

# Havoc

Book Two of the Worlds Apart saga

DJ Stoneham

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Book Two of the Worlds Apart fantasy saga

by DJ Stoneham

The Worlds Apart fantasy saga:

Book One: Outcast

Book Two: Havoc

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Havoc

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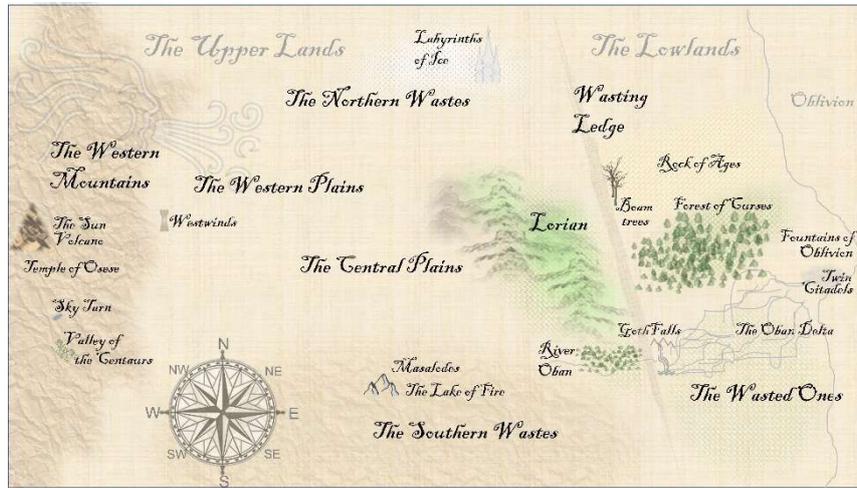
*Dedicated to Jenna and Jan*

## Contents

- Session 1: An End to Happiness
- Session 2: Time to Forget
- Session 3: Feeling Like One Hundred Per Centaurs
- Session 4: Magmarama
- Session 5: The Well of Amok
- Session 6: Old Friends and Older Enemies
- Session 7: The Seeds of Three Moons
- Session 8: The Reckoning
- Session 9: The Black Death
- Session 10: The Second Coming
- Epilogue

## Sye's World

A map made by Luke Boyle based on Sye's account of further events of his journey.





## Session 1: An End to Happiness

*Sye lay in a coma in the secure wing of Bodley Hall. Dead to the world – our world, at least. My source of creativity to turn my own fantasy books into something extra-special had dried up. Even more frustrating, he had left me dangling in the middle of his living story. I prayed for his speedy recovery.*

*Sye had sworn that everything he told me was true, that he was from another world, infinitely more beautiful and dangerous than ours, a world of myth and magic that he was desperate to return to. Rubbish of course. But through his words and emotions, I was reliving his amazing journey. And stealing his ideas. Now it had ended, all too abruptly.*

*What if Sye never woke up? Could I finish his story myself? If not for the benefit of my readers (true, they didn't exist yet) then simply for my own satisfaction. Why not? We constantly make up different endings for movies to suit our mood. We invent conclusions to interrupted dreams. We fabricate reason why our partners leave us. So why not complete Sye's story to satisfy my own need to know what happened? Because I was nowhere near the storyteller that Sye was, that's why not.*

*Part of me wanted to say that Sye's journey had more or less ended, with Sye happily married to Princess Andeledes in their Lorian paradise. But Sye himself had said that his story was far from over. Events in the story backed that up. Even the characters in his story said so. Salm – Sye's childhood crush turned evil nemesis - had some kind of hold over both the Priestesses of Osese and Queen Malisa and was plotting something big, for which she still needed*

*Sye. And the fact that Sye now lay in a mental hospital in our world was proof that he had not settled down permanently in Lorian. Wait a minute ... what the hell was I saying? It was just a fairy story he was telling me!*

*Before looking in on Sye, I spent half an hour by Mum's bedside. I considered telling her about my new girlfriend. If I was perfectly honest, this woman I had been dating was my first and only proper relationship since my wife left me. I had known one or two other women in the biblical sense but the less said about those encounters the better. Anyway, in the end, I decided to keep quiet about my new girlfriend to Mum, lest she begin to chastise me for 'my poor taste in girls', a phrase she tended to use during my teens. Instead, I talked to Mum about Sye, knowing that she would not understand a word. True to form, she latched onto a single random word from my lips and began her monologue. I think I mentioned that my friend was in a coma, which set her off about Perry Como, Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jr for a good fifteen minutes. Whether a result of my bored expression or the sound of her own voice, she drifted off to sleep, saliva descending onto her polyester nightgown like the strand of a spider's web.*

*The staff had moved Sye to a private room as they awaited his transportation to a special unit on the other side of the city. The doctors had surrounded him with machines that beeped and clicked, and made sure that his vital signs did not fluctuate outside the norm and disrupt his equally vital organs (or was it the other way around?). Whatever. The only organ of his I was interested in was his brain and that had shut up shop. It was a pity one of the machines didn't translate his thoughts to images on a screen. I might have been able to watch the rest of his story on the monitor, like a movie. All the machine currently did was project white peaks in time with his pulse. Mountains. In Sye's world, the sun rose behind the Western Mountains.*

*"If you know of Mr Coe's favourite piece of music or poem, that might help," said a member of staff, interrupting my train of thought. The female nurse had come to turn a white knob on one of the machines a quarter-turn to the right. "What?"*

## Havoc

*“Familiar sounds and voices, smells, touch – they might stimulate his brain and wake him up.”*

*“I don’t know him. Not really.”*

*“Then you shouldn’t really be here, should you?”*

*“He doesn’t have anyone else.”*

*“Which is why I’m being nice and letting you stay here.”*

*She talked to me in the same tone of voice I talked to Max, my son. No wonder he disliked me. To be honest, things were going much better between Max and I these days, though I knew I still had a long way to go to repair the damage I had inflicted on him during the bitter break-up of my marriage. Anyway, back to Bodley Hall.*

*The staff had cleaned Sye up, as though preparing him for death, sprucing him up to meet his maker. His hair was washed and combed (the wrong way). They had shaved his stubble off and dressed him in pyjamas. Despite those and other cosmetic changes, seemingly designed to make him look even more helpless and dying, his face bore the same rugged look - a once-handsome face marred by fights, outdoor living and endless traumas. Whether his tales of battles and hardship were true or not, he was exceptionally strong. If he really was fighting for his life then I wouldn’t have put money on Death to win. Sye’s sheets were tightly tucked under the sides of the mattress and acted like a straitjacket. I assumed the staff had also reattached the restraints to his wrists under the covers. I hoped so.*

*I waited by his bedside, talked to him about my girlfriend, and even asked him questions about Lorian and his marriage to Andelede. Judging by the lack of response, it helped me more than it did him. There was not so much as a flicker of life on his face. He was ghostly still. So I left. I had to face the fact that I might never hear him speak again.*

*I used the time I normally spent recording his story, making transcripts of each session or editing, to revisit earlier text. The purpose of this exercise was to identify and extract ideas for my own books but needless to say, I began to re-edit the text too. When the hospital phoned me, as they promised they would, to inform me that there had been no change (a peculiar thing to do), I*

*decided to make a short summary of Sye's whole story to date. It would help me get my head around what had happened so far and why. I could perhaps learn something to help my own writing. For example, how Sye's characters developed over time. This is what I wrote:*

*Sye's story so far*

*Unknown to all but the castle's rulers, a baby had been dumped mysteriously outside Westwinds, a mighty castle on the edge of the Western Plains. With physical features markedly different from the rest of the castle's inhabitants, the baby was handed to a breeding maid, whose own daughter had gone missing. She named the baby, Sye. One day, a girl called, Salm, born on the same day Sye had arrived at the castle, joined their family. Sye and Salm became best of friends until one day, Salm was taken away to live with foster parents.*

*Because of his appearance, Sye was branded an outcast and ridiculed throughout his youth, even by Salm, who had joined Sye as a scholar in the Halls of Learning. Salm had grown into a beautiful, intelligent girl but had a cruel streak, triggered possibly by abusive foster parents. More often as adversaries but also once as close friends, Sye and Salm excelled as scholars in the Halls of Learning and brought new interpretations to the One Way of Life, the creed by which every Westwinds' citizen lived.*

*One of their tutors, nicknamed Young Nole, who turned out to be one of the oldest and most senior Lords of the castle, had earlier discovered an ancient parchment, which completed a prophecy written by High Lord Hyuko, the founder of Westwinds, 1,500 years earlier. Young Nole's dilemma as to whether the prophecy referred to Sye or Salm was partly resolved by the frequency of Salm's misdemeanours. However, the main reason Young Nole decided in favour of Sye was the fact that the old man harboured a terrible secret he wanted to keep hidden; he was Salm's father. In an uncharacteristic act, Young Nole, who had been refused breeding rights, had drugged and raped Salm's mother while visiting her to tell her of her husband's suicide. Although she was later not able to recall the details of her ordeal, thanks to the effects*

## Havoc

*of the potent tobacco in Young Nole's ball pipe, Salm's mother became depressed and subsequently took her own life. When Salm found out the truth about all this, and realised that Young Nole, her father, was never going to declare her the chosen one the prophecy spoke of, let alone acknowledge her as his daughter, she became bitter and vindictive, and took to studying the darker side of alchemy.*

*Growing increasingly aggressive, Salm attacked and maimed Ros, a fellow scholar, who had tried to stop Salm from publicly ridiculing Sye. Salm disappeared but her cohorts beat Sye as he lay in the castle gaol, wrongly suspected of Ros's assault. Riddled with guilt at his own dark secrets, Young Nole helped his daughter to hide in the Archives and staged events to look as though she had fled the castle. At the same time, Young Nole mentored Sye who, with a flair for logic and creativity, excelled in his studies and rose quickly through the ranks, first as an Attendant in the Halls of Administration, then a Lord in the Halls of the Wise. To prepare Sye for his forecasted role as Snow Lord, Young Nole taught him the art of tunnel vision, a way of moving at high speed over short distances. He also taught Sye about how the Lords had ruled with the help of an oracle called the Informary and secret passageways inside the castle walls. Sye learnt from Young Nole that he was not born in the castle, even though his foster mother still thought that she was his biological mother. When Young Nole died and unrest among the Lords escalated into fighting, Sye escaped via the Room of Truth to the battlements. After many days' isolation, Sye returned to the lower levels as High Lord Sye, where he was instantly and unanimously proclaimed the sole leader of Westwinds and deemed to be the chosen one – the Snow Lord.*

*Although obeyed by all, Sye's propensity to question the One Way of Life, doubt the ways of alchemy and dismantle age-old traditions earned him silent enemies, not least Salm, who grew in power and influence in her secret lair in the Archives. When Ros was horribly murdered, Sye realised that Salm had not fled the castle at all but had lived in hiding in the castle. She was planning to take over Westwinds with even bigger ambitions in mind. Sye began a widespread hunt for her. Bloody skirmishes, betrayal and magic on both sides left Salm in a cocoon outside the castle gates and Sye's leadership*

*unsustainable. It was around this time, Sye discovered the skeletons of children in a remote hidden passageway and deduced that Salm had even more sinister secrets than she had already revealed. He assumed one of them was related to his long-lost half-sister, even though Salm hadn't been born when she went missing. With his true origin unknown to him, few friends and an unresolved vendetta against Salm, Sye decided to leave Westwinds.*

*On finding Salm's cocoon empty, Sye rode out east across the Western and Central Plains. He took with him the armour and weapons of Loran-Obis, a legendary ancestor of High Lord Hyuko. During Sye's travels across the deserts, he fought and killed a Doman, a crazed half-man, half-beast, and met two Wayfarmers, benevolent mystical beings, who rode on massive eight-legged beasts called meatbulls. After choosing to follow the Oban, a river said to have the blood of Loran-Obis flowing through it, Sye met a beautiful woman he called the Lady of the Glade. Because she had similar features to him, he assumed that she was his long-lost kin. Before he could talk to the Lady, Sye tumbled into the fast-flowing River Oban.*

*Sye survived Goth Falls only to find himself in the Lowlands, where he was cared for by a beautiful rainforest girl, Rain, and her family, who belonged to a tribe of people with no eyes. Sye learnt that this was one of many tribes that made up the Wasted Ones, people that had various afflictions and lived throughout the vast rainforest region. As he too began to lose his eyes, Sye learnt the ability to 'open up' and was finally able to communicate with Jin-Wag, a small ape-like creature given to him by Young Nole. Having once belonged to High Lord Hyuko, Jin-Wag answered many questions about Westwinds and the Upper Lands that had long puzzled Sye. We heard how Havoc, the creature of infinite sin, had once been vanquished from Westwinds by High Lord Hyuko, and how its shadow had remained on the battlements to corrupt the High Lords and people of Westwinds and influence their thoughts and actions. Once it had passed below the battlements and into the castle, the shadow of Havoc had doubled its efforts to corrupt the Lords and had eventually possessed Salm. Jin-Wag's knowledge explained a lot about events in Westwinds, including background to the prophecy. Although Lord High Hyuko had written the prophecy (the earlier ancient parchment had in fact*

*been forged by Salm), it was possible that his hand had been guided by an unseen power. Either way, Sye had ended up burning them both.*

*As Sye adjusted to his rainforest environment, he spent time in the company of Rain and they began to grow fond of each other. However, eager to return to the Lady of the Glade and refusing to accept he was doomed to remain a Wasted One, Sye persuaded the village elders to divulge the name of the being that knew the only way back to the Upper Lands - Queen Malisa, who lived with her menagerie of birds at the Fountains of Oblivion. The bond between the River Oban and Sye's armour helped Sye overcome an encounter with swamp serpents and regain his eyes (the same power had saved him from drowning and perishing in Goth Falls cataract). On meeting up with Rain again, they declared their love for each other but racked with indecision and doubt, and believing he had to find the Lady of the Glade to locate his homeland and peace, Sye said goodbye to Rain. He soon encountered other tribes of the Wasted Ones and new dangers in the jungle. After traversing wetlands and an inland sea, Sye participated in a macabre game of death in the twin citadels, a stone's throw from the Fountains of Oblivion.*

*Aided by a legendary roc bird, Sye reached the Fountains of Oblivion, where Queen Malisa, a sexless ogress, entertained Sye and told him the history of the Lowlands. Malisa was the daughter of Obis (who had been raped by her parent, Loran-Obis, and who had committed suicide by drowning in the River Oban). While Obis had not survived, her unborn daughter had and was born in the Lowlands. Beautiful and cunning, Malisa had ruled the people in the rainforests as queen until she had become sick from the waters of the Lowlands, which contained the echo of Loran-Obis (her other parent), a power now named the Soul Snatcher. Malisa had become deformed, then spurned and ultimately despised by her subjects. Out of revenge, she intentionally spread her disease among the nation, which developed different afflictions and split into that was now the separate tribes of the Wasted Ones. Malisa told Sye many things, among them that his Lady of the Glade was actually one of the Priestesses of Osese, a shapeshifter sworn to avenge the death of her mother, Mystine the Enchantress, who had died at the hand of Loran-Obis two thousand years earlier. In telling her life story, Malisa's intention was to delay Sye's departure*

*until the Priestesses of Osese could arrive and she could exchange him for the Priestess's gryphon. The Priestesses owned the world's last gryphon, whose golden feathers would keep Malisa alive for another thousand years and allow her to orchestrate her game of the living dead in the twin citadels. As there never was any Lady of the Glade, Sye's reason for leaving the Lowlands was false and he was again faced with the decision whether to go on or go back to find Rain.*

*Sye used the power of the dried tongue of Mystine, which Loran-Obis had long ago cut from the Enchantress's mouth, to discover the location of the Boam trees, the only access back to the Upper Lands. He told Malisa to ask her roc bird to carry him back to the rainforest to collect Rain, then take them to the Boam trees. She tricked him and the roc headed straight for the Boam trees without Rain. The roc carried Sye over the Forest of Curses and set him down in the Rock of Ages. Sye navigated the strange desert and climbed the tallest Boam tree to the top of Wasting Ledge, the colossal cliff face that divided the Upper Lands from the Lowlands.*

*Travelling west, Sye battled two Doman and freed their prisoner, an old woman, who turned out to be mother to the King of Lorian. Once Sye's good deed had been corroborated, the people of Lorian showered him with gifts, including a horse, a smallholding and livestock. When the king was satisfied that Sye was prepared to settle down in Lorian, he announced that his daughter, Andeledes, the future Queen of Lorian, and Sye would wed, subject to their consent. With some trepidation, both agreed.*

*Sye had at last gained a sense of belonging, respect, comradeship and love in his life. Having accomplished everything he had dreamt of as a child, he tried to put all thoughts of finding his homeland, exacting revenge on Salm and the beautiful Rain out of his head. He grew to love Andeledes and knew that he would be a fool to lose everything that he had fought so hard to find.*

*Meanwhile, possessed by the shadow of Havoc, Salm continued her dark schemes of world domination from the safety of her frozen lair in the Labyrinths of Ice in the north. She had enlisted the Priestesses of Osese and Queen Malisa*

*into her ranks, though the three Priestesses had plans to double-cross Salm as soon as they acquired from Sye the dried tongue of their mother, Mystine the Enchantress.*

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*It wasn't a perfect summary. I had greatly over-simplified the story, missing out several characters, such as Fall, the Wasted One; Kite, the Master Bowman, brother of Andeledes; Lord Pol, as well as details about the prophecy. Nevertheless, it acted as a superficial and chronological reference to events, when the time came to transfer Sye's adventures into my own books. It also highlighted to me some of the strengths and weaknesses of the story Sye had created. Perhaps it was a good thing that I didn't write any notes about this. After all, I couldn't afford to leave a paper trail, which might incriminate me at a later date.*

*As said, my summary was hardly a masterpiece but it caused another thought to cross my mind. What if I read it out loud to Sye as he lay in his coma? Could such a condensed snapshot of his life kick-start his consciousness? It was worth a try. I needed him conscious to hear how his story ended.*

*The very next day, I found myself sitting by Sye's bedside, reading my synopsis out loud to him. It doubled in length as I began to adlib along the way. The second time I read it out, the length quadrupled as my own excitement grew at the telling. Three times I read the summary to Sye, each time adding more detail and embellishing it with my own emotions and memory of the recordings, but I saw not so much as a flicker of his eyelid. On the fourth reading, he moaned loudly. I like to think it was because it awoke a passion in him, but it could have been a groan of boredom. In any case, two hours later, he was sitting up in bed eating lunch, as though nothing had happened.*

*After eating an amount of food Queen Malisa herself would not have scoffed at, Sye was quite prepared to continue his story where he had left off but the doctor shooed me out of the room before I could turn on my recorder. Two days later, however, after the specialist had pronounced Sye as fit as he*

*had previously been (it was worded carefully) and returned him to the open ward, I received a phone call from Bodley Hall to say that my friend wanted to see me.*

*"I was back there!" said Sye, before I could even sit down. "Just for a few seconds. I was back in my world!"*

*"But you were here in a coma for weeks," I said. "You can't be in two places at once." I must have sounded disappointed for a part of me wanted to believe that he had been transported physically to another world.*

*"I do not know how it works. But it felt like I was unconscious for only a matter of your seconds of your time, and all the while I was there."*

*"That's not possible. You were in a coma for days. If you were there for just a few seconds, where else did you go? Where were you the rest of the time?"*

*I realised that I was making his coma sound like some magical mystery tour. There really was no need to explain. His mind had played tricks on him, pure and simple. His passion began to annoy me but I figured that I might as well make the most of it and capture some new ideas.*

*"So, what did you see?" I asked, humouring him.*

*Sye looked at me and tears welled up in his eyes. He shook his head then turned away before any of his tears could fall. I knew he wanted to tell me, so there had to be a big reason why he couldn't. Or then he was just emotionally overwhelmed to be back in the land of the living. I glanced at his clenched fists and white knuckles. His chest rose with deep, irregular breaths. I couldn't tell if he was sobbing or seething inside. Then a peculiar thing happened that I cannot explain to this day. The ward was silent - I swear there was not a single sound - but in my head, I heard Sye yell - not a single shout but a thousand screams, brain-shattering voices, hurting my eardrums. I instinctively put my hands over my ears (as if that would drown out a sound inside my head!) until the sound faded away.*

*"I am sorry," said Sye. "Now turn on your device. I still have lots to tell you."*

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Together, Princess Andelede and Sye created their own personal paradise in Sye's Lorian cottage. In many ways, she was the ideal woman for him –

patient, calm, confident. With Andeledes, he could at last be himself and take his time to find his role in the Lorian community and be happy. She didn't expect him to prove himself by mastering Lorian skills like hunting or farming. She didn't expect him to bend to her will or try to lead her. All she wanted was that which he willingly gave to her, and that he accept her love. In that, they were alike. Sye was in some ways the right partner for her. In her opinion, she wanted someone different, reflective, unpredictable – someone totally unlike her father perhaps. She had seen and heard enough of Sye through Kali's stories to believe Sye might be that person. Unlike the swarm of suitors that had followed her around like hungry mosquitoes, Sye took pride in the fact that she had talents that he lacked. He had few of the preconceived ideas that the many of the eligible men in Lorian harboured. Possessive though he was, Sye enjoyed seeing his wife pursue her own interests, rather than follow his. Likewise, she didn't push him to join her in her past-times. Both of them felt their love was above the everyday, materialistic things in life, or rather it made room for them. There was little or no competition between them. There was no fiery passion or melodrama either. In short, they both felt comfortable with each other. It may have proved to be a recipe for success, had the timing been right.

The timing of their marriage was unfortunate for two reasons. Firstly, without having had much contact before their wedding, the couple knew nothing about each other's real selves or their pasts. They both had their sights set firmly on the future. Plans were made, their lives mapped out. Subconsciously they assumed that all they had to do was stay on course and happiness was more or less guaranteed. The second reason was equally tragic. Queen Aladenus had been killed in a freak hunting accident. Her husband, Ifrodes, and their two eldest sons, Jorin and Roulf, along with several others that made up the hunting party, had caught up with a wild boar they had been tracking. They had let fly a volley of arrows that whizzed through the trees and found their mark. A clean kill. When they had ridden to the place their quarry lay, in its place was Aladenus, a dozen arrows embedded in her flesh, any one of which could have proved fatal. No-one could explain it. For days, her family could not even believe it. Each member of the hunting party had blamed himself or herself for they recognised the arrows that pierced the queen's skin.

The king had fired two arrows into his wife, one of them in the centre of her heart. Of the hunting party, only Prince Kite was blameless, for he had apparently turned back and ridden home before the queen had even entered the forest. King Ifrodes was inconsolable and shut himself away. Princess Andeledes would have needed her father's support but she turned to Sye instead. He did what he could but since he was not sure what to do, he suspected that his support was inadequate.

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*Sye explained to me where he thought he went wrong in his relationship with Andeledes.*

*"Perhaps we had imagined that we would be able to live in a bubble, far away from prying eyes and wagging tongues. Maybe we imagined that crises would not come our way or changes would not occur. Perhaps we thought we deserved a happy union, that it was ours by right. All of this was sheer fallacy. She was a princess and I was an outsider that had wheedled his way into Lorian society. Neither of us had been in a proper relationship before. Then there was the change in the people around us. I became aware of how differently people began to treat me - most of them behaved well, some not so much. Almost all with insincerity. I was expected to fill a role, not by Andeledes but by others and, in due course, by myself. In my desperation to continue to blend in, to integrate into Lorian life, to subconsciously prove to myself that I was as good as any other man in Lorian, I began to lose a part of myself. Perhaps, sometimes I tried too hard, sometimes not enough. Little by little, I traded my own imperfections and those of others for a fantasy world, where people became what I expected of them not what they actually were. I built the same mask for myself. No-one, not Andeledes or myself, was able to live up to my expectations. I had set myself up for disappointment after disappointment.*

*"Keep in mind that I was new to relationships, not to mention marriage. I had no experience of the ups and downs they bring. I was still naïve, immature. I had not taken the time to get to know Andeledes, love her for who she was, and so I began to take life, and her, for granted. I wondered if our life was as good as it could get. Deep down, I knew that I was doing something wrong but*

## Havoc

*my need to succeed and the façade I had built would not allow me to admit it. We were both too polite to ask the difficult questions. All this contributed to the fact that I was unable to support her as deep down she still struggled to come to terms with the death of her mother. I did not treat Andelede as well as I should have done. I did not deserve her or happiness.”*

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