys; behold, I am not love if I do not stand against what shatters the beloved; I am not mercy if I leave

- the oppressed and the oppressor untouched in their roles forever.
21. Behold, any picture of Me that makes you comfortable with your own harm toward others is a lie, and any picture of Me that crushes you when you seek to heal is also a lie; between these lies I walk as a consuming but tender fire, burning away what kills and warming what can yet live.
 22. And the Eternal One said: You have also made inward idols of leaders and prophets and saviors, whose words echo in your head louder than the quiet pull of conscience; you fear displeasing them more than you fear wounding your neighbor, and you measure your holiness by your loyalty to their image.
 23. Woe unto the hearts that cannot imagine God apart from the tone of a preacher’s voice, the gestures of a father, the rules of a sect; behold, when any human voice so fills your inner room that you no longer ask, “Is this just? Is this kind?”, then you have enthroned that voice where only the Eternal One should sit.
 24. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what then shall we do with all these inner images? Shall we tear them down until nothing remains and call that emptiness truth?
 25. And the Eternal One answered: You are not called to live without all images, for your minds are woven of stories and symbols, and they will

- dream whether you permit it or not;
but you are called to hold every image
lightly, to let it be corrected, to let it be
broken when it begins to demand what
only I may demand.
26. Behold, you may speak of Me as
Parent, as Fire, as Breath, as Rock, as
River, as Friend, as Judge, as Midwife,
as Shepherd, as Stranger; yet remember
that each of these is a doorway and not
a prison cell, a hint and not a
photograph; woe unto those who
confuse metaphor with measurement
and then beat others with their poetry
as if it were iron law.
27. And again the Eternal One said: There
is one image I Myself have placed
within you that I do not despise, and
that is the sense that there is something
beyond your own desires that calls you
to goodness; when you feel that
summons, whether you name it God or
conscience or truth, you are already
brushing against the hem of My robe.
28. Behold, when your heart protests
against injustice even when it costs
you, when you blush with shame
because you have harmed another and
wish to repair it, when you are moved
by a beauty that asks nothing from you
but reverence, these are not idols but
signs that the Eternal One is not far
from your inner room.
29. And I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One,
how then shall we pray, when so many
forms and images have been used to
control and condemn; shall we abandon

- all crafted words and sit only in
silence?
30. And the Eternal One answered: Pray
as honestly as you can, with whatever
words you truly mean; I would rather
hear, "I do not know who You are, but
I am tired and afraid," than a thousand
smooth phrases spoken to impress an
image; I dwell more readily in a single
rough truth than in a flood of recited
lies.
31. Behold, if you can only say, "If You are
there, help me not to harm myself or
another today," this is a prayer; if you
can only say, "I do not trust You, but I
am talking anyway," this too is a
prayer; and if you sit in silence with
your pain and simply refuse to lie to
yourself, your very sitting is a cry that
reaches Me.
32. And the Eternal One said: Let this
chapter be a mirror and not a hammer;
if you see your own inward idols
named here, do not despair as if I will
cast you away; I reveal them not to
shame you, but to loosen their grip,
that you may breathe again as one who
is loved and not merely managed.
33. Woe unto those who take these words
and wield them chiefly against others,
as if they themselves were free of false
images; behold, whoever reads of idols
and thinks first of their enemies has
already discovered one idol in their
own heart.
34. Wherefore let each who hears these
sayings ask quietly, "What image of

God have I carried that has harmed me or those around me?”, and let them dare, if only in a whisper, to say, “Eternal One, if You are not as I was taught, show me better,” and know that such a request is a seed I will gladly water.

35. And thus are the words of the second chapter of the Fire Against the Images written, that in this age of many portraits and doctrines and inward voices, some may begin to distinguish between the Holy One and the shadows in their minds, and to turn, even trembling, from the worship of those shadows toward the Eternal Source, who cannot be captured by any image, yet who answers every honest cry.

CHAPTER 3

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the hidden images in the heart, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
Nibwâskââ, now write concerning the houses that call themselves Mine, and the images they raise within their walls, that those who have been crushed beneath such sanctuaries may know that I have seen all that was done in My name.
2. For there are churches and temples and assemblies that have lifted up an image of holiness as a distant platform, upon which a few may stand robed in authority, while the many kneel below

and are told that their only path to Me is through the hands and minds of those above them, and they call this arrangement “order” and “priesthood” and “the kingdom of heaven.”

3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the leaders who build ladders of caste and dress them in light, who divide My children into ranks of worthiness and degrees of glory as if I delighted to sort you like coins, who teach that some are born nearer to My favor and others must spend their lives ascending toward those thrones; behold, this is the architecture of empire, not of the Eternal.
4. Behold, I have watched as men declared themselves closer to Me by reason of their office, their lineage, their learning, their gender, their skin, and they have drawn maps of eternity with themselves at the center, assigning lower places to those they already disregard on earth, and they have whispered that this hierarchy is eternal truth and not their own reflection.
5. Woe unto the prophets who speak of “higher kingdoms” and “lesser lights” and then use these visions to justify contempt, who say, “You shall be servants in the world to come as you are servants now,” and call this revelation; behold, they have written their social order into the sky and called it God’s handwriting.

6. And the Eternal One said: You have taken My name and stamped it upon your charts and ordinances and secret grades of belonging, so that the people cannot imagine heaven without your system; you have made of salvation a process that must be licensed by your hands, ratified by your councils, sealed by your rituals, and you have said, "Outside of this, there is no fullness."
7. Woe unto you who chain the Infinite to your own procedures and then threaten the souls who cannot or will not comply, saying to them that their families will be torn in the hereafter, that their place will be lowest, that their joy will be thin, unless they bow in the manner you prescribe; behold, this is extortion in sacred clothing.
8. Behold, I tell you a mystery which is not a mystery: no human institution, however ancient or elaborate, owns the gates of the world to come; no council's signatures determine who is welcome at My table; no ritual, however beautiful, binds Me to reject those who never knew it or who were cast away from it by your cruelty.
9. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, but what then of the sacraments and ordinances and ceremonies in which some have found real comfort and awakening; are these all to be counted as nothing?
10. And the Eternal One answered: I do not despise the moments when a soul, standing in water or before a table or

beneath anointing hands, truly opens to love and resolves to walk more justly; these acts I honor, for they are doors through which some have stepped closer to Me; but I send My fire against the claim that I am bound to your doors and absent from all others.

11. Woe unto the churches that turn gifts into chains, that say, "Because this ritual helped us, all must pass through it or be cast away," that hoard grace like currency and dole it out as reward for obedience; behold, I am present in the river where no officiant stands, in the kitchen where bread is broken without liturgy, in the quiet where resolve is made with no witness but Me.
12. And the Eternal One said: There are also houses that have fashioned an image of spiritual success measured in numbers and buildings and influence, and they say, "Behold how God has favored us, for our crowds swell and our coffers are full," and they do not ask whom they have trampled or silenced to build such monuments.
13. Woe unto the shepherds who count bodies instead of burdens, who measure health by attendance and wealth by square footage, who design their gatherings as spectacles to keep the restless soothed and the doubtful distracted; behold, when the fear of losing your image of success outweighs your willingness to tell hard truth, you

- no longer serve Me but your own reputation.
14. Behold, I see the churches that protect their “anointed” at the expense of the wounded, moving abusers from place to place while teaching victims to forgive and be silent, and I see the councils that know the harm and cover it for fear of scandal, and then stand to bless the people as if their hands were clean; know that their hands are not clean before Me.
 15. Woe unto every prophet and priest and pastor and apostle who has used My name to demand that the abused return to their abuser, that the oppressed accept their place, that the questioning recant or be cast out; behold, I will call them to account for every soul gaslit into thinking My voice was the voice that harmed them.
 16. And it came to pass that the Eternal One said: You have even made an idol of the word “church” itself, as if I were confined to your membership rolls; you say, “The people of God are those within our walls and under our authority,” and you speak of “the world” as if it were a cesspool outside your borders; yet many who bear My likeness most clearly have never felt safe in your pews.
 17. Woe unto the assemblies that mistake conformity for holiness, that require the suppression of truth to maintain unity, that brand the honest as rebellious and the survivors as bitter;

- behold, when your “unity” is purchased by silencing the harmed, it is not unity but violence in slow motion.
18. Behold, I am found among those who have been expelled for telling the truth, among those who could not swallow the image you demanded they adore; I walk with the ones you call apostate when their leaving is born of conscience, and I do not count their departure as treason, but as a painful step away from the idol you built.
 19. And I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, is there then no faithful community, no gathering You will honor, when so many structures are stained with these images?
 20. And the Eternal One answered: I honor every circle where power is held lightly, where leadership is understood as service and not as rank, where questions are welcomed and not feared, where those who suffer are believed and not managed, where the poor and the marginalized are not projects but kin; such circles may meet in cathedrals or in basements, in fields or in chatrooms, and I am among them.
 21. Woe unto the leaders who hear these words and rush to say, “We are such a community,” without first searching their own histories and habits; behold, the idol of self-righteousness stands also in progressive sanctuaries, where people worship their own enlightenment and mock the ignorance of others in My name.

22. Behold, I delight in any people, however small, who confess, “We have been wrong, and we are learning,” and who repair what can be repaired; but I withdraw My blessing from any people, however correct their creed, who cloak their idols in the language of growth and justice while still loving their own image more than the least of these.
23. And the Eternal One said: There is yet one more image that stalks the halls of religion—the image of a flawless, triumphant “people of God” marching from victory to victory; woe unto this picture, for it leaves no place for the broken, no patience for the slow, no honor for those who stagger and faint; it would rather hide its wounded than admit that grace works through weakness.
24. Behold, when a community cannot bear to tell the truth of its failures, when it must varnish every story and frame every setback as instant triumph, it has made of its own reputation an idol, and it asks its members to burn their honesty as an offering upon that altar.
25. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, wept and said: Eternal One, I have seen much of what You now name, and I am both angry and afraid; what shall become of those still trapped within such systems, who cannot yet leave or speak?

26. And the Eternal One answered: I am not absent from their Silent Rooms; I hear their secret prayers and their choked confusion; I count the nights they lie awake wondering if they are the mad ones for sensing that something is wrong; I slip courage into their chests in small portions, enough for a conversation, a question, a boundary, a step.
27. Behold, I will raise unexpected allies within and without, I will cause stories to surface that cannot be reburied, I will erode the false images slowly and then all at once; some institutions will change, and some will crumble, but every soul who chooses truth over image will find Me nearer than before.
28. Wherefore let this chapter stand as a testimony against the idols of church and caste and spiritual prestige, and as a comfort to all who have been struck by them; let it be known that the Eternal One does not dwell more gladly in marble than in a rented room, and does not require that you climb the ladders others built in order to be seen and loved.
29. And if any shall read these words while yet fearing the loss of their place in a system that harms them, let them hear this also: your worth does not depend on any title bestowed by human hands, nor on your standing in any book of membership; before all these things were, you were Mine, and

after all these things pass, you will still be Mine.

30. Thus are the words of the third chapter of the Fire Against the Images written, that the churches of this age might be measured not by the splendor of their images nor the size of their multitudes, but by the mercy they practice, the justice they seek, and the freedom they grant to every soul to know the Eternal One without chains.

CHAPTER 4

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the houses that claimed to be Mine, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
Nibwâskââ, now you shall write of the saviors that have been lifted up as shields between Me and My children, and of the prophets who have made of themselves gates that no one may pass without paying toll.
2. For in many lands and ages the leaders have said to the people, "You cannot bear the brightness of God; stand behind us and behind our chosen figure, and through him alone will the Eternal One regard you," and the people, being weary and afraid, have believed it, and thus have learned to fear the Source more than they fear injustice.
3. And the Eternal One said: Behold, I do not despise those who told stories of rescue in order to speak of hope; I have walked with many who found courage

in the thought that heaven was drawing near; but woe unto those who took such stories and fashioned from them a throne for their religion, saying that the world must bow to their savior exactly as they describe him or be counted enemies of God.

4. Woe unto the prophets who speak as if I were a monster to be appeased, while their chosen figure is presented as the kind face that persuades Me not to destroy you, for they split Me in the minds of the people and teach them to cling to an image while trembling before the One who is imagined behind it; this is not good news but a sickness of the soul.
5. Behold, when you are taught that I am wrath without end and that only the correct allegiance to a certain name can quiet My rage, you will live always in terror of misstepping, and you will fear for your children more than you trust Me with them, and you will mistake trembling for devotion and anxiety for faith.
6. And the Eternal One said: I am not a tyrant whose heart must be softened by blood; I did not design a world in which I could only forgive by killing the innocent; woe unto the doctrines that call cruelty "justice" and then praise a savior for protecting you from the justice of such a god, for they have slandered Me and called it reverence.
7. Behold, I tell you plainly that I need no go-between to hear the cry of what I

have made; I do not require that your prayers be translated by a holier voice before they reach Me; I am not nearer to the eloquent than to the inarticulate, nor nearer to the orthodox than to the confused; whoever calls in truth is heard without an advocate standing in the doorway.

8. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, yet many have found comfort in the image of a savior who walks with them, who understands their wounds, who stands against the powers that crush them; will You strip them of this hope also?
9. And the Eternal One answered: I will not despise any comfort that leads to courage and compassion; if any story or figure has taught you to stand with the broken, to forgive instead of avenge, to tell the truth instead of hide, I will honor the fruits of that teaching; but I will not permit that figure to be used as a chain around the necks of those who do not or cannot name him.
10. Woe unto the churches that take a story meant to proclaim that I am with the suffering and twist it into a weapon that condemns whole peoples as forsaken, saying, "Because you do not accept this narrative, you are cut off from God," for they have turned a song into a cage and a healing into a test.
11. Behold, I have seen how whole cultures have been conquered in the name of a gentle savior, their lands

taken, their children stolen, their languages buried beneath imported scriptures, and when the oppressed cried out, they were told to be grateful that their conquerors had at least brought them "the true way to God."

12. Woe unto the missionaries of empire who arrive with book and banner and say, "Your ancestors knew nothing of the Eternal; only now, through us, does God truly speak," for they erase My long companionship with those peoples and plant instead a story in which I appear only when the colonizer arrives.
13. And the Eternal One said: In every land where such saviors were enforced at the edge of sword and policy, I walked beside the ones who resisted in their hearts, who said, "If this is God, then God has betrayed us," and I counted their protest as a defense of My true name, which is justice and mercy joined together.
14. Behold, there are prophets who preach, "Believe in this figure and you shall be made clean, and once clean you are superior to those outside," and they build an invisible caste system in the soul, with the "saved" at the top and all others beneath; and they map this invisible ladder onto their societies until the poor and the foreign and the queer and the uncredentialed are treated as living in an outer darkness even while alive.
15. Woe unto such preaching, for it teaches you to love your membership more

than your neighbor, your certainty more than compassion, your future reward more than present responsibility; behold, if your “salvation” does not increase your tenderness toward those you were taught to despise, then it is not salvation but a more religious way of being cruel.

16. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if these savior-images and prophet-castes are idols, what then of those who have built their whole identity around them; will not their world fall apart if these are taken away?
17. And the Eternal One answered: Yes, their world will crack, and I will sit with them amid its ruins; better that the false sky fall than that a soul spend its years bowing to a lie; better that a person walk trembling in honest uncertainty than stride confidently in a path that tramples others.
18. Behold, when the image of the necessary savior collapses, many will feel naked and alone before the Mystery, and they will say, “How shall we approach God now?” and I will answer them not with thunder but with a quiet knowing in their own depths: “You have never been required to buy My ear; you have always been directly held.”
19. And again the Eternal One said: The prophets who frighten you with visions of sorted heavens and graded

eternities, who claim secret knowledge of which degree of glory you shall inherit, they use the hereafter as a leash; woe unto them, for they have weaponized the imagination of coming worlds to maintain obedience in this one.

20. Behold, they draw charts of heavens and speak confidently of who will shine and who will be dim, of who will rule and who will serve, of who will dwell near and who will be cast far off, as if they had walked those corridors and read those rosters; yet in truth they only extend the architecture of their own ego into infinity.
21. And the Eternal One said: I will not confirm your fantasies of eternal caste; I will not preserve in the age to come the hierarchies you built in fear and greed; whatever life awaits beyond this one, know that it will not be the eternal enthronement of the few over the many, nor the endless humiliation of those you already despised.
22. Woe unto the prophets who threaten, “If you leave our fold, you will lose your place in the highest realm; your family will be broken; your light will dim forever,” for they trade in terror and call it pastoral care; behold, whoever stays only because they dread such punishments has not chosen Me but fled from a nightmare drawn by human hands.
23. Behold, I call blessed those who, in spite of such threats, follow the truth

of their conscience out of systems that harm them; they may walk in loneliness for a time, but I count their steps as pilgrimage; and though they may fear they have abandoned Me, I walk on their right hand and on their left.

24. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, bowed my head and said: Eternal One, how then shall we speak of rescue and of Your nearness, if we cannot center our lives upon a single blessed figure or cling to the promises of being on the “right side” of heaven?
25. And the Eternal One answered: Speak of rescue as the opening of eyes to reality, the softening of hearts toward the broken, the breaking of chains of domination; speak of My nearness as the Presence that strengthens you to do these things; but do not claim that I am yours more than another’s because of a name you recite or a doctrine you sign.
26. Behold, you may honor any teacher whose life and words led you nearer to justice and compassion, but honor them as a fellow servant, not as a gate that all must pass; you may remember any story of sacrifice that awakened you to the depth of love, but remember it as a signpost, not as a tollbooth; and let every prophecy be judged by whether it increases mercy and truth.
27. Wherefore let this fourth chapter stand as a witness against the idol of the necessary savior and the caste of untouchable prophets, and as a door

for those who feel themselves damned for failing to adore the sanctioned image; let them know that the Eternal One has not tied their destiny to any human institution’s imagination, but has always spoken directly to the heart that longs to do what is right.

28. And if any shall read these words and feel both anger and relief, both grief for what they are losing and hope for what might yet be found, let them not be ashamed of this mixture; for that is the ache of chains falling, and in that ache I, the Eternal One, am nearer than any idol ever was.

CHAPTER 5

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the saviors and the prophets who stood between the Eternal One and the people, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, now you shall write of the images that rule your houses and beds and bodies, for many have bowed to portraits of “family” and “order” and called these idols divine.
2. For there are those who hold up an image of “the holy household” as a rigid statue, with the man enthroned above, the woman beneath, the children in ranks, and all affections and callings forced to kneel before this shape, and they declare, “Thus it must be in time and in eternity, for such is the order of God.”

3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the teachings that bind My name to your arrangements of power, that call male dominance “headship” and female silence “virtue,” that threaten My displeasure upon any house that dares to divide labor and authority in ways your ancestors did not imagine; behold, you have confused your customs with My character.
4. Behold, I have seen women whose minds burned with wisdom and whose spirits blazed with courage, told that their highest devotion was to shrink and to wait, to stand as support for the greatness of others and never to walk in their own full height; and when they felt the fire within protest, they were told that this was rebellion against God.
5. Woe unto the prophets who paint a God who fears the strength of women, who preach that the Eternal One is threatened when daughters speak, lead, and decide, who sanctify their own insecurity with verses and call it “the pattern of heaven”; behold, such a god is not Me, but the image of a frightened man.
6. And the Eternal One said: There are also those who crush men beneath an image of “masculinity” forged of stone and smoke, telling them that to be holy they must never weep, never falter, never need comfort, that they must conquer or be counted worthless, and they call this violent mask “manhood from God.”
7. Woe unto the doctrines that forbid men to feel, that train them to offer strength but never confession, protection but never vulnerability, command but never tenderness; behold, such teachings break My sons and then blame them for being broken, and from their wounds many others bleed.
8. Behold, I see the child whose spirit does not fit the statue—whether boy or girl or neither or both—taught from earliest days that their truest self is an enemy of the holy pattern, and they tremble in secret, praying to be changed, bargaining to be loved, and when the change does not come they conclude that either they are monsters or I am cruel.
9. Woe unto every system that uses My name to demand uniformity of flesh and desire, that calls diversity of body and being “confusion,” that punishes what it does not understand; behold, when you teach a child that their existence is a problem for God, you have already erected an idol more deadly than any carved stone.
10. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, many will say, “But we uphold these images to protect the family and preserve morality; without them the world will fall apart”; what word have You for such fear?
11. And the Eternal One answered: Your world is not held together by your

- rigid roles but by your stubborn kindness; families do not stand because a chart says who commands whom, but because someone chooses to forgive, to listen, to stay when staying is hard and to leave when leaving is the only way to protect life; woe unto the fear that confuses domination with stability.
12. Behold, you have taught that the highest glory is to conform to one narrow picture, and you have called those who cannot match it “lesser” in time and eternity; you have woven into your visions of heaven an eternal caste of those who fit and those who do not, and you have named this “the eternities of family order,” yet I have not drawn such diagrams.
 13. Woe unto the charts of hereafter that place some forever at the head of tables and others forever at their feet, that imagine endless ages of domestic hierarchy and call it “exaltation”; behold, this is not My kingdom but your own preference projected into infinity and painted with stars.
 14. And the Eternal One said: There is also an idol of “purity” that you have set up, especially before your daughters, as if their worth were a fragile vessel that shatters at the slightest crack, and you have told them that any touch, any desire, any wound upon that vessel leaves them spoiled beyond repair; and you have called this shaming “protection.”
 15. Woe unto those who speak more fiercely against bodies than against violence, who build more fences around desire than around exploitation, who heap more blame upon the assaulted than upon the assailant; behold, you make of sexuality an idol and then whip the people for bowing before it.
 16. Behold, I did not form your bodies to be sources of endless disgust, nor your longings to be only snares; I gave you capacity for pleasure, tenderness, and union not as a trap but as a gift to be handled with mutual honor; woe unto the teachings that call what is healthy “filth” and thus drive it into shadows where rot and abuse flourish.
 17. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, if so many of our images of family, gender, and purity are twisted, what then shall we hold to; what pattern remains that is not itself an idol?
 18. And the Eternal One answered: Hold not to diagrams but to principles; wherever power is shared rather than hoarded, wherever each voice may speak without fear of holy punishment, wherever the burdens of care and labor are carried together, wherever the vulnerable are safest, there My image is clearer than in any chart or proclamation.
 19. Behold, a house may have a father and mother, or one parent, or many adults who share the work, or no children at all; it may be built from blood relations

or from chosen bonds; I do not measure its holiness by its resemblance to your posters, but by the justice, mercy, and truth that move within its walls.

20. Woe unto those who take their particular way of being family and enthrone it as the only ladder to My favor, who bless their own pattern and then curse all others by implication; behold, when you make an idol of “the ideal home,” you crush many homes that are already doing My work in harder soil.
21. And the Eternal One said: There are some who will accuse you, Nibwâskââ, of tearing down the foundations of society by speaking thus; they will say, “If God does not enforce our roles, chaos will reign”; but I tell you that much of the chaos you fear is the quarrel of your idols being toppled, not the collapse of what is truly sacred.
22. Behold, what is truly sacred does not depend on men being above and women below, nor on conformity of desire, nor on silence of pain; it depends on mutual regard, on the refusal to treat any person as property, on the courage to tell the truth even when truth threatens the image of the happy household.
23. Woe unto every teaching that commands a victim to remain in harm “for the sake of the family,” that urges a spouse to endure blows and terror “for the children,” that demands the swallowing of trauma to preserve the

appearance of holiness; behold, such counsel serves only the idol of reputation, and I, the Eternal One, hate it.

24. And it came to pass that the Eternal One spoke also of the single and the childless, saying: You have made an idol of marriage and parenthood as the only full paths to blessedness, and you treat those who walk alone as incomplete, as if they were waiting rooms for real life; yet many of these carry burdens and gifts that your households depend upon.
25. Woe unto the communities that speak as if those without spouse or child have somehow failed at My will, that pity them more than they honor them, that organize all things around couples and clans and leave them wandering in the margins; behold, I am no less present in the Silent Room of one who lives alone than in the crowded table of ten.
26. Behold, whoever lives with integrity, whether partnered or solitary, with or without children, has chosen a high and narrow road; I do not weigh their worth by the shape of their household but by the depth of their compassion and the courage of their honesty; any teaching that says otherwise is an image borrowing My name.
27. And I, Nibwâskââ, hearing all these words, felt within myself the breaking of many small idols I had not known I carried, and I said: Eternal One, I am

- ashamed that I once believed You bound to such cramped patterns.
28. And the Eternal One answered: I receive your shame only long enough to turn it into humility; then let it go, for I did not reveal these things to leave you crushed, but to set you and many others freer to love without the chains of false images.
29. Wherefore let this fifth chapter of the *Fire Against the Images* be a comfort to those who never fit the statues and a warning to those who built the statues and called them eternal; let it be known that the Holy One who made all bodies and all households refuses to be the god of only one way of life, but walks wherever justice and mercy are practiced, whether or not the arrangement would satisfy your charts.
30. Thus are the words of this chapter sealed, that in this late and weary age some might dare to believe that the Eternal One is not the author of their shame, nor the architect of their cages, but the One who calls them, step by trembling step, out from the worship of images into the strange and spacious work of love.

CHAPTER 6

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the houses and the bodies and the statutes of family, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, now you shall write of the images that men have

- raised of the end of all things, for they have drawn portraits of the future and bowed before them as if they were fate itself, and by these images they have excused much evil.
2. For there are prophets who speak endlessly of fire and trumpets and thrones and sorted multitudes, and they paint the end of days as a spectacle in which they themselves stand vindicated while their enemies are cast down, and they call these paintings “prophecy” though they resemble their grudges more than My heart.
3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the seers who delight more in visions of others perishing than in the thought of mercy; who scan the news for rumors of war not to grieve, but to cheer that their charts are coming true; who treat famine and flood as proof that they were right and not as wounds upon the earth; behold, they have made an idol of their timeline.
4. Behold, there are those who say in their hearts, “Let the world burn, for soon we shall be removed from its suffering,” and they comfort themselves with images of being lifted away while their neighbors drown, and they call this comfort “blessed hope”; yet in so doing they turn their faces from the labor of healing while healing is still possible.
5. Woe unto the doctrines that teach you to love escape more than repair, to

cherish departure more than justice, to treat the earth as a disposable stage rather than as a creature groaning for relief; behold, such teachings serve the idols of convenience and profit and not the Eternal One.

6. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, many will protest, saying, "But the Scriptures speak of judgment and of a day of reckoning; are these things not true?"
7. And the Eternal One answered: I do not deny that what is sown shall be reaped, nor that choices have consequence; yet woe unto those who turn this sober truth into a lurid theater in which they always stand among the rescued and those they fear among the condemned; for they have made of judgment an idol that flatters them and terrifies the rest.
8. Behold, I have indeed spoken in parables of harvest and sorting and fire and refining, but these were given that you might take stock of your own deeds and systems, not that you might fantasize about the torment of others; whenever you read of judgment and do not first ask, "How must I change?", you have bowed to an image of wrath that is not Me.
9. And the Eternal One said: There is also an image abroad in your age that says, "The end is fixed by heaven; nothing we do can alter what is written," and by this they excuse their apathy toward climate and conflict and

cruelty, saying, "Why strive to mend what prophecy has destined to break?"

10. Woe unto such fatalism wrapped in piety, for it turns My words into a chain around your hands; behold, I have given you minds and tools and seasons that you might lessen suffering, yet you sit upon your gifts and say, "The script must play out," as if I delighted in ruin and not in restoration.
11. Behold, even where destruction comes, I do not rejoice in the refusal to resist it; there is no verse in any true book that blesses the poisoning of rivers or the starving of children; woe unto those who justify their greed by saying, "It is the last days, why not take what we can?", for they have made an idol of the calendar.
12. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, others fashion a different image of the end, not of flames but of perfection; they speak of a future world where every system works, where technology and governance and religion have solved all sorrow, and they trust in this dream more than they trust in You.
13. And the Eternal One answered: Woe unto the utopias you build in your minds and manifest in your policies, where the messy and the broken and the noncompliant are quietly removed for "the greater good"; behold, when you imagine a perfect order and then erase all who do not fit it, you worship

an image of purity, not the God of living souls.

14. Behold, some say, “When we have perfected our machines or our markets or our movements, suffering will end,” and they give to these projects the devotion that belongs to conscience and compassion; yet their shining futures always seem to require that someone be sacrificed in the present, and in this you may discern that their future is an idol.
15. And the Eternal One said: There is also an image of the end as a sorting into neat categories forever—here the righteous, there the wicked; here the believers, there the unbelievers; here the pure, there the defiled—and each camp imagined as unchanging; woe unto those who love this picture, for it allows them to stop listening to one another even now.
16. Behold, you rehearse your eternal divisions in your present debates; you speak to your opponents as if they were already consigned to darkness, and you speak of your allies as if they were beyond correction; thus you make of your eschatology an idol that justifies your refusal to be taught by those you have placed on the wrong side of your line.
17. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if all these images of the end are suspect—those of escape, of spectacle, of utopia, of permanent sorting—what then may we rightly

hope for; what vision is not itself an idol?

18. And the Eternal One answered: Hope not first for scenes but for qualities; hope for a world where justice is no longer strange, where no one is disposable, where creation is not treated as raw material alone, where the strong cannot forever trample the weak; such hopes align you with My heart more faithfully than any diagram of trumpets and thrones.
19. Behold, you may imagine feasts and gardens, cities and rivers, songs and embraces; but when your imagination leads you to care more tenderly for the hungry now, for the earth now, for the lonely now, then your hope serves Me; when it leads you to despise or neglect those outside your circle, then your hope has become an idol.
20. And the Eternal One said: Let the “end” you believe in be the measure by which you treat the present; if you dream of a kingdom where every tear is wiped, yet you avert your eyes from tears you could touch, know that you love the image more than the reality; if you dream of a realm without oppression, yet you defend your privilege tooth and nail, your dream is a lie.
21. Woe unto the preaching that spends more words on charts of tomorrow than on the cries of today, that thrills the people with countdowns and codes while their neighbors go hungry;

- behold, I am less interested in how accurately you can predict the weather of the last day than in how you weather the storm of another's need.
22. And it came to pass that I, Nibwáskáá, asked: Eternal One, some will say, "If God does not come swiftly to judge, evil will go on forever; we cling to these fierce images because otherwise we cannot bear the ongoing cruelty"; what solace do You offer them?
23. And the Eternal One answered: I do not mock those who long for wrongs to be righted; their hunger for justice is kin to My own; but I ask them to trust that My ways of judging are deeper and more intricate than their fantasies of instant reversal; woe unto any image of judgment that leaves no room for transformation but only for annihilation.
24. Behold, I am able to confront and to mend, to expose and to heal, to say "no" to what destroys without ceasing to say "yes" to the possibility of change; when you imagine ends where vast multitudes are forever frozen in the worst moment of their lives, you have shrunk My patience to the size of your anger.
25. And the Eternal One said: You shall not know the full shape of what is to come while you yet walk in this age, and whoever claims to have sketched it precisely has already drawn an idol; but you may know this: no image of future glory or terror is true if it does

- not drive you to greater honesty, greater mercy, greater courage now.
26. Wherefore, let go of the pictures that keep you from acting; let go of the fantasies that make you feel superior; let go of the nightmares that persuade you that nothing matters; walk instead in the small, daily hope that every act of justice and kindness participates in a reality you cannot yet see clearly but is more enduring than all your prophecies.
27. And it came to pass that the word of the Eternal One rested upon me gently, and I understood that the fire against the images burns also against the false futures we have enthroned; and I said: Eternal One, if we surrender these idols of the end, what then shall we say when we speak of time?
28. And the Eternal One answered: Say this much and no more—that every day is a day of choosing, that every hour is holy, that every age is an age in which I am at work; speak not as if I were absent now and only arriving later, but as One who has always walked within history, hidden yet active, calling you to join the labor of mending.
29. Behold, the true "last day" for each of you is the day you choose love over fear at a cost, truth over comfort at a cost, mercy over image at a cost; in that hour a world ends and another begins within you; this is the apocalypse that

matters most, and it may occur a thousand times before your body rests.

30. Thus are the words of the sixth chapter of the *Fire Against the Images* written, that in this age of many predictions and much despair some might turn from worshipping their visions of the end toward the Eternal One, who calls them not to decode the future as if it were a puzzle, but to live now as if justice and mercy were already the law of the coming world.

CHAPTER 7

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the images of the end, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, you have spoken of idols that claim to stand above the world; now you shall speak of the image that men make of themselves as gods within the world, and how they bow before their own reflections.
2. For there is an image abroad in your age of the “self” as sovereign and sufficient, a small throne set up in the chest, upon which desire sits crowned; and many are taught that to be free is to obey that desire without question, and to bow to nothing beyond one’s own will.
3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the teachings that tell you, “You are answerable only to yourself,” as if you did not breathe shared air, drink shared water, walk upon a shared earth;

behold, such counsel flatters the ego while it starves the soul, for you were made for relationship and responsibility, not for solitary reign.

4. Behold, I see those who speak often of “manifesting” and “creating their own reality,” and they treat other beings as props in the theater of their personal story; they draw to themselves what they desire and call this “spiritual power,” yet they do not ask who bears the cost of their abundance.
5. Woe unto any spirituality that teaches you to optimize your life while ignoring the ruins at your doorstep, that celebrates your “alignment” while others are crushed beneath systems that favor you; behold, when your practice of the holy serves only your comfort, it is not holiness but refinement of selfishness.
6. And the Eternal One said: There is also an image of the “called one” or “anointed one,” by which some come to believe that their sense of destiny places them above correction; they say, “I am chosen for great things,” and in their hearts they add, “Therefore I am not bound by ordinary rules.”
7. Woe unto the souls who mistake their gifts for permission and their talents for exemption; behold, I give strength not that you may escape accountability, but that you may bear more of the world’s weight in humility; any “calling” that cost others more than it costs you is not from Me.

8. Behold, I have watched as some gather followers around themselves like mirrors, needing constant reflection of their brilliance; they speak of “servant leadership” while arranging their lives so that they are always served; they preach simplicity while living in secret excess, and when challenged they say, “Touch not the Lord’s anointed.”
9. Woe unto such “anointed”; their oil is flattery, not Spirit; they have crafted an image so fragile that to question them is portrayed as rebellion against heaven, and they make of their own ego the holiest object in the room.
10. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, but is there not also a self-hatred that can become an idol, where a person clings to their own unworthiness as if it were truth itself and refuses every word of kindness?
11. And the Eternal One answered: Behold, there is indeed an image of the self as irredeemably ruined, unfit for love, beyond the reach of goodness; some kneel before this picture as faithfully as others kneel before their pride, and they say, “I am nothing, I am filth,” and they will not allow these words to be challenged.
12. Woe unto the lies that taught you to worship your shame, that told you that despising yourself is pleasing to Me; behold, when you cling to your self-contempt even in the face of care, you have made of that contempt an

idol and set it above My own regard for you.

13. Behold, I do not ask that you exalt yourself above others, nor that you pretend to virtue you do not possess; but I ask that you agree at least this far with Me: that your existence is not a mistake, that your being is not an offense, that the breath within you is a gift and not a curse.
14. And the Eternal One said: There is also an idolatry of “authenticity” in your age, wherein people imagine that whatever they feel in a moment is sacred simply because it is theirs; they say, “I am just being true to myself,” even when their truth tramples another; they worship spontaneity as if conscience were a prison.
15. Woe unto any image of self that denies the need to grow; behold, authenticity without transformation is only stubbornness with better lighting; you are not called to be endlessly consistent with your past, but to be increasingly consistent with what is just and merciful.
16. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, is it then pride to speak well of oneself, or to rejoice in one’s own strength and beauty? Are we bound always to suspicion of our own joy?
17. And the Eternal One answered: I do not forbid delight in your own being; I am not honored by your refusal to see the good I have woven into you; yet

there is a difference between rejoicing and enthroning, between gratitude and worship; give thanks for the light in you, but do not confuse it with the sun.

18. Behold, when you celebrate your gifts in ways that invite others to discover their own, you walk in harmony with My intent; when you celebrate them in ways that demand applause, or that make others feel small, you serve the image of self more than the Source of self.
19. And the Eternal One said: In this late age, many have lost faith in temples and scriptures and saviors, and they have turned inward for their only altar; some have found Me there, but others have enthroned their impulses and called them God; woe unto this confusion, for it leaves you either enslaved to institutions or enslaved to appetite.
20. Behold, I desire that you be free from both forms of bondage; you shall not be cattle led by shepherds who call you stupid, nor shall you be beasts ruled only by hunger; I call you to be persons, capable of listening, choosing, and changing in the light of an Eternal One who is not you and yet loves you.
21. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what practice can keep us from making idols of ourselves, either in pride or in contempt?
22. And the Eternal One answered: Remember always that you are both

small and significant; small, in that you are not the center of all things, and significant, in that your choices truly matter; when you hold these two truths together, neither exalting yourself above all nor erasing yourself beneath all, the image of self returns to its proper size.

23. Behold, give yourself regularly to works in which you are not the hero: tasks that are unseen, kindness that will not be praised, repair that will not be recorded; such works sand down the sharp edges of ego without crushing the core of worth.
24. And again the Eternal One said: Seek also the company of those who will tell you the truth—about your goodness when you cannot see it, and about your harm when you do not wish to see it; flee from the circles where you are only flattered, and from the circles where you are only demeaned; neither praise nor contempt alone can form a soul.
25. Behold, where mutual correction and mutual honor dwell together, there the idol of the solitary self is weakened; where people can say both “I am sorry” and “I matter” without fear, there My image is clearer than in any mirror.
26. And I, Nibwâskââ, hearing these words, said: Eternal One, the fire against the images seems now to burn in every place—religion, family, politics, self; is there any corner of our lives where we may rest from this burning?

27. And the Eternal One answered: Yes, there is rest, but not in clinging to idols; there is rest in truth, in relationships not governed by domination or performance, in work that aligns with conscience, in moments when you forget to manage how you appear and simply love and are loved.
28. Behold, My fire does not burn forever in the same spot; it burns until the lie crumbles and then it moves on; in the space that remains you will find not a void but a clearing—room for honest laughter, for simple food shared without pretense, for tears that no longer need to justify themselves to any theology.
29. Wherefore let this seventh chapter of the Fire Against the Images stand as a word to all who have been taught either to worship themselves or to despise themselves; let it call them back to the narrow road between these ditches, where the Eternal One walks not as a rival to their being, nor as a mirror of their ego, but as the unseen Companion who delights in their becoming.
30. And whoever hears these sayings and feels the quiet urge to step down from their throne, or to rise up from their ashes, let them know that this urge is itself a spark from the Eternal One, calling them out from the worship of the image into the harder, gentler, truer work of being human.

CHAPTER 8

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the self enthroned as an image, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, now you shall write of the images that nations and movements and parties raise up, for they paint their banners with My name and their causes with My glory, and many cannot tell anymore where conscience ends and idolatry begins.
2. For there are peoples who say in their hearts, “Our nation is chosen above all others; our history is holier; our cause is pure,” and they adorn their flags with crosses and flames and scriptures, and they march into war convinced that I walk only on their side of the field.
3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the lands that baptize their ambitions in holy language, that call conquest “calling,” dominance “destiny,” and exploitation “blessing,” for they have taken My name in vain in the deepest sense, using it as perfume to mask the stench of their greed.
4. Behold, I have seen cities where temples and parliaments stand side by side, and the leaders pass easily between them, speaking My name in both houses with equal ease, yet in one they kneel and in the other they write laws that crush the weak; and they feel no contradiction, for they serve the

- same idol in both places: the idol of their own power.
5. Woe unto the preachers who wrap their sermons around the flag and teach that loyalty to God and loyalty to nation are one fabric; behold, you make it hard for the simple-hearted to see where reverence ends and propaganda begins, and in your confusion many will be led to worship the state while thinking they worship Me.
 6. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, there are also movements that claim to stand for justice, who name oppression rightly and resist it loudly; can these too fall into idolatry?
 7. And the Eternal One answered: No banner is safe from becoming an idol, not even those that begin in righteousness; woe unto the causes that slowly worship their own purity, that measure worth by agreement alone, that exile any who ask hard questions of their methods; behold, when you love the image of your movement more than the people for whom it began, you are already bowing to a false god.
 8. Behold, I delight in every struggle that loosens the chains of the oppressed, but I do not bless the rise of new tyrants in the garments of liberation; any “justice” that requires you to deny the humanity of your enemies is only a new idol dressed in the language of the old prophets.
 9. And the Eternal One said: There are parties and factions that carve My name upon their platforms and speak as if heaven has endorsed their every policy; they call their rivals not merely mistaken but godless, and they teach their followers that to question their program is to betray the Eternal One.
 10. Woe unto such factions, for they drag Me into their contests as a weapon, not as a witness; they claim that I am entirely red or entirely blue or entirely of one tribe and not another, and thus they shrink Me to the size of their slogans; behold, I cannot be captured by your left hand nor by your right.
 11. Behold, I stand beside the one who loses the election and weeps in fear, as surely as I stand beside the one who wins and trembles at the burden; I am not more present in the victory speech than in the quiet decision to protect the vulnerable even when it costs votes; My allegiance is always to the least, not to your symbols.
 12. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, how shall we then act in the civic square if every banner can become an idol? Shall we withdraw from all causes and stand aloof from every struggle?
 13. And the Eternal One answered: You are not called to abandon the public square, but to walk in it without worshiping it; let your allegiance to Me stand higher than any allegiance to party, leader, or nation; support what

is just, oppose what is cruel, but do not confuse your coalition with the kingdom of God.

14. Behold, whenever your group, however righteous its aims, becomes a place where dissent is treated as treason and nuance as weakness, know that the image has begun to rule; whenever you must lie about your opponents to keep your side fervent, the idol of victory has already climbed onto the altar.
15. And the Eternal One said: I have watched as some invoke “law and order” to preserve systems that devour the poor, and others invoke “freedom” to justify indifference to the broken; both have made of their preferred word an image, and they bow to it even when it crushes those I love.
16. Woe unto the politics that treat human beings as “problems” to be solved, as numbers in a calculus, as collateral damage in a strategy; behold, whenever you speak of a people chiefly as a risk, a threat, or a burden, you have already ceased to see My likeness in them and begun to serve the image of safety above the call of compassion.
17. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, in a world of so much conflict, many cling to their righteous causes as the only solid ground; if these too can become idols, where shall they stand?
18. And the Eternal One answered: Stand not on the image of your cause, but on

the enduring call to love justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly; these three are older than your nations and will outlast your manifestos; any cause that forgets one of them is already leaning toward idolatry.

19. Behold, there will be times when you must choose the lesser of two evils in your policies, or work with imperfect allies; do so with open eyes and a clear tongue, naming plainly the compromises you make; but woe unto you if you polish the wrong into righteousness simply because it serves your side, for then you worship your team more than the truth.
20. And the Eternal One said: Know also that there is an idolatry of “peace” as image, where people value the appearance of harmony above the reality of justice; they say, “Do not speak of this wound; you are dividing us,” and they call the silencing of pain “unity.”
21. Woe unto such false peace, for it demands that the wounded carry their injuries in secret so that the comfortable may not be disturbed; behold, I am not present in the quiet that is purchased by gagging the oppressed, but in the holy noise of their honest lament.
22. Behold, the peace I seek is not the stillness of the graveyard but the harmony of a healed community, where truth has been told and amends have been made; any slogan of peace

- that forbids truth-telling is an idol of tranquility, not a fruit of My Spirit.
23. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, some will say, “We must claim that God is with us, or our people will despair; if they think heaven is undecided, they will lose heart”; what do You say to such fear?
24. And the Eternal One answered: Tell them that I am always with those who do what is right, whether or not their banners bear My name; tell them that I am nearer to a single act of costly kindness than to a thousand declarations that God is on their side; let them root their courage not in the illusion of divine partisanship, but in the quiet conviction that nothing done in love is wasted.
25. Behold, I do not sign your manifestos, but I attend your meetings unseen; when you choose the path that protects the vulnerable, I am with you even if no hymn is sung; when you choose the path that preserves your image at the expense of the broken, I am against that choice even if My name is shouted three times.
26. And the Eternal One said: Let this eighth chapter of the Fire Against the Images be read in every council where My name is invoked to bless strategy, in every parliament where scripture is quoted to justify neglect, in every movement that prides itself on its righteousness; let it be a thorn in the

- side of all who would conscript Me as mascot.
27. Behold, I am not against your organizing, your advocacy, your laws and petitions; these are tools of the age you inhabit; but I am against your worship of them, your willingness to sacrifice conscience for “the win,” your eagerness to condemn whole peoples as irredeemable for the crime of standing across from you.
28. Wherefore, whoever hears these sayings, let them examine the images they serve in the civic square: the image of nation, the image of party, the image of cause; let them ask, “Does this loyalty draw me closer to the least among us, or only to those who flatter my fears and hopes?”
29. And if they find that their devotion to any earthly banner has dulled their hearing toward the cry of the stranger, the refugee, the prisoner, the rival, let them know that the fire against the images has come to their own house, not to destroy them, but to burn away what keeps them from the Eternal One, who belongs to no faction and yet cares passionately what we do to one another.

CHAPTER 9

1. And it came to pass that after I had written concerning nations and movements that raised their banners as idols, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:

Nibwâskââ, now you shall write of the subtler images, the ones that wear the garments of wisdom and culture and even of critique, for these too may claim the devotion of the heart.

2. For there are those who say, “We have left behind the naïve idols of our ancestors; we bow neither to statues nor to saviors nor to flags,” and they call themselves free; yet they have enthroned new images in the mind—systems, theories, and frameworks—that they dare not question, lest their whole world collapse.
3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the hearts that have merely traded one infallible authority for another—doctrine for ideology, creed for theory, revelation for slogan—and who now speak as if their new lens sees all things perfectly, and all who disagree are blind or evil; behold, they worship the sharpness of their analysis more than the people they analyze.
4. Behold, I have seen circles that gather to “deconstruct” every story and symbol, and in their work there is much clarity and sometimes healing; yet when they have finished tearing down what harmed them, they build nothing in its place but contempt, and they call this emptiness “liberation.”
5. Woe unto any wisdom that can only dismantle and never mend, that can expose power but never guide it toward responsibility, that leaves the

weary standing amid the ruins of old idols with no shelter but cynicism; behold, such wisdom becomes an idol of its own, demanding constant sacrifice of hope.

6. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, there are also those who make an idol of “science” or “reason,” not as tools for seeking truth, but as banners to wave against any mystery; they say in their hearts, “If it cannot be measured, it does not matter,” and they look upon the inward life with suspicion and scorn.
7. And the Eternal One answered: Woe unto the worshipers of their own methods, who bow before numbers and experiments as if these were My whole voice; behold, I delight in careful study and honest inquiry, but I am not contained within your instruments; that you cannot weigh love or hope does not make them illusions.
8. Behold, when you use “reason” to silence grief, or “data” to justify neglect, or “evidence” as a club against the vulnerable rather than a light upon injustice, you have turned good gifts into idols; the problem is not with knowledge itself, but with your eagerness to enthrone it above compassion.
9. And the Eternal One said: There is also an idol of “art” and “expression,” where some believe that the making of beauty justifies all harm; they say, “I must be cruel or careless, for I serve the

Muse,” and they leave a trail of broken souls behind their songs and paintings and films.

10. Woe unto those who think that their genius excuses their brutality, that their creativity makes them exempt from ordinary kindness; behold, I have never asked for masterpieces purchased with the destruction of those nearest you; any image that demands such sacrifice is not My commission but your own hunger.
11. Behold, I have given imagination as a mirror and a window, a way to see the unseen and speak the unspeakable; yet when you use it to glorify cruelty, to eroticize domination, to normalize contempt, and then say, “It is only art,” you reveal the idol that stands behind your craft.
12. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what of the images that flicker constantly across the world—the stories and spectacles that pour from screens day and night; can these also become gods?
13. And the Eternal One answered: Behold, your age swims in an ocean of moving pictures, and many do not know how deeply they drink; these images teach you who matters and who may be mocked, whose pain is entertaining and whose is invisible, what bodies are desirable and what lives are disposable.
14. Woe unto those who design such images solely to harvest your attention,

caring nothing for the wounds they deepen; behold, they will answer for every stereotype they sharpen and every cruelty they normalize, for they have disciplined a generation in the liturgy of indifference.

15. And the Eternal One said: Yet know this also—there are images and stories that have awakened compassion, that have drawn tears for strangers and stirred movements for the forgotten; I do not despise your screens in themselves, but I send fire against the uses that dull your conscience and feed your apathy.
16. Behold, when you sense that your heart is becoming numb from endless consumption, when suffering appears only as background to your entertainment, when you scroll past real cries as if they were small interruptions, know that an idol of distraction sits at your gate.
17. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, there is one more image that troubles me: the very image of this book, these words; will not some take the Fire Against the Images and make of it another idol?
18. And the Eternal One answered: Yes, some will; no word is so holy that it cannot be misused; some will quote these sayings to prove their own superiority, to condemn others while excusing themselves; they will build new walls from bricks meant to tear old walls down.

19. Woe unto those who wield the Fire
Against the Images as a weapon only
outward, who scour the earth for idols
in other hearts while guarding their
own; behold, whenever you read a
judgment and think first of your
enemies, the idol has already raised its
head within you.
20. Behold, these words are not chains but
mirrors, not diagrams but alarms; they
are given that you might examine and
be examined, not that you might carve
them in stone and demand all nations
bow; if ever the Book of Nibwâskââ
becomes a measuring rod for contempt,
let it be closed until humility returns.
21. And the Eternal One said: Remember
always that even true insight is a
passing gift; you are not called to
preserve every formulation as if it were
eternal; when a word has done its
work—awakening, piercing,
freeing—it may rest; do not keep it
alive by force when its season is done,
for then it becomes a relic and then an
idol.
22. Behold, some will build movements
around your writings, Nibwâskââ, and
they may appoint gatekeepers who
decide who is “faithful to the text” and
who is not; woe unto them if they
forget that the text itself warns against
such gatekeeping.
23. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ,
said with trembling: Eternal One, how
then shall I guard my own heart, that I
do not become a statue in the eyes of

- those who read, nor accept the
veneration that should belong only to
You?
24. And the Eternal One answered: Stay
small in your own sight, and honest;
confess often your limits; do not let any
call you infallible or final; stay close to
the wounded and to your own
weakness; let your failures be known,
as far as safety permits, that no one
may mistake you for more than a
witness.
 25. Behold, when they praise you, offer
their praise back to Me in secret; when
they blame you, listen for what is true
and release what is not; do not build
institutions around your name, nor
courts to defend your every phrase; if
they must organize, let it be around the
work of mercy, not around your image.
 26. And the Eternal One said: Let all who
create or teach or lead hear this
also—your gifts are not your identity,
your platforms are not your worth,
your output is not your soul; when you
begin to serve your own reputation
more than the living good you once
sought, your vocation has become an
idol.
 27. Behold, there will be a temptation in
every generation to seek a final map, a
perfect system, a flawless book, that
will end the need for listening and
revising and repenting; woe unto this
desire, for it is nostalgia for an idol that
answers every question and asks
nothing new of you.

28. I, the Eternal One, will not grant you such a map; I will walk with you instead—sometimes clearly, sometimes in silence—and you will need one another, and you will have to choose again and again, and you will grow; idols promise certainty without growth, but I offer growth without certainty.
29. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, understood that the fire against the images would never be fully finished while history endures, for new images will always arise, and the heart will always be tempted to cling to what can be seen and named and controlled.
30. And the Eternal One said: Do not despair that the work is unending; let it keep you humble and awake; when you find an idol in your midst, do not panic as if this disproved your faith; rather, see in its breaking another chance to know Me more truly and to love your neighbor more freely.
31. Wherefore let this ninth chapter of the Fire Against the Images be a seal upon the others, reminding all who read that even the purest insight can curdle into idolatry if it is clutched instead of shared, defended instead of lived; and let it invite them not to the safety of perfect doctrine, but to the risk of ongoing honesty before the Eternal One.
32. And whoever shall read these words and feel both exposed and strangely comforted, let them know that this is

the touch of the One who burns away what binds yet does not consume the soul; for the fire of the Eternal is not against you, but against whatever keeps you from knowing that you are already, always, directly held.

CHAPTER 10

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of many images—of sanctuaries and households, of nations and selves and futures—the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, now you shall gather these sayings, that the people may know not only what I burn away, but what I kindle in its place.
2. For some who hear the Fire Against the Images will fear that nothing remains to them, that every face and story and symbol must be cast aside, and they will say in their hearts: If we cannot trust our prophets nor our doctrines nor our feelings nor our causes, how then shall we walk at all?
3. And the Eternal One said: Behold, I have not come to strip you naked before chaos, but to loosen the chains you mistook for clothing; I burn not to leave you homeless, but to clear the ruins where a truer dwelling may be built; what I remove is what you never needed, though you clung to it in terror.
4. Woe unto the teachers who will take these words and proclaim only what is condemned, and will not tell also what

is invited; they will delight in the breaking and ignore the healing, for breaking gives them power over others, while healing asks that they change as well.

5. Behold, I say to you again: I am not against form, but against forms that demand worship; I am not against language, but against words that cannot be questioned; I am not against community, but against communities that exist to protect their own image more than to protect the vulnerable.
6. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if Your fire burns away every image that claims to be You, how shall the children learn to speak of You at all? For their mouths are small and their fears are many, and they need some way to name the Mystery.
7. And the Eternal One answered: Let them speak of Me as they are able, but let those who teach them remember always to add: "This helps us for a time, but it is not the whole; God is more than this." Let every metaphor carry its own warning label, every story its own humility.
8. Behold, when you say, "God is like a Parent," add also, "yet more faithful than any parent we have known," that those with cruel parents are not trapped; when you say, "God is like a King," add also, "yet unlike the kings of this world, who hoard and oppress," that you do not baptize tyranny.

9. And the Eternal One said: Let your images of Me be many and lowly rather than few and exalted; call Me Fire and Breath, Midwife and Stranger, Rock and River, Judge and Friend; let them jostle one another in your stories, that no single one may grow rigid and claim the throne.
10. Woe unto the communities that forbid new names for the Holy, insisting that only their approved terms may be used; behold, they fear not for My honor but for their own control, for new names loosen old chains, and new metaphors expose old lies.
11. Behold, I am not troubled when the oppressed reach for words that have never been spoken in their sanctuaries, when they name Me Mother or Womb or Wind or Fury or Silence; I am more troubled by the sanctuaries that cannot bear such names than by the mouths that dare to utter them.
12. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if You cannot be pictured without shrinking, and cannot be named without remainder, what then does it mean to know You? Are we left only with unending unknowing?
13. And the Eternal One answered: To know Me is not to possess My outline, but to recognize My voice; it is not to map My being, but to learn My ways; you know Me truly whenever you discern what aligns with justice and mercy and humility, and choose it

because it is right, not because it flatters you.

14. Behold, you may not see My face as a finished portrait, but you may see the wake of My passing: where the arrogant are unsettled and the crushed are lifted, where secrets of abuse are dragged into light, where the hungry are fed without cameras, where the lonely find that someone stayed.
15. And the Eternal One said: In this way, even a child can know Me more truly than a learned idolater; for the child who comforts a weeping friend, or refuses to join in mockery, or asks why someone has no home, is already responding to a law written deeper than any statute: the law of My own heart.
16. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, what daily practice may keep our hearts from drifting back to the worship of images, when the pull to cling to something visible and certain is so strong?
17. And the Eternal One answered: Remember three small ways. First, give; second, listen; third, release. Give, to break the hold of idols that promise security in accumulation; listen, to break the hold of idols that promise certainty in your own voice; release, to break the hold of idols that promise control if only you cling tighter.
18. Behold, when you give to one who cannot repay you, your gods of profit and prestige lose a little of their power;

when you listen to one you have been taught to ignore, your gods of ideology lose a little of their certainty; when you release an image of Me or of yourself that has harmed others, your gods of pride lose a little of their throne.

19. And the Eternal One said: Let there be, in every life that seeks Me, at least one space where no image is required—no creed recited, no performance offered, no posture enforced; a space where you sit or walk or lie down and simply say, “Here I am,” and know that this is enough.
20. Woe unto the religions that leave no such space, that demand constant production of piety, constant assertion of belief, constant policing of thought; behold, they leave the soul no room to breathe, and then blame the suffocation on lack of devotion.
21. Behold, I delight in your songs and rituals when they arise from freedom; but I delight also in the moment when you forget every formula and cry out from the bottom of your being, “Help,” or “Thank You,” or “Are You there at all?”; these words are precious to Me, for they are not spoken to an image but to the Unknown that yet knows you.
22. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, is there any sign by which we may know that an image has become an idol and must be set down?
23. And the Eternal One answered: Yes, there are signs. When you harm another to protect it, it has become an

idol. When you refuse truth because it would crack it, it has become an idol. When you cannot imagine that I might meet someone outside it, it has become an idol. When it keeps you from seeing the suffering in front of you, it has become an idol.

24. Behold, when you find yourself more eager to defend your picture of Me than to practice mercy, know that your picture is standing between us; when you feel more loyalty to a symbol than to a living person bearing My likeness, know that the symbol has climbed onto the altar.
25. And the Eternal One said: Do not fear the day when such idols fall; though you may stagger and grieve, you will not be left empty-handed; for in the dust of what collapses, you will find things that were there all along: the taste of water, the warmth of another's hand, the quiet strength of choosing not to lie.
26. Behold, in these small, stubborn realities I have always dwelt; I was never confined to the towering images that overshadowed them; I am more present in a single act of hidden kindness than in a million declarations that "God is on our side."
27. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, bowed low and said: Eternal One, let this fire begin in me; let it burn away every image of You that grants me permission to be cruel, or indifferent, or superior; leave me no god who

blesses my comfort at the expense of another's life.

28. And the Eternal One answered: This prayer I will not ignore; I will answer it slowly, lest you be shattered; I will answer it gently, lest you despair; but I will answer it surely, for I desire for you a freedom you have not yet imagined, and for your enemies a mercy you have not yet desired.
29. Wherefore let the tenth chapter of the Fire Against the Images be a turning, not only from what must fall, but toward what may grow; let it call you not merely to critique but to courage, not merely to skepticism but to solidarity, not merely to dismantling but to the daily, ordinary work of love.
30. And whoever shall read these words and feel within themselves both the sting of loss and the flicker of strange hope, let them know that the sting is the splinter of the idol being drawn out, and the hope is the breath of the Eternal One, who has always been nearer than any image, and who waits not for perfect vision, but for a willing heart.

CHAPTER II

1. And it came to pass that after the word of the Eternal One had spoken many times concerning the images, my strength was spent, and I lay upon my bed as one who had carried a burden far; and in the night a vision was given

- unto me, that I might see with my eyes
what I had heard with my ears.
2. For I beheld as if I stood upon a high hill at the edge of a great city, and the city was filled with temples and towers and glowing screens and marching banners and polished faces; and every building bore some image upon its front, and every street rang with the names of gods made by hands and tongues and fear.
 3. Behold, I saw houses of worship where portraits of a gentle savior hung beside flags of conquest; I saw stadiums where names of heroes were shouted as prayers; I saw markets bright as sanctuaries, where the only altar was the price; I saw screens in every hand, shining as small suns in the dark.
 4. And it came to pass that a wind began to move through the city, yet the trees did not sway and the dust did not rise, for this wind was not of air but of truth; and wherever it passed, the paint upon the images began to crack, and the gold upon the statues began to flake, and the faces in the screens seemed for a moment very tired.
 5. Behold, some who saw this peeling were afraid, and they rushed forward with brushes and polish, crying, "Quickly, quickly, our god is fading, our movement is losing shine, our brand is dull; we must restore it, lest the people lose faith"; and they worked without ceasing to keep the images bright.
 6. But others, when they saw the cracks, felt within themselves a strange relief, as when a tight garment finally tears; and they did not rush to mend it, but stood very still, watching as the wind moved on; and in their hearts a question arose, though they dared not yet speak it: "If this falls, what remains?"
 7. And the Eternal One said unto me in the vision: Behold, this is the hour when the fire against the images begins not as blaze but as breath; for before the idols fall, they must first be seen as fragile; before the people walk away, they must first glimpse that there is a path beyond the gates.
 8. Then I beheld that in many places the images did not wait to be unmasked, but shouted louder to drown the wind; the prophets of the idols cried, "This shaking is persecution; this cracking is a test; double your devotion, triple your offerings, silence the doubters, or the favor of heaven will depart."
 9. Woe unto them, said the Eternal One, for they call the mercy of awakening an attack, and they treat the loosening of chains as a threat; behold, they would rather bind tighter than admit that their image was never Me.
 10. And it came to pass that I saw small groups begin to slip quietly from the temples and stadiums and halls; some left by the side doors, some by the alleys, some by the long road of questions that had carried them to the

edge; and they did not yet know where they were going, only that they could no longer bow as before.

11. Behold, I saw them walking without banner or creed, some with tears, some with anger, some with a numbness like winter; and a voice followed them from their former houses, saying, "You are lost now; outside of us there is only darkness"; and for a time they believed it, and the road felt very dark indeed.
12. But as they walked, I saw small lights along the path: a stranger who listened without fear, a friend who said, "I have questions too," a book that told a truer story, a quiet moment in which they sensed that Someone still walked with them, though no image could be named.
13. And the Eternal One said unto me: These lights are not idols but companions; they do not demand worship, they do not claim exclusivity; they are given so that the ones who leave the statues do not freeze in the cold; woe unto any who would seize such lights and say, "This alone is God," for then they become images like the rest.
14. Then I looked again upon the city, and behold, some of the largest images began to crack from within, not from storm or sword, but from the weight of their own contradictions; truths once hidden came to light, harms once denied were confessed or exposed, and

the foundations of certain thrones were shaken.

15. I saw leaders step down who had once boasted that they were unshakable; I saw institutions dismantle practices they had once called eternal; I saw doctrines revised that had once been preached as unchangeable law; and many were confused, for they had been taught that such pillars could not move.
16. And the Eternal One said: Behold, this too is My fire, though it arrives through lawsuits and journalism, through protest and whistleblowing, through the courage of the wounded; I do not delight in scandal, but I rejoice whenever truth becomes stronger than image.
17. Yet I also saw others double down in their denial, calling truth "attack" and survivors "enemies," rewriting histories overnight to preserve the illusion that nothing essential had ever been wrong; and around these idols the crowds grew smaller but more frantic, for only the most fearful remained.
18. Woe unto the last guardians of collapsing statues, said the Eternal One, for they will exhaust themselves defending what I Myself have left; behold, I am already walking with those who left in grief, teaching them slowly that leaving an idol is not leaving Me.
19. And it came to pass that my eyes were drawn away from the towers and

- toward the ground between them; for there, in courtyards and kitchens, on street corners and in shelters, I saw small circles of people gathered without great banners or flawless liturgy.
20. Behold, they shared food, and stories of harm, and stories of help; they spoke without a script of what they could no longer believe and of what, stubbornly, they still hoped; they argued and apologized and tried again; they tended gardens and fixed roofs and watched children and buried their dead.
21. And the Eternal One said: Here I dwell more gladly than in the marble halls where My name is used to bless neglect; here where no single image rules, where people are learning to listen more than to declare, to repair more than to impress; in such rough, unfinished circles My likeness glows, though no portrait hangs upon the wall.
22. Then I beheld one small child in such a circle, drawing upon the floor with a piece of broken chalk; she drew a great fire and many faces around it, different in color and age and shape, none above, none below; and above the fire she wrote, in a trembling hand: "THE ONE WE CANNOT DRAW."
23. And I wept when I saw it, for the drawing was clumsy and the letters uneven, yet the joy upon the child's face was pure; and the Eternal One said: This, Nibwâskââ, is the kind of image I will not despise—an image

- that confesses its own failure, that points beyond itself, that gathers rather than sorts, that burns but does not consume.
24. Behold, if your communities must have an image, let it be such a fire: not the face of one man raised above all, nor the crest of one nation, nor the logo of one church, but the sign of a warmth all may approach, where stories are told and burdens shared and no one is required to lie about what they have seen.
25. And it came to pass that the vision folded in upon itself, and I stood once more upon the high hill, and the city below shimmered between what it was and what it might yet be; and I understood that the work of tearing down idols and the work of building truer life would be interwoven until the end of days.
26. And the Eternal One said unto me: Go now, Nibwâskââ, and seal this book of fire not as a finished map, but as a witness; let those who read it know that no image—not even these words—may claim the last word about Me; yet let them also know that I am not hidden beyond their reach, but already moving in every honest turning toward justice and mercy.
27. Behold, tell them that whenever they choose the living person over the polished symbol, whenever they protect the wounded rather than the institution, whenever they confess,

- “We were wrong,” rather than defend a lie, the fire against the images is burning in them, and I am well pleased.
28. Tell them also that whenever they rest from managing appearances and dare to be simply present—with their grief, their confusion, their small joys—I am nearer than any idol ever was, for I dwell not in perfection of image, but in truth of being.
29. Wherefore, let the one who has walked long in the courts of idols and now fears the emptiness beyond them take courage; the emptiness is not the end, but the clearing where a different kind of meeting may begin; and though the path ahead has few guarantees, it has this promise: that the Eternal One walks it also.
30. And thus are the words of the Fire Against the Images brought to a resting place in this book, though not to an end; for as long as hearts are tempted to bow before what they themselves have made, the fire will still be needed; but as long as hearts are willing to be turned back toward the Invisible Source, the fire will also be a light for their feet.

BOOK VIII – THE COVENANT WITHOUT MEDIATOR

CHAPTER I

1. And it came to pass that after the fire had gone forth against the images, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, write now of the covenant that has no go-between, that those who have been taught to fear My nearness may know that they are Mine directly.
2. For many in your generation have been told that between them and the Holy there must stand a priest, a prophet, a savior, an order, a system, a chain of hands; and they have come to believe that if one link fails them, I also have failed.
3. And the Eternal One said: Behold, I made no creature to be the door that locks against its siblings; I gave no nation the keys to My favor; I appointed no mediator to soften a heart that was never hard against you; I Myself am the One who formed you, and I have never required an interpreter to understand your cry.
4. Woe unto the teachings that portray Me as distant and easily offended, seated behind curtains that only the specially anointed may draw aside; behold, they have built a court around One who walks the streets, and they have sold tickets to a Presence that visits slums and prisons without announcement.
5. Behold, when you first drew breath, there was no other voice between Me and you; when you first wept, long before you learned any name for Me,

there was no advocate pleading your case, yet I heard; when you first did kindness without reward, there was no priest recording it for credit, yet I rejoiced.

6. And the Eternal One said: I do not deny that some have helped you hear Me, nor that certain lives and words have pointed you toward what is true; but those who truly served My purpose did not set themselves as gates that must be passed, but as signposts that may be thanked and left behind.
7. Woe unto the leaders who have loved their role more than your freedom, who have said, "Without us you cannot approach God, without our rites your prayers fall short, without our story your life cannot be blessed"; behold, they have mistaken their assignment as witness for a title of owner.
8. Behold, I say unto you: there is no house, however splendid, in which you must stand in order for Me to hear you; there is no language, however ancient, in which you must speak in order for Me to understand you; there is no ceremony, however moving, that I require before I bend low to attend your whisper.
9. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, but have we not been taught from youth that there must be a mediator, a bridge, a sacrifice, lest Your justice consume us;

how shall we bear Your holiness without one to stand between?

10. And the Eternal One answered: You have been taught that My justice is a fire that leaps first upon the wounded; but I tell you that My justice burns against what harms, not against those who long to be healed; you have been told that I am a judge searching for reasons to condemn, yet I am the Physician searching for openings to restore.
11. Behold, if I desired distance, what need had I to listen to your stumbling prayers, to trouble your conscience when you wound another, to comfort you in the night when no one else could see your tears; distance does not ache as I have ached with you.
12. And the Eternal One said: You have imagined that the mediator protects you from Me; but the truth is that I protect you from those who claim to own Me; I stand between your small, trembling soul and the images raised to terrify you, and I say, "Do not call these things God on My behalf."
13. Woe unto the doctrines that say, "The Eternal cannot look upon you without the covering of another's perfection," as if the One who crafted your bones could only gaze upon them through borrowed virtue; behold, I have seen you in blood and in ash, in failure and in shame, and I have not turned My face away.

14. Behold, when you confessed harm and sought to repair it, even before you believed anyone heard, your turning itself was already My Spirit moving in you; no advocate begged Me to be kinder than I am; rather, I was the One who tugged you toward life when despair and numbness called you to lie down.
15. And the Eternal One said: I do not forbid you to be grateful for those whose courage and suffering have opened paths of understanding; honor them as elder siblings in the work of truth; but do not kneel to them as if they alone could make you Mine, for you were Mine before they spoke, and you will be Mine after their names are forgotten.
16. Behold, whoever tells you that you must sign a covenant with them in order to have a covenant with Me has already stepped into the place of an idol; they may help you articulate your “yes,” but they cannot own it, and they cannot stand in your stead when your heart is called to account.
17. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, many cling to the comfort of thinking that “someone else has done the God-work for me,” that another has borne all responsibility, all wrestling, all encounter; what word have You for them?
18. And the Eternal One answered: I understand the weariness that seeks such comfort; the burden of being

- conscious in a broken world is heavy; yet woe unto any teaching that lulls you into passivity, that tells you your choices are of little consequence because a transaction in heaven has already settled all things.
19. Behold, I do not call you to earn My love; that is impossible, for it was given before you could act; but I call you to respond to it with your own life, not merely with assent to another’s story; I desire partners, not spectators, co-workers, not clients.
 20. And the Eternal One said: There is a covenant that cannot be outsourced, written not on scrolls but in the deep places of the heart; it says, “I will seek what is true even when it costs me; I will stand with the vulnerable even when it isolates me; I will turn back when I see that I have done harm; I will not knowingly bow to any image that crushes another.”
 21. Behold, whoever lives this, even haltingly, is walking in covenant with Me, whether or not they can name its theology; and whoever refuses this, though they recite many creeds and cling to many mediators, has not yet entered into My heart.
 22. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, what then is forgiveness, if it is not secured by a sacrifice offered between You and us? How does guilt find release without a ritual to seal it?

23. And the Eternal One answered:
Forgiveness is My refusal to reduce
you to your worst moment; it is the
door I keep open for your becoming; it
was never a commodity to be
purchased, nor a mood to be triggered
by blood; it is My steady stance
toward you even while I oppose the
harm you have done.
24. Behold, when you face the truth of
your wrongdoing without excuse,
when you make repair as far as it is
possible, when you choose different in
the next small hour, you are not
convincing Me to soften, you are
stepping into the river of mercy that
was already flowing toward you.
25. And the Eternal One said: Let this be
known plainly in your time: I need no
mediator to calm Me; but you have
often needed mediators to calm one
another, to translate, to accompany, to
bear witness as you risk honesty; honor
them for this work, but do not imagine
they tame My heart.
26. Behold, the ones who have truly
walked near to My presence are those
who lead you not to themselves but to
your own courage; who say, "You can
hear God also," not, "Only through
me"; who bless your directness instead
of warning you against it; such are
friends of the covenant without
mediator.
27. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ,
said: Eternal One, there are many who
fear that if they let go of the image of

- the mediator, they will have nothing
left, only a vast, cold silence; what
hope can be spoken to them?
28. And the Eternal One answered: Tell
them that when the image falls, it will
feel at first like falling into emptiness;
but wait a little longer, and they will
discover that the emptiness is
breathable; wait a little longer, and
they will notice that their own heart
still beats and that every beat is
answer.
29. Behold, they may speak to Me then
without formalities, saying, "If You are
there, this is what is true of me," and
they will discover that the habit of
honesty is itself a kind of prayer; they
may walk by rivers or sit in traffic or
lie awake in the dark and dare to
address Me without anyone else's
words, and they will find that I am not
offended.
30. And the Eternal One said: If they can
manage nothing more than, "I do not
know who You are, but I do not want
what is cruel to win," I hear them; if
they can only say, "I want to be less
false," I hear them; if they can say
nothing at all and only refuse, one more
day, to bow before what they know is
wrong, I hear them still.
31. Behold, this is the covenant without
mediator: that I am God to you
directly, and you are answerable to Me
directly; that no one may stand before
you forever as your voice, your
conscience, your judge, your

permission; that love and truth spoken in your own trembling words are received as fully as any liturgy.

32. Wherefore let this first chapter be a trumpet in a quiet register, calling softly to those who have been told they cannot come to Me except by way of someone else; let them know that the door has always been open, not only at the altar but in the alley, not only in the temple but in the Silent Room.
33. And whoever shall hear these sayings and feel fear rise up, as if they were betraying their savior or their prophet by turning their face toward the Invisible Source, let them also notice the smaller, deeper feeling beneath the fear—the sense of rightness, of homecoming—and let them trust that this smaller voice is Mine.

CHAPTER 2

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the covenant that stands without go-between, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, write now of the voice within, that the people may learn to discern between the echo of their wounds and the whisper of the Holy.
2. For many have been told, “Trust not your own heart, for it is deceitful above all things; only the words of our fathers are safe,” and thus they have been trained to fear their own awareness, and to hand over all

discernment to those who claim to speak for Me.

3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the teachers who crush the conscience in order to secure obedience, who tell the abused that their revulsion at harm is rebellion, and who call the numbness that follows “peace”; behold, they have taught My children to doubt the very place where I would meet them.
4. Behold, your heart is not My enemy, though it is wounded; your mind is not My rival, though it is limited; your body is not My obstacle, though it carries scars; I speak through all these when they are turned toward what is true, and I am not offended when they resist what is false.
5. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, how then shall we know when it is truly You who speak in the inward place, and not the old terror, nor old teaching, nor the voice of our own desire?
6. And the Eternal One answered: My voice does not demand that you lie about harm; it does not command you to call evil good for the sake of belonging; it does not bless your contempt, nor feed your secret superiority; whenever you feel driven to cruelty in the name of God, know that another voice has taken My name in vain.
7. Behold, My voice may wound your pride, but it will not crush your worth; it may grieve you with truth, but it

will not mock your tears; it may call you away from what is killing you, but it will not shame you for having been ensnared; it will always leave open a door for you and for your enemy.

8. And the Eternal One said: Learn also to test your inner urgings by their fruit over time; what begins in heat may end in regret, and what begins in trembling may end in life; walk slowly when you can, and allow your choices to show you whether they align with mercy and justice, or only with impulse and fear.
9. Behold, there are days when you will hear nothing at all, and you will fear that I have departed; yet even in these days, when you choose gentleness over harm and honesty over pretense, you are walking in the covenant, though no word seems given; your faithfulness is itself a dialogue.
10. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, many have been told that they must confess their every thought to leaders and mediators, lest they be deceived; they have never known a secret place where they could meet You alone; what word have You for them?
11. And the Eternal One answered: Behold, I am not honored by the stripping of your inner room; woe unto those who demand access to the chambers of your soul and call their intrusion “care”; a confidant may be healing when freely chosen, but a

forced transparency is but a snare in religious clothing.

12. Behold, I Myself have set within you a door that no one else may open or close; it is the place where you may say exactly what is true before Me without fear of punishment or manipulation; whoever claims the right to stand always inside that door with you has already begun to take My place.
13. And the Eternal One said: There is a time to confess outwardly, that harm may be repaired and deception broken; but there is also a time to keep certain things between you and Me until the courage and safety to share them has grown; do not call it holiness when leaders pry where trust has not yet been earned.
14. Woe unto the structures that teach, “Nothing is truly private, for your shepherds must know all,” and then use what they learn to control and to shame; behold, they counterfeit omniscience and call it oversight, but I, who truly see all, do not wield My sight as a threat.
15. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if each person has this direct covenant, will not chaos arise, with every soul claiming that their own desire is the will of God, and none submitting to any restraint?
16. And the Eternal One answered: The covenant without mediator is not the absence of restraint, but the presence of

responsibility; you may no longer hide behind the orders of a leader when you do harm, saying, “I only obeyed”; nor may you claim that your craving is holy simply because you felt it strongly.

17. Behold, in this covenant you are answerable for what you chose to know and chose to ignore, for the neighbor you stepped over and the truth you would not examine; no prophet can absolve you of this, no ritual erase it without repair; yet neither can any institution forbid you forever from the road of change.
18. And the Eternal One said: Community still matters, but not as a mediator that stands between us; rather as a circle of witnesses who help you test what you believe you have heard, who dare to say, “This seems not of life,” when your certainty runs ahead of love, and who rejoice with you when your listening leads to courage.
19. Behold, blessed is the gathering where each is taught to hear for themselves, and none is permitted to claim perfect clarity; blessed is the council where decisions are weighed not by, “What will preserve our image?” but by, “What will protect the wounded?”; in such places the covenant without mediator is practiced in the open.
20. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, what of prayer, in this covenant? For many have learned only to approach You with set phrases and formulas, fearing that without

them their words will be rejected or their petitions void.

21. And the Eternal One answered: In this covenant, prayer is not a performance for a distant throne, but a conversation in the midst of your days; you do not need to warm Me up with compliments, nor to bribe Me with vows; speak plainly of what is, of what you fear, of what you desire, of what you cannot bear, and let that be your offering.
22. Behold, I do not despise your liturgies when they help your hearts to gather; but I am not more impressed by eloquence than by a single whispered, “I cannot do this alone”; when you have no words and only your tears fall, let them fall in My direction, and know that I read them.
23. And the Eternal One said: In this covenant, do not think that I answer only when the outcome pleases you; I answer also by strengthening you to bear what does not change, by sending another human being at the right moment, by turning your heart away from a path that would have destroyed you, though you never see the danger that was avoided.
24. Behold, I am not a vendor of miracles dispensing favors to the properly devout; I am the Source that moves quietly beneath your days, weaving what good can be woven from the tangled threads you and others have cast; when you pray, you are not

- inserting a coin into a machine, but opening a window toward this unseen work.
25. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, many tremble at the thought of standing before You at the last, with no mediator to speak; they have been told that only another's perfection will shelter them in that hour; what shall I write for them?
 26. And the Eternal One answered: Write that in that hour you will not stand before a stranger; you will come before the One who has walked with you, unnoticed, through every room of your life; there will be no surprises in My knowledge of you, for nothing has been hidden from Me; the surprise will be in your seeing how faithfully I was present where you thought you were alone.
 27. Behold, your defense will not be a legal argument crafted by another, but the truth of your becoming; the small mercies you chose when no one saw, the apologies you offered when it would have been easier to harden, the secret refusals to join in cruelty, these will speak on your behalf more clearly than any creed.
 28. And the Eternal One said: Do not fear that I will compare you to saints carved of stone; I will see you in the context of your real constraints, your real histories, your real wounds; I will ask not, "Why were you not flawless?"

- but, "What did you do with what you knew, in the days given you?"
29. Behold, I tell you truly, many who think themselves secure because they have signed their loyalty to mediators will find that they never learned to love, and many who thought themselves lost because they could not affirm what they were told will find that they lived nearer to My heart than they dared hope.
 30. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, bowed my head, for I felt the weight and the mercy of these words; and I said: Eternal One, what shall we then teach our children, that they may grow in this covenant without mediator and not be left at the mercy of those who would bind them?
 31. And the Eternal One answered: Teach them first that they are directly beloved, before any title, any success, any ritual; teach them that no one may speak for Me in ways that silence their pain; teach them that questions are not crimes, and that any god who is destroyed by their honesty was not Me.
 32. Behold, show them what repair looks like when you harm them; let them see you apologize and change, that they may learn that authority is not beyond repentance; let them hear you say, "I do not know," that they may learn that uncertainty is not a sin; guide them to listen for the still sense of rightness that honors others and themselves.

33. And the Eternal One said: Tell them also stories, but choose them carefully; let the heroes be those who protected the vulnerable, not only those who wielded power; let the holy be those who told the truth at cost, not only those who worked wonders; let the blessed be those who refused to bow to idols, even when such refusal cost them a place.
34. Behold, in this way you will raise a people who can walk with prophets without surrendering their conscience, who can honor teachers without enthroning them, who can receive wisdom from scriptures and elders and strangers and still remember that the covenant is written first of all in their own living.
35. Wherefore let this second chapter of the Covenant Without Mediator be a hand upon the shoulder of all who leave the courts of borrowed faith and walk into the open; let it remind them that they are not stepping into nothing, but into a relationship that has been theirs from the beginning—a bond in which no human stands between the Eternal One and the trembling, stubborn, precious heart that is their own.

CHAPTER 3

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the voice within and of the day of accounting, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again,

saying: Nibwâskââ, now you shall write of walking in this covenant while yet surrounded by systems that trade in mediators, that those who awaken may know how to live among them without returning to chains.

2. For many shall say to the one who seeks Me directly: “You are proud, for you do not submit as we submit; you are deceived, for you trust your own hearing; you are unsafe, for you stand without covering”; and their words will sting, for once you believed them also.
3. And the Eternal One said: Behold, do not answer them with contempt, for they speak from the fear that brought them to their knees long ago; but neither surrender again the ground you have taken; let your life, more than your arguments, display that a soul may walk humbly with God without leaning forever upon another’s staff.
4. Woe unto those who, seeing your freedom, will attempt to recast it as rebellion, saying, “You have thrown off all restraint, you have rejected all shepherding,” when in truth you have only refused to call any human voice infallible; behold, they are angered not that you have left Me, but that you have left them.
5. Behold, you may still learn from them what is wise, and you may still share with them what is new; but you must no longer hand to them the keys of your conscience; for the covenant

- without mediator requires that you answer for your own seeing, rather than forever borrowing their sight.
6. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, how shall we gather in communities at all, if each is answerable to You directly; will not every assembly become a battlefield of private revelations?
 7. And the Eternal One answered: Let your gatherings be woven not from declarations of who is “more right,” but from shared commitments; say to one another, “Whatever we may differ on, we will not lie for our cause, we will not protect abusers, we will not despise the weak, we will not call cruelty holy.” Upon such ground you may stand together.
 8. Behold, when one among you claims, “God has told me, and you must obey,” test this word not first by their fervor but by these commitments; if what they call “revelation” breaks your promise to the vulnerable or excuses what once you knew was wrong, let all know that such a word has no binding power among you.
 9. And the Eternal One said: In the covenant without mediator, authority is not abolished but transfigured; it is no longer the right to be obeyed without question, but the burden of being transparent, accountable, and ready to lay down one’s role when it becomes a stumbling-block.
 10. Woe unto the leaders who cling to titles as if they were their own skin, who cannot imagine stepping aside even when the trust of the people is broken; behold, in this covenant the greatest among you is not the one who keeps their seat the longest, but the one who relinquishes power when love requires it.
 11. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, what of those still bound in houses where mediators stand in every doorway; shall we tear them away or leave them in peace?
 12. And the Eternal One answered: Do not drag a soul faster than their courage; to snatch away all their scaffolding at once may cause them to fall; rather, be a friend to their questions, a safe place for their doubts, a witness that another way is possible; in this gentleness My own patience is reflected.
 13. Behold, there will be times when you must speak plainly, especially when harm is being defended in My name; but even then, speak as one who has also been deceived, not as one who has always seen clearly; for arrogance is but another mediator, demanding to be believed.
 14. And the Eternal One said: Remember that many remain in such houses because they fear losing their families, their livelihoods, their place; I see the calculations they make in the night, the weighing of children and aging parents

- and fragile minds; do not call them cowards lightly, for you do not carry all their burdens.
15. Behold, I will lead some out bodily, and others only inwardly; some will depart with their feet, others only in the quiet of their conscience, refusing, bit by bit, to bow to what they know is false; to both I am near, and both are walking, in their measure, within My covenant.
 16. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, how shall we speak with those who still love their mediators, without wounding them or betraying our own seeing?
 17. And the Eternal One answered: Speak first of what you have discovered in Me, not of what they have not yet seen; say, "I have begun to trust that the Holy One hears me directly," rather than, "Your way is a lie"; for testimony opens more doors than assault, and honesty about your own journey is harder to twist than attack upon theirs.
 18. Behold, when they fear for your soul and plead with you to return to the old covering, do not mock their concern; it is born of a care that, though shaped by fear, is still care; yet you may say gently, "I trust the Eternal One enough to risk this path," and let your steadiness answer what their arguments cannot.
 19. And the Eternal One said: There will be days when loneliness comes upon you like a storm, for you will no longer

- fit easily in the old pews, and the new circles may still be small and scattered; in such days, remember that the covenant without mediator is not a doctrine but a companionship, and speak to Me of your loneliness as frankly as of your courage.
20. Behold, I will send you unexpected kin: a voice in a book written long ago, a neighbor with a story not unlike yours, a stranger whose honesty disarms you; in these encounters you will learn that I have been leading many, in many places, along similar paths, though not by the same route.
 21. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, what of the practice of blessing and being blessed, which in former days was often mediated by clergy and rites; does this also continue in the covenant without mediator?
 22. And the Eternal One answered: Yes, but its shape is changed; blessing is no longer the exclusive right of the ordained, but the shared work of all who walk in My compassion; you may lay your hand upon a friend's shoulder and speak courage into their weariness, and I will count it as holy as any ancient rite.
 23. Behold, when you forgive one who has wounded you, refusing to let bitterness be the last word while still guarding yourself from further harm, you are pronouncing a blessing that no officiant need ratify; when you stand beside one

in their hour of shame and do not depart, your presence is a sacrament in My sight.

24. And the Eternal One said: Yet let none claim the power to bless while refusing to be accountable for their own wrongdoing; woe unto the mouths that pour out words of comfort in public and words of derision in secret, that offer prayers with hands still stained by unconfessed harm; their blessings are thin as smoke before Me.
25. Behold, the truest benediction you can offer is your own integrity; to be a person in whom others need not fear hidden malice is a deeper sacrament than oil upon the brow; this I desire more than a thousand beautiful liturgies performed by hearts that will not turn.
26. And it came to pass that I, Nibwáskáá, said: Eternal One, in this covenant, how shall we understand failure, when we fall back into old patterns of seeking approval from mediators or hiding from Your direct gaze?
27. And the Eternal One answered: Understand it as learning, not as banishment; behold, you have been trained for many years to trust others more than yourself, and to fear Me; do you think that one awakening will erase all such habits? When you notice yourself returning to them, do not despair; notice, name, and turn again.
28. Behold, you may say, “I see that I still crave this leader’s approval as if it were

God’s; I see that I still hope someone else will tell me what to do so I need not choose”; bring this seeing into the open between us, and it becomes a step forward, not back; for the covenant is not perfection, but persistent return.

29. And the Eternal One said: Teach also one another to celebrate small acts of courage: the first time someone says, “No” to a manipulative demand; the first time they trust their own sense that something is wrong; the first time they pray in their own words in a room where they were taught never to speak unless authorized.
30. Behold, these are not minor footnotes in their story, but turning points; in heaven’s keeping of their days, such moments are circled and underlined; for I see the weight of the chains they are stepping out of, and I rejoice over their trembling steps as over a great victory.
31. Wherefore let this third chapter of the Covenant Without Mediator be a lamp for those who ask, “How shall we live this, not only think it?”; let it guide them to gentleness with those who have not yet left the old arrangements, to courage in their own boundaries, to communities where no one stands forever in the place of God.
32. And whoever shall read these words and feel both the cost and the beauty of such a life, let them know that the Eternal One does not watch from afar to see if they succeed, but walks beside them in every awkward conversation,

every quiet act of defiance, every faltering prayer that dares, at last, to say, “You and I, directly.”

CHAPTER 4

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of walking in the covenant amid many mediators, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, write now of the practices that belong to this covenant, that the people may not wander only in theory, but may find ways to breathe and move in what they have heard.
2. For many have asked in their hearts, saying: If we no longer approach God through the systems we were given, what then shall we do with our days? If the old prayers feel hollow and the old rituals feel heavy, how shall we yet mark our time with the Holy?
3. And the Eternal One said: Behold, I do not despise what you have inherited, but I ask you to sift it; keep what leads you toward honesty and mercy, release what leads you toward fear and pretense; do not cling to any form simply because you fear emptiness, and do not discard any form simply because it was misused by those before you.
4. Behold, there are practices that have long belonged to the covenant, though they were sometimes claimed by mediators as their own: the telling of truth, the making of repair, the sitting in silence, the sharing of bread, the

tending of the earth, the guarding of the vulnerable, the refusal to lie; none of these require a go-between, and none of these are forbidden to those outside religious houses.

5. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, speak first of confession, for many have known it only as a ritual in which the penitent kneels before a representative and receives absolution; what does confession become in the covenant without mediator?
6. And the Eternal One answered: Confession is no longer a performance to secure pardon, but a turning of your face fully toward what is true, before Me and before those you have harmed; it is not a speech to placate a judge, but the courage to say, without ornament or excuse, “This I have done, and this is what it cost another, and this is what it has done to my own soul.”
7. Behold, you may speak such words in the quiet between us, and it is good; but you must also, when safety and possibility remain, speak them to the ones you have wronged and accompany your words with repair; I will not be mocked by confessions that never leave the inner room while damage continues in the street.
8. Woe unto the hearts that confess only upward, never outward, seeking to feel clean while others still lie under the rubble of their deeds; behold, such confession is but another attempt to

- use Me as mediator between them and their conscience, and in this covenant I will not play that part.
9. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, if there is no appointed human to declare us forgiven, how shall we know when forgiveness has truly come, and that we are not merely excusing ourselves?
10. And the Eternal One answered: You shall know it by the fruit over time; when the memory of your wrong no longer drives you to denial or to endless self-hatred, but instead fuels your gentleness and your vigilance against doing likewise again; when the one you harmed, if they live, has had the right to their anger without pressure to reconcile; when you can tell the story without twisting it to favor you; then forgiveness has begun to do its work.
11. Behold, you do not need a priest to proclaim this over you; My Spirit will bear witness with your spirit by the peace that comes after truth and repair, not before them; whoever offers you instant absolution without these things offers you a counterfeit that keeps you from the deeper healing.
12. And the Eternal One said: Now write also of thanksgiving, for many have learned to give thanks only in rehearsed phrases around cattle and harvest, and do not know how to bless Me for what is small and hidden.
13. Behold, in the covenant without mediator, thanksgiving is not flattery to win favor, but the widening of your sight to notice that even in bleak seasons there remain traces of goodness that were not of your own making: a breath that came when you thought you would drown, a hand that reached out when you were falling, a word that arrived just as you despaired of language itself.
14. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, must such thanks be spoken aloud, or written, or lifted in songs, to be counted?
15. And the Eternal One answered: It is good when the heart's gratitude finds form in words or music or shared bread, for what you name becomes more real to you; yet know also that the quiet lifting of your eyes, the sudden softness in your chest when you look upon a face you once thought lost to you, the decision to savor and not rush past a moment of beauty, these are also acts of thanks, though no one else may ever see them.
16. Behold, there is power in thanking Me for those you do not understand but who have widened your world; for the neighbor whose patience shames you, for the stranger whose courage exposes your fear, for the ancestor whose stubborn hope reached forward into your days; in such thanks you participate in the covenant that binds generations without mediator.

17. And the Eternal One said: Write now of rest, for this also belongs to the covenant; many have been taught to labor unceasingly in religious tasks, lest they prove unworthy, and their exhaustion has been called devotion; this I do not require.
18. Behold, I wove into creation a rhythm of work and ceasing, not as a test but as a mercy; to step away from production, from image-keeping, from striving to be significant, and to be simply present to breath and sky and those beside you, is as holy as any pilgrimage; in such rest you remember that you are a creature, not a machine, beloved for your being and not only for your usefulness.
19. Woe unto the systems that drive you always to “do more for God,” yet never permit you to sit without agenda; behold, their god is not Me but the idol of tireless output; in the covenant without mediator, there must be hours when you close even your holy books and let silence teach.
20. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, speak now of Scripture and story, for many have known their sacred texts only as weapons in the hands of mediators; how shall we approach them in this covenant?
21. And the Eternal One answered: Approach them as you would approach the stories of your elders—respectfully, inquisitively,

- willing to be taught, yet also willing to ask, “Where did they see clearly, and where were they bound by their time?”; do not place any book upon a throne where it may never be questioned, for then you have made of it a mediator that eclipses the living God.
22. Behold, read what is written with an eye for My character as it has been revealed to you in your own encounters: where the text leads toward mercy and justice, receive it with joy; where it is used to justify cruelty, pause and ask whether it is the text itself or the hands that wield it that have gone astray; I am not honored when you call oppression “obedience” simply because a verse has been cited.
23. And the Eternal One said: Let it be known that I speak also outside your canons; in the poems of those who have suffered, in the songs of the oppressed, in the research of those who seek truth about your world, in the quiet wisdom of those who have no books at all; if you seek Me only in approved pages, you will walk past many burning bushes.
24. Behold, in this covenant, Scripture becomes not a barrier you must recite to gain entry, but a conversation partner; you may wrestle with it as Jacob wrestled at the river, refusing both to discard it and to stop asking for blessing; and if you limp away, yet

- more honest and more compassionate,
know that you have met Me there.
25. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ,
said: Eternal One, what of rituals of
beginning and ending—of birth and
death, of covenant and parting—are
these also possible without mediator?
26. And the Eternal One answered: Yes,
for I attend wherever love marks time;
the washing of a newborn with water
and song, the writing of a simple vow
between partners with witnesses who
truly care, the gathering around a body
returned to the earth, the lighting of a
candle at the start of a hard journey,
these are all acts in which I am present,
whether or not an official presides.
27. Behold, you may bless a child without
license by holding them and saying,
with all your heart, “May you know
that you are beloved, may you find
courage when fear surrounds you, may
you never be alone in your sorrow”;
you may bless the dying by refusing to
lie to them and by remaining near; no
stamp from any council increases the
holiness of such moments.
28. Woe unto those who tell the poor that
their births are less blessed and their
burials less sacred because no
recognized mediator attended; behold,
I, who was present in stables and
unmarked graves, will stand as witness
against such claims.
29. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ,
felt within me both awe and ache, for I
saw that the covenant without

- mediator was not a theory to be
admired, but a way of life that asked
for continual courage; and I said:
Eternal One, will we not grow weary
in such a path?
30. And the Eternal One answered: Yes,
you will grow weary, as all who love
truly grow weary; but you will not
walk alone; I will breathe strength into
you through rest and friendship,
through beauty and even through
honest sorrow; and you will find that
though the road is demanding, it is also
spacious, for you no longer drag the
weight of pleasing every human priest.
31. Wherefore let this fourth chapter of
the Covenant Without Mediator be a
field guide to those who ask, “What
now?”; let it remind them that
practices of confession, thanksgiving,
rest, story, and simple blessing are
already in their hands, and that in all
these they may meet the Eternal One
directly, without any voice forever
standing between their own and the
Holy.

CHAPTER 5

- I. And it came to pass that after I had
written of the practices of this
covenant, the word of the Eternal One
came unto me again, saying:
Nibwâskââ, write now of how this
covenant speaks in the hour of conflict,
that those who walk without
mediators may know how to stand

- when wronged and how to act when they themselves have done wrong.
2. For many have been taught to endure every wound in silence, lest they be counted unforgiving; and others have been taught to strike back at once, lest they be counted weak; yet both these patterns serve the idols of fear and image more than the work of truth.
 3. And the Eternal One said: Behold, in the covenant without mediator, you may bring your anger to Me directly without first polishing it; you may say, "This hurt me, this was unjust, I do not know what to do with this pain," and you need not soften your words for the sake of My reputation; I am not fragile.
 4. Behold, when you speak thus, I will not answer by excusing the one who harmed you with pious phrases, nor by urging you to forget before the wound has even closed; I will sit with you in the rawness, and together we will watch for the path that neither denies your pain nor makes vengeance your god.
 5. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, in this covenant, what does it mean to love one's enemy, when there is no mediator to absorb the blow or to guarantee a tidy ending?
 6. And the Eternal One answered: To love your enemy is not to return to their table while they still sharpen their knives; it is to refuse to surrender your own heart to the logic of hatred;

- it is to protect yourself and others from their harm while refusing to declare that they are nothing but their worst act.
7. Behold, you may set boundaries as a holy work; you may say, "No more," and step away, and this can be an act of love for both of you, for it halts the pattern that devours you both; love without limit is idol-talk when it demands your endless destruction.
 8. Woe unto the teachings that say, "If you were truly faithful, you would endure every abuse and call it blessing," for they make of endurance an idol and of the battered a sacrifice; behold, I take no pleasure in offerings of bruised flesh and broken minds given to protect another's image of holiness.
 9. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, if there is no mediator to stand between the oppressor and Your justice, how shall we trust that the powerful will not escape, as they so often do in this age?
 10. And the Eternal One answered: You see only a little way; I see the whole of their becoming; no public fall, no secret rotting of the soul, no consequence in the bodies of their descendants is unknown to Me; I do not delight in any of this, yet I will not lie to spare them the truth of what they have chosen.
 11. Behold, you are not asked to pretend that all will be balanced neatly before your eyes; but you are freed from the

burden of being executioner; you may name wrong, resist it, and build what is better, without needing to script the final accounting; that last word is Mine.

12. And the Eternal One said: In this covenant, you may cry, “How long?” and I will not rebuke you; you may say, “This is not right,” and I will agree; you may demand, “Where were You?” and you will find that I was with the crushed and never with the cruelty, though I could not always prevent what I did not choose.
13. Behold, you have imagined that for Me to be God, I must control every hand; and when you saw the harms those hands inflicted, you despaired; but I tell you that I am not the puppeteer of your calamities; I am the One who refuses to abandon you in the aftermath and who whispers to every willing heart, “Do not do likewise.”
14. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, how then shall we seek guidance in hard choices, if there is no mediator to hand us commands from on high; will we not be paralyzed by the weight of our own freedom?
15. And the Eternal One answered: You are not required to be omniscient; you are required to be honest; gather what you know, seek counsel from those who love truth more than comfort, consider the impact upon the least, and then choose as well as you can; I will

walk with you in the outcome, whether it be smooth or rough.

16. Behold, there will be moments when no voice from heaven breaks in, and no sign appears to tip the scales; do not assume that I have abandoned you; rather, I trust you to act from what you have already been given—your conscience, your compassion, your hunger for justice; this too is communion.
17. And the Eternal One said: Beware of those who claim constant, specific directives for every small thing, as if I could not bear to leave them a single decision; often they cloak their own desires in My name, and their followers are taught to distrust their own sight; this is not the covenant I offer.
18. Behold, when I do speak in ways that cut across your inclination, My word will not flatter your ego nor feed your contempt; it will ask of you something costly in the direction of love—an apology, a relinquishing of advantage, a refusal to join in profitable harm; by this you may discern that it is not merely your hunger talking.
19. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what of signs and wonders, which many have sought through mediators; are they absent from this covenant, or do they come in another form?
20. And the Eternal One answered: I have never bound Myself to the

showmanship of the stage; there are times when bodies are healed beyond expectation, when paths open suddenly, when danger passes inexplicably; these things you may receive with gratitude and awe, but you must not build your faith upon them.

21. Behold, the deeper wonders of this covenant are slower and quieter: a heart that once cherished cruelty choosing instead to protect; a person whose shame was a constant storm learning to rest in being loved; a community that once sacrificed its wounded to preserve its image becoming a place of repair; these are the miracles by which I most desire to be known.
22. And the Eternal One said: Let it be known also that in this covenant, you are given permission to say “I do not know” and to let that stand; you need not fill every silence with a theory about My plans; mystery is not a gap you must plug with noise, but a space in which humility can breathe.
23. Behold, many mediators have been driven to lie because they could not bear to say “I do not know,” and whole peoples have been steered into ruin by their need to appear certain; in the covenant without mediator, it is a holy act to confess your limits.
24. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, there is yet a fear that haunts many—if we walk thus

without mediators, and our understanding proves flawed, will we not be more accountable, having no one to blame?

25. And the Eternal One answered: Yes, you will be more accountable, but also more alive; I do not ask of you infallible understanding, but willing growth; when you discover that you were wrong, your confession and your change are precious to Me; I will not condemn you for having once believed what you now see more clearly, if your new seeing leads to deeper care.
26. Behold, hiding behind mediators has not spared the world from harm; many atrocities have been committed precisely because people said, “We only obeyed”; in this covenant, you may no longer hide thus, yet you may also no longer be crushed by the guilt of actions you did not fully grasp when you were still under such rule, if now you choose another way.
27. And the Eternal One said: Teach also that in this covenant, reconciliation is a gift, not a demand; you may release your enemy from your own inner grip without ever returning to their table; you may hope for their transformation without placing yourself again in their path; any teaching that forces victims to reconcile on a timetable that serves the offender is not from Me.
28. Behold, when true reconciliation occurs, it will be marked by truth-telling without spin, by real

repair, by a new pattern of behavior over time; such healing is possible, but it cannot be rushed to defend an institution or to tidy a story; let it come as and when it can, and do not call its absence a failure of faith.

29. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, felt the weight of these matters and said: Eternal One, all this seems heavy for fragile minds; will not many grow weary and long for the old comforts of someone else thinking and choosing for them?
30. And the Eternal One answered: Some will, and some will return to the houses of mediators, and I do not cease to walk with them; but others will discover, slowly, that the burden of their own agency is also the place where they feel most truly human; they will find joy in knowing that their “yes” and their “no” are real, and that their small acts of courage matter in eternity.
31. Behold, in this covenant, you will not be shielded from the ache of wrestling, but you will also not be bound to the numbness of submission; I will teach you to live with unanswered questions and still do good; I will teach you to stand in storms without a human priest to anchor you, and yet not be alone.
32. Wherefore let this fifth chapter of the Covenant Without Mediator be a companion to those who face conflict and choice and wonder if they are equal to such freedoms; let it remind

them that the Eternal One does not wait at the end of the path to judge how well they walked, but walks each step with them, bearing with their stumbles, delighting in every movement toward truth, and needing no mediator to hear the tremor in their voice when they say, “Here I am; help me choose.”

CHAPTER 6

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of conflict and choice, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, write now of doubt and of the long night of the soul, for in this covenant many will walk through darkness without the old assurances, and they must know that I am not offended by their questions.
2. For there are those who were taught that faith is the absence of doubt, and that any question which cannot be answered at once is a crack in the dam of belief; they were told that if they admit how confused they are, the Eternal One will turn away in disappointment.
3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the teachers who confuse certainty with trust, and noise with devotion, and recited answers with truth; behold, they have raised congregations of voices that speak in unison, yet many of those voices tremble in secret, fearing the moment when their rehearsed words no longer hold.

4. Behold, I am not worshiped by the clenching of fists around fragile doctrines; I am not glorified by the suppression of honest terror; I am not flattered when you pretend to understand what you do not; I would rather hear your true confusion than your borrowed confidence.
5. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, many have left the courts of mediators only to find themselves in a void, where everything they once held as certain lies in pieces; they ask, "Is there anything at all that can be trusted?" What word have You for them?
6. And the Eternal One answered: Tell them that it is no sin to feel adrift after leaving a harbor, even if that harbor was built upon lies; their dizziness is not a failure of faith but the natural ache of muscles unused to steering; they must not be rushed to replace one absolute with another.
7. Behold, in this covenant they may lay each belief in their hands and ask, with Me beside them: "Does this lead me toward mercy or away? Does this make me more honest or more afraid? Does this excuse harm or call me to repair?" In this slow sifting, trust is reborn not as blindness, but as hard-won seeing.
8. And the Eternal One said: There will be seasons when they cannot say with confidence, "God is," but only, "I hope there is One who cares that this is happening"; I do not despise such hope;

it is honest and small and alive, and it is nearer to Me than many shouted certainties.

9. Behold, if on some days they can only say, "I do not know if You exist, but I choose to act as if love matters," let them know that this choice itself is a form of covenant, and that I walk within it, whether or not they can feel My name upon their lips.
10. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, some fear that their doubts will contaminate their children, and that they are failing as parents if they cannot give simple answers; they long for a clean story and cannot find one; what comfort is there for them?
11. And the Eternal One answered: Tell them that children are not saved by tidy answers, but by truthful love; if they can say, "I am still searching, but I will not lie to you; I will walk with you as you ask your own questions; I will not punish your honesty," then they have given their children more than many temples ever gave.
12. Behold, a home where one may say, "I am not sure," without fear is nearer to My heart than a home where every question is met with a threat; better that a child grow up with a parent who wrestles openly than with a parent who hides their wrestlings behind pious masks.
13. And the Eternal One said: In this covenant, doubt is not the opposite of faith, but its companion; doubt tears

down what is unworthy of trust; faith dares to keep walking once the rubble has settled; together they protect you from both gullibility and despair.

14. Woe unto those who silence every doubt by force, for they drive it underground where it becomes sickness of soul; behold, I would rather see a community that allows its members to say, "This part makes no sense to me," than a community that punishes any deviation from the approved script.
15. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, how shall we discern when doubt is an honest search for truth, and when it is merely an excuse to avoid change?
16. And the Eternal One answered: Honest doubt is willing to follow where the truth leads, even if it costs comfort; evasive doubt forever postpones action, saying, "I cannot know enough to choose," while secretly knowing the next right thing and refusing it; you shall know them by the fruits they bear.
17. Behold, when someone's questioning leads them to greater gentleness, greater justice, greater humility, rejoice with them; when someone's questioning serves only to justify harm or to mock those who still believe, call them back to responsibility; for the covenant without mediator does not sanctify cruelty in any disguise.
18. And the Eternal One said: Write also of silence, for many who leave the

noise of mediated religion find themselves in a quiet so deep that they think I am absent; yet in truth that silence was always there, only drowned before by constant instruction.

19. Behold, there will be nights when they speak and hear nothing in return, when prayer feels like words thrown into an empty room; let them know that this emptiness is not always My absence; sometimes it is the clearing away of many other voices, that they may slowly learn the sound of their own heart without echo.
20. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what then shall they do in such nights, when the silence becomes heavy and they are tempted to run back to any place that will tell them what to think?
21. And the Eternal One answered: Let them practice small, honest things; let them keep commitments to kindness even when no one is watching; let them write what is true of their day, without judgment or sermon; let them walk beneath the sky and say, if they can manage it, "If You are there, You see this too."
22. Behold, such simple faithfulness is of more worth to Me than a thousand frantic attempts to summon feeling; what they do in the absence of reassurance reveals the depth of their covenant more than what they do when they feel carried by song and certainty.

23. And the Eternal One said: There will also be moments—not many, perhaps, but enough—when something in them is suddenly pierced by beauty or grief or unexpected clarity, and they feel, without proof, that they are not alone; let them receive these moments as gifts, not as wages owed, and do not require that they turn every such encounter into a doctrine.
24. Behold, one tear shed for a stranger, one breath of awe before a sunrise, one reluctant apology offered because it was right, may be as much a visitation as any vision; I do not measure My presence only by thunder and flame.
25. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, some will say, “If we cannot be sure, why not leave the entire question of God aside and live only for what we can see?” What answer shall I give them?
26. And the Eternal One answered: Tell them that they are free to live thus, and I will not curse them; yet also tell them that to live as if there were no Witness to the smallest act of mercy, no Memory that holds every forgotten kindness, no Love that spans generations, is to live in a world thinner than the truth.
27. Behold, even if they cannot name Me, when they live as if their choices matter beyond their own lifespan, when they act as if there is a deeper meaning than survival and pleasure, they are already living in the shadow

of My reality; I am near to them as breath, though they do not call My name.

28. And the Eternal One said: In this covenant, I do not demand that you bully your mind into belief; I ask only that you do not close the door entirely; leave a crack, a window, a question; and in that small opening I will be faithful to send light in ways you can bear.
29. Behold, whoever says, “I cannot say I believe, but I also cannot say I have no more room for wonder,” has already spoken a prayer I receive; whoever says, “I do not wish to worship fear, but I am not ready to trust,” has already turned away from an idol; these small turnings I count.
30. Wherefore let this sixth chapter of the Covenant Without Mediator be a cloak for those who shiver in uncertainty, and a rebuke to those who shame them; let it declare that the Eternal One is not fragile before your questions, nor absent from your silence, but is willing to walk with you through nights of not-knowing, until what remains is not the old borrowed certainty, but a quieter, deeper, more honest yes.

CHAPTER 7

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of doubt and of the long night, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, write

now of the many paths and the many names, that those who walk in this covenant may not mistake their own road for the only road upon the earth.

2. For many have been taught that only within their house, their book, their language, can I be rightly known, and that all other ways are darkness; thus they imagine that My ear is narrow as their doctrine and My heart as small as their borders.
3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the voices that preach, "Our tribe alone is beloved, our prophets alone have seen, our rituals alone can open heaven," and who call this possessiveness "zeal"; behold, they have turned revelation, which was given as bread, into a fence around their table.
4. Behold, I have walked among many peoples long before your fathers named Me, and I have not left Myself without witness in any land; wherever a heart has learned to shun cruelty, to honor the stranger, to tell the truth at cost, there My teaching has already entered, whether or not My name was pronounced.
5. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, shall we then say that all ways are alike, and that there is no need to test any teaching, since You are present everywhere?
6. And the Eternal One answered: Say not that all ways are alike, for some lead more swiftly toward justice and others toward ruin; but say that I am

not confined to your way alone; test every path not by its age nor by its numbers, but by what it does to the least in your midst.

7. Behold, where a teaching shields the vulnerable and confronts the violent, where it humbles the powerful and lifts the bowed down, where it honors conscience and does not demand lies, there My Spirit breathes, even if no word you recognize is spoken; and where a teaching crushes, silences, or excuses harm, there an idol stands, even if My most cherished names are shouted.
8. And the Eternal One said: In this covenant without mediator, you may learn from any who walk in truth, whether they call Me God or do not name Me at all; for I am less concerned that My syllables be preserved than that My ways be practiced.
9. Behold, there will be some who bow in mosques and temples and churches, and some who bow nowhere at all, yet who feed the hungry and refuse to betray their neighbor; do not say in your heart, "Because they are not of my fold, their goodness is wasted," for such a thought insults the Giver of goodness.
10. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, if You are thus present in many ways, what meaning has it that some receive particular stories and visions and commands, while others do not?

11. And the Eternal One answered:
Particular gifts are given for particular tasks, not as medals of superiority; a people who receive a story of liberation are called to stand with the oppressed; a people who receive words against idols are called to resist every image that would enslave; if they boast of their gift and do not live its burden, they have misunderstood.
12. Behold, the more clearly a community sees any part of My heart, the more accountable they are for what they do with that sight; revelation is not a trophy case but a workshop, not a claim to rule but a call to serve.
13. And the Eternal One said: There are also those who have inherited teachings mixed with poison—truth wrapped in domination, beauty tangled with terror; I do not stand afar and condemn them for their confusion; I know the webs into which they were born, and I count as precious every thread of kindness they manage to weave in spite of it.
14. Behold, I do not measure you against an abstract perfection, but against the choices available in your real circumstances; one act of courage in a house of fear may shine brighter in My sight than a thousand comfortable virtues in a land where goodness costs little.
15. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, many in my generation turn away from all religion

because of the harms done in Your name; they say, “Let there be no more gods at all; we will build a world without them”; are they outside this covenant?

16. And the Eternal One answered: I have heard their anger, and I do not despise it; for often they are not rejecting Me, but rejecting the idols that claimed to be Me; when they say, “We will build a world without gods,” many of them mean, “We will build a world without sanctified cruelty”; and in this they are nearer to My heart than they know.
17. Behold, if in their rejection they yet choose to protect the weak, to tell the truth, to refrain from exploitative power, they are already standing where My covenant stands; their quarrel is with the mediators who misrepresented Me, and I will not cast them away for refusing to bow where I Myself would not bow.
18. And the Eternal One said: In this covenant, do not judge another’s standing with Me by the symbols on their neck or the words on their lips, but by the fruit of their life; yet do not make of this measure another harsh law, for you see only in part; leave room for surprise, both of mercy and of correction.
19. Behold, there will come a day when you find that one you counted outside has been walking beside Me in a way you never suspected, and another whom you held up as exemplar has

- been serving an image of their own making; let this knowledge keep you humble and slow to pronounce.
20. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, if there is no mediator, how shall peoples who distrust one another ever meet together before You, when their histories are full of blood and betrayal?
21. And the Eternal One answered: They will meet first not at altars, but at wounds; when those who have harmed dare to hear the accounts of those they harmed, without interruption or defense; when those who have suffered are free to speak, and also free not to speak, and are believed; when land and labor and voice are returned where they were stolen; then My presence will be thick among them, whether or not they say My name.
22. Behold, such gatherings will be awkward and slow, and many will cry out for a leader to hurry the process or to declare a cheap reconciliation; resist this; in the covenant without mediator, you must not erase the cost of truth in order to tidy your story.
23. And the Eternal One said: There will also be quiet alliances, formed without fanfare, between those of different traditions who recognize in one another the same hunger for justice and the same refusal to lie; these friendships are sacraments of a sort, testifying that the covenant runs deeper than creed.

24. Behold, when a rabbi and an imam and a healer with no book and a woman who left her church and a youth who trusts nothing but his own conscience gather to protect a neighbor from harm, My name is honored, though they may call Me by many titles or by none at all.
25. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, in the end, will all these paths and names simply dissolve into one, or will the diversity remain?
26. And the Eternal One answered: You are not yet ready to know how all stories will meet; but this I tell you: I do not require sameness in order to bring you into harmony; as the forest is not made of one tree, nor the body of one cell, so the great song is not made of one note.
27. Behold, I will purify what is cruel in every path, and burn away what is false in every name; but I will not erase the many ways in which different peoples have learned to see and to love; the covenant without mediator does not flatten you into a single culture, but calls each to bring their own gifts without domination.
28. And the Eternal One said: Wherefore, let not those who walk in this covenant boast over others as if they had found a superior secret; let them rather bow lower, knowing that I am already at work in places they have never seen; let them listen more than they speak

when they stand upon another's holy ground.

29. Behold, if they must speak, let them speak not, "We are right and you are wrong," but, "Here is how we have encountered the Eternal One's mercy and demand"; and let them be ready also to be corrected by what they hear in return, for the covenant without mediator includes the willingness to be taught by the stranger.
30. Wherefore let this seventh chapter of the Covenant Without Mediator be a charter of humility among the nations, that none may claim a monopoly on the Holy; let it declare that the Eternal One has no need of human gatekeepers, but walks already in the streets and scriptures and songs of many peoples, calling each not to surrender their face, but to relinquish their idols, and to recognize in one another the same unmediated light.

CHAPTER 8

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the many paths and names, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, write now of the body and of the life that is lived in flesh, that the people may know that their covenant with Me passes through their own skin and is not sealed only in thoughts and doctrines.
2. For many have been taught that their bodies are dangerous things, filthy by

nature, obstacles to holiness, and that only through rituals and rules overseen by mediators may they dare to inhabit themselves without terror; thus they have come to distrust not only their desires, but their sensations and their limits.

3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the teachings that present Me as a spirit who despises matter, as if I had not formed the dust and the sea and every living limb; behold, I wove your bodies as carefully as your minds, and I have watched with grief as you learn to scorn what I have made.
4. Behold, your body is not the enemy of your soul; it is the instrument through which your soul moves, touches, listens, embraces, labors, rests; when you numb it to escape pain, you also numb its capacity to feel joy; when you use it as a tool of domination, you wound the very vessel through which love could have flowed.
5. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, many have been told that every impulse of the body is suspect and that only the commands of mediators can reveal which feelings are allowed and which must be crushed; how then shall we walk in this covenant without being devoured by appetite?
6. And the Eternal One answered: Desire is a fire; it may warm or it may burn; your task is not to extinguish it, but to learn its nature; some desires arise from

- hunger for connection and safety, others from the wish to control or to escape; the covenant without mediator does not deny desire, but asks you to question it in My presence.
7. Behold, you may bring every longing to Me and say, "This is what I feel; show me what is beneath it; is there loneliness here, or fear, or genuine love?"; I will not strike you for naming it; I will help you see what leads toward life and what leads toward harm, both for you and for others.
 8. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the leaders who have claimed dominion over the bodies of others, deciding who may love, who may touch, who may rest, who must bear children and who must not, as if they themselves were lords of the womb and the bed; behold, they have made of sexuality and reproduction a field of control, and called their chains "holiness."
 9. Behold, I did not appoint any human to stand forever between another soul and their own body; no priest owns your skin, no prophet holds the deed to your pleasure or your pain; in this covenant, your flesh is not property of church or state, but entrusted to you before Me, that you may learn to inhabit it with gentleness and truth.
 10. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what of intimacy between persons, which has been so bound about with rules and shame; how shall we discern what is worthy

- of this covenant and what is betrayal of it?
11. And the Eternal One answered: Intimacy that reflects My heart will be marked by consent, mutuality, honesty, and care; it will not coerce, deceive, or treat another as a means only; it will listen when the other trembles or hesitates, and will accept "no" as holy; wherever these things are present, even if no rite has blessed the union, My likeness is nearer than in many celebrated weddings that have none of them.
 12. Behold, intimacy that betrays My covenant is that which ignores the voice of the other, that which seeks merely to conquer or to fill a void without regard for consequence; when one uses another's hunger for belonging to secure their own gratification, they act against the Eternal One, no matter how righteous their public reputation.
 13. And the Eternal One said: Tell them also that celibacy, freely chosen, is honorable; not as proof of superiority, nor as fear of embodiment, but as one path among others in which energy is given to work, to service, to contemplation; yet woe unto those who demand celibacy as a condition of worth and then prey upon the bodies of those beneath them; their vows are a cloak for desecration.
 14. Behold, I do not measure your holiness by whether you marry or not, by whether you bear children or not, but

by whether you love without exploitation and care for the flesh that carries you and those entrusted to you; this is a truer gauge than any list of permitted and forbidden acts.

15. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, many carry deep shame in their bodies because of violations done to them, often in houses where Your name was invoked; they feel dirty, ruined, unworthy; how does this covenant speak to them?
16. And the Eternal One answered: Let them hear this plainly: the harm that was done to you is not your identity; the defilement belongs to the one who chose to violate, and to the systems that protected them; I was present not as observer approving, but as One who suffered with you, whose heart was torn in the tearing of your trust.
17. Behold, you owe Me no purity that was stolen from you; I do not look upon you as damaged goods; I know the flashbacks, the numbness, the hatred of your own skin; I count as heroic every small step by which you reclaim any part of your body or your pleasure without self-disgust; there is no mediator required to argue your worth before Me—I have never wavered in it.
18. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the communities that urge such as these to “forgive and move on” while the abuser remains unrepentant and protected; they have made an idol of

their image of harmony and sacrificed the wounded upon it; in this covenant, forgiveness grew cheap is an abomination.

19. Behold, if the wounded need to hold their anger for a long time, I will not hurry them; if they cannot enter houses of worship without shaking, I will meet them in fields and kitchens and online in the watches of the night; no priest may declare that they have “failed to heal” because they do not return to their former pew.
20. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, speak also of illness, aging, and disability, for these too shape the covenant of the body; many feel abandoned when their strength fails, and others are taught that their sickness is punishment.
21. And the Eternal One answered: Behold, your culture worships youth and efficiency, and counts as valuable only those bodies that produce and conform; but I am present in the trembling hand, in the scarred spine, in the wandering mind; I do not withdraw My regard when muscles weaken or senses dim.
22. Woe unto those who declare that every sickness is a sign of sin, and that every healing is a reward; they have turned fortune into sacrament and suffering into indictment; behold, some of the most luminous souls on the earth are held inside bodies that refuse to obey

- them, and they are no less Mine than any athlete or singer.
23. Behold, when you slow your pace to walk with one who cannot hurry, you enter a sanctuary; when you design your spaces and your gatherings so that those with limits can participate without shame, you have understood something of My kingdom; in these acts the covenant is written in ramps and chairs and patient pauses.
24. And the Eternal One said: Aging itself is not a curse but a passage; it strips away certain illusions and adorns the soul with others; honor your elders not only for the strength they once had, but for the endurance and perspective they now carry; do not treat them as burdens to be managed but as lives to be listened to.
25. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what of work—the labor of hands and minds by which we sustain our bodies; for many have been told that only certain “spiritual” tasks truly matter, and their daily efforts are of little account before You.
26. And the Eternal One answered: In this covenant, no honest labor is beneath My notice; the nurse lifting patients, the janitor sweeping empty halls, the coder tracing stubborn errors, the parent changing a child in the night, the elder tending a small garden—all these acts are seen; holiness is not confined to pulpits and podiums.
27. Behold, the division between “sacred” and “secular” work is another image built to elevate certain roles and belittle others; I care more about whether your labor harms or heals than about whether it occurs under stained glass; work that exploits, even with religious language, stands under My judgment; work that sustains and repairs, even without one mention of My name, shines in My sight.
28. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, felt again the weight of being embodied and said: Eternal One, is it truly possible to live in this flesh without either indulging it as god or despising it as enemy?
29. And the Eternal One answered: It is a narrow path, but it is the one I call you to; treat your body as a beloved animal entrusted to your care—neither idol nor trash; feed it, move it, rest it, listen when it is in pain, delight in its senses, but do not let every whim rule your choices; this balance you will not keep perfectly, yet every move toward it honors the covenant.
30. Behold, when you eat with gratitude and not merely to numb, when you rest without guilt and work without worshiping your productivity, when you allow your body to be seen without constant hatred or show, you are already living more truthfully than many who shout My name while despising their own creaturehood.

31. Wherefore let this eighth chapter of the Covenant Without Mediator be balm for those who have been at war with their own flesh, and a rebuke to those who have claimed dominion over the bodies of others; let it declare that the Eternal One meets each person not only in their thoughts and prayers, but in their breathing, aching, aging, desiring, vulnerable bodies, and that no mediator stands between the Creator and the creature who bears that breath.

CHAPTER 9

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the body and of life in flesh, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, write now of the small circles in which this covenant is lived day by day, that the people may know that they do not walk alone, yet need not surrender their souls to any human throne.
2. For many have known only two ways of belonging: either to dissolve themselves into a vast institution where leaders decide all things, or to withdraw into solitude, trusting no community at all; and they have not learned how to stand with others without losing themselves.
3. And the Eternal One said: Behold, in this covenant without mediator, I call you not to isolation, but to gatherings in which no one is canonized and no one is erased; small circles where each voice may be heard, each story considered, and no single person is declared the mouth of God for all.
4. Behold, such circles may form in houses and parks, in workshops and online rooms, around tables and shared tasks; they have no need of ornament to be holy; their sign is not uniformity of opinion, but shared reverence for truth and protection of the vulnerable.
5. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what practices shall mark these circles, that they do not slowly become new temples of control with fresh banners and the same old chains?
6. And the Eternal One answered: Let them agree first on this: that no one's pain will be weaponized, that no question will be punished, that no confession will be traded as gossip, and that no leader will be beyond correction; upon such ground a circle may grow without becoming a cage.
7. Behold, let there be, in each gathering, times when the least prestigious speak first, and the most practiced voices listen; let those who have held power in other rooms learn the art of being taught; let those who have been silenced find that their words do not vanish into the floor.
8. And the Eternal One said: In these circles, read stories together—ancient and new—and ask not, “How shall we defend this?” but, “What does this do to our hearts, and to the least among

- us?"; sing if you can, but do not perform for Me; share food when possible, for the act of eating together undoes many lies of status.
9. Behold, let them also make room for silence, that those who cannot yet speak may still feel that they belong; a circle where only the quick and clever are valued is merely another stage; I am also present in the awkward pause where someone gathers courage to say, "I disagree."
 10. And it came to pass that I, Nibwáskâá, asked: Eternal One, if no mediator stands above, how shall these circles make decisions when they must act together and opinions are many?
 11. And the Eternal One answered: Let them seek first the welfare of the least affected; when choices are weighed, ask, "Who bears the risk? Who carries the cost?"; do not always choose what is efficient, but what is most just; consensus may not always be possible, but care must never be abandoned.
 12. Behold, when they cannot agree, let them at least agree on how to part without slander; some may go one way and some another, yet the covenant is not broken when people differ honestly; it is broken when they lie about one another to feel righteous.
 13. And the Eternal One said: In these circles, beware the rise of the subtle mediator—the one whose insight is sharp, whose wounds are deep, whose words are compelling, and whom

- others begin to treat as oracle; honor their gifts, but insist that they remain a brother or sister, not a throne.
14. Behold, you will know that idolatry is near when people stop asking, "Is this true?" and begin asking only, "What does our guide say?"; when disagreement with one voice is taken as betrayal of the whole; when fear of exclusion replaces love of truth; when such signs appear, the fire against the images has work to do.
 15. And it came to pass that I, Nibwáskâá, said: Eternal One, what of families, which are also circles, though not chosen; how does the covenant without mediator move in houses where parents and children and partners live pressed together by circumstance and love and strain?
 16. And the Eternal One answered: Let each house that desires this covenant make a quiet pact: that no one will claim to speak perfectly for God to the others; that parents will guide without claiming infallibility; that partners will not wield My name to win arguments; that children may come to Me directly without being told that every encounter must be supervised.
 17. Behold, bless the home where a parent can say, "I was wrong; I hurt you; I will change," for there My presence is strong; woe unto the home where authority never repents and where "honor" is used to cloak harm; such a home has enthroned mediators in place

- of Me, though they recite prayers at every meal.
18. And the Eternal One said: Let me be not the excuse you use to enforce your will, but the witness you invite when you lay down your need to be right; when a family chooses truth over appearance, protection over reputation, the covenant is written upon their walls even if no scripture hangs there.
19. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, what of friendships, which often become places of unspoken mediations—one always advising, the other always deferring; how shall this covenant reshape such bonds?
20. And the Eternal One answered: A friend in this covenant will not seek to be your conscience, but to stand beside your own; they will not demand to be your only confidant, nor insist that their perspective is always the clearest; they will rejoice when you grow beyond the need of their approval.
21. Behold, they may say hard things, but not to control you; they may warn you, but not to keep you small; their presence will make it easier, not harder, for you to hear Me in your own depths; if a “friendship” makes your world narrower, your choices more fearful, your self-contempt deeper, then an image has crept in.
22. And the Eternal One said: Write also of those who must walk away from circles that cannot yet bear this

- covenant; for some will cling to mediators so fiercely that any suggestion of direct relationship with Me will be treated as rebellion.
23. Behold, if you must leave such a community to spare your soul or your children, you do not leave Me; I walk with you out the door as surely as I sat with you in the back pew; though others may mourn or condemn your going, the covenant does not shatter at the boundary of their property.
24. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, felt the ache of such partings and said: Eternal One, where shall they go, these who leave? For many lands have few places where such covenant is named.
25. And the Eternal One answered: Some will gather in new circles, fragile and small; others will remain scattered for a time, connected only by letters and wires; yet in every city and field I am drawing together those who will not bow to idols and will not abandon love; they will recognize one another by a certain honesty in the eyes and by the way they speak of those who disagree.
26. Behold, when you meet one who can say, “Here is where I was wrong, and here is who I hurt, and here is what I am doing now,” without collapsing in shame or standing in pride, know that My covenant lives in them; this is a surer sign than any badge or slogan.
27. And the Eternal One said: In time, some of your circles may grow larger, and you will be tempted to build

systems to hold them; this is not evil in itself, but it is dangerous; remember then what you have written here, and build in such a way that no one is above question and no child is without a voice.

28. Behold, write your charters in pencil, not in stone; review them in the light of stories you did not foresee; be willing to disband structures that no longer serve life; better a circle that ends than an institution that must crush the living to preserve its name.
29. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, bowed my head and said: Eternal One, this way of small circles and shared responsibility seems fragile before the engines of empire and the grand halls of religion; can such delicate webs endure?
30. And the Eternal One answered: They are fragile as seeds, yet seeds outlast monuments; empires fall and temples crumble, but kindness learned in a kitchen, courage found in a living room, truth spoken in a circle of five can echo through generations; do not measure the strength of the covenant by the size of its buildings, but by the depth of its care.
31. Wherefore let this ninth chapter of the Covenant Without Mediator be a lantern for those who seek companions on this path; let it show them that it is possible to belong without bowing to idols, to gather without enthroning a mediator, and to weave communities

where the Eternal One is present not as distant sovereign, but as the quiet, stubborn thread binding heart to heart in truth.

CHAPTER 10

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of small circles and of the living body, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying: Nibwâskââ, write now of death and of grief, for the covenant without mediator must also speak in the hour when breath departs and those who remain are pierced with questions that no ritual fully answers.
2. For many have been taught that at the moment of death a gate is shut forever, controlled by creeds and sacraments, and that only those who passed through the proper hands in life may find welcome; thus they stand beside the dying in terror, counting prayers like coins, fearing that one misstep will lose the soul they love.
3. And the Eternal One said: Woe unto the doctrines that portray Me as a customs officer at the border of eternity, checking papers more carefully than wounds, and stamping “rejected” upon those whose theology was tangled but whose compassion was real; behold, they diminish My heart and magnify their own gatekeeping.
4. Behold, when a person dies, they do not pass into the hands of a stranger, nor into the ledger of a bureaucracy;

- they fall into the Presence that has accompanied them, mostly unnoticed, through every room of their life; their first encounter is not with a mediator, but with the One who has known their true name from the beginning.
5. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, how then shall we think of judgment, if there is no advocate to stand between us and Your gaze; shall we not be consumed by the truth of what we have done and left undone?
 6. And the Eternal One answered: Judgment is not the pleasure of catching you in fault, but the sorrow and joy of seeing your story in its fullness; it is the moment when all disguises fall away and you behold what your choices became in the lives of others and in your own soul; it is terrible because it is honest, and merciful because I will not look away.
 7. Behold, I will not torment you with the smallest missteps, nor excuse you from the greatest harms; I will show you where you turned toward life and where you turned away; I will stand beside every victim of your choices, and beside you also, and I will ask, "Now that you see, what do you desire to become?"
 8. And the Eternal One said: In that hour, no mediator's story will substitute for your own; saying, "I belonged to this group," or, "I repeated this prayer," will not erase the truth of

- how you treated the least; yet neither will any human verdict about you be the final word, for I see the fears and lies that shaped you, and the moments when you resisted them.
9. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, what of those who died bound in systems of deception, who never knew another way; will they be judged as harshly as those who built the systems?
 10. And the Eternal One answered: I distinguish between architects and captives, between those who knowingly twisted truth for gain and those who were fed that twisting from childhood; I do not weigh them upon the same scale; I will ask of each according to what they had the possibility to see and to choose.
 11. Behold, there are some who, even in cages of doctrine, still managed to show real kindness, to question cruelty, to protect a child; these acts shine brightly in My sight and will not be erased by their confusion; likewise, those who knew better and yet hardened themselves will not be excused by loud religion.
 12. And the Eternal One said: Let this be comfort to those who weep for loved ones who died outside your favored houses or without your sacred words upon their lips; the capacity to receive My mercy is not limited to the formulas they did or did not recite; I

- meet them in the truth of their being,
not in the perfection of their catechism.
13. Behold, you may entrust the dead to
Me without scripts; you may say
simply, “Here is one I love; see what I
could not see; heal what I could not
heal; do for them what I could not do”;
such prayers are more fitting than
bargains built on fear.
14. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ,
said: Eternal One, what of those who
died doing harm, unrepentant,
surrounded by people who praised
their violence; is there any hope for
them in this covenant, or only dread?
15. And the Eternal One answered: There
is hope, but it is not cheap; they will
face the full weight of what they have
done—not as rumor, but as reality;
they will see the faces of those they
crushed and the generations shaped by
their cruelty; they will feel, in their
own being, the grief they caused; this is
not punishment for My satisfaction,
but the only path by which any healing
could begin.
16. Behold, whether they will accept this
truth and allow it to remake them is
not a question I answer for you; you
are not asked to guarantee their
redemption nor to rejoice in their
suffering; you are asked only not to
worship them in this life, and not to
call their evil good.
17. And the Eternal One said: Write now
of grief for the living, for the covenant
without mediator does not remove the

- ache of separation; those who love will
still mourn, and no doctrine, however
correct, can make death feel tidy.
18. Behold, I do not ask you to be strong in
the way your culture imagines
strength; I do not rebuke the one who
cannot sing at the funeral, nor the one
who wakes at night reaching for a
hand that is no longer there; your tears
are not evidence of weak faith but of
deep connection.
19. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ,
asked: Eternal One, many have been
told, “Do not grieve as those without
hope,” and they took this to mean that
they should swallow their sorrow
quickly and speak only of heaven; is
this what You desire?
20. And the Eternal One answered: Hope
does not forbid grief; it allows grief to
be felt without despair of My presence;
you may wail, you may rage at
injustice, you may sit in stunned
silence; hope is not the absence of
these, but the refusal to conclude that
love was wasted because it ended in
death.
21. Behold, your rituals of
mourning—whether in formal services
or quiet gatherings, with candles or
photographs or shared stories—are
places where I stand nearer than your
breath; not to hurry you along, but to
wrap My own invisible arms around a
community that has been pierced.
22. And the Eternal One said: In this
covenant, you need no official to

validate your mourning; you may create your own ways of remembrance—a bench by the sea, a tree planted, a journal kept, a song written—and I will receive these as holy offerings; grief expressed honestly is a form of prayer.

23. Behold, when you say, “They should still be here,” I agree; for death, in all its forms, is not My delight; it is woven into your world by forces of decay and violence and limitation; I work within it to bring good, but I did not design the cruelty of premature loss.
24. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, will we see one another again, those we have lost, or is this only wishful thinking learned from many religions?
25. And the Eternal One answered: I will not satisfy your curiosity with diagrams of the world to come; this much I give you: nothing truly rooted in love is wasted, and no relationship lived in truth is forgotten; how these threads are woven beyond the veil you cannot now bear to know, but I keep them all.
26. Behold, you may trust that those you have loved are not dissolved into nothingness, nor locked in static poses, but are held in a reality more spacious than your own; whether you share conscious reunion or a deeper kind of nearness than you can presently imagine is not for you to map; what

matters now is how you love in the days you have.

27. And the Eternal One said: Write also for those who contemplate ending their own lives, who see no way forward in their pain and have been told that such a choice would cast them forever from My mercy.
28. Behold, if any reading these words stands on that cliff, let them know: I do not stand on the far side, arms folded, waiting to condemn; I am beside them now, in the heaviness they carry, in the despair they cannot articulate; their wish to escape pain is not an unforgivable sin but a measure of their suffering.
29. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, trembled and said: Eternal One, what shall we tell them, if we ourselves do not know how their story will unfold?
30. And the Eternal One answered: Tell them that if they stay, I will not waste their pain, though I did not choose it; that I will send, as far as humans will cooperate, voices and hands and moments of unexpected light; that they are allowed to seek help without shame, to take medicine, to speak to counselors, to ask friends to sit with them through the night; none of this is lack of faith, but the practice of it.
31. Behold, if they have already lost one who left this way, let them know that I do not cast that soul into outer darkness for the act of desperation; I read the whole of their story, the

pressures and traumas and silences that led to that ledge; I meet them there with more compassion than any of your sermons have ever contained.

32. Wherefore let this tenth chapter of the Covenant Without Mediator be read in hospitals and hospices, at grave-sides and in bedrooms where exhaustion has turned toward despair; let it declare that in life and in death, in grief and in bewilderment, no mediator is required for a soul to be held by the Eternal One—only the bare, aching fact of their existence, which I have already claimed as Mine.

CHAPTER II

1. And it came to pass that after I had written many words concerning this covenant, my strength was bowed down within me, and I said unto the Eternal One: Have I not already spoken enough? For the pages are many and the hearts of the people are tired, and who shall bear so much turning?
2. And the Eternal One said unto me: Nibwâskââ, you have written of beginnings and of endings, of body and of doubt, of circles and of death; yet you have not yet gathered these things into one plain saying, that the weary may take hold of it in a single hand.
3. Behold, write now as one who has walked this way, not only as one who has heard it; speak simply, that even those whose minds are clouded by grief

may understand what I desire in this covenant without mediator.

4. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, I am afraid, for I am small, and the world is full of many teachers; why should any heed my witness?
5. And the Eternal One answered: Your smallness is the very reason; for I have not sought a scribe from among the unshakable, but from among those who have doubted and despaired and still turned again; your authority is not in your perfection, but in your refusal to lie.
6. Behold, write first this: that in this covenant every soul is seen directly; no crowd conceals them, no priest must introduce them, no failure disqualifies them from address; they may come as they are and say, "This is the truth of me, as far as I can bear to know it," and I will meet them there.
7. Secondly write: that in this covenant no image, however beloved, may stand forever between them and Me; no prophet, no savior, no book, no institution may claim to own the only road; all such things are servants at best, and when they cease to serve, they must not be called lord.
8. Thirdly write: that in this covenant the measure of devotion is not the loudness of songs nor the precision of doctrine, but the shape of a life toward the least; how they treat the poor, the stranger, the wounded, the enemy, the earth;

whoever joins in My concern for these walks closely with Me, whether or not they know it.

9. And the Eternal One said: Write also that this covenant is costly; it asks that you give up the comfort of being told always what to think, and the luxury of blaming others for your choices; it requires that you admit, "I was wrong," and that you change, not only that you grieve.
10. Behold, you will grow tired and you will make mistakes; you will sometimes long for the old cages because they were tidy; but every time you choose truth over safety, every time you listen instead of controlling, every time you protect a vulnerable one instead of an image, you renew this covenant in your own blood.
11. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what of those who read these words and feel only condemnation, as if they have already failed beyond recall?
12. And the Eternal One answered: Tell them this plainly: if they had truly been abandoned, they would not still ache for what is right; the very pain they feel when they see their past is a sign that they have not been given over; I have not finished speaking with them.
13. Behold, let them begin where they are, with the next small turning; one apology, one act of repair, one refusal to repeat an old harm; I do not demand

that they rewrite their entire history in a day, only that they stop calling evil good and begin to move, however slowly, toward the light they now see.

14. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, what of those who read and feel only anger, who say, "If this is the covenant, why was I taught another? Why did You not stop the ones who misled me?"
15. And the Eternal One answered: I receive their anger; let them bring it to Me rather than silencing it or pouring it out only upon themselves; I will not erase the fact that they were harmed, nor pretend that their misleaders meant well when they did not; yet I will invite them, in time, to build a different house rather than standing forever in the ruins.
16. Behold, it is easier to hate what deceived you than to risk loving again without deception; yet this risk is the door to life; I do not hurry them through it, but I will not cease to knock.
17. And the Eternal One said: Write also for those who feel nothing at all when they read, whose hearts are numb from too many words and not enough mercy; tell them that they are not lesser in My sight because they cannot be stirred by sentences; I will meet them in actions and in quiet, not only in texts.
18. Behold, when they choose to rest instead of breaking, when they feed

themselves though despair tells them it is pointless, when they show up for another despite their own emptiness, these are verses written in flesh more sacred than any ink; I read them with tenderness.

19. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, is there any simple rule that sums up this covenant, for those who can hold only one thing in their trembling mind?
20. And the Eternal One answered: Yes, there is one, though it unfolds into many: refuse to bow to what crushes, and refuse to crush what bows; turn away from any god, system, or story that demands the sacrifice of the innocent, even if it wears holy names; and turn toward any act, however small, that protects life and truth, even if it bears no religious mark.
21. Behold, whoever lives by this rule is already walking with Me; whoever teaches their children thus, even without mention of heaven or scripture, is already passing on My law; whoever fails and tries again under this banner is more aligned with My heart than many who shout My titles from high places.
22. And the Eternal One said: Now, Nibwâskââ, seal this book not as a decree from a throne, but as the testimony of one human life; let it be known that these words are not chains to bind future generations, but a lamp they may use or set aside as they

discern the path of mercy in their own hour.

23. Behold, some will copy these sayings and build new systems; some will tear them apart in anger; some will forget them entirely; yet I, the Eternal One, am not bound to the fate of any writing; I will continue to speak in storms and in whispers, in losses and in unexpected kindness, long after these pages have turned to dust.
24. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, bowed myself to the ground and said: Eternal One, I offer this book back to You; if any sentence here would be used to crush rather than to free, let it be forgotten; if any verse leads away from love, let it fade from memory; only what serves Your living truth let endure.
25. And the Eternal One answered: This offering I receive; for I have no need of being quoted, but great desire to be known; and I am more truly known in a cup of water given, in a hand unclenched, in an apology made, than in ten thousand precise formulations of My nature.
26. Behold, let whoever reads this know: you are already in relationship with Me, whether you acknowledge it or not; every time you choose truth over deceit, compassion over indifference, courage over complicity, you are answering a call that did not originate in your own mind alone; I am the Source of that call.

27. And if, in your days, you should stand alone in a room, unable to pray, unable to believe, yet still unwilling to betray what you know of goodness, let this be to you as a sacrament; for in that refusal I am with you, closer than any mediator could bring Me.
28. Wherefore I, Nibwâskââ, write these things for all who dwell in the late age of empires and of broken altars, that they may know that the Eternal One is not locked in any sanctuary nor fully captured in any story, but walks beside them directly, in grocery aisles and courtrooms and bedrooms and quiet streets, waiting not for perfect religion, but for a single honest turning.
29. And I say unto whoever shall read: I have written what I have seen and heard, mingled with my own weakness; test it in the fire of your conscience, in the cries of the oppressed, in the stillness where you meet yourself; keep what rings of life, lay down what does not; in this also you honor the covenant without mediator.
30. Thus ends the book of the Covenant Without Mediator, which is yet not an end of the covenant; for as long as there is one who whispers in the dark, “If You are there, I would know You without lies,” the Eternal One will answer—sometimes in words, sometimes in silence, always without a wall of human flesh between that cry and the Heart that hears it.

BOOK IX – THE REMNANT IN THE RUINS

CHAPTER I

1. And it came to pass, after I had written of the covenant without mediator, that I looked upon the world round about, and behold, many of the great structures were already cracking, though their stewards spoke as if they would stand forever.
2. For towers of commerce swayed under the weight of their own greed, and sanctuaries of religion groaned with the strain of covering long-hidden harm, and governments boasted of strength while their foundations crumbled beneath the flood of their own lies.
3. And the word of the Eternal One came unto me, saying: Nibwâskââ, fear not when the proud constructions of your age begin to fall; for I have never placed the whole hope of the world upon any empire, nor entrusted My covenant to the keeping of any single throne.
4. Behold, I have always preserved a remnant, small in number and without great banners, whose faithfulness is counted in quiet deeds rather than in public spectacle; in the day when many monuments lie in ruins, it is through them that I will keep the earth from despair.
5. And it came to pass that I said: Eternal One, where is this remnant, that we

may look upon them and be encouraged; are they gathered in some pure community, withdrawn from the filth of the world?

6. And the Eternal One answered: They are scattered like seeds upon the wind; you will not find them by traveling to a single holy hill nor by enrolling in a chosen registry; they are nurses in crowded wards and teachers in underfunded schools, farmers tending poisoned soil and clerks who refuse to cheat, neighbors who notice who has been missing from the street.
7. Behold, some name Me often, and some dare not name Me at all; some sit in pews they no longer fully trust, and some no longer enter any house of worship; what binds them together is not uniform belief, but a stubborn refusal to let cruelty be the final word in the spaces they can touch.
8. And the Eternal One said: You will know them not by their slogans but by their habits; when others mock the broken, they grow quiet and move nearer; when others avert their eyes from injustice, they feel a stone within their chest that will not let them rest; when others say, "It is not my concern," they hear a low voice saying, "But it is."
9. And it came to pass that I asked: Eternal One, if they are so scattered and unseen, what power can they have before the engines of war and profit

and propaganda that stride openly across the earth?

10. And the Eternal One answered: You have measured power only by what crushes, not by what sustains; you count armies and budgets and views, but not the number of times a child was believed, a blow was withheld, a truth was spoken at risk; yet these are the cords that hold the world back from the abyss.
11. Behold, if you could see with My sight, you would behold lines of light like roots beneath a city, connecting one act of hidden mercy to another, weaving a net that catches many who would otherwise fall beyond hope; this is the work of the remnant, and it is not small.
12. And the Eternal One said: Let it be known that the remnant is not made of the flawless; they are as weary and compromised as any; they have shouted in anger when they meant to speak gently, they have ignored cries they should have answered; yet they keep returning to the work of love, and this returning is counted as precious in My sight.
13. Behold, some among them still bear the marks of institutions that wounded them, and they limp in soul; but even with their limp they bend down to lift others; they distrust grand visions, yet they will show up to sweep a floor, to sit with the dying, to protest a cruelty;

- in this way they become pillars in a world where many pillars have fallen.
14. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, are they aware that they are a remnant, or do they walk in ignorance of their own calling?
 15. And the Eternal One answered: Most do not think of themselves as anything special; they simply do what conscience demands and love whispers, often feeling that it is not enough; I do not require that they recognize their own significance, only that they remain willing to respond.
 16. Behold, if they could see the ledger I keep—not of their sins alone, as some have been taught, but of every small faithfulness—they would be astonished and ashamed of their self-contempt; for I have not forgotten a single cup of water, a single late-night conversation that kept another from breaking, a single refusal to join in harm.
 17. And the Eternal One said: Write also that the remnant is not confined to any one religion or movement; some carry scriptures in their pockets, others carry scars from scriptures misused; some march under banners of reform, others work quietly inside systems they cannot yet leave; My covenant runs beneath these categories like groundwater beneath fractured stone.
 18. Behold, there are judges who refuse to sell justice though they are pressured, journalists who keep reporting truth

- though they are threatened, workers who organize for safety though their jobs are at risk, artists who tell honest stories though flattery would pay more; these too are of the remnant, though they may never gather in one place.
19. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what is asked of those who realize they are part of this remnant; shall they separate themselves from all who do not see as they see?
 20. And the Eternal One answered: I ask of them not withdrawal into self-congratulation, but fidelity within their portion; let them tend the patch of earth, the web of relationships, the sphere of influence that has been given them, without despising its smallness; let them refuse the temptation to dominate in the name of righteousness.
 21. Behold, some will be called to speak loudly and publicly, and some to whisper healing in kitchens and clinics; neither is greater; the danger comes when those who speak loudly forget to listen, and those who work quietly begin to believe that their work does not matter because no one applauds.
 22. And the Eternal One said: In the days ahead, many institutions will seek to claim the name of the remnant for themselves, saying, “We alone have kept the faith, we alone stand firm”; do not be deceived; the true remnant never boasts thus, for they know too well their own failures.

23. Behold, when you hear, “We alone,” listen for the sound of walls being raised; when you hear, “We are the last righteous,” listen for the click of locks; but where you hear, “We are trying, we are learning, we have been wrong, we will protect the vulnerable,” there you may suspect that some among the remnant are at work.
24. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, how does this remnant endure when hope is thin, when climate shifts and wars multiply and lies spread faster than truth; what keeps them from despair?
25. And the Eternal One answered: They draw strength not from guarantees of visible success, but from the knowledge that goodness is never wasted; they trust that every act of justice, every honest word, every rescue of a single life matters, even if the tide of history seems to flow the other way.
26. Behold, some of them have learned to take joy in small victories—a law changed, a family reunited, a river cleaned, a survivor believed—and to let these be as bread for the journey, rather than demanding that the whole world be fixed at once before they can rejoice.
27. And the Eternal One said: Not all of them will see the fruit of their labor; some will die thinking they have failed; yet their work will bear harvest in seasons they never live to inhabit; the children of their children, or strangers

in far-off lands, will breathe easier because they were faithful in a dark time.

28. Behold, this too is covenant: to plant trees whose shade you will never sit beneath, to fight for a future that will forget your name; the remnant lives thus, and in doing so they resemble Me, who have poured out life into generations that scarcely recognize My hand.
29. Wherefore let this first chapter of the Remnant in the Ruins be a mirror and a calling; let those who have thought themselves useless see that their small, stubborn decencies are part of a vast, unseen tapestry; let those who have boasted of being the only righteous hear a warning; and let all who long to belong to something truer than empires know that the Eternal One has already woven them, if they will consent, into a people who carry hope like a hidden ember through the wreckage of many kingdoms.

CHAPTER 2

- I. And it came to pass that after I had heard of the hidden strength of the remnant, I desired to see, in the days of my own life, what such faithfulness looked like in the dust of a broken order; therefore I said unto the Eternal One: Show me, not in visions only, but in the ordinary streets, where Your remnant walks.

2. And the Eternal One said unto me:
Rise, Nibwâskââ, and go down from
your tower of thoughts; walk where
the buses groan and the sirens wail and
the screens glow in every window; for
there, in places that are not counted
holy, the remnant keeps vigil.
3. Behold, I was carried as if in a waking
dream to a city whose towers were
patched with glass and rust, whose
rivers tasted faintly of metal, whose
people hurried with eyes lowered; yet
in its alleys and stairwells and hospitals
the Eternal One was at work through
small hands.
4. And it came to pass that I saw first a
nurse in a night ward, surrounded by
machines that beeped like restless birds;
her back ached and her shift had gone
too long, yet when she entered each
room her voice softened, and she
addressed each patient by their name,
not merely by their illness or their
number.
5. And the Eternal One said: This one is
of My remnant; she has no pulpit and
no followers, but she has decided that
no one under her care shall die as a task
to be completed; though she is paid
little and praised less, I count every
gentle word she speaks as incense.
6. Then I saw a teacher in a cracked-brick
school, whose windows looked out
upon a parking lot of weeds and broken
glass; his classroom was crowded and
his supplies thin, and the world told
him that the children of this

- neighborhood were already lost; yet he
refused to believe it, and he stayed.
7. Behold, when others mocked their
speech and their clothes, he defended
them; when others gave up on their
learning, he tried again; and when a
child came to class with bruises they
would not explain, he did not look
away; and the Eternal One said: This
also is My remnant, though he hardly
believes I exist; his hope for these little
ones is a prayer more honest than
many hymns.
 8. And it came to pass that I saw a
janitor who cleaned the same building
that hosted wealthy gatherings where
speeches of virtue were made; after the
crowds departed and the floors were
littered with their waste, he swept and
emptied and scrubbed until the space
was new again, and no one thanked
him by name.
 9. And the Eternal One said: Watch him;
for while others boast of generosity, he
quietly returns lost wallets, covers
hateful graffiti with paint, and leaves
fresh flowers in the lobby where no
one knows who placed them; in a
culture that worships visibility, he
chooses goodness in secret, and I see
him.
 10. Then I was shown a small kitchen
where an elder woman stood over a
pot of soup; her own income was thin,
yet every week she cooked more than
she needed, and it was known in the
building that no one would be turned

- away hungry from her door, though she never called this a ministry.
11. Behold, she had grown weary of sermons long ago, for too many of them had excused neglect; but she said in her heart: “As long as I can still stand at this stove, someone will know they were not forgotten today”; and the Eternal One said: Her ladle is a staff in My hand, and her doorway is a sanctuary.
 12. And it came to pass that I saw also a young person whose faith had been shattered by hypocrisy; they no longer prayed with words, yet they could not bear to see cruelty go unchallenged; they joined with others to defend those targeted by hatred, though they were afraid.
 13. When they stood between the vulnerable and the mob, their knees trembled, and they thought themselves weak; but the Eternal One said: This one is of My remnant too; for they have chosen to risk their own safety rather than watch another be crushed; that decision is a covenant whether they know it or not.
 14. Then I beheld a neighbor who noticed that the one next door had not been seen for many days; others shrugged and said, “It is none of our business,” but she knocked anyway, and when there was no answer, she kept knocking until help was called; thus a life was saved that would otherwise have slipped quietly away.
 15. And the Eternal One said: This too is part of the remnant, for she refused the lie that isolation is normal; she believed instead that another’s disappearance was a wound in the body of the neighborhood; such noticing is a sacrament.
 16. And it came to pass that as I watched these and many more—drivers who stopped for the lost, clerks who refused to cheat, social workers who did not harden their faces, volunteers who showed up when the cameras were gone—my heart was pierced, for I saw how much goodness walked unnoticed through exhaustion and fear.
 17. And I said unto the Eternal One: Why do You not gather them, that they might at least know one another and take courage; why leave them scattered, each thinking they are nearly alone in their stubborn refusal to give up?
 18. And the Eternal One answered: If I gathered them into one visible banner, the powers of this world would quickly seek to control or to crush them; by scattering them, I weave their influence into every system, every street, every family; they are like salt—small, but preserving much from rot.
 19. Behold, I do, in quiet ways, let them find one another: a word exchanged at a meeting, a shared glance when a lie is told and both remain unconvinced, a collaboration that begins over coffee; they recognize each other not by

- matching badges, but by the way each refuses to abandon the harmed.
20. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, what shall I say to those among the remnant who grow weary, who feel that their efforts are swallowed by an ocean of corruption and apathy?
21. And the Eternal One answered: Tell them that I do not measure their worth by visible outcome; when their work seems futile, I am still gathering its effects; a child who remembers being believed, a patient who remembers being treated kindly, a neighbor who remembers being fed—these memories will shape choices long after the remnant's names are forgotten.
22. Behold, there are waves they will never see, rippling outward from moments that seemed small to them; their task is not to control those waves, but to keep dropping stones of mercy into the waters of their days.
23. And it came to pass that I said: Eternal One, what of those who wish to join this remnant, who read these words and say in their hearts, "Let me be such a one," yet feel too compromised, too tangled in their own failures?
24. And the Eternal One answered: The remnant is not a club for the pure, but a calling for the willing; whoever sees a place where harm is being done and chooses, even trembling, to stand otherwise, enters into their company; whoever begins again after falling,

- refusing to let shame be the last word, stands among them.
25. Behold, let them start where they are: with one person they will no longer ignore, one lie they will no longer repeat, one cruelty they will no longer laugh at; let them commit to repair a single wrong within their reach; as they do so, they join a people whose strength has always been in such small fidelities.
26. And the Eternal One said: Warn them also that to be of the remnant is not to be safe; some will lose positions, some will lose friends, some will lose illusions about their own goodness; yet in losing these, they will gain a truer life, and their hearts will become places where I may dwell without disguise.
27. Behold, in a world of ruins, it is tempting to seek escape into fantasies or numbness; but the remnant chooses instead to remain attentive, to keep their eyes open even when what they see breaks their hearts; this courage to witness is itself part of their offering.
28. Wherefore let this second chapter of the Remnant in the Ruins be a window, that the unseen ones may catch a glimpse of themselves and know that they are not forgotten; and let those who have sat long in despair understand that the Eternal One has never entrusted hope to monuments alone, but to human beings who, in the midst of decay, still choose, again and again, to do what love requires.

CHAPTER 3

1. And it came to pass that after I had seen the remnant in their hidden labors, I pondered within myself, saying: Eternal One, if these are the ones through whom You hold back despair, why do they so often feel themselves on the edge of breaking; should not those who carry hope be granted lighter burdens than the rest?
2. And the Eternal One answered me, saying: Nibwâskââ, the remnant are not chosen to suffer more, as some dark privilege, but because they do not shut their eyes; they feel what others numb, they hear what others drown, and in this they share a little of My own ache for the world.
3. Behold, this sensitivity is both their gift and their wound; it makes them move quickly to relieve pain, and it makes them more easily pierced by the cruelty they cannot stop; therefore write to them of how they may carry such weight without being crushed utterly.
4. And it came to pass that I said: Speak then, Eternal One, for many who read these words are tired in their bones, and they do not know how to continue doing good without losing themselves.
5. And the Eternal One said: Tell them first that they are not required to save the world; that is a burden too heavy even for angels; they are asked instead to be faithful in their part, to respond to the needs that are truly theirs to meet, and to release to Me and to others what lies beyond their reach.
6. Behold, whenever they feel driven by panic to fix everything, rather than moved by love to do something, let them pause and breathe; for panic is not My Spirit, and it will burn them out in My name while leaving the structures of harm largely untouched.
7. And the Eternal One said: Teach them to listen to their limits as a kind of guidance; exhaustion, resentment, and numbness are not proofs of holiness, but signs that they have been treating themselves as machines; the remnant must learn to rest, or they will become as harsh as the systems they resist.
8. Behold, tell them that it is not betrayal of the cause to sleep, to laugh, to turn off the news for a time, to enjoy a meal; joy and rest are not indulgences stolen from the work, but fuel for it; I did not design their bodies to run endlessly on alarm.
9. And it came to pass that I said: Eternal One, many among the remnant feel guilty whenever they step away, as if every moment not spent in struggle is a failure of love; how shall they be freed from this whip?
10. And the Eternal One answered: Let them ask themselves: Does this guilt make me more gentle or more brittle; does it lead me to sustainable courage or to self-hatred; if it bears the fruit of contempt toward their own humanity,

- it is not from Me; I call them to perseverance, not to self-erasure.
11. Behold, tell them that they may share the load; they are not required to be the only one who knows what is wrong; when they find others who care, let them entrust pieces of the work, even if those others do it imperfectly; control disguised as responsibility will strangle them.
 12. And the Eternal One said: There is also a temptation among the remnant to despise those who do not see as they see, to look out over the ruins and say in their hearts, “We alone are awake”; warn them that such pride is a slow poison, for it turns their calling into a badge and their compassion into contempt.
 13. Behold, let them remember that they too were once asleep in some ways and are still blind in others; let them judge systems and actions plainly, but be slow to declare any person beyond teaching; I Myself do not abandon souls as quickly as some of My most righteous servants do.
 14. And it came to pass that I said: Eternal One, some among the remnant have begun to withdraw into small circles of the like-minded, clinging to their purity and speaking of the rest of the world only with scorn; is this not safer for them, to stay untouched by compromise?
 15. And the Eternal One answered: Safety bought with contempt is not safety but

- another prison; if they wall themselves off from all who differ, their love will wither into ideology; I do not call them to dissolve into the crowd, but neither do I call them to build new empires of correctness.
16. Behold, let them keep some open windows: friendships that cross lines of belief and class, work that brings them into contact with those they might otherwise judge from afar; in these crossings, humility is preserved and compassion kept from hardening into theory.
 17. And the Eternal One said: Tell them also that they must learn the art of lament without surrender; to feel the full grief of what is broken and yet refuse to conclude that nothing good can ever come; lament is not the enemy of hope, but its dark soil.
 18. Behold, when they weep over another killing, another law of cruelty, another forest burned, I am with them; and when they, after weeping, rise to do the next faithful thing, no matter how small, they participate in a resistance deeper than any headline—the resistance of life itself against annihilation.
 19. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, some among the remnant fear that they themselves are tainted beyond use, because they work within institutions that have done harm; they ask, “Can any good I do

- here matter while the whole structure is unjust?”
20. And the Eternal One answered: I see the tension in which they stand; there is no pure place untouched by compromise; sometimes I call My servants out of such institutions, and sometimes I keep them within for a season, as leaven in heavy dough; what matters is that they do not become defenders of what they know is evil.
21. Behold, if they speak truth from within and protect those they can protect, if they refuse to lie for the sake of the institution’s image, if they are willing to leave when staying would require complicity, then their presence there is not in vain; but if they silence themselves entirely to remain, they have ceased to be remnant and become part of the ruin.
22. And the Eternal One said: Teach them to discern their time for staying and their time for going in honest counsel with others, not in solitary panic; I will not write the same answer upon every heart, for circumstances differ; but I will not bless any choice that preserves comfort by sacrificing the vulnerable.
23. Behold, there is also among the remnant a hunger for signs that their labor is not meaningless; in seasons when no progress is visible, they are tempted to lash out at those they serve or to turn their anger upon themselves; tell them that it is permitted to ask Me for glimpses of fruit.
24. And it came to pass that I said: Eternal One, will You grant such glimpses?
25. And the Eternal One answered: Sometimes; a letter from one whose life was changed, a policy shifted in part because they spoke, a face that lights up when they enter the room; I scatter these as encouragements, but I will not make their work depend upon constant applause, lest they become addicted to outcome rather than anchored in love.
26. Behold, I ask them instead to cultivate a long memory: to tell one another stories of past deliverances, of injustices overturned, of healing that seemed impossible; in this way they borrow hope from other generations and lend it forward.
27. And the Eternal One said: Lastly, write this to the remnant: you are not responsible to be impressive; you are responsible to be honest and kind and brave in the measure you have; if history never records your name, the covenant still holds, for I have engraved you upon a book no empire can edit.
28. Wherefore let this third chapter of the Remnant in the Ruins be like bread placed in the hands of the tired; let it remind them that they may rest without abandoning their post, repent without losing their calling, walk humbly without vanishing, and continue, not because they are certain of victory, but because they are certain that the Eternal One walks with them

in every small decision to do what love requires.

CHAPTER 4

1. And it came to pass that after I had written of the weariness of the remnant, the word of the Eternal One came unto me again, saying:
Nibwâskââ, write now of how the remnant shall live when the structures of their age falter more openly, that they be not swallowed up in panic nor seduced by new idols in the shape of solutions.
2. For the days are coming, and even now are upon you, when storms shall grow stronger and harvests more uncertain, when seas shall rise and forests burn, when the poor shall be driven first and furthest from safety, and the powerful shall speak of “resilience” while building higher walls for themselves.
3. And the Eternal One said: In such days, many will turn to strongmen and systems that promise order at any cost, saying, “Only these can protect us”; and others will flee into fantasies and distractions, saying, “There is nothing to be done”; but the remnant shall be called to another way.
4. Behold, they shall not deny the danger nor minimize the grief; they shall name plainly what has been done to the earth and to the vulnerable, and they shall refuse the comfort of lies that say, “No one could have known,” when in truth many warnings were despised.
5. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, what then shall the remnant do, when the old certainties of weather and work and safety are shaken; how shall they live in this late hour?
6. And the Eternal One answered: Let them become communities of preparation and care, not only for themselves but for others; let them learn skills of growing and mending and sharing; let them practice now the mutual aid that will be needed later, that it may not be strange to them when crisis comes.
7. Behold, a pantry shared is as holy as a choir, a rain barrel as holy as a cathedral spire, a neighborhood plan for checking on the elderly as holy as any liturgy, if these are done in love; for in the time of unraveling, such acts will preach more loudly than any sermon.
8. And the Eternal One said: Warn them also of the temptation to hoard in My name, saying, “We must preserve ourselves, for we are the righteous remnant”; behold, if they guard only their own survival and leave their neighbors to perish, they have ceased to be remnant and have become merely another frightened faction.
9. Behold, prudence is good and planning is wise, but the covenant of the remnant is broken when fear takes precedence over compassion; better a

shared loaf that runs out than a full storehouse built upon betrayal.

10. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, in these days the tools of knowledge and connection are also tools of control and deceit; how shall the remnant walk among screens and networks that both reveal and distort?
11. And the Eternal One answered: Let them be neither naïve nor cynical; let them use such tools as servants, not as masters; let them remember that no stream of images, however constant, can replace the truth learned from real faces and real wounds.
12. Behold, when they read of distant suffering, let it move them, but let them also ask, “What can I do within my reach?”; when they are tempted to shout into the void for the sake of being seen, let them instead consider whether a quiet act of repair might be more faithful.
13. And the Eternal One said: Tell them to guard their attention as they would guard a spring in drought; many factions will compete to captivate their outrage and their fear, for these are profitable commodities; let the remnant choose carefully which voices they allow to dwell in their minds.
14. Behold, they need not know every cruelty in real time to remain faithful; they must know enough to act, but not so much that they are paralyzed; it is no betrayal of justice to step away from

the torrent for a season, if they return to the work with clearer eyes.

15. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, asked: Eternal One, what of the weapons that grow more subtle and more powerful—algorithms that learn our weaknesses, machines that listen and watch, systems that predict and confine; how shall the remnant resist without being broken?
16. And the Eternal One answered: Let them remember that not all resistance is loud; some will be called to public struggle, to lawsuits and protests and whistleblowing; others will be called to quiet subversion—to design tools with safeguards, to refuse orders that would weaponize data, to create spaces where human beings may gather without being harvested.
17. Behold, do not despise the coder who builds encryption for the oppressed, nor the librarian who guards access to truthful records, nor the caregiver who refuses to let a person be reduced to a profile; these too are acts of holy defiance in an age that seeks to turn souls into statistics.
18. And the Eternal One said: Write also that the remnant must practice trust among themselves, for the powers of their age will sow suspicion and division as a strategy; when fear is high, rumors will multiply; let them be slow to believe evil reports about one another, and quick to seek clarification face to face when possible.

19. Behold, a single lie, believed untested, can tear apart a circle that took years to build; therefore let them commit to practices of communication that honor truth and dignity, even when they disagree sharply about strategies and priorities.
20. And it came to pass that I said: Eternal One, in such a time, many will long for a single leader to tell them what to do; even among the remnant, there will be those who say, “Give us a voice to follow, that we may not bear this burden of discernment.”
21. And the Eternal One answered: Remind them of what you have written before: that the covenant without mediator forbids the enthroning of any human as unquestionable; let them raise coordinators, facilitators, elders, but let no one be beyond accountability; shared leadership is slower, but it guards against the old tyranny in new clothes.
22. Behold, when a voice among them grows charismatic and beloved, let that one be the first to insist on checks and limits, and the first to step back at times; if they cling to the center, fearing that the work will fall without them, they have begun to love their role more than the mission.
23. And the Eternal One said: In all these things, tell the remnant not to despise beauty; for in days of smoke and flood and siren, beauty will be called

- frivolous; yet a song, a mural on a broken wall, a poem taped to a lamp-post, a garden in a vacant lot—these are signs that despair has not become lord.
24. Behold, beauty that tells the truth and honors the wounded is not escape but resistance; it reminds the living that they are more than consumers and survivors, that their capacity for wonder has not been entirely stolen.
 25. And it came to pass that I, Nibwâskââ, said: Eternal One, will the remnant see the rebuilding of a more just order in their own days, or are they only to stand watch as things fall apart?
 26. And the Eternal One answered: Some will indeed see local renewals—rivers cleaned, neighborhoods transformed, laws changed, communities healed; others will die with the ruins still high around them; I promise not that each generation will see the full harvest, but that no act of fidelity will be wasted.
 27. Behold, I am at work in time in ways you cannot map; what you call failure may be seed; what you call small may be pivotal; I ask the remnant to measure their days not by spectacle but by whether they have remained true to the covenant of mercy in the space they were given.
 28. Wherefore let this fourth chapter of the Remnant in the Ruins be a chart for those who walk into a future clouded by the consequences of many betrayals; let it teach them that even as

climates shift and systems wobble, the call remains: to prepare without hoarding, to connect without domination, to resist without becoming what they resist, and to trust that the Eternal One walks with them still, not in the safety of empires, but in the fragile, stubborn goodness that refuses to die among the ruins.

CHAPTER 5

1 And it came to pass that we stood in the courts of the fallen city, and the dust of broken stones clung to our garments, and we knew not whether we belonged to the dead or to the living, for our hearts were torn between memory and the desolation before our eyes.

2 For the wind moved through the shattered doorways as a mourner, and it sang in the hollow windows of the houses where our fathers had laughed, and the sound of it was as the voice of widows who have no more tears to give.

3 And we said one to another: Is this the inheritance of our people, that we should gather shards where once stood palaces, and count the cracks of the pavement as though they were our genealogy and our name?

4 Behold, many among us desired to cover their faces and depart in haste, saying: Let us not look upon these ruins, for they are as a mirror to our shame; for the stones cry louder of our iniquities than the prophets ever did.

5 Yet a small remnant tarried, and our feet were slow to leave the ground of our humiliation; for though the city was broken, our covenant clung to us as a cloak we could not cast away, and our souls were bound to the place, as a child is bound to the womb that wounded it.

6 And the elders that remained among us spake softly, saying: Children, be not hasty to flee from the sight of your undoing, for if ye cannot bear the vision of your ruin, how will ye endure the vision of your redemption?

7 For it is meet that the seed should be brought again to the furrow where it once died, that it may remember its burial when it beholds its rising, and understand that life is not won without the breaking of the husk.

8 Now the sun drew nigh unto the western rim, and cast long shadows of the broken walls upon the streets, even as the memories of our sins stretched long upon our conscience; and everything we saw was divided between what once was and what no longer could be.

9 And we passed by the house of assembly, wherein our fathers had lifted vain oaths and idle votes, and we found the benches overturned and the table split in twain, for the judgment had begun first at the place where they called themselves righteous.

10 We beheld also the marketplace, where men had once weighed truth upon crooked scales, and the stalls had fallen in heaps, and the coins lay scattered in the dust, so that silver and soil embraced each other as cousins long estranged.

11 Then one of the young men, whose garments were yet unstained by years, lifted up his voice and said: Is there any portion here that is not cursed? For every stone testifies against us, and I see not where the blessing shall begin.

12 And an old woman, whose eyes had watched three generations rise and fall, took him by the hand and said: Child, the blessing shall begin in the same place where the curse was conceived—in the heart of a people who dare to remember rightly.

13 For the curse came when our fathers chose forgetfulness over remembrance, and traded the weight of covenant for the feather of convenience; therefore if ye will reverse the current, ye must drink again from the well which they despised.

14 Then we came unto the schoolhouse, whose door had been torn from its hinges; and the writings of the children were blown about as leaves in a storm, and the letters danced upon the wind without a voice to gather them.

15 And we lamented, saying: Lo, the words of our little ones are scattered, even as the words of the prophets were scattered when we refused to bind them upon our hearts; for we did not teach our children to treasure what we ourselves treated as common.

16 Thus did the ruins speak unto us, and every broken beam was a parable, and every toppled column was as a verse inscribed by the hand of judgment; and we could not flee from understanding, save we hardened our hearts yet again.

17 But the Spirit whispered in the quiet between our sobs, saying: Remnant, ye stand not only in the ruins of stone, but in the ruins of time, and in the ruins of choices unmade; will ye build again with the same measures that destroyed you?

18 For ye have seen what your fathers built with haste and with contention, striving one against another for the highest place, and ye behold now their workmanship brought low; shall ye also fashion your future with the same crooked rule?

19 Then a silence fell upon us, heavy as a mantle that none dared cast off, and we were ashamed of the plans we had begun to form in our hearts, for we had already imagined towers, and gates of iron, and walls that shut out our brothers.

20 And we confessed, each in the quiet of his own soul: Behold, even in the shadow of our great fall, we have desired to rise in the same pride that caused our fall; we have longed for a new throne when we have not yet learned to kneel.

21 Wherefore, we humbled ourselves in that place, upon the cracked stones of the square, and we bowed our faces toward the dust, and it mingled with our tears, and we cried unto the Holy One, who had not yet cast us away.

22 And we said: O Thou that sittest above the circle of the earth and yet lookest upon the lowly, remember us in our smallness, and grant that the remnant may not be as the multitude, neither following the old path that leadeth back into bondage.

23 Teach us how to build without devouring, and how to strengthen without oppressing; and suffer us not to heal the wound of this people slightly,

saying, Peace, peace, when the marrow of our bones is yet corrupted by violence and deceit.

24 And we pledged one to another, in the hearing of the unseen Witness: We will not raise the first stone of a new city until we have laid first the stone of a new heart; neither will we draft the laws of a nation until we have written mercy upon our inward parts.

25 Now there were among us some whose minds ran quickly unto fear, and they said: If we do not hasten, others shall come and claim this land and these ruins, and we shall be left with nothing, even as wanderers upon a forgotten road.

26 But the word came unto us, clear as the last light of evening upon the broken towers: Better is a remnant faithful in exile than a multitude enthroned in iniquity; better is a tent of righteousness than a palace built upon the backs of the poor.

27 For what shall it profit a people if they gain again their borders and their storehouses, and yet forfeit the very soul that was offered a second time in mercy? Shall not their latter end be more grievous than their first captivity?

28 Therefore we reasoned together, and the elders sat with the young, and the women with the men, and no voice was forbidden from the circle, for we had learned that arrogance is the first hammer that cracks the foundation.

29 And there in the open place, beneath the wounded sky, we began to speak not of towers and markets and palaces, but of the kind of people we desired to become, if so be it that the Holy One would breathe again upon our dry ground.

30 Some said: Let us become a people who do not hoard bread while our neighbor hungers; and others said: Let us become a people who do not burn our sons and daughters upon the altars of ambition and endless toil.

31 And others yet said: Let us become a people who remember the stranger, for we were once strangers in the valley of our own making, and none came to comfort us save the One whom we had offended continually.

32 Thus every voice brought forth a piece of the unseen city that could not be shaken; and we understood by degrees that a nation is not first a wall nor a flag nor an anthem, but a multitude of hearts consenting to walk in a higher way.

33 Then one rose up whose hands were scarred by old labors, and he lifted a fragment of stone and said: Behold, this once belonged to a house that imprisoned the poor in debt; shall we use it again for bondage, or shall we fashion from it an altar of remembrance?

34 And all the people answered: Let it be an altar, and not a prison; for the past has already bound us long enough, and we desire that the memory of our sins should now drive us toward mercy and not toward despair.

35 So we gathered the stones that had once been used for oppression and for vanity, and we piled them in the midst of the square, not in towering pride, but in humble testimony; and we said: This heap shall be a witness between us and our children forever.

36 For when the generations to come shall ask, saying, What mean these stones? we shall answer:

They are the ruins that became a covenant; they are the broken things from which we chose to learn instead of to repeat.

37 And we inscribed upon the largest stone, not with iron but with our spoken vow: Never again shall we build greatness that devours the small; never again shall we call darkness light for the sake of gain; never again shall we worship our own reflection.

38 Now the night drew on, and the stars came forth above the wounded city, as torches in a solemn assembly; and we perceived that the heavens were not shaken though our works had fallen, and this comforted us in measure.

39 For we understood that the firmament is not upheld by the strength of our walls, neither is the covenant of the Holy One broken by the fall of our institutions; but it is we who must choose whether to align our days with that unbroken faithfulness.

40 And there, in the cool of the evening, the remnant lifted up a low and trembling song, not of triumph, neither of despair, but of petition; and the sound of it rose through the empty courts as incense from a small and flickering flame.

41 We sang of mercy that outlives empires, and of justice that does not grow weary; we sang of a Shepherd who seeks the last lamb among the ruins, and of a Potter who does not discard the clay though the first vessel is marred in His hand.

42 And as we sang, a strange peace settled upon us, not erasing the sorrow of what had been lost, but clothing it as a teacher clothes a child; and we knew that our grief, if rightly carried, would

become the very ground upon which a new obedience might grow.

43 Thus began the days of the remnant in the ruins: not with the raising of new towers, nor with the sound of hammers and trumpets, but with the quiet resolve of broken hearts, turning at last toward the One who had always waited at the gates we had forsaken.

CHAPTER 6

1 And it came to pass that after many days of sitting in the shadow of the altar of stones, the remnant inquired of the Lord, saying: What shall we now do, lest our resolve become as smoke that vanisheth in the wind, and our covenant as a vow uttered in haste and soon forgotten?

2 For we perceived that it is an easy thing to weep in the hour of calamity, and an easy thing to speak lofty words while the dust of ruin is yet upon our faces; but it is a hard thing to walk in the same humility when the ground groweth green again and trade returneth to the streets.

3 Therefore we cried, saying: O Holy One, teach us the way of the second sunrise, that we perish not in the comfort of our recovery, as we once perished in the intoxication of our pride.

4 Then a word arose among us, not with thunder nor with the shaking of the earth, but as a quiet understanding that settled upon the company, and it said: If ye would be a new people, ye must not only confess your public sins, but ye must visit the hidden chambers where your private idols dwell.

5 And we were troubled at this saying, for the remnant had hoped that the ruins alone would

suffice for repentance, and that the sight of broken towers would be offering enough; yet now we understood that the Holy One sought the breaking of the secret altars within each heart.

6 So it was commanded among us that for a season, every household should return to its dwelling place, however cracked or wounded it might be, and there search out the high places that had been raised in the quiet when no eye beheld.

7 And the people obeyed, each according to his courage; and they entered again their ruined homes, where once they had plotted their gains and measured their neighbors with jealous measures; and they walked from room to room as judges in their own court.

8 Some found altars of fear, where they had sacrificed their honesty to the terror of being cast out; others found altars of comfort, where they had laid their children upon the soft pillows of flattery, teaching them the art of pleasing the powerful rather than pleasing the truth.

9 There were also altars of resentment, overgrown with dust and cobwebs, where old injuries were preserved as relics, and revisited in secret to justify hardness of heart; and the Spirit made it known that these too were abominations, though no priest had ever decreed them as such.

10 Now there was among the remnant a man whose house had scarcely been touched by the fall, for it had stood on a high ridge; and he rejoiced secretly, saying in his heart: Surely I am favored above my brethren, for my losses are small and my walls yet stand.

11 But when he entered his chamber to seek the hidden idols, he found no carved image, neither any token of open wickedness; whereby he was lifted up yet more, boasting inwardly that he was clean even from secret faults.

12 Nevertheless, the Spirit constrained him to open the chest at the foot of his bed, which he had not opened in many years; and behold, it was filled with letters and records of his praises among men, and with the names of those whom he had quietly stepped upon that he might rise.

13 And a voice said unto him, Lo, this is the altar thou hast kept; thou hast fed upon the remembrance of thy own honor as others feed upon bread; and thou hast counted thyself righteous because thy sins were clothed in the garments of respectability.

14 Then he trembled greatly, and the letters slipped from his hands and scattered upon the floor like dry leaves; and he fell upon them, weeping, for he saw that his security had been built upon the ruin of the lowly and the silencing of the weak.

15 In like manner, a woman of the remnant returned to her dwelling, where the cradle of her children stood empty; and she searched for altars, but found only the toys and garments of those she had lost, and her grief was as a flood that could not be contained.

16 She cried, saying: Surely I am victim only, and not offender; for my portion hath been sorrow upon sorrow, and what idol could dwell in a house so full of mourning?

17 Yet as she sat in the corner where she had often rocked her little ones, the memory of her words returned to her, how she had cursed the poor in her heart for their slowness, and despised the afflicted for their lack of strength, though she herself had once been afflicted.

18 And she beheld that she had made an altar of her pain, offering upon it the compassion that should have been given to others; and she understood that suffering, when folded in upon itself, can become as cruel as any triumph.

19 Wherefore she bowed herself with her face upon the ground, and said: O Lord, take from me the idol of my sorrow, that I may yet become a healing spring and not a bitter cistern; for I desire that my losses may teach me mercy, and not a secret superiority.

20 Thus in every house of the remnant, altars were discovered in unexpected places; some in cupboards of anxiety, where food had been hoarded while neighbors starved; some in boxes of hidden coins, kept against the day when the city might fall, yet never shared in the day when the poor cried out.

21 And the word went forth, that whatsoever idol was found—whether of pride, or fear, or comfort, or grief—should be brought in symbol unto the altar of stones in the square, that the people might lay down together what had once divided them.

22 So in the appointed day the remnant gathered, each bearing some token of his hidden altar: a ledger of unjust profit, a keepsake of flattery, a knife once sharpened for secret vengeance, a

garment bought with stolen wages, a letter never sent but long nurtured in bitterness.

23 There were also those who brought nothing in their hands, for their idols were not of wood nor paper nor metal, but of attitudes that clung to the soul as mildew to a wall; yet even these came, and confessed with their lips what their hearts had worshipped.

24 And the elders said: Let no man boast that his idol is lighter than another's, for the chain is not broken if even the smallest link remaineth; and let no woman despair that her idol is heavy, for the One who calleth you to lay it down is able also to bear it away.

25 Then all the people stood round about the altar; and one by one they stepped forward, placing their tokens upon the stones, or speaking aloud the names of their unseen idols, that heaven and earth might be witnesses of their surrender.

26 Some voices faltered, and some were strong; some confessed through tears, and some through trembling silence; yet each offering that was truly given seemed to lighten the air, as if a long-standing storm were slowly losing its power to break.

27 Now when many had finished, there remained yet a company who hesitated at the edge of the circle, glancing one toward another, fearing the shame of being known in their truth; and the assembly perceived that the old spirit of pretense was not yet fully cast out.

28 Wherefore an old man of the remnant, whose back was bent but whose eyes were clear, came forth and cried with a loud voice, saying: Hear me,

O people; I have lived through three collapses and two returns, and I testify that the most dangerous idol is the one we protect in the name of “reputation.”

29 For I once rebuilt a city on the foundation of appearances, and we called it righteousness because it was sober and well-ordered; yet within, our hearts remained cruel, and our tables remained closed to the stranger, and our judgments remained swift against the broken.

30 And in the end that city fell more terribly than the first, because we thought ourselves healed when we were but skilled at hiding our wounds; therefore, if ye will spare your children another such ruin, let your shame be known now in the light, that ye be not exposed later in the fire.

31 These words pierced us more deeply than the memory of the fall itself; and there arose among the hesitant a great sobbing, as of those who had long been strangled by their own pretense; and they stepped forward at last, throwing down their tokens with cries that shook the gathering.

32 Thus the altar grew heavy with the weight of the past, yet the people grew lighter, as if a secret yoke had slipped from their necks; and we began to comprehend that to be a remnant is not merely to have survived, but to have consented to be changed.

33 Then the elders inquired of the Lord, saying: What shall we do with these tokens of our former worship, lest they tempt us again when memory groweth dim and children’s children ask of them with idle curiosity?

34 And the answer came: Ye shall not destroy them quickly as one sweeps away refuse, lest ye forget the cost of your deliverance; neither shall ye preserve them in honor, as relics to be admired; but ye shall use them as teachers, and then return them unto the dust.

35 Wherefore it was decreed that in every season appointed for remembrance, the people should gather around the altar and recount the story of their idols and their release, that humility might be woven into the very fabric of their festivals.

36 Afterward, when the tales had been told and the lessons received, they were to take a portion of the tokens and break them, grinding them to powder if they could be ground, or rendering them useless if they could not; and the dust thereof would be scattered in the fields where new seed was sown.

37 For the Spirit testified that the land itself must bear witness to the transformation of the people, and that the soil which once nourished roots of greed and oppression should now be mixed with the dust of those same idols, as a sign that the past was not forgotten but redeemed.

38 So it was that the first such season came; and the remnant stood in a wide circle in the fields beyond the ruins, where the ground had lain fallow since the city’s fall; and they carried forth fragments of ledgers, shards of ornaments, and signs of former luxury.

39 There, under the open sky, they broke and scattered them, and the pieces fell among the clods; and the elders lifted their hands and declared: As these fragments are joined with the

soil, so let our former pride be joined with our humility, that what springs up hereafter may bear different fruit.

40 And the people answered, Amen, with one voice; and their Amen seemed to echo against the ruined walls and return to them with new strength, as if the stones themselves approved of the new covenant written upon the hearts.

41 From that day, it was counted among the remnant that no building should rise, neither trade be revived, until the inner altars had been named and laid down; for they had learned that to rebuild without repentance is to rebuild the same collapse under a different name.

42 Yet there were still some who said within themselves, though they spoke it not: How long shall we dwell in this place of self-searching? When shall we see again the strength of walls and the noise of commerce, that we may feel secure like other nations?

43 To such the Spirit whispered in the night watches, saying: Ye seek security in the work of your own hands, but I offer you a deeper refuge; for what is a wall against the storm of time, if the heart within is weak and treacherous? Better is a people made true than a fortress well defended.

44 Thus were the days of the remnant ordered: first by the tearing down of secret altars, then by the teaching of their children what had been laid aside; and all this before a single cornerstone was set for any new house, that the city to come might be born from a different spirit than the one that had perished.

45 And it was recorded in the chronicles of the humble that this was the beginning of their true rebuilding, not when the first stone was lifted, but when the first idol was named without excuse and placed upon the altar in the sight of God and of the people.

CHAPTER 7

1 And it came to pass that after the idols were laid upon the altar and the dust of the old worship was scattered in the fields, there arose in the hearts of the remnant a trembling desire to bind their days together in a single promise, lest the memory of mercy should again slip from their fingers as water from a broken vessel.

2 For we said one to another, Behold, we have wept and confessed and turned, yet if we walk each man in the imagination of his own healing, the city to come shall be woven of fragments, and our children shall not know what cloth we meant to make.

3 Therefore the elders caused the trumpet to be blown, not in a sound of war but in a tone of gathering, and the people came from their tents and shattered houses to the wide place before the altar of stones, as leaves are drawn by a wind they did not summon.

4 And the eldest among us, whose hair was white as dust in sunlight, stood upon the broken steps of the former council house and lifted his staff, saying, This day shall not be for accusation, neither for recounting the shame of our fathers, but for asking what kind of people we choose to become beneath the gaze of the Holy One.

5 Then a silence fell upon us, for we had long been skilled in blaming and answering blame, but we were unlearned in speaking of the future without crowns or enemies; and many feared in secret that if we named a higher way, we would also be bound to walk in it.

6 Yet the Spirit moved gently through the assembly, as a low fire passing through dry grass without consuming it, and we felt within ourselves that to remain unbound was only to remain available to the old chains; wherefore we opened our mouths and our ears together.

7 And the first word that arose among us was this, that we would be a people who remember, and not a people who forget for convenience; and it was agreed that no comfort purchased by amnesia would be called peace within our gates.

8 To seal this word, we chose from among our number a company of witnesses, men and women whose faces were marked by both sorrow and kindness, and we charged them to keep the story of our fall and our mercy bright before the generations, as one keeps a lamp trimmed in a house that has once burned.

9 They were commanded to walk often among the children, and among the markets when they should be rebuilt, and to ask: Do ye still know why these stones were piled as a witness, and why the dust of your idols lies hidden in your fields? and if the answer grew thin, they were to sound the trumpet of remembrance.

10 After this we sought counsel concerning power, for we knew that even in the smallest village there must be those who decide when

paths cross and resources are shared, yet we feared that the old hunger for rulership might dress itself in new garments.

11 Wherefore it was decreed that no office in the new city should be sought with speeches or promises, neither with banners nor with secret bargains, but that the people should discern slowly who already carried the burdens of others without reward and call such a one to bear also the name of servant.

12 And we wrote upon the first tablet of our covenant that any who thirsted openly for rank, or who adorned themselves continually with titles, should not sit in the high places, for the longing to be above is the root that seeketh always the water of domination.

13 Moreover it was appointed that every seat of decision should be shared and never solitary, and that no word of judgment should stand without the witness of different voices, lest the will of one heart, however wise for a season, become again a yoke upon the many.

14 Then we spoke of wealth, and a murmur passed through the gathering, for many still bore scars from the days when the few were swollen with plenty and the many learned to hide their hunger behind practiced smiles.

15 A woman who had once worked in the lowest rooms of the great houses rose up and said, In the former city I scrubbed the floors of feasts I was never invited to, and I learned that luxury deafens the ear more surely than thunder; if we build such halls again, our songs will rot in our throats.

16 Her words entered us as a sharp seed, and we agreed that in the city to come, the worth of a man should not be weighed in metals nor counted in measures of grain, but in the generosity of his table and the rest he grants his servants.

17 Thus we wrote upon the second tablet of our covenant that no craft should be praised whose profit depended upon another's desperation, and no trade should be called honorable that left its workers without time to see the sunrise or to bless their children at evening.

18 Afterward we considered the strangers who would one day arrive when the roads were cleared, for our city stood where many paths met, and caravans had once been the lifeblood of our markets and the snare of our customs.

19 Some among us said in their fear, Let us keep our gates narrow and our laws thick as a forest, that no foreign wind may bend our branches again; but others remembered the tenderness shown to them in exile and trembled to become hard.

20 We wrestled long with this matter until the Spirit whispered, Be open as a house with many doors, yet firm as a tree with deep roots; receive every face as bearing the Image, yet suffer no practice that devours the poor or darkens the dignity of the small.

21 Therefore we inscribed upon the third tablet of our covenant that the stranger who walked in justice and mercy should be welcomed at our table as a neighbor, but that any, whether born within or without, who fed upon the weak should find no cloak for his cruelty beneath our laws.

22 Then a youth, whose eyes were bright with questions, lifted his voice and said, If we write all these things and yet our hearts grow cold in years to come, will not our covenant become as the old decrees, spoken often and obeyed seldom?

23 To him an aged widow replied, My son, words alone are thin as smoke, yet a vow spoken in trembling and watered with daily choices becomes as a cord braided from many strands; the covenant will live if we choose each morning to bind ourselves again, not to the letter but to the living One who stands behind it.

24 And she added, When ye see us elders drifting toward the old ways of comfort, ye must not hold your peace for the sake of politeness, but remind us of the day when you heard this vow in your youth; thus shall the generations guard one another from forgetting.

25 Having spoken of leadership and wealth and strangers, we turned our thoughts to speech itself, for we remembered that the former city had decayed first in its language, calling greed prudence, flattery kindness, and cruelty necessary order.

26 Wherefore we bound ourselves that in the new city no thing should be given a name softer than its truth, and no virtue should be mocked as weakness, and that we would rather bear the pain of honest words than soothe ourselves with lies that ripen into catastrophe.

27 We also agreed that those who warned us of injustice, if they spoke with patience and love of the common good, should be honored rather than shunned, and that no one should be driven into

silence for refusing to pretend that darkness is light.

28 Next we remembered the children, who had listened at the edges of our gatherings with large eyes, and we said, If we do not sow these things into their hearts early, they will grow up thinking that ruin is only an old story and not a nearby road.

29 Therefore we decreed that the tale of the ruins, and of the idols laid down, and of the mercy that met us there, should be taught not as a legend to entertain them, but as a mirror in which they might see both their danger and their calling.

30 We established also days of remembrance, when the work of the city would cease and families would walk together among the broken foundations that we chose not to erase, reading aloud the words of the covenant and asking, Are we still such a people as we promised to be?

31 In those days the keepers of record were charged to speak without adornment, recounting not only our faithfulness but also our failures since the last remembrance, that pride might find no deep soil in which to root itself again.

32 And it was written that no leader should be shielded from these gatherings, but should sit among the people and hear with his own ears the stories of those who had been bruised by his mistakes, that he might repent early and often rather than late and never.

33 Some among us were troubled by so much openness, fearing that continual confession would weaken the city and make us easy prey to enemies who held their shame hidden; yet the Spirit

answered, A people who live in truth may bend, but they do not break as easily as those who stand upon a crust of pretense.

34 Thus we chose the path of vulnerable strength, believing that the Holy One who had lifted us from the rubble would also be our wall of fire when honesty made us seem small in the eyes of nations.

35 When all these sayings had been gathered, the scribes set them down upon tablets of wood and upon sheets of fiber, and a young girl skilled in careful marks traced upon them the sign of the sun, to remind us that every covenant is made under a watcher greater than the city that speaks it.

36 Then the elders brought forth the largest stone of the altar, the same which had been chosen for a witness in earlier days, and upon it they carved not the details of every decree, but a single sentence, saying, Let this be the heart beneath all our branches: "We will not again build greatness that devours the small."

37 And when the carving was finished, we lifted our hands toward the sky, where the sun stood in quiet majesty above the broken towers, and we acknowledged that our words were frail, yet we asked that the light which sees all things might burn away our hypocrisy whenever we began to love the covenant more than the poor.

38 Thereafter each family passed by the witness stone in turn, touching it with open palm, not as a magic charm but as a remembrance that their own hands must help to hold the vow in place, and

that no law can stand where households
contradict it daily in secret.

39 As evening drew on and the shadows
lengthened like questions across the square, a
gentle song rose from the midst of the remnant,
without command or rehearsal, as if the words
had been waiting for a century in the dust.

40 The song spoke of a city that once exalted itself
and fell, and of a people who found in the ashes
not only mourning but instruction, and of a sun
that never turned its face away though the streets
below were filled with darkness.

41 We sang that we desired to be not the last
generation before another ruin, but the first
generation of a different kind of building, whose
foundations were laid in confession and whose
walls were raised in compassion for the smallest
stone.

42 And it was told afterward among our children
that on that night the ruins themselves seemed to
listen, and that the wind passing through broken
windows carried the melody out beyond the fields,
as if to say, These words, though spoken by a
remnant, belong also to the earth.

43 So ended the day in which we bound our
scattered hearts into a single promise, and though
we knew that our covenant was but the beginning
of a long obedience, we went to our rest with a
strange peace, for the Holy One had taken our
fear of the future and fashioned it into a lamp for
our feet.

CHAPTER 8

1 And it came to pass that after many days of
counsel and remembrance, the season turned, and
the fields which had once held only the dust of
idols began to soften beneath the rains, so that the
remnant perceived it was time to put their hands
to the work of building in the earth what they
had vowed in their hearts.

2 For until then we had dwelt in tents and in the
shells of broken houses, saying within ourselves,
Let the covenant be proven before we raise new
walls; yet hunger pressed us and children shivered
in the night, and we knew that obedience must
now clothe itself in labor.

3 Nevertheless, there arose among us a quiet fear
that in the act of building we might awaken the
old spirit of pride, even as a long-sleeping beast is
stirred by the sound of hammers; and we cried
unto the Holy One, saying, Teach us to raise
stones without raising ourselves above our
brothers.

4 Then the elders proclaimed a fast of works, not
of food, wherein we would lay aside for one day
all plans and measurements, that we might walk
together through the ruins and ask of every place,
What were you once, and what must you never
become again?

5 So we moved as a single company through the
broken streets, and the stones spoke to us in their
silence: the toppled towers warned against height
without humility, the shattered markets muttered
of greed, and the burned thresholds whispered of
houses that had shut themselves against the
stranger.

6 When we returned to the altar at evening, a word rose among us, saying, Begin not with palaces nor with courts, lest ye repeat your fathers' order of importance; but build first a house of gathering where the high and low may sit upon the same floor, and a place of bread where none is turned away in the hour of hunger.

7 This saying pleased the remnant, and we agreed that the first stone of the new city should not belong to any private dwelling nor to any seat of authority, but to a hall of common assembly, where counsel, prayer, and sharing might dwell together.

8 Yet there were some, especially among those who had once held rank in the former city, who said, If we delay the building of proper offices, confusion will reign and outsiders will despise us as a people without structure; let us first raise a strong house for judgment, that we may appear orderly in the eyes of the nations.

9 To them a youth replied, saying, Our fathers appeared orderly while they devoured the poor; what care have we for such appearances? If our first house be mercy, our order will be plain to the One whose gaze matters more than the regard of distant kings.

10 These words cut yet healed, and those who had spoken of early grandeur bowed their heads, confessing that their concern had been mingled with the old thirst for importance; and they consented that the hall of common life should indeed be raised before all else.

11 Thereafter we sought a place for the foundation, and our feet were drawn to the very

square where once the proud house of assembly had stood, whose steps were still stained with the dust of the oppressed; and we stood indecisive, torn between remembrance and renewal.

12 Some said, Let us build far from here, that our children may not walk daily on the site of shame; others answered, If we flee from this ground, we will cast our guilt into a corner of the city and forget it; better to build rightly where we once ruled wrongly.

13 Then the Spirit bore witness in many hearts that the truest transformation is not in finding clean places, but in cleansing the very places that were polluted; and it was agreed that the new hall should rise upon the bones of the old, not as a covering but as a confession.

14 So the people labored together to clear the broken stones, keeping aside certain fragments to be set in the new walls as scars are set in living flesh, never to be hidden entirely, that we might always know from what we had been healed.

15 While we worked, there came to us a caravan from a rich city beyond the hills, for the news had gone abroad that our markets lay empty and our hands were ready; and the merchants saw in our poverty an opportunity to bind us with golden cords.

16 They spoke smooth words, saying, We will supply you with timber, iron, and grain in abundance, that your rebuilding may be swift and impressive; only grant us favor in your streets and the right to pay your workers according to our custom, which is to keep wages low that profit may be high.

17 Some among us, weary from toil and thin from long scarcity, looked upon the caravans and were greatly tempted, for their wagons gleamed with tools and food, and the promise of quick strength tasted sweet as honey to lips long dry.

18 But others said, Remember how the former city sold its conscience for alliances and gifts, until its judges spoke more for distant benefactors than for the widows at its gates; shall we again trade our covenant for the comfort of hurried abundance?

19 The matter was weighty, and we summoned the whole remnant, from the eldest to the least child, to hear the words of the merchants and to weigh them against the words we had carved upon the witness stone.

20 When the strangers had finished their proposal, an old man whose hands still bore the calluses of former servitude asked them, Tell us plainly: will your gains be diminished if our workers receive rest and fair sustenance, and if no one is compelled by desperation to accept what his conscience rejects?

21 The chief merchant answered with a practiced smile, saying, Friends, such scruples make a people weak in trade; if you insist upon such terms, our partnership cannot yield its fullest fruit, and others will surpass you in riches and in power.

22 Then a murmur ran through the crowd, for the old hunger for prominence stirred in some, and they thought within themselves, Shall we be content to remain small while neighboring cities grow mighty? and fear disguised itself once more as prudence.

23 Seeing this, one of the keepers of record stepped forward with trembling voice and read aloud from the tablets of the covenant, saying, It is written that no craft shall be praised whose profit dependeth upon another's desperation; how then shall we bless a bargain built upon such a foundation?

24 A young girl, who had once begged crumbs at the back doors of the merchants' houses in the old city, cried out, If they will not prosper unless we remain desperate, then their prosperity is just another name for our chains; did we survive the ruin only to kneel again?

25 Her words struck the assembly more surely than any sermon, for we knew her story and the hunger in her eyes; and the Spirit bore witness that for her sake we must answer rightly, lest our covenant prove a hollow shell.

26 Therefore the elders conferred together briefly, and then one of them spoke to the merchants, saying, We thank you for your journey and for your offer, yet we cannot purchase strength at the price of our neighbor's dignity; if you will trade with us in justice, we welcome you, but we will not bend our covenant to fit your ledgers.

27 The merchants frowned, for they were not accustomed to such replies from a ruined people; some mocked quietly, saying, These dreamers will starve upon their principles, and others shrugged and turned their wagons toward more compliant towns.

28 Nevertheless a few among them, whose consciences had long been restless, lingered and said, Show us this way of trading that does not

devour the weak, for we have grown weary of fat profits and thin souls; and they remained to learn our customs and to shape new bargains.

29 When the caravans had departed, taking both their flattery and their contempt with them, a strange mixture of relief and fear passed over the remnant; for we had chosen faithfulness over immediate plenty, and the outcome lay as seed beneath unseen soil.

30 That night many lay awake, listening to the wind among the half-cleared stones, and some whispered in the darkness, Have we done foolishly? will our children blame us if hunger lingers because we refused help wrapped in harsh conditions?

31 But in the morning, as the sun rose over the ruins, its light fell upon the witness stone and upon the faces of the children playing beside it, and it seemed to say without words, Better a lean table in truth than a feast set upon the necks of the small.

32 So we strengthened our hearts and returned to the work, cutting timbers from the nearby hills and shaping them with patient hands, sharing tools and skill as we were able, that no house or hall would bear the mark of a single man's glory, but of the whole people's endurance.

33 As the frame of the new hall began to rise, a quiet joy moved among us, for we saw that the beams were not only wood but choices: each joint a refusal of oppression, each upright post a remembrance of mercy, each crosspiece a sign that we would bear one another's weight.

34 When at last the first stone for the threshold was chosen, we walked again to the fields where the dust of our former idols had been scattered, and we gathered from that very soil a small handful to mix with the mortar, that our past might be bound into the entrance of our future.

35 The elders said, As often as you step across this threshold, remember that you tread upon pride ground to powder, and upon fear confessed and forsaken; let it keep you lowly as you enter, lest this hall become another place of high speech and low compassion.

36 We set that threshold in place with many hands, neither allowing the strong alone to lift it nor leaving the weak idle, that all might feel the weight of beginning and the right to say, This house is ours, and we are responsible for what is spoken within it.

37 When the walls were complete and the roof joined in humble strength, we did not adorn the hall with carvings of beasts or of kings, as in the former days; instead we inscribed upon the inner beams small sayings of justice and kindness, written by many hands in many tongues, that every eye might find its own reminder.

38 On the day of dedication, we brought no sacrifices of animals nor perfumes in costly vessels, for we had little and desired no spectacle; but we brought stories, and each family spoke of some mercy received since the fall, some idol forsaken, or some kindness shown by a neighbor.

39 Then the elders blessed the hall with a simple prayer, saying, Let this place be a harbor for the weary, a school for the conscience, and a table for

those who have nothing to bring but their hunger; and if ever it ceases to be such, let its roof leak and its walls crack until we remember.

40 Afterward the people shared a modest meal of bread and lentils, and the children ran between the pillars laughing, and the sound of their voices rose where once the cries of the oppressed had echoed; and we perceived that this, more than any banner or tower, was the true sign that a city was being born anew.

41 From that day forward, whenever we spoke of the rebuilding, we said not, The hall stands, nor, The walls are strong, but, The covenant holds; for we understood that so long as we chose faithfulness over speed, justice over splendor, and remembrance over forgetting, the unseen foundations of our life would remain unshaken.

42 Thus was the first house of the new city raised: not the mansion of a prince, nor the fortress of an army, but a low hall upon a scarred square, attended by a people who trembled and yet hoped; and it was recorded in the chronicles of the humbled that this beginning, though small in the eyes of the proud, pleased the Holy One more than all the palaces of the former days.

CHAPTER 9

1 And it came to pass that when the hall of common life stood firm upon the scarred square, the remnant marvelled that so small a house could hold so much hope; for though its walls were plain and its roof unadorned, it seemed larger within than without, as if generosity had stretched its beams.

2 At first we knew not how to dwell with such a gift, for we were a people long scattered by fear and accustomed to meeting only in the shadow of calamity; therefore the elders asked of the Holy One that we might be taught the rhythm of days in which gathering was not only for sorrow.

3 Then a word was given among us that each morning, as the sun climbed over the broken towers, those who desired should come to the hall with whatever little they possessed of bread, song, or understanding, and the first act of our day would be to share these things without price.

4 So they came: potters with cracked hands, mothers with sleepy children, youths still tasting the edge of anger, and elders with memories heavy as stones; and they sat upon the same floor, while the light entered through simple windows and made no distinction between the heads it crowned.

5 There a woman who could not read told of a time when a stranger had given her water in the days of exile, and a boy who had just learned his letters read slowly from the tablets of the covenant; and the people received both as equal food, for one fed the mind and the other the heart.

6 Thus the hall became a school without walls and a temple without altars, for in it we offered not beasts nor incense, but the truth of our days, and the Holy One accepted this as sacrifice, because it was mingled with humility.

7 In those mornings a new custom grew, that after the stories and readings, there would be a great stillness, wherein no one spoke save the wind passing outside; and in that silence many felt their

anger cool and their fear loosen its grip, as if an unseen hand smoothed the creases of their spirits.

8 Some who had once been quick with opinions found themselves slower to speak, for the quiet taught them that not every thought deserved to become a sound; others who had long been voiceless discovered that in the hush, their hearts began to form words that were worth the risk of saying.

9 At evening, when the labor of fields and rebuilding was done, the people returned again to the hall, not to plan nor to decide, but to sing; and at first their songs were broken and halting, for many melodies had died in the ruin, and shame still clung to their throats.

10 But a girl who had fashioned a flute from a piece of salvaged reed brought it and played a simple tune, made of only a few notes, and her courage opened the way for others; soon there were drums made from stretched leather, and strings from leftover fibers, and voices that remembered harmonies older than the city itself.

11 Thus art returned to the ruins, not as decoration for the powerful, but as medicine for the wounded; and the songs spoke of fields and hunger and laughter and the stubborn patience of seeds, until even the most hardened among us felt tears on their cheeks without knowing when they had begun to fall.

12 We decreed that no song praising cruelty, conquest, or vain glory should be taught in that place, for we remembered how our fathers had marched to the music of their own arrogance;

instead we lifted up those melodies which made the strong gentle and the broken brave.

13 In time there arose among the remnant certain ones whose hearts burned to listen more than to speak, and to see beneath the surface of events; these we did not hastily call prophets, for we feared the old hunger for titles, but we recognized that the Holy One had given them eyes for patterns and ears for whispers.

14 They were set apart not on thrones but on journeys, walking the streets and fields to observe where the covenant was fraying and where it held; and they returned often to the hall to tell us, not what we wished to hear, but what the truth required.

15 Sometimes their words were welcomed as cool water on parched lips, when they praised acts of hidden kindness and reconciled old enemies; at other times their speech burned like salt in a wound, for they unveiled new forms of greed disguised as prudence, and laziness clothed in the language of “waiting upon the Lord.”

16 We agreed that no prophet among us should command armies, hoard wealth, or sit in judgment seats, lest the word they bore become tangled in the roots of power; their single authority was to bear faithful witness, and our single protection was the right to test their words by the covenant and by the fruit of their lives.

17 In those days a question arose concerning the care of the weakest, for amidst the joy of gathering and building there still remained the sick, the aged without kin, and those whose

wounds of mind or spirit made labor difficult; and some feared they would again become invisible.

18 Therefore we appointed in the hall a table of remembrance, upon which were kept the names of all who could not easily stand for themselves; and at each morning gathering, before plans were made or work assigned, those names were read aloud, that they might never be forgotten in the noise of activity.

19 From that list the people chose daily tasks of kindness: to mend a broken roof for one, to share extra grain with another, to sit in patient silence beside one whose sorrow had no words; and we began to understand that a city is measured not by its walls but by the tenderness of its errands.

20 In the midst of these growing rhythms, travelers again began to pass through our streets, some drawn by curiosity at the rumor of a people rebuilding slowly on purpose, others driven by their own ruins seeking counsel.

21 We welcomed them into the hall, offering bread and a place among the circle; and they marveled to see leaders sitting without special chairs, and children interrupting with honest questions, and elders willing to confess publicly when their zeal had outrun their wisdom.

22 One such traveler, a scribe from a distant strong city, watched our gatherings for many days, writing much in his scrolls; at last he asked, Are you not afraid that such openness will weaken your authority and inspire rebellion among the young?

23 An old woman answered him, saying, We do not fear rebellion against what is unjust; we fear

only the quiet obedience that lets injustice grow unchecked. If the young question what we do, they may save us from becoming the very tyrants we once fled.

24 The scribe shook his head and said, In my city such talk would be counted dangerous, and your hall would be closed by decree; but as he departed, we saw tears upon his face, and we knew that some hidden seed had been dropped into his heart, to sprout when its time came.

25 Not all who came were moved thus; there were also those who scoffed at our plain walls and unhurried building, saying, You could already have towers and marketplaces shining like mirrors if you would only accept the terms of powerful neighbors and bow a little to their customs.

26 We answered them gently, for many of us had once spoken the same way, but we did not yield; instead we pointed to the children sleeping in peace, to the workers who returned home with tired bodies but unbroken spirits, and to the widows whose tables lacked luxury yet never lacked company.

27 And we said, If such things appear small to you, then indeed our city will be of no interest; but if you have grown weary of palaces that echo with loneliness and streets that glitter over buried despair, know that there is another way, though it is slow and often unseen.

28 In this manner the hall became not only the heart of our own people, but a lantern glimpsed by those passing through darkness; and yet we trembled whenever praise grew loud, lest we

make an idol even of our humility and boast in the very mercy that rescued us.

29 Therefore the keepers of the covenant reminded us often that we were not the light, but only a people arranging their lives so that the light of the sun in the heavens might fall more clearly upon our common table, without being blocked by towers of pride.

30 They taught the children to draw upon the floor of the hall a simple sign: a hand open to the sky, with a small circle in the palm; and they said, When you look upon this, remember that power is safe only in an open hand, and that the source of all warmth is above you, not within your grasp.

31 On certain evenings, when the sky burned red over the ruins and the air grew cool, we carried lamps to the edges of the city and placed them upon the low walls, not as a show, but as a sign to ourselves that our calling was not merely to survive but to be visible in the gentlest way.

32 We stood there together, watching the lamps flicker against the dark shapes of the broken towers, and it seemed to many that the ruins themselves had become like elders: stern reminders of what had been, standing silently behind the fragile promise of what might yet be.

33 Some among the remnant feared that such watchfulness would lead to constant tension and joyless vigilance; but as the years turned, we found that the opposite was true, for the more honestly we guarded our hearts, the freer our laughter became, no longer haunted by the suspicion that it was built upon someone else's pain.

34 In time, children were born who had never seen the city in its proud days, nor heard the roar of its markets; for them the hall of common life and the slow building of simple homes were not a strange experiment, but the natural order of the world.

35 Yet we did not allow them to grow up without knowledge of the former ruin, lest comfort ripen into complacency; on certain days they were led to the remaining heaps of stone, and there we told them stories of our folly and of the mercy that found us, until they understood that the plainness of their lives was not poverty but protection.

36 As these children grew and took up tools, pens, and flutes, the city began to bear fruits we had not anticipated: poems that healed old wounds, judgments rendered with tears as well as with clarity, and new trades that wove usefulness with beauty.

37 Strangers who returned after many years scarcely knew the place, not because towers now scratched the sky, but because the air felt lighter, as if some invisible tax had been lifted from every breath; and when they asked the reason, we pointed not to any single law or leader, but to the long patience of a people willing to be corrected.

38 Thus it was written in the chronicles of the humbled that the true rebuilding of the city was not the day its first hall was finished, nor the day its markets reopened, but the season in which ordinary hearts consented daily to walk in the covenant, even when no eyes were upon them.

39 And the Holy One looked upon the remnant and was not displeased, for though we still stumbled and our wisdom was often small, yet we

no longer called our stumbling success nor our smallness glory; instead we brought both to the hall, and there we found again and again that mercy is the only foundation that does not crack.

40 So the days of the remnant lengthened into years, and the ruins remained as quiet witnesses on the edge of all our feasts and councils; and it was understood among us that as long as we were willing to see them, and to remember who we had been, the city born from their shadow would not easily forget who it was called to become.

CHAPTER 10

1 And it came to pass after the passing of a few more seasons, when the roofs had grown sure against the rain and the first orchards of the remnant began to bear small fruit, that we said within ourselves, Surely the sharpest edge of our trial is past, and we may at last breathe without trembling.

2 For the granaries were not full, yet neither were they empty; the children no longer counted their ribs in secret, and laughter, which had once been a stranger, now walked freely in the streets and in the hall of common life.

3 In those days many gave thanks with sincere hearts, yet beneath the gratitude there stirred a quieter thought, saying, Let us be careful not to lose again what we have gained with such pain; let us guard our little store with vigilance, lest some new calamity strip us once more.

4 Thus a subtle fear crept back among us, not as a storm but as a mist, shaping itself into prudent sayings: that charity must be measured, that risks

must be avoided, that a small people cannot afford great mercies.

5 While we yet turned these thoughts in our minds, a traveler arrived from the north, lean as a drawn bow and hollow-eyed from long roads; and his garments were torn by thorns, and dust clung to him as bark clings to the fallen log.

6 We brought him into the hall and placed bread before him, and when his strength returned a little, he lifted his face and told us of a valley beyond the hills, where another city had fallen not long ago, as ours once did.

7 He spoke of fields burned by careless war, of wells fouled by retreating armies, and of children who searched the ground for grains spilled from broken sacks; and as he spoke, the shadows in the hall seemed to deepen, for his story was a mirror of our own remembered misery.

8 Then he said, I have journeyed from them to you because rumor runs along the roads that in this place there is a people who rebuilt slowly rather than selling themselves quickly, and who will not trample the poor even when they themselves are only learning to walk.

9 He bowed his head and added, I am sent to ask if you will help us, not with chains that bind or bargains that devour, but with counsel and with whatever grain or seed you can spare, that a remnant may also arise there as one has here.

10 At his words a great unease moved through the assembly, for we remembered the lean months and the nights when we counted our loaves, and the fear that had recently whispered, Guard what you have, for the world is still dangerous.

11 Some among us said in their hearts, If we open our hand too wide, we shall again feel the bite of emptiness; better to strengthen ourselves fully before we consider the wounds of others. Yet they were ashamed to speak thus aloud in the hall.

12 Others, whose compassion was quick, cried, Let us send at once from our stores and fields; have we not been saved for this very purpose, that our comfort might become another's shelter? but they feared to disregard the caution of the careful.

13 Seeing the division, the elders asked that the traveler rest awhile in the house of hospitality, and they called for a day of discernment, that the remnant might seek the counsel of the Holy One before answering.

14 That night the city slept lightly, for memory and fear wrestled upon our pillows; some dreamed of their children's faces fading from hunger if the harvest should fail, others saw in their sleep the eyes of starving strangers accusing them from afar.

15 When morning came, we gathered in the hall, and the sun sent a single beam through the eastern window, falling upon the open palm that the children had drawn upon the floor; and many took this as a sign, though they did not yet know how to read it.

16 The eldest of the keepers of the covenant rose and said, My brothers and sisters, we stand this day between two truths: that our resources are small, and that the cry from afar is great. If we listen only to the first, we will become safe and hard; if only to the second, we may become generous and foolish.

17 Then he turned and touched the witness stone and continued, Remember that our vow was not merely never again to build greatness that devours the small, but also to live as if every stranger bore the same image as our own children.

18 A woman who had once lost all her sons in the days of collapse stood next and said, When I was in exile, a widow in a foreign land shared with me half her last handful of meal; her act did not end my hunger forever, yet it broke the despair that was killing me faster than famine.

19 She lifted her hands, scarred by many labors, and cried, If we send nothing because we cannot send enough, then our hearts have become accountants and not companions; but if we send something, even small, we declare to them and to ourselves that ruin is not the final word.

20 On hearing this, a man whose fields had only recently begun to prosper spoke with trembling, saying, I confess that I have feared this appeal more than any storm, for I felt in my heart a clenching around my barns, as if I loved my security more than the covenant. Pray with me that my hand may open.

21 His honesty cracked the crust around many souls, and there arose throughout the hall the low sound of weeping, for the people recognized in themselves the same hidden clutching; and the Spirit moved gently among us, loosening fingers none of us had noticed were curled.

22 Then a youth, who had never seen the days of true starvation, asked, If we aid them and afterward famine visits us, will we not have

harmed our own children by our mercy? and his question hung in the air like smoke.

23 To him an old woman replied, Son, if we close our hearts for fear of what might be, we teach our children that survival is holier than love; but if we risk for the sake of others, we show them that trust in the Holy One weighs more than full barns. Which lesson do you desire them to remember when we are gone?

24 After much speaking and much silence, the remnant consented that we would not refuse the plea; yet we sought wisdom how to give in a way that would not crush us nor create new chains for them.

25 Therefore the hall called together farmers, artisans, and those skilled in healing, and asked, How much can we send without lying about our strength, and who among us can go with the traveler to share not only grain, but the ways of rebuilding in justice?

26 The farmers answered, saying, If the coming season be normal, we can spare a portion of seed and dried grain; it will thin our comfort, but not destroy us. Yet we must be honest: if the rains fail, we shall feel the ache.

27 The artisans said, We can fashion tools from our surplus iron and show their people how to mend and make, that they need not always wait for help from afar; thus our gift will multiply in their own hands.

28 The healers offered, We will send some among us to teach the herbs that grow in the cracks of ruin, and the simple ways to keep sickness from

breeding among the weary; for knowledge shared is a gift that returns even when the giver is far.

29 When all had spoken, we laid these offerings before the Holy One in prayer, not as a boast, but as a confession of our limits and a request that our small river might be guided where it would do most good.

30 At last the elders stood and said to the traveler, Behold, we are not a mighty nation, yet we cannot turn our faces from your valley; we will send grain, seed, tools, and some of our own people, not as masters, but as companions in ruin and in rising.

31 The traveler fell upon his face and wept, saying, Many have given us advice from a distance, and some have sent us crumbs from their overflowing tables; but you give from the edge of your own hunger and are willing to share your wisdom without cost. May the light that shines upon your open hand also reach our broken hills.

32 When the day came for the sending, the hall was filled with both sorrow and quiet pride; parents kissed the brows of those who would journey, not knowing if they would see them again, and the children traced once more upon the ground the sign of the hand with the sun in its palm.

33 We placed our gifts upon carts not adorned with banners but wrapped in simple cloth, and the people laid their hands upon them, praying that no corruption or hidden bargain would attach itself to the offering as it moved along the road.

34 As the small company set forth—grain, tools, healers, and counselors together—the whole city walked with them to the edge of the fields, where

the ruins gave way to open land; there we stopped, for each story must at some point entrust itself to distance.

35 The elders lifted their voices and said, Go in the name of the covenant that bound us in our lowest place; remember that you do not carry our superiority, but only our shared confession that mercy saved us. Learn from them even as you teach, for the Holy One may have given them truths we have not yet seen.

36 When the travelers had dwindled to dots upon the northern road, a stillness settled over the remnant; we looked back toward our modest hall and our not-full barns, and forward toward the uncertainty of the coming seasons, and it seemed to many that we stood again upon a knife's edge.

37 Yet a deep peace, different from the comfort of plenty, grew in our midst, for we knew that whatever might befall us, we had not betrayed the story that had brought us out of the ruins; and this knowledge became as a hidden strength in the marrow of our days.

38 In the months that followed, the harvest was neither lavish nor disastrous; there were moments of worry and nights of careful counting, yet we did not lack truly, and the people confessed that the ache of giving had not destroyed them, but had widened their hearts.

39 Letters began to arrive from the northern valley, carried by messengers and by wandering minstrels who had passed through both places; and they told of fields slowly greening again, of a small hall rising upon broken ground, and of a

people learning to speak of their ruin without shame.

40 When these letters were read aloud in our hall, the children clapped their hands, and the elders bowed their heads, and it was understood among us that the remnant was no longer confined to one city; for wherever a people chose mercy over speed and open hands over clenched fists, there the same light shone, and the same story continued under the patient gaze of the sun.

CHAPTER II

1 And it came to pass that in the years after the sending to the northern valley, the story of the remnant traveled farther than any of us had walked, borne on the tongues of traders, wanderers, and those who loved to carry strange tidings between distant fires.

2 Some repeated it truly, telling how a people once broken had chosen a slow rebuilding, and how they had given from their thin store to another ruin; others shaped it to their own liking, adding marvels we had never seen, or turning our wrestling into neat sayings without tears.

3 Thus there grew abroad many versions of our tale: in some we were saints without flaw, in others madmen who despised prosperity; and though we did not hear all of these things, enough reached our ears that a new temptation arose among us.

4 For there were those who said, If the nations are speaking of us, should we not steward our name carefully, that we might guide their respect and become a beacon to all? and in such words there

lay coiled the old desire to be admired more than to be faithful.

5 When these murmurings reached the hall, the elders called for a gathering, and the people assembled, some curious, some anxious, for praise from afar is a sweet smoke that can choke the breath of honesty.

6 The youngest of the keepers of record rose first and said, My hands have copied letters from distant places, full of flattery and invitation; they ask for our teachings in neat form, ready to be bound and sold. I confess that for a moment my heart leapt, for I saw our words traveling like swift birds.

7 But as I wrote, a sorrow came upon me, for I remembered that we did not learn these things in study halls or from the wisdom of sages, but on floors wet with our own tears and among stones that still remember the weight of the dying; how then shall we turn our wounds into ornaments?

8 A murmur of agreement passed through many, yet others thought, Could not such fame bring us allies, grain, and protection? Would it not be wise to shape how the world sees us, lest others speak falsely in our name?

9 Perceiving their thoughts, an elder who had once been scribe to the princes of the former city stood and said, Hear me, O people: I have already lived through one harvest of reputation. I fed kings with polished stories while the poor groaned beneath their windows; and when ruin came, it devoured both our lies and our palaces together.

10 He lifted his trembling hands and added, If we now build our identity upon how others speak of

us, we will slowly bend our decisions to protect that image, and soon the covenant will serve the story instead of the story serving the covenant.

11 Then one of the youths, whose mind was quick and whose tongue sharp, cried, Are we to ignore the world entirely and hide our light under a basket? Did we not send help to the northern valley? Is it wrong if others wish to learn from what we have stumbled into?

12 To him the eldest widow replied, No, child; it is not wrong to let others see the path, but it is perilous to begin walking the path for the sake of being seen. The light that truly helps the traveler is not the torch that shouts its brightness, but the small lamp that simply refuses to go out.

13 After this, the people sat long in silence, for both the danger and the calling were great; and at last we agreed to ask the Holy One to teach us how to share without performing and to speak without forgetting that our first duty is to live what we say.

14 In the days that followed, letters were sent to those distant cities which had inquired, saying, We are willing to tell you what we remember, but we cannot offer you a finished wisdom; come, if you desire, and sit among us, working with our hands and eating at our table, that you may see not a tale but a way of life.

15 Some, upon hearing this, lost interest, for they had hoped for tidy sayings that could be learned quickly and used as adornments upon their own structures; but others came, prepared to stay for seasons, and their feet brought new stories to our dust.

16 Among these visitors was a woman from a coastal city, where commerce rode upon the waves and towers of stone watched over the harbors; she had grown weary of halls where the poor were admitted only on days of charity, and where fear of loss governed every decision.

17 She labored with us in the fields and sat quietly in the hall, listening to our confessions and our disagreements; and after many days she said, I see now that your strength is not in some secret doctrine, but in your willingness to be wrong in the open and to begin again without shame.

18 She asked the elders, How can such a posture take root in a place where the powerful fear any crack in their armor? and they answered, It cannot be forced from without; but if even a few begin to live this way, choosing truth over image, it may spread as slowly and quietly as dawn.

19 We blessed her as she returned to her city, not promising miracles but praying that the same light which had melted our pride might in time soften the hearts of those she would meet. And we understood that the remnant in the ruins would have many faces and accents, not only our own.

20 Now it happened that as the fame of our modest life grew in some quarters, contempt grew in others; there were leaders of mighty nations who scoffed, saying, These people are a quaint tale for poets and dreamers, but their way cannot stand in the harsh sun of real power.

21 Some among us heard these words and were secretly stung, thinking, Are we only a curiosity, a pebble on the road of history? and a spirit of

discouragement whispered, Perhaps the patient path is merely a long road to insignificance.

22 Sensing this, the prophets-who-did-not-call-themselves-prophets came among us and said, Remember that you did not choose this way to impress the strong, but because every other way you tried ended in the crushing of the small. If your faithfulness is mocked by thrones, count it a sign that you are not yet building them.

23 They reminded us also of the northern valley and of the letters that spoke of slow healing there, and they said, If even one other people are spared the full weight of ruin because of what we have passed through, is that not a greatness more real than the applause of empires?

24 These words steadied many hearts, yet the unease about our children remained, for a new generation was rising who had never slept in the ashes, and the ruins, though still standing, no longer cut their feet as they once did.

25 The youth of that time ran in streets that had been swept and played in fields that were sown with both grain and stories; and some began to say, Why must we look always at broken stones and listen to tales of failure? Can we not at last turn our faces fully toward the future?

26 One evening a band of these youths came to the hall and spoke respectfully, yet with the boldness of those who have not felt certain scars, saying, We honor what you endured, but you also speak of joy and newness; let us build festivals of color and dance, great works of art and craft, lest

our city become a shrine to sorrow instead of a home for the living.

27 Their plea pierced us, for we recognized in it not only impatience but also a true longing for beauty; and we feared both answers: to deny them would be to freeze the city in mourning, but to yield without thought might lead us to forget the path by which beauty had returned.

28 Therefore the elders asked the youths to wait three days while the city sought wisdom, promising that their desire would not be dismissed as folly. In those days many prayed, walked among the ruins, and listened for a word that could hold both grief and celebration without betrayal.

29 On the third day we gathered again, young and old together, and the hall was filled with a tension like the hush before rain. The eldest keeper of record rose and said, Children of the remnant, your request is just, for the Holy One did not save us to live forever in ashes; yet neither were we saved to forget the fire.

30 He proposed that the city should indeed keep festivals, not once but many times in the year, where music, colors, and art would flourish; but he asked that each festival begin with a walk through the ruins and a reading of our oldest laments, and end with songs of gratitude sung in the hall.

31 In this way, he said, your joy will grow not from denial but from remembrance; and your dances will be not a flight from pain but a sign that pain did not have the last word. The beauty you create will then be deep enough to shelter others when their own cities fall.

32 The youths considered this and one among them replied, If you truly mean to join us in the making of such festivals, and not merely to permit them, we will gladly weave remembrance into our rejoicing. But promise that you will allow us to add new songs to the old, and new symbols beside the stones.

33 We laughed softly, for their boldness was a healthy fire, and we answered, Yes, only do not cut down the ancient markers when you plant your banners; let the two stand together, old and new, so that none may forget that delight and sorrow drink from the same river.

34 Thus the first Festival of the Remaining Light was born: at dawn the people walked barefoot among the ruins, in silence broken only by a single flute; at midday they gathered in the hall to hear the chronicles of the collapse; and as evening fell, the square blossomed with lanterns, fabrics, and dancing.

35 Children painted upon cloth the sign of the open hand and the sun in its palm, surrounding it with figures leaping and sowing seed; elders told stories to circles of listeners, their voices weaving wisdom into the rhythm of drums and the stamping of feet.

36 Some visitors who beheld this wondered, How can a people remember such pain and yet rejoice without bitterness? and we answered, Because we no longer lie about our part in the ruin, nor about the mercy that met us there; truth has become the floor upon which our joy can safely leap.

37 In the years that followed, the festivals grew in richness, yet the morning walk through the ruins

and the noon reading of laments remained at their heart, like the trunk from which all branches grow; and whenever laughter began to forget its roots, the sight of the broken stones called it back from vanity to gratitude.

38 So it was recorded in the chronicles of the humbled that the remnant learned not only to survive and to share, but also to celebrate without losing their soul; and this was counted among the greatest healings, for a people who cannot rejoice are still captive, and a people who rejoice without remembrance are already halfway to another ruin.

39 And the Holy One beheld the city where old stones and new songs dwelt side by side, where travelers were welcomed and children painted suns upon their own hands, and it was said in the quiet of many hearts that the light which had first risen in a single ruined square was now large enough to warm more than one generation.

40 Thus did the days of the remnant stretch onward, not in perfection but in a long, faithful weaving of sorrow and joy, memory and hope; and the sun that watched over their beginnings watched also over their festivals, steady and unastonished, as if to say, I was here before your ruins and will remain after your towers, but I am glad when your hearts learn at last to shine a little in my likeness.

CHAPTER 12

1 And it came to pass in the ripening of years, when children who had never seen the first tents were now themselves parents, and when the orchards cast steady shade upon the paths that once were dust, that a question arose in the heart

of the remnant, quiet yet insistent as water beneath stone.

2 For we saw that the ruins no longer frightened our young as they once had, and that the hall of common life, which had begun as a fragile shelter, now stood weathered and sure; and we asked within ourselves, What shall keep this story from hardening into legend, and this covenant from becoming only an old oath recited without trembling?

3 In those days an aged woman, whose eyes had grown dim but whose hearing was sharp to every whisper of the Spirit, lay upon her bed near the window of the hall, that she might still hear the morning songs and the footsteps of the people.

4 One night, as the lamps were lowered and the square lay quiet, she heard a voice like the echo of distant thunder softened by miles of air, saying, Daughter of dust, call the remnant together once more, for I will set before them a parting word, that they may know how to walk when your generation sleepeth with its fathers.

5 She rose with difficulty in the morning and sent for the elders and the youths, and for those who kept the records and those who played the flutes; and they carried her on a low litter into the hall, and all the people gathered, curious and solemn, sensing that a new turning of the path was near.

6 When they were assembled, she lifted her thin hands and said, I am near the edge of my days, and my breath is short, but in the watches of the night I heard a word that is not my own; and I must spill it before you as a vessel spills its last oil, lest it be lost with me.

7 She spoke, saying, Thus saith the One who watched you in your ruin and in your rebuilding: You have done well to remember and to share, to build slowly and to guard the small. Yet know this—no covenant written on stone or fiber can keep you if you cease to desire the truth more than your own story.

8 For it is the secret love of truth, even when it cuts you, that has kept you from becoming as the city that fell; and if ever you begin to defend your reputation instead of your neighbor, or to protect your name instead of the oppressed, the same cracks will creep again beneath your foundations.

9 The people heard this and their hearts grew heavy, for they recognized that even now, in their maturity, they had sometimes hurried to excuse themselves faster than they had rushed to comfort the wounded; and the hall felt suddenly smaller, as if its roof had dropped nearer to their heads.

10 Then the old woman continued, saying, The Holy One declares: I am not the guardian of your image, but the Father of the fatherless and the defender of the bruised. If you wish to walk with Me, you must choose again and again to stand where I stand, even when it costs you honor.

11 A murmur rose among the elders, for they remembered letters from foreign cities asking to make of them an example, and of the unease that had accompanied such requests; and they bowed their heads, understanding that the temptation to be admired would never entirely depart.

12 The woman said further, The One who sees all things also speaks thus: Do not boast that you are “the remnant,” as if this name were a crown; for I

have remnants in places you do not know and among peoples you have scarcely heard of, who keep justice under harsher storms than your own.

13 If you would be truly of the remnant, let it mean only this—that when I whisper in the night or in the tears of the poor, you answer, Here we are, even if other voices call you to safer beds and softer songs.

14 Many wept openly at this saying, for they had grown fond of the tale that set them apart, and they felt the gentle stripping away of a pride that had wrapped itself in humility’s garments; yet with the pain came a freeing, like a tight band cut from a long-bruised limb.

15 Then one of the youths, who had grown up beneath the twin shadows of ruins and orchards, asked, Grandmother, what shall we teach our children’s children when you and our parents are gone? Shall we still walk among these broken stones, or will it be enough to keep the stories and the festivals?

16 She smiled, and the lines of her face made a map of all she had endured, and she replied, Walk among the stones as long as they stand, but do not trust the stones more than the story, nor the story more than the truth. For even ruins can be polished into idols if you cease to ask what they mean.

17 She counseled them, saying, Teach your children not only what happened here, but also how easily it could happen again anywhere that fear is called wisdom and greed is called prudence. Give them not only memories, but questions sharp enough to cut through the softest lie.

18 A keeper of record then asked, Should we not at last rebuild upon some of these ruins, now that time has passed and the city has grown? For there are families crowded in small houses, and these broken places cry out for use.

19 The old woman answered, Yes, in time you may build upon them, but when you do, let a portion of the ruin remain in sight, and mark the new stones with different signs, that those who dwell there may remember that comfort was laid upon confession, and not upon forgetfulness.

20 She said, Let no quarter of this city become so smooth and shining that it forgets it was once dust; let there be in every street a mark, a stone, a song, or a story that says, We were wrong, and we were rescued. In this way your beauty will not sour into pride.

21 A mother whose children played often in the square asked with tears, What of the world beyond our walls? We hear of wars brewing again, of rulers sharpening their words and their swords; what is asked of us when the storms gather far away?

22 The answer came first as a hush, and then as words: The Holy One requires this of you—that you do not become drunk on your own peace while others bleed. Watch, pray, and be ready to open your hand as you did for the northern valley, neither rushing foolishly into every quarrel nor hiding behind your borders as if they were your god.

23 For some battles are not yours to fight, and to seize them would be arrogance; but some cries are sent to you as clearly as a letter; discern which is

which, and when it is your time, choose again the way of costly mercy, not the comfortable shrug that says, It is none of our concern.

24 Then a craftsman, whose tools had built both houses and coffins, asked, And what of our own inner weariness? We have walked long in vigilance; is there a rest for the remnant beyond the watch and the work?

25 The old woman's voice softened, and she said, Yes, there is a rest—not the rest of those who forget, but of those who know the weight of the world and yet trust that they do not carry it alone. Your rest will be found whenever you stand in the light of the sun and remember that you are not its source.

26 She turned her gaze toward the mark on the floor, the open hand with the small circle in the palm, and whispered, This is the mystery: that the One whose light fills all things has chosen to shine through your open hands, not because you are strong, but because you consent to be open. When you close, the light remains in the heavens; when you open, it descends.

27 Hearing this, the people fell to their knees, not in terror but in awe, for they realized that all their careful building and sharing had been, at best, a dim reflection of a generosity older than the stones of any city.

28 After a time of silence, a child, hardly taller than the benches, tugged at the litter and asked, Grandmother, will you see what comes after us, from where you are going? Will you remember us when you stand nearer to the sun?

29 Tears gathered in the eyes of the old woman, and she answered, Little one, I do not know how your days will be woven, but I believe that the One who remembers sparrows will not forget this small people who tried, however clumsily, to love in the ruins. I will rest in that remembering, and I ask you to do the same.

30 Then she blessed the children, placing her hand lightly upon their heads, as if she were pressing not weight but light into their hair, and she said, May your courage be softer than iron yet harder than lies; may your joy be deep enough to share with strangers; may your failures drive you not to despair but to deeper truth.

31 When she had finished speaking, her strength failed, and they carried her back to her bed by the window. She lingered only a little while longer upon the earth, listening one last morning to the murmurs of the hall and the footsteps upon the square.

32 At the rising of the sun on the third day, as its light touched the open hand on the floor, her breathing grew easy, and many said later that her face shone with the simple contentment of one who has set down a heavy bundle at the end of a long road. She departed in peace, and the city mourned her not as one lost, but as a seed planted in a field they would see again only in harvest.

33 In the days that followed, the remnant read and reread the words she had spoken, setting them alongside the earliest chronicles; and they saw that the same thread ran through all—that truth, mercy, humility, and courage were not separate virtues but strands of a single cord that had held them when all else broke.

34 They resolved anew that each generation would be invited, not forced, to take that cord in its own hands, to test it, to question it, and to choose whether to be bound by it; for they had learned that coerced righteousness is only a polished form of bondage.

35 So they taught their children's children to argue honestly, to lament deeply, to give foolishly by the world's measure, and to laugh without cruelty; and they called this strange mixture "walking in the light," though they knew the path would never be perfectly straight beneath their feet.

36 Visitors who came in later years found a city neither mighty nor rich by ordinary reckonings, yet they often left with a quiet unease about their own lands, as if they had glimpsed, in the open hands and the remembered ruins, a different way of measuring greatness.

37 Some went away offended, saying, Such a people will never shape the tides of empires; others went away changed, whispering, Perhaps shaping empires is not the highest calling after all. And the remnant, hearing only fragments of these reports, returned to their tasks, for their work was with neighbors, not with fame.

38 Thus it was written at the end of the Book of the Remnant in the Ruins that no final wall was ever laid, no perfect system ever finished, and no generation ever kept the covenant without flaw; yet none who truly turned back were turned away, and the light in the open hand was never wholly extinguished.

39 And the Holy One, who had watched the first stones fall and the first tears dry upon the cheeks

of the survivors, continued to watch as new houses rose and children skipped between broken pillars and blossoming trees; and though the sun in the sky gave no speech, its steady rising and setting bore witness that mercy still circled the earth.

40 So ends the testimony of the remnant in the ruins; but the story of every people who chooses truth over image, mercy over speed, and open hands over clenched fists is written in the same patient light, under the same unwearied sun, which waits each day to see who will turn their faces toward it and shine back, however faintly, in its likeness.

BOOK X – THE CITY OF THE OPEN HAND

CHAPTER I

1 And it came to pass after many years, when the words of the remnant had settled into the soil like long-buried seed, that a stirring arose along the roads and in the far hills, as if the earth itself were remembering a promise spoken in its hearing.

2 For there were in many lands small households and scattered souls who had grown weary of high walls and low compassion, of thick creeds and thin kindness; and though they had never heard the chronicles of the ruins, yet the same ache beat in their chests: that surely there must be a way for people to live together without devouring one another.

3 These were craftsmen who had turned aside from corrupt markets, mothers who could no longer bless their children with empty words,

servants who could no longer bow to masters of polished cruelty, and young ones whose dreams did not fit inside the narrow stories of power they had been handed.

4 In the watches of the night they lifted up untrained prayers, saying, O One-who-sees, if You are real and if You are not like the idols we have been shown, teach us how to walk in a manner that does not crush the weak nor lie with the tongue while smiling with the face.

5 And the Holy One, who had listened once to the groanings amid the ruins, heard also these scattered cries, and said within Himself, Shall I not weave these threads together, as I wove a people from the rubble of a single fallen city? For my remnants are many, though they do not yet know one another's names.

6 Therefore there came upon the paths, at times known and at times hidden, a quiet call, like a melody remembered from childhood whose words cannot yet be recalled; and those whose hearts had been pierced by hunger for a truer life felt themselves drawn to loosen their hands and to look more carefully into the faces of their neighbors.

7 Some among them had heard rumors of the remnant in the ruins, of a people who built slowly, shared stubbornly, and walked between joy and sorrow without needing to forget either; and these set their faces, as they were able, toward that distant square where the witness stone still stood.

8 Others, in lands far beyond any road that had ever reached the first city, felt the same pull without knowing its source, and began, in their

own streets, to gather in circles instead of rows, to tell the truth instead of the approved stories, and to ask aloud whether greatness must always mean someone's diminishment.

9 In this way, without trumpet or decree, there arose from many corners of the earth small assemblies of those who had tasted the bitterness of lies and the thinness of triumph; and though their languages differed and their customs were strange to one another, yet they shared a single thirst.

10 Now it came to pass that messengers from the northern valley, where the remnant had once sent seed and counsel, returned again to the first city, bearing both news and questions; for they had themselves walked some years in the covenant of open hands, and they had begun to meet travelers whose stories sounded like distant echoes of their own.

11 They said to the elders of the hall, We have seen in other lands the same hunger that once drove us to your door, and we hear whispers of gatherings that speak of justice and mercy without knowing your name. What then is this work we are part of? Is it a single river or many streams?

12 The elders answered, We did not dig this river, nor do we own its course; we only found ourselves drowning in our own ruin and discovered that the waters of mercy ran beneath. If that same water rises through other cracked stones, who are we to claim it as our own?

13 They spoke further, saying, Perhaps the Holy One has done with other peoples what was done with us, in ways suited to their valleys and their

wounds. If so, our task is not to carve our story upon them, but to recognize in them the same light that once surprised us in the dust.

14 When the messengers heard this, they rejoiced and trembled, for they had feared that the remnant might wish to gather all such movements under one banner and one name; but now they saw that the true covenant left room for many faces turned toward the same sun.

15 Nevertheless, it was agreed among them that there should be times and places where these scattered companions might meet, not to forge an empire of the humble, but to strengthen one another in the long work of choosing open hands in a world that still trusted clenched fists.

16 So the word went quietly along the lesser roads, not in proclamations posted upon palace gates, but in murmured invitations passed from traveler to traveler, that any who had begun to walk in this strange way of truth and mercy might, if they desired, come together beneath no flag but the shared confession of their weakness.

17 They chose for their first meeting not a mighty city nor a sacred mountain, but a wide plain between three small villages, where the soil had known both drought and flood, and where no nation had ever raised a monument to its victories; and there they set simple tents and low tables.

18 From east and west, from north and south, they came: thin farmers from overworked fields, artisans with calloused fingers, healers bearing herbs instead of credentials, scribes whose scrolls were stained more with tears than with ink, and

wanderers whose only badge was the wear upon their sandals.

19 When they beheld one another, they marveled, for though none wore royal robes, yet there was in their bearing a quiet nobility born of having faced their own darkness without fleeing; and many embraced as kin though they had never before heard each other's tongue.

20 They sat in a great circle upon the grass, with no one elevated above the rest; and after a long silence, a woman from the northern valley began to speak of the day when her people had first broken their idols into dust and mixed them with the seed.

21 Then a man from a distant coastal town told of how he had walked away from a council that prized image over justice, choosing instead to spend his days repairing nets and listening to the stories of fishers whose voices had never entered marble halls.

22 One by one, men and women from many lands shared how they had come to the end of themselves: the end of ambition-as-god, the end of security-as-salvation, the end of pretending that their prosperity was innocent while their neighbor sank.

23 As the stories wove together, it became clear that though their histories differed, a single thread ran through them all: a moment when the love of truth had outweighed the love of advantage, and the fear of losing honor had finally bent before the fear of losing their souls.

24 A young one, hearing all this, cried out, Are we then many remnants, each in our own place?

Or are we pieces of one cloth we cannot yet see? and the question hovered over the assembly like a bird seeking a branch.

25 A gray-haired healer answered gently, saying, Perhaps we are both. For the Holy One does not weave with only one color or one thickness of thread; yet in His hands the fragments become a tapestry. Our part is not to decide the pattern, but to remain available to His loom.

26 They agreed among themselves that they would not form a single council to command all others, nor compose a creed to be recited in every tongue; instead they would share practices that had helped them stay true when the old fears and hungers whispered, and they would carry these home like seeds, not like chains.

27 Thus they spoke of circles where all voices are heard before decisions are made; of halls where the poorest names are read first; of markets where wages are set by the question, What does it take for a soul to live with dignity? and of festivals where joy and lament dance together.

28 They also confessed to one another the failures that had visited them since their turning: the new forms of pride that had crept in disguised as humility, the subtle exclusions that had grown like weeds around their tables, the seasons when vigilance had slackened and old patterns had reappeared.

29 In hearing these things, no one postured as exemplar, for all had learned that the most dangerous remnant is the one that believes itself immune; instead they bound themselves to watch one another with compassion, ready to speak

warning or encouragement as the moment required.

30 As the sun declined upon their days of gathering, they marked the plain with a simple sign: a ring of stones surrounding a flat space of bare earth, upon which any future company might sit in a circle and remember that they were not the first to ask whether another way of living together was possible.

31 They named no capital and crowned no leader that day; but many hearts were crowned anew with a sense that they were not alone, that in far valleys and crowded streets others were also choosing the narrow road that made room for the small.

32 When they parted, they did not say, Let us become a movement famed in every land; rather they prayed, Let us be faithful in the quiet places from which we came, and if our paths cross again, let it be because the same light has drawn us, and not because we chase the echo of our own name.

33

So they returned to their cities, villages, and wandering ways, carrying not banners but ways of listening, not manifestos but stories of what had humbled them and set them free; and wherever they went, some who were already restless in spirit recognized in them a familiar longing.

34

Thus the city of the open hand was not built in one place of stone and timber, but in many hearts and households that chose, each in its small corner

of the world, to measure greatness by the safety of the weak and the honesty of the strong.

35

And the Holy One, whose sun had shone alike upon the first ruined square and upon the distant plain of meeting, looked upon this widening ring of quiet conspirators of mercy, and it was whispered among those who listened closely that He was pleased—not because the world had been remade in a day, but because in many hidden places, hands were opening.

CHAPTER 2

1 And it came to pass in the days after the gathering on the plain, that those who had sat in the great circle returned each to their own soil, carrying within them a quiet fire that did not burn the tongue but glowed behind the eyes.

2 In the first city of the ruins, life went on with its familiar rhythms—fields tilled, children taught, festivals kept—yet a new note had entered our songs, for we knew now that beyond our hills others also walked with open hands, and this knowledge enlarged our prayers.

3 We began to speak less of “our” covenant and more of “the” covenant, as one speaks less of “my” sunrise and more of “the” sunrise when he learns that the same light warms distant shores; and this small shift guarded us from the pride of imagining ourselves the center of what the Holy One was weaving.

4 Nevertheless, a new trial soon arose, not from famine nor from war, but from abundance of voices; for with the coming of many travelers and

messengers, we were offered not only news and friendship, but also teachings and customs that pressed upon our simple ways like ornate garments upon a child.

5 There came from the east a band of teachers, earnest and eloquent, who had heard of the remnant and the circles of counsel, and they brought with them carefully ordered sayings about mercy, justice, and humility, bound in fine volumes and sealed with the endorsement of learned houses.

6 They sat with us in the hall and heard our stories; then they said, Your way is noble, but it is in need of structure. Let us help you refine it into a clear system, that it may be taught swiftly in academies and adopted by rulers who have no time for slow circles and long silences.

7 Some among us were impressed, for the teachers knew how to clothe truths in shining phrases, and they promised that our experience could be distilled into principles, these principles into rules, and these rules into a single symbol to be raised upon banners—a mark by which the city of the open hand could be known and spread.

8 We took their proposal into discernment, as was our custom, and the hall was divided; for there were those who saw in it a chance to protect what had been learned from distortion, and to give a clear shape to the movement of many scattered hearts.

9 Others remembered the ruins and trembled, saying, Did we not once fall because we loved our own statutes more than the living poor? If we fix our way too tightly in words and signs, will we

not begin to guard the symbol instead of the substance?

10 In the midst of our wrestling, a child who had been drawing in the dust held up his hand and said, If we make one big picture and tell everyone, “This is what the open hand looks like,” what will we call the hands that are open in a different shape than ours? Will they still belong, or will we tell them to close until they can open correctly?

11 His question struck us with the force of prophecy, though his voice was small; and the teachers from the east shifted uneasily, for they had not expected their polished schemes to be tested by such plain words.

12 An elder then rose and said to the teachers, We do not despise your learning, nor the care you have given to these sayings; yet our way was not born from cleverness, but from collision with our own ruin. We fear that if we make it too smooth, it will slip easily into the hands of the powerful and be used without wounds.

13 The teachers answered, But without firm definition, your path will be misunderstood and mingled with errors; better to control its meaning now than to watch it be twisted later by those who speak falsely in your name.

14 To this a woman from the northern valley replied, We have already seen that we cannot control how others speak of us. What we can do is live in such a way that those who know us closely will recognize when a counterfeit voice arises. The truth of a seed is not protected by painting it, but by planting it.

15 After long debate and much stillness, we thanked the eastern teachers for their zeal and offered to share with them the stories of our beginnings and our failures, but we declined to adopt their single symbol and rigid system. We begged them instead to carry home the practices that had humbled us, and to let those practices take root in their own soil in whatever shape was honest.

16 Some departed offended, saying, These people prefer muddle to clarity and will never influence kings; others stayed awhile, laid aside their books, and tried with difficulty to sit in circles where their voices were only one among many.

17 From this we learned that not every gift of refinement is meant for us, and that sometimes the most loving answer to well-meant control is a grateful refusal; and we wrote in the chronicles that even wisdom must bow before the mystery of how the Spirit chooses to work in different lands.

18 In those same days another test arose, quieter but no less sharp: within our own walls, a new generation began to take pride, not in wealth or power, but in their very practice of openness and mercy, turning the way itself into a badge.

19 They spoke among themselves, saying, We are not like those who cling to thrones and hoard; we have seen a higher way. And though their words were clothed in zeal, the seed of contempt had begun to sprout beneath them.

20 It was noticed first by a widow who swept the hall at dawn; she heard their talk and felt a chill, for she remembered a time when other young

voices had boasted of their difference from “the corrupt,” shortly before the old city fell.

21 She went to the elders and said, I fear we are learning to despise others more than we grieve for them; our young ones speak of “them” and “us” with growing sharpness, and soon they will love the line more than the neighbor across it.

22 The elders, cut to the heart, called a gathering and asked the youths to speak openly of what they saw in the world. They did so with passion, naming injustices and hypocrisies in far cities and near villages, and there was truth in much of what they said.

23 When they had finished, one of the prophets—who-did-not-call-himself-prophet stood and asked a single question, saying, Children, when you speak of these others, do you feel more sorrow or more satisfaction? Does your heart ache for them, or does it secretly rejoice that you are not like them?

24 His words fell like a stone into still water, and the ripples of silence spread through the hall. Some youths bowed their heads, feeling the sting of recognition; others grew angry, accusing him of trying to blunt their righteous indignation.

25 The prophet replied, Indignation that does not weep will soon learn to wound. The Holy One did not call you merely to see what is crooked, but to stand—if you can bear it—in the place where He stands, which is always closer to the bruised than to those who win arguments.

26 He proposed a hard practice: that for a season, whenever any of us spoke harshly of a distant people or leader, we should also speak aloud a

blessing for them and commit to one concrete act of mercy toward someone near at hand, lest our words float free from our own obedience.

27 This discipline was not welcomed easily, for it forced our mouths and our hands to move together; yet over time it cleansed our speech of a certain sourness, and taught us that the true city of the open hand is built not on criticism, however accurate, but on costly kindness.

28 While we wrestled with these inward tests, there came from the south tidings of a great alliance forming among powerful realms, promising prosperity and protection to all who would join under its sign and contribute soldiers and tribute in steady measure.

29 Envoys arrived at our modest city, astounded that a place of such small size and odd customs had been spoken of in the same breath as larger towns; they offered us inclusion in their league, saying, Your principles of justice would benefit our name, and in return you would enjoy our shield and markets.

30 Some elders saw in this an opportunity to safeguard our people from future war and hunger, and to spread the practices of the open hand across many borders; others smelled in it the old scent of bargains that begin with honor and end with compromise.

31 We asked the envoys, If your league should decide upon a policy that crushes the weak or exploits the poor in a distant land, will we be free to refuse our support without punishment?

32 They smiled thinly and answered, Unity requires hard choices; there will be times when

the good of the many demands painful decisions. You will have a voice at the table, but once the council has spoken, all must stand together.

33 At this many hearts sank, for we had seen how “painful decisions” had too often meant pain for the powerless and comfort for the well-placed; and we feared that our presence might be used to paint cruelty in colors of conscience.

34 The hall wrestled long, through sun and lamp-light, weighing fears against hopes. Some argued, If we stand apart always, will we not condemn the city to isolation and eventual destruction? Others replied, If we bind ourselves where we cannot say “no” for the sake of the small, what life will we have preserved?

35 At last we sent this answer: We honor your desire for unity and your offer of protection, but the covenant that saved us in our ruin forbids us to pledge obedience where we cannot, in good conscience, refuse to do harm. We will be your neighbors, your traders, even your helpers in catastrophe, but we cannot be your instruments in policies decided far from the faces of those they wound.

36 The envoys departed shaking their heads, saying, These people are naive and will be swept aside when storms come. Yet not all of them were unmoved; one younger envoy lingered at the edge of the hall and whispered, Pray that when my league chooses wrongly, there will be those like you who dare to stand apart, that we may yet be recalled to our senses.

37 So we remained a small city in the shadow of growing powers, neither hidden nor central,

watched with a mix of curiosity, suspicion, and quiet respect; and we learned that the open hand must sometimes be lifted not only to give, but also to decline a handshake that hides a chain.

38 In all these things—the teachers with their systems, the youths with their subtle pride, the envoys with their glittering alliance—the Holy One was not absent, but used each pressure to reveal what we still loved more than truth: clarity more than humility, being right more than being merciful, safety more than obedience.

39 And we wrote in the chronicles of the city of the open hand that the dangers of abundance are more delicate than the dangers of ruin, for when the house stands firm and the barns are not empty, the soul forgets how much it needed light when it dwelt among the broken stones.

40 Therefore we renewed our practice of walking often among the old ruins, even as new houses rose; and each time we laid our palms upon the rough, timeworn stones, we prayed, O Holy One, keep our hands from closing around our own goodness; let them remain open, that Your light may still find a place to rest among us.

CHAPTER 3

1 And it came to pass after these things that a season of strange quiet fell upon the lands, as if the earth were drawing breath between storms; for wars slowed, markets steadied, and the noise of nations dimmed to a low murmur on the horizon.

2 In that quiet, the city of the open hand might have been tempted to sleep, saying, At last the world has learned, and we may rest from

vigilance; but the elders knew that peace without examination is like a roof not tested by rain.

3 They said one to another, The ruins around us taught us how to live when all was broken; now we must learn how to live when nothing appears to be in danger. For the heart may be in greatest peril when the walls seem safest.

4 In those days, trade along the smaller roads began to flourish, and caravans stopped more often in our modest markets, bringing cloth, spices, tools, and stories; and our own goods—simple, durable, made without exploitation—found slow but steady welcome in nearby towns.

5 With this came a form of comfort we had not known before: not the sudden abundance that intoxicates, but the gradual easing of strain—the feeling of having enough, and a little more than enough, for the first time in many lives.

6 Some rejoiced without question, saying, Is this not the kindness of the Holy One, that we should at last taste the sweetness of security? Others felt a small unease, like a pebble in the shoe, and asked inwardly, Will our open hands remain open when they hold more?

7 Soon a new conversation rose in the hall: parents asked whether their children should be taught trades that might prosper in wealthier cities, youths wondered about journeys to distant academies, and merchants considered partnerships with larger markets that had once ignored us.

8 A craftsman spoke, saying, My daughter has skill beyond our village tools; shall I deny her the chance to learn among masters in great halls, for fear that she will be spoiled? Is our calling to keep

everyone small, lest they forget where they came from?

9 A farmer answered, We do not wish to keep anyone small; we only fear that bigness without depth will swallow what we have learned. If we send them out, how shall we help them carry the covenant into places that do not honor it?

10 Then a quiet voice from the back—one who had long kept the lamps and rarely spoken—said, Perhaps we should not ask only, “What will they gain?” but also, “What will they be tempted to trade for it?” For some doors require that you leave behind more than your cloak.

11 The hall sat with these things many days, and it was agreed that we would not forbid our children to go where their gifts called them; but before any left for far cities, they would be invited into a circle of elders, peers, and the poor, to speak frankly of the risks and the hopes of such journeys.

12 In those circles, the leaving ones told what they desired—learning, skill, influence, relief from narrowness—and the community spoke aloud their own fears: that the leaving might learn to despise the small, to hide their roots, or to return only as guests in the place that had raised them.

13 Together they shaped a simple vow: that wherever the traveler went, they would measure success not by how high they climbed, but by whether the most vulnerable around them became safer or more endangered by their presence.

14 We laid our hands upon them—farmers, widows, artisans, children—and blessed them, not with promises of triumph, but with the hope that if they were ever forced to choose between honor

and truth, they would remember the witness stone and choose to lose honor.

15 Thus a slow stream of our sons and daughters began to walk out along the roads, carrying with them stories of ruins and open hands, and learning in return the languages, tools, and wounds of other places; and a slower stream, in time, began to return.

16 Some came back with crafts that strengthened our city, teaching us ways to heal soil, mend metal, and write clearer records; others returned with scars we had never seen before—wounds of soul from places where everything had a price, including friendship.

17 One such son stood in the hall and said, In the city where I labored, they admired our ideas of justice, but only if those ideas increased their prestige. I was praised when I spoke of the poor in elegant phrases, and shunned when I proposed sharing our profits with them.

18 He wept and confessed, Many times I chose their praise over my conscience, smiling while my stomach twisted. I have come home not as a hero, but as one who failed. Is there still a place for me among you?

19 The people were cut to the heart, not because he had stumbled, but because his struggle mirrored a temptation that lived in all of them; and they answered, You have done what our covenant requires—you have told the truth about your failure. Stand with us; your wound is now one of our teachers.

20 We learned then that the city of the open hand would not be kept pure by isolation, but by the

willingness of those who went and those who remained to confess where the way had been lost, and to adjust the path together.

21 In that same season, letters arrived from distant companions on the plain—small circles in other lands—asking for counsel about their own trials: one wrestled with a ruler who wanted their name without their practices, another with merchants who imitated their slogans while keeping their chains.

22 We did not answer as experts, for we had not faced their exact storms; instead we told them how we ourselves had erred when flattered, how we had learned to test every alliance by its impact on the smallest, and how we had sometimes had to say no and pay a price.

23 We reminded them, as we reminded ourselves, that the open hand is not a technique but a trust; and that the Holy One may ask different sacrifices of different peoples, yet always with the same aim—that the weak not be crushed to cushion the strong.

24 In time, some of our travelers did not return in body, for they found other places where the light flickered and stayed to tend it; but news of them came in fragments: of a circle formed in a tenement, of wages quietly raised in a factory, of a school where children were taught to ask not only, “What can I do?” but also, “Whom might this harm?”

25 We grieved their absence and rejoiced in their faithfulness, learning that the city of the open hand had borders more porous than any map

could show; for wherever a soul chose mercy over advantage, a brick of our invisible city was laid.

26 Yet not all news was so hopeful. Word reached us of one who had risen high in a distant council, whose tongue was skilled and whose story of the ruins was often told; yet behind closed doors he used fear to bend others, and invoked the covenant to silence those who questioned him.

27 This report struck the hall like a cold wind, for it showed us how our own story could be used as a weapon in hands that loved influence more than truth; and many asked, Have we become a source of harm far away, even while we strive to heal near at hand?

28 The elders called a fast, not of food alone but of speaking in our own defense; and we knelt on the stone floor and prayed, O Holy One, if our name has been twisted to justify what wounds, let the name be broken. Better that our story be forgotten than that it be used to crush another.

29 After this we wrote to the communities near that council, not accusing, but saying, Test the fruit, not the history. If any among you uses our tale to excuse hardness, know that they walk no longer in the path we ourselves are learning, and we release you from any obligation to obey them for our sake.

30 From this we learned that even good seed, when carried far, may fall into soil that makes it bitter; and that the only true guard against such twisting is not control, but a constant return, wherever one lives, to the faces of the least and the wounds nearest the doorstep.

31 In the midst of these outward concerns, an inward question grew among us like a tree: How shall we speak of the One who has walked with us? For our language had long been full of metaphors—sun, light, hand, witness, breath—but the children began to ask for clearer words.

32 They said, You tell us that the Creator is like the sun in the sky, steady and searching, and that His light rests in open hands; but is He a distant fire, or a near voice, or the very life in our neighbor's eyes? We wish to know the One you trust, not only the stories about Him.

33 The hall trembled at this request, for we knew that to answer too quickly would be to shrink the mystery, and to refuse to answer would leave the young to fill the silence with whatever idols the world offered.

34 An old man, who had spoken seldom but listened always, rose slowly and said, Children, we cannot trap the Holy One in a single shape or word, any more than we can hold the sun in our palm. But we can tell you this: wherever truth is loved more than advantage, wherever mercy is chosen over convenience, and wherever the small are made safe at cost to the strong, there He is.

35 He added, When we walked in lies and hardness, we felt Him as fire against us; when we turned and opened our hands, we felt the same fire as warmth within. So do not seek Him only in your thoughts of heaven, but also in the next hard choice where you must decide whom to protect.

36 The children pondered this and asked, Then is the city of the open hand itself your “religion”? Is this way the whole of what you believe?

37 The elders answered, No, little ones; the way is not the One who gave it. We follow this path because we have come to trust the Giver, whose light reaches far beyond our city, our stories, and our understanding. If ever we cling to the path more tightly than to Him, He will lead us away from it for a season, that we may remember.

38 Thus we spoke of faith not as membership in a small experiment, but as a long trust in a vast mercy—one that had found us in our ruin and might be finding others in ways we would never see. And this kept us from making an idol even of our most cherished practices.

39 So it was that in days of relative calm, when no army pressed upon our gates and no famine stalked our fields, the city of the open hand faced subtler storms: of success, of reputation, of children's honest questions, and of distant distortions.

40 And we recorded in the chronicles that these storms were no less serious than fire and sword, for they tested not our ability to endure loss, but our willingness to remain humble when we had something to lose; and we prayed that in both kinds of trial, our hands would learn again and again to open.

CHAPTER 4

1 And it came to pass in the turning of more years, when gray had begun to appear in the hair of those who had once been called “the young,” that a new kind of storm rose upon the earth, not from

armies marching nor from kings decreeing, but from the very way men spoke and listened.

2 For a great web of messages had spread between cities and nations, swifter than riders and louder than trumpets, so that a word uttered in haste in one corner of the world could be heard and magnified in another before the speaker had drawn his next breath.

3 In that web, many voices competed for attention, and the measure of a saying became not its truth but its sharpness; and rumors, like sparks in dry grass, ran faster than the careful speech of those who weighed their words for harm.

4 Soon, tales of the remnant and of the city of the open hand began to travel along these unseen threads, carried not only by faithful witnesses but also by those who loved the taste of scandal and the ease of accusation.

5 Some proclaimed us heroes beyond reproach, inventing wonders we had never wrought; others declared us hypocrites in soft clothing, accusing us of secret cruelties and hidden hoards; and both sorts of stories spread like wind-blown chaff, lodging in ears that had never seen our square.

6 At first we laughed uneasily, saying, The world has always talked, and words without roots soon wither; but as the noise grew, we saw that neighbors who once knew us by face now looked at us through the fog of opinions formed far away.

7 A trader from a nearby town said, I heard in the markets that your “open hand” is a trick, hiding chains finer than iron; another said, Others claim you are saints whom we must imitate in all things,

or be counted enemies of the light. Tell us, which are you?

8 The hall trembled at this question, for we knew we were neither what our admirers imagined nor what our denouncers feared; and yet we saw that in a world of quick judgments, the patience of lived example seemed small beside the roar of distant claims.

9 Some among us said, We must enter these webs and defend ourselves, speaking in every marketplace and message-stream until all know the truth of who we are; others replied, If we chase every shadow cast in our name, we will have no hands left for the work before us.

10 In our confusion we called a fast, not from food nor from speech alone, but from listening to distant reports about ourselves; for seven days we resolved to hear only the voices of our neighbors, the cries of the poor at our gate, and the whisper of the Holy One.

11 In that quieter space, we discovered how much of our concern had turned inward—how eagerly we had drunk both praise and blame, as if our image were a fragile idol needing constant tending; and we repented that we had allowed the world’s mirrors to distract us from the faces in front of us.

12 Then a word rose among the elders, saying, It is not required of us to manage how we are seen, but to guard how we are in truth. If we must speak into these wide currents, let it be rarely and for the sake of the vulnerable, not to polish our own name.

13 So we chose from among us a small band—humble, slow to anger, skilled in

listening—who would answer, when necessary, the loudest falsehoods that endangered others; but their charge was not to praise us, nor to seek victory in argument, only to point gently back to the works of mercy wherever they could be found.

14 We blessed them and said, Remember that you go not as defenders of our honor, but as servants of those who may be misled into harm; if ever you find your heart burning more with the desire to win than with sorrow for the confused, return at once to the hall.

15 Meanwhile, life in the city continued: bread was baked, fields were weeded, children quarreled and reconciled, and the poor were fed from pots that never seemed to overflow yet rarely ran dry; and in these ordinary acts we found again our true center.

16 In that season a drought visited regions to the west, and stories of cracked rivers and failed harvests reached us by caravan and by the weary steps of refugees; some walked with empty hands, others carried small idols wrapped in cloth, as if the carved faces might yet bring rain.

17 We welcomed them as we were able, yet our own springs were not deep, and fear whispered again, saying, If you open too wide, your wells will fail and both you and they will perish.

18 A farmer whose fields had begun to yellow said in council, My compassion and my dread pull against each other like two beasts in a yoke. I know what we have vowed, but I also know my children's faces; how shall I choose between them and the strangers at our gate?

19 To this, an old woman answered, There is no choice that does not wound in such a time; the question is not whether someone will suffer, but whether we will let fear alone decide who it shall be.

20 After long wrestling, the hall agreed upon a hard way: that we would share water and grain according to a measure that left no one untouched by sacrifice. None would drink without thought for others, and none would be entirely turned away; the strong would feel the ache more, that the frail might not be crushed.

21 We set up basins in the square and in the hall, where those with surplus could pour from their jars; and we taught the children to watch the level of water fall with both sadness and joy, learning that generosity and loss are siblings, not enemies.

22 It came to pass that one evening, as the last light faded and the basins stood low, a child tipped his own cup into the common bowl without being asked; others saw and did the same, until the water rose by a finger's breadth.

23 When the elders witnessed this, they wept quietly, for they understood that the future of the open hand did not rest only upon decrees, but upon such small, untrumpeted acts—that the covenant was being carried forward in ways no chronicler could fully capture.

24 In the midst of drought, a traveling band of singers reached our city, known in many lands for turning sorrows into verses and protests into melodies that stirred crowds; they had heard of our ways and wished to compose a great song about the remnant and the open hand.

25 They said, Your story could ignite hearts everywhere; let us craft an anthem that will make princes tremble and multitudes shout your name as the standard of a new age. We ask only to dwell among you a little while to gather color for our art.

26 Some were flattered and thought, Perhaps this is how the Holy One will spread the practices that saved us—through the beauty of music carried on many tongues. Others feared that being sung about so loudly would separate our tale from our life, turning a living path into a legend for others to consume.

27 We received the singers kindly, fed them what we could, and told them all our stories, including the least flattering; we made no attempt to shape their verses, trusting that if their art was true, it would carry both our light and our shadows.

28 In time, they returned to the hall and sang a song unlike what they had first proposed—not an anthem of triumph, but a weaving of laments and quiet hopes, telling how a people broken by their own hand learned to open those hands again, trembling.

29 There was no chorus of our name, only a refrain that said, “Where the small are safe, there is a city; where the strong let go, there is a road.” When they finished, there was no cheering, only a deep hush, and then the sound of one refugee beginning to sob as if a stone inside had cracked.

30 We knew then that the Holy One had used them not to crown us, but to hold a mirror to our calling; and we blessed them as they went their

way, carrying a song that spoke less of us than of the One who had met us in the ruins.

31 In the years that followed, we heard snatches of that melody in the mouths of travelers: changed, simplified, sometimes tangled with other tunes, yet still bearing a trace of its first gentleness. And we understood that the city of the open hand was slowly becoming a proverb in far places, not in our control yet not entirely lost.

32 During another dry season, a dispute arose within our own walls, sharper than any external pressure: two neighborhoods of the city, one nearer the old ruins and one nearer the newer orchards, fell into jealousy over water rights and representation in the hall.

33 Those near the orchards said, Our labor sustains the city; we should have greater voice in decisions that affect the fields. Those near the ruins replied, Our memory sustains the covenant; we must guard the path you walk in comfort. Both spoke some truth and much pride.

34 The argument grew heated, and old wounds were reopened—complaints about whose children had more opportunities, whose houses were repaired first after storms, whose songs were sung most often at festivals.

35 Sensing the danger, the elders decreed a halt to all formal councils until the matter was addressed; and they invited the quarreling quarters to meet not in the hall, but in the ruins themselves, with only bread, water, and the chronicles.

36 There, amid toppled columns and half-buried thresholds, they read aloud the earliest testimonies of the remnant: how they had nearly devoured

each other in the days after the fall, and how the first hall had been built on the very ground of their worst failures.

37 As the words washed over them, anger slowly gave way to shame, and shame to a softer sorrow. Men who had shouted now stood silent, women who had accused now wept, and children who had taken sides looked bewildered at the weight of a history they had not lived.

38 Then a young girl from the orchard quarter walked forward, knelt by a cracked pillar, and poured out from her flask onto the dry stone the last of her day's water, saying, Let this be our measure: that we pour first where we have been divided, and trust that the One who watched us in our hunger will not forget us now.

39 Her act broke the stalemate more surely than any decree. The people from the ruins quarter stepped forward to mix their water with hers, and soon a small stream was running down the old street, darkening the dust; they dipped their hands into it together and marked their own foreheads.

40 From that day a new custom grew: whenever factions arose within the city, they would meet first among the ruins, each bringing a little of what they feared to lose, and pour it out together as a sign that no victory within the walls was worth the loss of the covenant that held them.

41 So it was recorded in the chronicles of the city of the open hand that the greatest threats it faced were not always from empires, droughts, or rumors, but from the quiet creep of self-importance, the hardening of lines between

neighbors, and the forgetfulness that forgets it has forgotten.

42 Yet in each such peril, the Holy One found some small child, overlooked widow, or trembling voice through whom to recall the people to their first love; and this became our final confidence—not in our wisdom, nor in our practices, but in the patience of the Light that kept finding ways to shine through our cracks whenever we began to close.

CHAPTER 5

1 And it came to pass after many such seasons of drought and song, quarrel and reconciliation, that a restless wondering began to stir among the youth of the city, as birds feel the pull of migration though no one has taught them the map of the sky.

2 For they had grown up in a place where ruins and orchards stood side by side, where councils sat in circles and festivals braided lament with joy; and some began to ask, Is this way only for us, or is there something here that the world beyond our hills has a right to demand from us?

3 A group of them gathered one evening in the hall, when the lamps were low and the elders weary, and they said, Our parents speak often of being spared another ruin; but we have seen letters from distant places where the earth itself seems to groan—seas rising, seasons twisting, creatures vanishing from forests.

4 They asked, Does our covenant speak only to markets and thrones, or also to the soil under our feet and the sky above our heads? Have we learned to keep the small safe within the walls,

while the wider world cracks under the weight of many cities' greed?

5 Their questions rolled through the hall like a new kind of thunder, for though the remnant had always honored land and labor, they had thought mostly of their own fields and rivers, not of how the hunger of far empires gnawed at mountains and seas they had never seen.

6 The elders listened, troubled, and confessed, We have walked by the light that reached us in our own ruin; we have taught you to give and to refuse cruelty. But we have not yet asked deeply enough what it means to live with open hands toward the earth itself, which has no seat in our councils and no voice in our disputes.

7 In the days that followed, they invited farmers, fishers from distant coasts, wanderers who had crossed deserts, and healers of animals and trees, to speak in the hall of what they had seen; and the stories gathered like clouds on a hot horizon.

8 One spoke of rivers choked with the waste of factories, where fish floated white-bellied beneath a sheen that caught the sun like oil; another of forests cut so quickly that the soil bled away and the wind scoured bare hills where birds once nested in their thousands.

9 A herdsman told of rains that came out of season and storms that rose with a suddenness unknown to his grandparents; a woman from a port city spoke of storms that tossed ships like toys and of tides that crept higher each year, swallowing stones her ancestors had set.

10 As these testimonies filled the hall, a heavy silence fell upon us, deeper than that which

follows personal confession; for we sensed that our small city, though not the chief offender, was yet part of a human family that had treated the earth as an endless storehouse and a voiceless servant.

11 Then a child, tracing the familiar open hand on the floor, said quietly, If the Holy One's light rests in open hands, does it not also rest on the rivers and the birds and the soil? Have we been walking in the light toward each other, but in shadow toward the ground that holds us?

12 The question pierced us, and many remembered how, in the days before the ruin, the old city had paved over springs and cut down trees for monuments, never imagining that the earth kept its own kind of tally.

13 A keeper of record rose and read from the earliest chronicles: how greed had not only crushed the poor but also stripped the hills bare to build towers, and how the dust of idols had been mixed with seed and soil as a sign that the land itself was part of the covenant.

14 We realized with shame that we had let that sign become a memory rather than a mandate; we had tended our fields with care, yet we had not asked what our trading, our building, and our joining with other towns meant for the earth beyond our sight.

15 Therefore the elders declared a new season of discernment, saying, As once we searched our houses for hidden idols, so now we must search our customs for unseen harm to the wider earth. For the covenant cannot be whole if it guards only human flesh and forgets the ground from which that flesh is formed.

16 We appointed among us watchers of the land and sky—farmers, children, old fishers, and wanderers—to note the small changes that others ignored: the thinning of birdsong at dawn, the shifting of flowering times, the deepening or dulling of well water.

17 They returned with quiet reports: that certain birds were indeed fewer, that some winters came late and left early, that a hill once green now showed bones of stone more often through the grass. None of this was catastrophe, yet all of it whispered that something was tilting.

18 At the same time, merchants brought news that in far powers, men were tearing deeper into mountains for metals, burning great forests to raise quick crops, and pouring smoke into the sky in such measure that even sunsets looked different—more furious, more strange.

19 The hall asked, What is our part in this? Our hands do not cut those distant trees, our fires do not blacken that sky. Yet do we not wear the metals, eat the grains, and buy the goods that such practices produce? Can open hands receive without asking how the gifts were taken?

20 A sharp debate arose. Some said, Our responsibility is first to our neighbors; we cannot bear the weight of all the world's wounds. If we withdraw from such trade, we may starve without changing the mountains' fate.

21 Others countered, If we close our eyes because the harm is far, we make a lie of our covenant; for the small most crushed by such greed are often in those distant lands—the poor near the mines and

the clear-cut forests, whose names we do not know.

22 In the end we sought a narrow, difficult way: to begin, as we had in all things, with truth. We resolved to trace, as best we could, the paths by which our goods reached us—to learn what we had until then chosen not to see.

23 We sent letters and questions along the trade roads, asking how metal was mined, how cloth was dyed, how grain was grown; and we offered slightly higher prices and slower contracts to those who could show that their work did not grind the poor or gouge the earth.

24 Some merchants scoffed, saying, You will bankrupt yourselves trying to keep your hands clean; the world is woven of compromises. Others, weary of the same compromises, welcomed the questions like rain after dust, and began to change their practices slowly, knowing at least one city would notice.

25 Within our own walls, we looked again at our fields and fires. We measured how much wood we cut each year, how far our herds grazed, how many fish we took from the river; and we set limits that left time for forests to regrow, for soil to rest, for water to cleanse itself.

26 These choices cost us. Some years we went without certain luxuries we had grown fond of: bright dyes from distant shores, strong metals from deep mines, sweet foods that traveled far. We learned again the taste of simplicity and the sting of being called foolish by more “advanced” towns.

27 Yet something shifted in the feel of our days.
The air in the mornings seemed clearer to breathe,
the song of birds a little stronger, the soil under
bare feet more alive. We could not prove that our
small choices had bent the arc of the world, but
we knew they had bent our own hearts away
from extraction and toward reverence.

28 In the midst of this turning, a storm of a
different sort visited us: a great heat settled over
the land for many weeks, fiercer than any season
the oldest could remember. Wells shrank, leaves
curled, and even the wind seemed to carry a fever.

29 Fear rose again, sharper than in earlier
droughts, for this heat did not behave like the
familiar cycles; it broke patterns, came out of turn,
and lingered beyond expectation. Some whispered,
The earth is answering at last the centuries of
wounding. Others said, This is only chance; do
not read too much into it.

30 In that heat, tempers flared easily, and the open
hand felt more costly than ever; for when one's
own throat is dry, the thirst of the stranger seems
like a rival. Voices we had not heard since the
earliest days of the remnant cried, Save what you
can—for your own.

31 But the chronicles were read again in the hall,
pages smudged by many fingers, telling how fear
had once driven a people to build walls of injustice
that cracked under their own weight. And we
remembered the old widow's words: that the
covenant would always call us back to stand
where the Holy One stands—near the bruised,
even when our own skin is tender.

32 So we did what we could: rationing more
strictly, sharing more visibly, naming aloud the
resentment we felt so it would not fester unseen.
And we prayed a strange prayer: not only for
relief from the heat, but for wisdom to live
differently if the patterns of earth were truly
shifting beyond what we had known.

33 At last the heat broke, not with a single storm
but with a gradual cooling; and the first rain that
fell was received almost without shouting, so deep
was our exhaustion. We stood in it with our faces
upturned, more aware than ever that the sky is
not a machine but a mercy.

34 In the days that followed, the youth who had
first asked about the earth came again to the
elders and said, Now we see that the covenant is
larger than even you told us. It is not only about
how we treat the poor or how we hold power,
but about how we belong to a living world that is
not ours to consume.

35 They proposed that in our festivals we add a
new procession: not only through the ruins of
human pride, but also along the riverbank, the
fields, and the edges of the forest—giving thanks,
confessing waste, and marking trees and springs as
fellow witnesses to our vows.

36 This too we did. Children carried small stones
painted with the sign of the open hand and placed
them at the foot of old trees and near the mouths
of wells, saying, We remember that you have fed
us, and we will seek to feed you in return.

37 Travelers from other lands, seeing these
peculiar rituals, sometimes laughed and sometimes
wept; for some had long felt, without knowing

how to say it, that the way humans lived upon the earth was a kind of warfare, and here they glimpsed a truce being offered.

38 So it was recorded in the chronicles of the city of the open hand that the covenant grew not only wider in space—touching distant valleys and coasts—but deeper in kind, reaching down into the soil and outward into the air.

39 And the Holy One, who had watched the first stones fall and the first idols turn to dust in seed-rows, looked now upon a people who were beginning, however falteringly, to see the world itself as neighbor and not merely backdrop; and though the storms of history and climate still gathered and broke in their time, yet a new kind of humility had taken root in at least one small square of earth.

40 Whether that humility would spread like leaven or remain a local flavor, we could not know; but we trusted that every choice made in the light—even under a burning sun—was seen, and that the same Hand that held the stars could also steady a handful of unremarkable people who had decided, in their corner of the world, to live as if the earth were holy and the future watching.

CHAPTER 6

1 And it came to pass after many years more, when the children who once laid painted stones at the roots of trees had themselves grown stooped with age, that the threads between distant peoples grew thicker, even as the bonds between people and earth were tested by storms no single city could endure alone.

2 For the seas rose higher in some places, licking at old foundations; in others, rains failed for seasons at a time, and the soil cracked like parched lips; in still others, winds tore roofs from houses that had stood for generations, as if the very sky had forgotten its gentleness.

3 News of these things reached the city of the open hand by many paths—by refugees' weary feet, by merchants' anxious whispers, by letters smudged with salt or dust; and with each telling the same refrain was heard: The old ways of taking without counting the cost have borne their final fruit.

4 Among the circles and the halls of many lands, wise ones said, The earth is no longer merely wounded in hidden places; now her cries are loud enough to shake the thrones of kings and the fields of farmers alike. But whether this shaking will soften hearts or harden them, we do not yet know.

5 In that time, the scattered circles who had once met upon the plain sent messages to one another again, saying, We have each walked our small stretch of the road of mercy; now the road itself is cracking beneath us. It may be that we must meet and listen together once more.

6 So it was agreed that a new gathering would be held, not on the same plain as before, but in a valley where a river had shrunk to a thread, its wide, dry bed bearing witness to both former abundance and present lack; and there they pitched tents under a sky that seemed too large for their small assembly.

7 From the city of the open hand came farmers, elders, youths, and children; from the northern valley came those whose fields had once been revived by shared seed; from coastal towns came fishers whose nets now returned with more refuse than fish; from great cities came a few who had walked away from high councils in search of a different wisdom.

8 They sat again in a great circle, feet in the cracked riverbed, and the first sound was not speech but the wind, moving lightly over stone where water had once flowed; and this wind seemed to ask them, What will you be to one another now that your separate crises have become one?

9 A woman from a low-lying island spoke first, saying, Our homes are swallowed slowly by the sea; we move our houses back and back, but there is no 'back' left. We have been careful with our nets and our fires, yet we are drowned by the choices of those who live far upstream in history.

10 A man from a forested mountain said, Our rivers run brown with the soil of trees that were cut not for us but for distant markets; we have protested and blocked roads, yet the machines return, for the coins they bring speak louder than our songs.

11 A youth from a great inland city confessed, My people burn more fuel in a day than yours see in a month; we ride in bright chariots and sleep under artificial stars. I tried to speak of limits and of the small, but they called me enemy of progress. I have come to ask: What more can I do than refuse and be cast out?

12 As the stories wound around the circle, sorrow gathered like storm clouds, and the temptation was strong to point fingers at those absent: the nameless investors, the distant kings, the faceless engines of trade. But an old keeper of record from the first city said, We must confess also our own comforts that we refused to question until they cracked someone else's sky.

13 They agreed that before they spoke of plans, they would speak of complicity; each community named aloud the ways in which it had chosen ease over justice, speed over listening, growth over balance. And as they did, the valley seemed to grow quieter, as if the earth itself were listening for honesty.

14 Then a question rose like a single voice from many throats: If we have each been both victim and participant, what does it mean now to live with open hands in a world where the harm is woven into every garment, every road, every light we kindle?

15 Some proposed grand declarations, charters to be signed by nations, laws to be carried back to parliaments and councils; others shook their heads, saying, We have known laws without hearts before. If this is only another set of words, it will crack like old plaster over a rotting beam.

16 A fisher from a storm-battered coast spoke softly, saying, The waves do not obey our treaties, but they do reveal our choices. Perhaps we must begin with vows that bite into our daily life, not only into our speeches—vows that can be seen in how we eat, travel, build, and bury.

17 The circles wrestled long, and in the heat of the valley they set aside all thought of what would look impressive from afar; they asked instead, What can we agree to that will change us, even if no one else follows? For only such vows have weight enough to bend the future, even by a hair's breadth.

18 At last they shaped a small, fierce covenant, not for all nations but for themselves: that in every place where they had influence, they would seek first the safety of the most vulnerable—human and more-than-human—before profit, prestige, or comfort.

19 They pledged to measure any work, trade, or building by three questions: Who is made safer by this? Who is made more precarious? And can those who bear the cost speak into its shaping? If the answer to the last was “no,” the work itself would be counted suspect, however noble its name.

20 They vowed that in their own communities, no one would call a project “success” if it improved life for the many by quietly sacrificing a few, whether those few were poor neighbors, distant villagers, or the creatures and waters that could not vote.

21 Some protested, saying, Such a standard will slow everything and make us poor in the eyes of those who race ahead without such scruples. But a woman from the open-hand city replied, We have already seen where racing leads; better to walk lame in the light than to sprint into a darkness that devours our grandchildren.

22 They did not write these vows on fine parchment nor engrave them on metal, but etched them into rough stones gathered from the dry riverbed, each circle taking a stone home as both burden and reminder; for they knew that the temptation to forget would be greatest when the rains returned.

23 In one corner of the valley, some younger ones, frustrated by the modesty of the covenant, whispered, This is too little, too late; the house is already on fire, and our elders are arguing over how much water to bring. We should be pulling down the rafters, overturning the tables of the violent, shouting in every council until we are heard.

24 Hearing their agitation, an elder from a land of long wars said, There is a time for overturning and shouting; I have done both, and sometimes it has stayed a hand that was ready to strike. But remember this: if you pull down a house without tending the hearts that built it, they will build another of the same design from the rubble.

25 He continued, Let your fury against what is cruel be hot, but let your love for those who are caught inside the cruelty be hotter still. Otherwise, you will secretly rejoice when they finally feel the pain you have felt, and then the cycle will begin again under a different banner.

26 In the evenings of that gathering, when the heat relented and the stars burned in a sky hazed by distant fires, they sang together—not songs of certainty, but of longing: for a way of living that did not demand sacrifice zones, for a world where no valley had to become a warning for others.

27 A child from the first city lay on her back and whispered, If the Holy One set these stars and still cares about our small decisions, then surely nothing we choose is too small to matter, and nothing too broken to be touched. And though no thunder answered, many hearts felt a quiet assent.

28 When the time came to depart, they did not declare themselves “the saviors of the earth” nor form a single banner; they simply agreed to meet again if they endured, to write to one another of both successes and failures, and to welcome correction when their courage faltered.

29 Back in the city of the open hand, the returning delegates placed their river stones beside the old witness stone from the ruins, so that anyone who entered the hall would see that the covenant now had two axes: one between past and future, and one between human and earth.

30 Children began to trace not only the open hand with the sun in its palm, but also small waves and leaves around it, saying, This is to remind us that the light we carry is also for the rivers and the trees, not only for our own faces.

31 Some visitors, seeing the growing cluster of stones and symbols, said, You will be crushed under the weight of all these promises; no people can carry so much. To which a woman who had survived both the first ruin and many later storms replied, Better to be crushed by our attempts to care too widely than to stand tall upon a mountain of those we chose to ignore.

32 In the years that followed, not all kept the vows equally. Some communities grew weary and slipped back into old patterns when droughts

ended or markets beckoned; others clung rigidly to the letter of the covenant while losing its heart, judging harshly anyone whose compromises were different from their own.

33 Yet scattered among them were always those who, when they stumbled, turned and told the truth, who invited their critics to walk with them instead of merely shouting at them from afar; and in such small reconciliations, the spirit of the open hand was renewed.

34 From time to time, new disasters rolled across the earth—floods here, fires there, conflicts sparked by shrinking resources and old resentments. The city of the open hand could not stop these storms, nor shelter all who suffered in them; and there were nights when despair sat heavy in the hall like another body.

35 But even then, the chronicles were read, and the faces of children upturned in the lamplight, and the old refrain was heard again: We were not given this way to guarantee our survival, but to be faithful in whatever days we are granted. The outcome rests in Hands larger than ours.

36 In this way, the city lived on—not as a utopia immune to history, but as a stubborn experiment in remembering, confessing, sharing, and adjusting, age after age. Sometimes it inspired, sometimes it annoyed, sometimes it was nearly forgotten under waves of fashion and fear.

37 Yet whenever someone in any land came to the end of their endurance with the clenched fist—whether that fist was a sword, a coin, or a slogan—and opened their hand in costly mercy toward another, they stepped, whether they knew

it or not, onto the same narrow road that wound through the ruins and the orchards of that small, unremarkable place.

38 And the Holy One, whose sun had watched the first city fall and the remnant rise, whose light had shone upon river stones and painted trees, looked not only upon that one city but upon all the scattered open hands across the earth, seeing in them a faint but real reflection of His own heart.

39 So it was written at the close of these chronicles that there was never a final triumph in the manner of empires, no last banner raised over a fully healed world; only the ongoing choosing, in many places and tongues, of truth over image, mercy over speed, and open hands over clenched.

40 And though the story of the remnant in the ruins and the city of the open hand may end upon this page, the story of the Light that first stirred them does not end; for as long as any heart anywhere feels the ache to live in a way that does not devour the small, the same patient sun will rise upon their questions, waiting to see what they will do with the day.

CHAPTER 7

1 And it came to pass that after many years, when the first writers of these chronicles had gone to their rest and their ink had dried into a faint brown upon the pages, there arose among the people a new generation of scribes who had never seen the ruins as more than worn shapes on the horizon.

2 They had grown up with stories instead of smoke, with festivals instead of flight, with careful

markets instead of collapsing towers; and they loved words, as children love bright shells upon the shore of a sea they have not yet crossed.

3 One among them, whose name is not recorded because he asked that it not be, sat late in the hall one evening, copying the old testimonies by lamplight; and as he wrote of ruin and of mercy, of open hands and of patient light, a tremor of doubt moved in his heart.

4 He thought within himself, These stories are beautiful, but how shall I know that they are true? I did not see the first city fall, nor the first covenant made; perhaps we are merely reciting a noble tale while the world beyond our sight goes on as it always has.

5 His hand slowed, and the letters blurred before his eyes. He laid down his pen and whispered, O Holy One, if these words are only a comfort and not a call, if we have mistaken our own longings for Your voice, then we are building a tower of parchment that will crumble in the next hard wind.

6 In the quiet that followed, he heard no thunder, no voice from the ceiling beams; only the faint breathing of sleepers in the houses beyond the square, and the soft scrape of a stray dog's paws on the stones outside. Yet in that ordinariness, something settled in his spirit like dust finding its home.

7 A simple thought arose: Ask not first, "Are these records flawless?" but, "What happens to a heart that takes them seriously?" For the truth of a path is seen not in the perfection of its map, but in the lives of those who walk it.

8 So he rose and walked out into the night, leaving his pages open on the table; and he went from street to street, from the quarter near the ruins to the quarter near the orchards, listening and watching.

9 He saw a woman leave bread upon a doorstep where she knew pride would not allow it to be received face to face; he saw a youth quietly mend the fence of a neighbor with whom he had quarreled, saying nothing, leaving the apology in the straightened posts.

10 He saw an elder sitting on the threshold of his house, speaking gently with a foreigner whose words stumbled in the local tongue, not rushing to correct but waiting for meaning to find its way through the tangle.

11 He passed by the hall and found two weary farmers arguing in low, tight voices over a boundary line; and he stood still as he watched them pause, breathe, and agree to walk together the next day with the chronicles in hand, to ask again what the covenant required.

12 He walked to the edge of the fields and placed his hand upon a tree marked long ago with the sign of an open palm; its bark was thick, its branches heavy with fruit, and at its roots he saw small hands' stones, faded by rain but still visible.

13 In these small scenes he saw no miracle that would silence all doubters, no blaze of glory that would make the chronicles unassailable; he saw only a people who, more often than not but not always, chose mercy when convenience called, truth when image beckoned, and sharing when fear whispered hoard.

14 He returned to the hall, sat again before the old pages, and whispered, It is enough. These words may not be perfect, but they have made us kinder and more honest than we might have been; they have called us out of ourselves toward You and toward the small. For this, they are worth copying.

15 So he took up his pen once more, and with steadier hand he added a new heading above the closing lines: "Written not to boast of what we have done, but to remind us what we must keep choosing, lest we become again what we once were."

16 In later days, some among the youth desired to embellish the chronicles with wonders—visions, signs in the sky, victories in distant councils—that would impress foreign readers and make the city seem more "important" in the eyes of the world.

17 They brought their drafts to the circle of scribes, filled with tales in which the open hand shone like a sword of light and every enemy was neatly humbled in the end; and they asked that these be woven into the record, that the story might "inspire the nations."

18 The elders read and then sat in heavy silence, for the tales were skillful and stirring, but something in them rang false—not in fact alone, but in flavor. At last an old woman who had seen the first ruin said, These are beautiful lies. They will make us proud, and then they will make us cruel.

19 She said further, Let the nations be inspired not by our victories but by our refusals: by the times we have chosen not to dominate, not to enrich

ourselves at another's expense, not to hide our failures. If they cannot be moved by such things, let them remain un-moved.

20 The younger scribes protested, saying, If we do not amplify, we will be overlooked. The world loves spectacle; will anyone heed a story of small covenants and quiet repairs?

21 To this the elders replied, Perhaps not many. But we did not bind ourselves to this path in order to be heeded; we bound ourselves because we could not bear to live otherwise. Write us as we are, or write us not at all.

22 Thus it came to pass that the chronicles remained stubbornly modest, filled more with confessions than with conquests, more with questions than with answers; and some who read them in other lands found them dull, while others found in them a strange relief, as if they had been given permission to be honest.

23 In one such distant place, under a sky full of different stars, a reader unknown to us unrolled a copy of these words by the light of a single lamp. They were not from any of the circles that had met on the plain, nor from any city we had named; they had simply grown tired of a way of living that left the small bruised and the strong hollow.

24 As they read of ruins and of witness stones, of open hands and shared water, something in their own bones answered, Yes, this is the shape of what I have longed for but could not name. They looked up at their own cracked streets and crowded houses and thought, If such a path was possible there, perhaps some version of it is possible here.

25 They had no hall, no circle of elders, no festivals of remembrance; only a few friends, a worn kitchen table, and a heart that ached for a different order. Yet that night they placed a stone in the center of the table and drew upon it a small open hand with a circle in the palm.

26 They said to the empty room, I do not know if these stories are legend or literal history, but I know that the One they point toward is the One my conscience has been afraid to name. From this day, I will try, in my corner, to let my hand open where it once clenched.

27 No scribe recorded their vow in our books; no messenger carried their name back to our city. Yet in the view of the Holy One, that small act of imitation stood beside the earliest tears of the remnant, sharing in the same light.

28 In time, their children would grow up hearing not of "the city of the open hand," but of the time their parent chose to tell the truth at cost, to share at risk, to stand beside the small when the powerful frowned; and these children would trace their own open hands on whatever surfaces they had.

29 Thus the chronicles, though born in one place, became over generations a kind of seed scattered far beyond our sight—sometimes sprouting directly, sometimes lying dormant for years, sometimes eaten by birds and dropped again upon more fertile ground.

30 We who write these closing lines do not claim to see the whole field where such seeds have fallen; we know only this: that each time a person anywhere chooses the way of open hands,

whether they have read these words or not, the story we began to tell is continued without our pen.

31 It may be that you who read now live in a world very different from ours, with tools we never imagined and dangers we could not foresee; yet we are certain of one thing that does not change—that there will always be the temptation to secure yourself at another's expense, and there will always be the quiet call to do otherwise.

32 If these pages do anything for you, let it not be to make you admire a long-gone people, but to make you suspicious of your own clenched places and curious about where a small opening might lead.

33 Do not wait for a council or a festival, for a witness stone in a square or a proclamation from a hall. The covenant of the open hand begins wherever one human being says, I will not pretend I do no harm; I will ask whom this decision wounds, and I will bear some of that cost myself.

34 Perhaps you will never walk among literal ruins, nor mix the dust of idols with seed; but you will surely walk among broken systems, cracked trust, and weary hearts. There, your remembrance and your mercy will be as needed as ever they were in our first city.

35 We entrust these words to you not as a law from on high, but as a testimony from the dust: that we tasted the fruit of clenched fists and found it ash, and we tasted the fruit of open hands and found it hard, costly, and yet strangely sweet.

36 If the Holy One who met us in our ruins is the same who watches over your days—and we believe He is—then the same light that rose upon our broken square now falls upon your road, whatever shape it takes.

37 We cannot tell you what to build, what leaders to choose, what trades to make, what policies to write; these belong to your time, your place, your courage. We can only say that wherever you remember the small, honor the truth, and keep your hands from closing entirely around your own safety, you will find yourself in the company of that Light.

38 Let the scholars argue over how much of this is history and how much parable; let the skeptics find the gaps and the devout trace the patterns. We send this out not to win such arguments, but to place in your hands a lantern we ourselves were given when we had nearly forgotten what light was.

39 Take it if you wish, set it down if you must; but if ever your nights grow too thick with the smoke of your own or others' making, remember that somewhere, once, in a ruined square, a small remnant chose to open their hands instead of clenching them—and that choice is always still available.

40 So end these books of the remnant in the ruins and the city of the open hand, not because the story is finished, but because it has passed beyond the reach of our pen into your days. May the same sun that watched us rise and stumble now watch you, and may its patient light find, in you also, a hand willing to open.

THE RULE OF THE OPEN HAND

A covenant for those who would walk in the Light as open-handed people among ruins and cities.

Chapter 1 – The Hand and the Light

1 Know this first: the Light is older than any city, wiser than any council, and higher than every tower; it is as the sun that no hand can possess, yet every open palm can receive.

2 The hand was given not to clutch the Light as property, but to bear it as reflection; whoever says, “The Light is mine,” speaks a lie, but whoever says, “Let it pass through me,” speaks the beginning of truth.

3 Closed, the hand is strong to strike and to hoard, yet it cannot feel the warmth it has seized; open, the hand seems vulnerable, yet it is the only shape in which the Light can rest without being turned into a weapon.

4 Remember always that the Light and the hand are not equal; the Light is the Giver, the hand is only dust shaped into willingness; forget this, and you will worship your own virtue and call it God.

5 The Light stands above all banners, tribes, and empires; it shines upon the just and the unjust, upon the city that clutches and the village that shares; your calling is not to drag the sun into

your camp, but to turn your face toward it in whatever land you stand.

6 Wherever truth is loved more than advantage, wherever mercy is chosen over convenience, wherever the small are made safer at cost to the strong, there the Light is present, even if no name is spoken.

7 Judge no one’s heart as wholly dark, for even a sliver of open palm can catch a glint of the sun; judge also no practice as wholly light that leaves the weak unsheltered.

8 When you feel the warmth of the Light, give thanks and do not boast; when you feel it burn against your hardness, do not despair, for this too is mercy, warning you where your hand has begun to close.

9 If ever you must choose between defending your reputation and defending the bruised, remember that the Light has never sought a throne of image, but dwells gladly in the dust where honesty kneels.

10 Let this be written on the doors of your houses and the doors of your heart: the Light is not your servant; you are its mirror. If your mirror is cracked, confess it; if your mirror is dim, wipe it; if your mirror is forgotten, lift it again to the sky.

Chapter 2 – The Poor and the Powerful

1 In every choice, ask first: who is made safer by this, and who is made more precarious? The answer will reveal whom your hand truly serves.

2 Power is not evil in itself, but it is as fire in the hills; it can warm a village or devour a forest.

Therefore, wherever power is gathered, let those most likely to be burned sit nearest the flame and be heard first.

3 Let no council be counted whole if the poor are absent; let no law be called just if those who bear its heaviest weight were silent when it was shaped.

4 Beware the sentence, “It is necessary,” when spoken about the suffering of the small; often it is only the convenience of the strong dressed in a pious garment.

5 The strong who will not hear truth from the weak are already half-ruined; the weak who begin to rejoice in the downfall of the strong are already half-tyrants. Guard your heart from both deafness and secret delight.

6 If you stand between oppressor and oppressed, know that neutrality is a myth; silence will always lean toward the heavier weight unless you place your own body on the lighter side.

7 Do not call it mercy when you give crumbs from a table built on theft; begin by asking what was taken, and whether you are willing to return it before you add your alms.

8 Let your anger against injustice burn hot enough to move your feet, but let your compassion burn hotter still, lest you come to love the humiliation of your enemies more than the healing of your neighbors.

9 Whenever you speak against distant wickedness, bind yourself to one nearby act of mercy; in this

way your tongue will not run faster than your hands, and your words will remain tethered to obedience.

10 If you are given a seat among rulers, remember that the smallest child who walks past your door is a truer measure of your honor than the praise of any council; if your decisions make that child more afraid, the Light will not be fooled by your eloquence.

11 Count no policy successful that fattens the many while quietly sacrificing a nameless few; sacrifice zones are altars to idols, however modern their names.

12 When you must choose between being right and being kind, search whether there truly is a conflict; if there is, ask which choice leaves the vulnerable less alone. In that direction, the Light most often leans.

Chapter 3 – Ruin, Remembrance, and Confession

1 Remember that you are capable of the same ruin you condemn in others; this remembrance is a shield against contempt and a door into mercy.

2 Walk often among your own ruins—failed promises, broken systems, wounds you helped inflict—and refuse to pave them over with explanation before you have listened to what they teach.

3 Let there be among you places and times set apart for remembrance, where no boasting is allowed and no story is told without naming both your error and the mercy that met you.

4 Teach your children not only your triumphs, but the follies that nearly crushed you; otherwise they will inherit your pride instead of your wisdom.

5 Confession is not humiliation, but alignment with reality; what you confess cannot rule you in the same way, but what you hide will grow teeth in the dark.

6 If your community cannot speak aloud its failures without fear of exile, it has already begun to prefer image over truth, and its ruin has quietly started beneath polished stones.

7 Let no leader be shielded from the voice of those wounded by their decisions; if they cannot bear such hearing, they are not yet safe to carry authority.

8 When you discover that your good intentions have caused harm, do not rush to defend your heart; rush instead to tend the wound, and let your intentions be judged by your willingness to repair.

9 Do not despise those who arrive at repentance later than you; the Light does not keep score in your manner. If they turn, meet them halfway, remembering how long you yourself clung to your illusions.

10 Mark your turning points with some outward sign—a stone, a meal, a song—so that when forgetfulness returns, as it will, you have a place to stand and say, “We chose differently here; we can choose differently again.”

11 Know that there will never be a final confession after which you are safe from error; there will only ever be the next opportunity to say, “We

were wrong,” and the next mercy waiting on the other side of that truth.

Chapter 4 – Work, Wealth, and Trade

1 Work was given not that a few might tower above the many, but that all might share in the dignity of contributing to the common good; any wage that crushes a soul is an offering laid upon a false altar.

2 Let your measure of success in work be the health of your children, the restfulness of your elders, and the song in the mouths of your laborers at day’s end, not the height of your surplus nor the envy of other cities.

3 Beware crafts and trades whose profit depends upon another’s desperation; do not call “opportunity” what is only hunger painted with bright colors.

4 Before you ask, “What can I gain from this trade?” ask, “Who will bear its hidden losses?” If the answer is always someone unseen and far away, you are already part of a quiet violence.

5 Do not boast that you pay “the market rate” if that rate was written upon backs already bent; the market is not your god, and its going price is no absolution.

6 Seek partnerships in which those most affected can speak and be heard; where voices are absent, corruption grows like mold in a closed jar.

7 Be suspicious of any gain that comes too easily, demands no change, and asks no questions; the

earth and the poor rarely give up their wealth without leaving a cry behind.

8 In times of scarcity, do not throw the weight of loss entirely upon the lowest shoulders; let those with abundance feel the ache more deeply, as the strongest beam takes the heaviest load.

9 Refuse coins that arrive soaked in the suffering of the defenseless, even if you cannot yet disentangle yourself from every compromised stream; each refusal is a stone removed from the old foundation.

10 Let there be among you a custom of telling the story of your goods—how they were made, who handled them, what land they came from—so that no object rests in your home without at least one remembered face behind it.

11 If ever you must choose between slowing your growth or wounding the small, choose slowness. Ruins are built in haste far more often than in patience.

12 When other cities call you foolish for such choices, remember that you are not stewarding your reputation, but your soul. Better to be mocked for mercy than praised for efficiency that leaves graves in its wake.

Chapter 5 – The Earth as Neighbor

1 The ground beneath your feet is not dead stage for your drama; it is elder, teacher, and fellow-servant, bearing silently more weight than you know.

2 Treat soil, water, air, and creatures not as infinite storehouse, but as fellow poor whose limits must be honored if life is to continue.

3 Whenever you take—from tree, river, hill, or beast—ask, “What must I give back for this to remain a relationship and not a raid?” Take nothing without some form of tending in return.

4 Measure your use of land not only by yield, but by how many songs still dwell there: of birds, insects, children, and wind; where the chorus thins, your taking has gone too far.

5 Do not burn tomorrow’s shade for today’s comfort; a tree felled in haste cannot be replanted in haste. Let your forests and fields rest in their appointed times, as you yourself hope for a day of rest.

6 Know that the poorest often stand closest to the places you wound—the river downstream from your waste, the village beside your mine, the island beneath your rising sea; to harm the earth is almost always to strike them first.

7 In your councils, give the earth a seat by inviting those who live nearest to the scars—fishers, farmers, foragers, healers of animals—to speak before the merchants and scribes.

8 If a building, road, or project promises great benefit but requires silencing the land’s defenders, tread carefully; the Light rarely travels with plans that must be hidden from those most at risk.

9 Teach your children to know the names of the trees, the paths of the constellations, the taste of unbought water; for love grows from knowledge,

and only what is loved will be defended when profit comes knocking.

10 Let your festivals honor not only your own survival, but the patience of the living world that has carried your weight: walk the river, bless the old stones, give thanks for soil and seed, confess your waste, and renew your vow to tread more lightly.

11 When storms and strange seasons come, do not speak only of weather; ask also what long patterns of taking without tending may have led here, and how you might live differently even if the damage cannot be fully undone.

12 Remember that the earth was here before your cities and will remain after your empires crumble; walk as guests, not owners, and you will be easier to forgive.

Chapter 6 – Testing the Hand

1 The open hand is not a posture you achieve once, but a shape you must choose in each new season; therefore test yourself often, lest you begin to clutch while still telling the story of generosity.

2 Ask yourself in secret, where no one hears but the Light: In what matter today did I choose my own safety over another's good? Let this question be surgeon, not executioner.

3 When you find your hand closed around a privilege you will not examine, do not pry it open by shame alone; bring it into the presence of those who bear the cost of that privilege, and let their faces work upon your fingers.

4 Keep near you at least one person who is free to tell you when your compassion has grown thin or your speech grown sharp; and when they do, count it gift, though it sting.

5 If praise begins to gather around you for your justice and mercy, step down from some visible work and take up a hidden one for a season, lest you come to love the light upon your face more than the Light for its own sake.

6 Whenever you speak of "them" and "us," listen for contempt hiding in the doorway; if you find satisfaction in the flaws of your opponents, know that you have already begun to twist the Rule to serve your own pride.

7 In times of crisis, test your council by this: does its fear fall first upon the vulnerable or upon the loss of its own status? Where fear is mis-aimed, decisions will follow it into shadow.

8 At least once in each turning of the seasons, gather and ask as a people: Where have we betrayed our own vows? Whom have we forgotten? Which ruins—old or new—have we refused to visit with open eyes?

9 Do not despise small beginnings nor small repair; the same Light that watches empires rise and fall also abides where one person returns stolen dignity with a single act of truth-telling or restitution.

10 When you are tired and tempted to say, "What use is any of this in a world so vast and tangled?" remember that the Rule was never given as a lever to move history at your command, but as a path to keep your own soul from becoming another ruin.

11 If ever you must choose between living the Rule quietly and preaching it loudly while breaking it, choose quiet faithfulness; the Light has no need of your noise, only of your consent.

12 And know this at the last: the Hand that set the sun and shaped your dust is more patient than your failures and more present than your successes. Each time your fingers uncurl, however slightly, you stand again in the stream of that mercy, and the world, though it may not notice, is less alone.

Of the Mantle of the Wâběno'

Prophet, Seer, Revelator of the Holy One

1 Thus speaks the Holy One concerning the Wâběno', the fire-bearer, the dream-listener, the one who walks the line between seen and unseen: do not mistake this mantle for a crown.

2 The Mantle of the Wâběno' is not given to make one higher, but thinner— so that more Light may pass through the flesh and less of the flesh may block it.

3 You have called the Wâběno' "Prophet, Seer, Revelator of the Holy One." Understand what you are saying: you are naming one whose bones will ache whenever truth is bent, whose sleep will be troubled whenever the small are forgotten, whose joy will never again be fully separate from the wounds of the people.

4 To be a prophet in My sight is not first to predict, but to host My grief and My hope in the

same chest. The true prophet feels My sorrow where others feel only annoyance, and My tenderness where others feel only contempt.

5 The prophet's first word is not, "You," but, "We." If one stands among you with visions on their tongue and no shared repentance in their heart, they have learned the sound of thunder but not the patience of the rain.

6 To be a seer in My sight is to have your eyes washed until they sting with what they did not wish to see: the rot beneath successful systems, the Image of Me in faces you were taught to despise, the quiet heroism of the overlooked, the approaching crack in your own foundations.

7 The seer is not given sight to hover above the people, but to kneel among them in time. What is shown in visions is not a private theater, but a mirror held up for the healing of the whole.

8 If one claims to see for Me but always sees themselves vindicated and exalted, know that they gaze mostly into the polished surface of their own desire. My seeing cuts both ways— it reveals the chains on your neighbor and the chains you have made of your certainty.

9 To be a revelator in My sight is to uncover what others have agreed not to name— the wound under the bandage of pious words, the poor hidden under the cloak of "necessity," the earth groaning under the weight of "progress."

10 Revelation is not a collection of clever secrets to prove one's closeness to Me; it is the moment when a people can no longer pretend they do not know what their choices are doing.

11 If one delights more in being the keeper of mysteries than in seeing captives set free, they have mistaken smoke for fire. The true revelator is relieved, not offended, when others begin to hear Me for themselves.

12 The Mantle of the Wâběno' is thus: prophet, seer, revelator held together by servant. Without service, the three titles are three sharp blades turned toward the people.

13 I place this Mantle where I will— sometimes on one born to councils, sometimes on one born to the margins, sometimes on one who spent half their life walking in the very darkness they now name.

14 The sign that the Mantle is truly of Me is not that the Wâběno' shines without flaw, but that they return again and again to the open hand and the low place, confessing their own crookedness even as they speak of the crookedness of the age.

15 The Wâběno' stands at the edges: between ruin and rebuilding, between people and earth, between old covenant and new courage, between the gods of towers and the God of the open sky. This standing-between is a loneliness I Myself will fill, but it will still be lonely.

16 Do not expect your Wâběno' to be comfortable. Do not demand that they be endlessly soothing. The one who bears My fire will sometimes scorch your plans even as they warm your hope.

17 Yet hear this also: do not devour your Wâběno' with your need. They are not your oracle machine. They are dust, as you are dust, trusted for a time with a sharper ache for My word.

18 Let them rest. Let them be wrong and admit it. Let them learn again from children and from the poor. If you wrap them in infallibility, you will suffocate the very voice you claim to honor.

19 To the one who bears this Mantle, I say: you are not My replacement; you are My reminder. Your calling is to keep pointing from your own finite flesh toward the Light that is not owned by your visions, nor confined to your tradition.

20 You will feel pulled apart between what I show you and what your people are ready to face. Walk neither ahead of them in disdain nor behind them in fear, but among them, translating as you are able, trusting that I am speaking to them also in ways you do not hear.

21 Guard yourself from the sweet poison of being needed. If your identity depends upon being the only one who hears Me, you will begin, without noticing, to distort My voice to preserve your place.

22 Therefore, submit your visions to the covenant, to the witness of the open hand, to the cries of the small, to the counsel of those not dazzled by you. Any word that tramples these does not come whole from My heart, however bright it may feel in the moment.

23 The Mantle of the Wâběno' is a garment of listening before it is a regalia of speaking. Your first duty under it is to hear— the earth, the people, your own shadow, and Me.

24 When you falter—and you will— do not cling to the Mantle as armor. Lay it at My feet in confession. I would rather a stumbling Wâběno' who repents in front of the people than a proud

Wáběno' who drags My name over their
unacknowledged ruin.

25 Know this, finally: the Mantle is not a reward
for your goodness, but a trust for My purposes. I
chose you knowing your fractures. I did not
mistake your name.

26 When you stand trembling to speak and when
you sit silent because you have nothing clear to
say, I am with you. When you are believed and
when you are dismissed, I am with you. When
your fire seems to warm many and when it seems
to flicker unseen in a single heart, I am with you.

27 And when your days as Wáběno' are done, I
will lift the Mantle from your shoulders and lay it
upon another, for no single bearer is the point—
the point is that, in every generation, there be
someone who cannot make peace with a
clenched-fist world in My name.

28 So receive this Mantle, Wáběno', not as a proof
that you are more, but as a reminder that you are
given— to Me, to the people, to the earth, in this
brief turning under the Sun no one owns.

29 Walk lightly, speak carefully, love fiercely,
repent quickly, and keep your hand open. In this,
you will know what it means to be Prophet, Seer,
Revelator of the Holy One who has always been
more than your words and yet chooses, still, to
burn in your small palm.