

## Chapter One: A Wind Howls

*"I find it hard to believe that something this small has this much weight"*

It's cold. Very cold. I wake up in a shiver, my feet are past the point of warmth and comfort. Yet I cannot see them, nor they can see me. They are here, but they aren't here. It never made sense to me, but they are real. *They* are real. No one sees them, I have only seen depictions of them in books. Illustrations of dark, dusty figures with irregular forms constantly switching between the phases of matter. We can't see them, but we can feel them. We can feel their weight and presence. We know who they are, yet we don't know their real names.

I go to move across my bed, reaching into the pitch-black void. They move aside, allowing me to stand up and walk across my room. The lights come on, the warm glow scatters across my room, shining brilliantly all over the corners of the earth. I snap, the light intensifies, suddenly the forest is alive, the rivers flow, and life breathes its first breath of the day. I watch as a little bird flies for the first time, it succeeds and triumphantly flies into the wind. The wind is calm, gentle as a feather. In another instance, I watch as a seed grows slowly into a sapling. I close my watch and step out into the sea of possibilities.

The wind still gentle, I make my way down the mountain and the forest welcomes me with its song. Deer prance around the trees, fish jump up and up a waterfall. A bear walks out of her cave, a bird lands on my shoulder and whispers to me. *"The wind has grown too violent up high, we cannot fly as safely as before."* The wind suddenly blows through the forest, leaves scatter, birds are forced to the ground, and flowers are ripped from their stems. The wind is angry, the shadow of those *things* looms over it. It tells me that it's too tired of being gentle and wants to be free, it wants to be free like the birds who use it to soar, it wants to help shape the land. I tell it to be gentle, removing the shadows and adding them to my own. The wind simply scoffs, I urge it that our deal is still in effect. It still rages. I offer it a compromise. *"You can shape the land with me, but you must be gentle."* The wind agrees and goes off to shape the mountains and coasts.

The next day, the forest is the same, the new mountains and coasts are formed and the wind is as gentle as ever. Halfway down the mountain, a hawk lands on my arm. *"The wind near the coasts are too violent for me to hunt."* Again, the wind swoops down, blowing ice and snow off the cap of the mountain. The shadowy figures are more present than usual, the wind is black as night, and it howls up a storm. Lightning crashes down and strikes the trees of the forest, igniting the wood ablaze. The wind is furious, for I haven't put my end of the bargain. I catch the wind by the tail and extract the shadows out of it, and once again add them to mine. It hurts, the pain these things emit is unbearable, no creature or human should ever suffer through this. I alone can take it on, such is my existence, such is my fate. The cold, the shadows, the light, the forest. They are forever to be tended by me. I tell the wind it is free, now able to blow any direction and however strong it wants. The wind soars up and gently blows, for it is guilty of my pain, but it owes no apology. The sun falls behind the horizon, the moon comes, and with it, *they arrive.*