

CHAPTER 1

THE STORM THAT SPLIT THE SKY

Halloween Night, 2025

Chicago had seen storms before, but never one that would be remembered in whispers—the night the sky itself split open. The silence after the lightning felt heavier than the thunder itself, as if the world were holding its breath. Leo thought of storms he'd seen before, but none had carried this iron taste in the air, this strange sense that the rain itself was listening.

But this wasn't weather. Later, scientists would call it an atmospheric anomaly. Survivors would call it the night the lights went out. For the first time in history, the world fell dark together—skyscrapers, deserts, oceans, mountains, all swallowed by the same silence. Months later, power grids still hadn't fully recovered. And no one could explain why.

The storm did not just split the sky—it felt as though Olympus itself exhaled. The thunder didn't just shake windows—it rumbled like chains straining beneath the world, as if each strike of lightning was a sentence of some forgotten decree.

For a heartbeat, he thought of the watchtower's silence—the way people called him reckless, the way no one ever believed in the boy who kept chasing storms. And now, at last, the storm itself seemed to see him.

Every drop of rain struck with weight, hissing on rusted steel and fractured glass. Leo felt—not for the first time—that the world was watching him, waiting for him, judging him.

He tightened his jaw. No one waited for Leo Alekos. Not his father. Not the kids at school. Not anyone. The storm was the first thing in months that seemed to care whether he lived or drowned.

Bolts of white-blue energy branched down like roots across the skyline, not striking but erasing. Transformers blew, rails froze, skyscrapers winked out floor by floor. This wasn't lightning—it was something older, something hungrier, draining the city as though the storm itself had teeth.

Through the blur of rain, a figure stood across the tracks—too far to name, too close to ignore. When Leo blinked, it was gone, leaving only the echo of eyes in the storm.

A storm thousands of years in the making had been waiting.
Silent. Patient.
Coiled above the world like a living thing, unseen by all but the gods who had chained it.

It was not born of clouds or wind or water.
It was born of prophecy.

The October air had that restless, brittle edge—cold enough to hint at winter, but still carrying the faint smoke of autumn bonfires.
And on October 31st, 2025, everything aligned.

The chains broke. And the storm split the sky.
Not just to drench the city below. Not just to howl its fury into the void.
But to change everything.

Forever.



The first crack of lightning hit so close it felt like it split the bones of the earth.

A bank of dead fluorescents flickered in the gutted security shack, buzzing like angry wasps. The storm felt close enough to press a hand against his ribs from the inside.

The air itself waited for him to move.

Leo Alekos flinched as the ground beneath his boots shuddered, loose gravel skittering across the skeletal remains of the Chicago trainyard. Rusted tracks jutted from the dirt like broken ribs, twisted from decades of neglect. Abandoned cars loomed in the darkness like ghosts of a city that used to matter.

And across the world, millions stared into sudden darkness. In Athens, the Acropolis fell black for the first time in centuries. In Cairo, the Nile vanished into shadow. In Tokyo, neon bled away until the skyline looked like a grave. Everywhere, silence spread. The storm hadn't passed. It had only begun.

The air smelled like wet metal and ozone, sharp enough to sting the back of his throat.

The sky boiled.

It wasn't just a storm.
It was alive.

Leo pulled his hood tighter around his face, his breath fogging in the unseasonable chill. It was late October, but this didn't feel like any Midwestern weather he'd ever known.

This felt like the end of the world.

He checked his phone for the tenth time, though the screen had been dead since the first lightning strike. Figures.

He wasn't even sure why he'd come out here tonight. No—that was a lie. He knew exactly why.

Because when the city felt too big, too loud, too suffocating, this place was the only one that felt like it belonged to him.

The trainyard ruins didn't care who he was. Didn't care that his dad had walked out when he was eight, leaving him and his mom to scrape by. Didn't care that his mom worked two jobs and still barely had time to look him in the eye. Didn't care that Leo Alekos—dropout, nobody, ghost of a kid—was one bad day from disappearing entirely and no one would notice.

Here, among the rust and the rot, he could breathe. Or at least, he used to.

Tonight, the air was too heavy to breathe.

The wind picked up, howling between the train cars.

Leo cursed under his breath, shoving his hands into his pockets.

He needed to get back before this storm got worse—if that was even possible. But something kept him rooted in place. Some instinct he couldn't explain.

Like the storm wasn't just above him.

It was watching him.

The second lightning strike came without warning. It didn't just split the sky. It ripped it open.

A blinding spear of white-blue fire slammed into one of the derailed train cars twenty feet away. The sound was so loud it felt like the world itself screamed.

Leo staggered back, throwing up his arms as a shockwave of heat and static rolled over him.

The car hissed where it had been struck, metal glowing faintly like it had been pulled from a forge.

And then he heard it.
A low, bone-deep hum threaded through the storm—not from the trainyard. From inside him.

“What the hell...”

Leo clutched at his chest, but there was nothing there—no injury, no wound. Just that impossible hum, vibrating through his ribs like a plucked string.

The storm roared again, the sky flashing with jagged veins of lightning.

He stumbled, boots skidding on the wet gravel, heart hammering.

For an instant, the boy inside him surfaced—the one who had prayed his father would come home, who had learned too early that some storms never pass. He shoved the ache down, but the memory lingered like salt in his throat.

That's when the voice came.

“Child of the Sea.”

Leo froze.
The words weren't shouted.
They weren't whispered.
They just were—as present and undeniable as the storm.

“Who's there?!” His voice cracked, swallowed instantly by the howling wind.

No answer.
Just the storm.
And the hum, growing louder.

The ground trembled beneath him.
Puddles scattered across the trainyard rippled, pulling toward him like magnets.

Leo staggered back again, his chest tight.
This wasn't real.
Couldn't be real.
And yet—

“You were not made for silence,” the voice said.
“You were made to rise.”

Lightning struck again.
This time, it didn't hit the trainyard.
It hit him.

The world went white.

Heat exploded through his veins, searing and cold all at once.

He should've died.
He should've been ash on the wind.
Instead, he was still standing.

The water at his feet surged upward, wrapping around his legs like it had been waiting for him.

Leo gasped, staggering as tendrils of water coiled up his arms, slick and heavy, yet impossibly light.

The hum in his chest became a roar.
Not pain.
Not exactly.
It was something deeper.
Like the part of him that had always been empty—the part his father left hollow—was being filled for the first time.

With power.
With fury.
With the sea itself.

“Stop!” he shouted, though he wasn't sure who he was talking to—the storm? The voice? Himself?

“Stop?” The voice chuckled. “You've been waiting for this longer than you know.”

Leo fell to his knees, gripping his head.
“I don't want this!”

“Liar.”

The word hit harder than the lightning.

The water surged higher, rising around him like a living tide.

Leo's panic curdled into something else.
Something hot and dangerous.

He wasn't just in the storm.
He was the storm.
The storm wasn't just around him.
It was in him.

The rain lashed sideways in sheets so thick it felt like the sky itself was falling, but Leo didn't feel cold anymore.

The water wrapped around him like armor, moving with him, through him, alive.

His knees hit the gravel, but it wasn't weakness—it was gravity. Some greater force pressing down on him, commanding him to bow.

“No,” he hissed between clenched teeth.

The word was almost drowned out by the storm.
Almost.

“Defiance,” the voice said, approvingly.

Lightning carved a jagged scar across the sky, its
afterimage burned into his eyes.

And then the storm moved.

Not the wind.

Not the rain.

The whole storm.

And it was looking at him.

The world tilted.

The ground beneath him vanished.

Leo's stomach lurched as gravity became
meaningless, the trainyard dissolving into black, endless
water.



He was falling.

No—sinking.

The storm above was just a distant smear of light,
muted and far away.

The water was everywhere.

And it wanted him.

Leo thrashed, fighting for air.

But there was no air here.

Only the crushing silence of the deep.

His lungs screamed, and his chest convulsed, but he
couldn't stop sinking.

Down, down, down.

Until the last glimmer of light vanished.

Until there was nothing but darkness.

And then the darkness spoke.

“Breathe.”

Leo's chest seized.

“No,” he choked out, though there was no air for the word to carry.

“I'll drown.”

“You'll rise.”

He couldn't.

Every instinct screamed at him not to.
But his body was done fighting.

The moment his mouth opened, the water surged in.

And it didn't choke him.

It filled him.
Warmed him.

He could breathe.



Leo gasped and opened his eyes.

He wasn't in the deep anymore.

He was standing.
On marble.

The hall was impossibly massive, carved from stone the color of the sea in winter—blue-green streaked with veins of silver. The air smelled of salt and storms, brine stinging his nostrils as if he were standing on the deck of a ship in the middle of a hurricane.

Somewhere deep within the shadows above, something groaned—the slow, leviathan-deep sound of something massive shifting just out of sight.

The hall wasn't empty.
It was watching him.

Colossal pillars rose into an endless vault of darkness above, their surfaces etched with sigils that glowed faintly like bioluminescent creatures in the abyss.

The floor was a mosaic: a trident splitting the waves, surrounded by twelve symbols he didn't recognize.

At the far end of the hall, a throne waited.

It wasn't ornate.
It didn't need to be.

It was carved from a single slab of dark stone, simple and brutal, like it had been pulled from the bones of the ocean itself.

And on it sat a man.
No—not a man.
A god.

His skin was sun-browned and scarred like weathered stone, his beard shot through with silver. His eyes—impossibly blue, impossibly deep—looked like they could swallow oceans whole.

He didn't wear a crown.
He didn't need one.
The sea itself bent toward him, waves of invisible power pulling at the edges of the hall.

“You've kept me waiting,” the god said.

His voice was the tide—endless, patient, inevitable.

Leo's mouth went dry. “Who... who are you?”

The god leaned forward, elbows on his knees, eyes narrowing.
“You know.”

And Leo did.

Somewhere deep in his blood, in a part of him he'd never understood, he knew.

"Poseidon," he whispered.

The name tasted like salt and lightning.

The god smiled, sharp and dangerous.

"Child of the sea," Poseidon said. "You are mine."

Leo staggered back. "No. I'm not—I can't—"

"Can't what?" Poseidon's voice rolled through the hall, shaking the marble. "Can't carry what you already are? Can't face what you've always been?"

"I'm no one," Leo said, his voice breaking.

"You are my blood."

Leo's throat closed.

"I don't want this."

"Liar."

The word was soft.

Cruel.

True.

Poseidon stood.

The hall groaned as if the ocean itself strained to hold his weight.

"You think I care what you want?" His voice rose, a storm in human shape. "You were born for this. Shaped by it. Every moment you've cursed your life, every day you've wanted to disappear, every time you've wished for something bigger than the scraps you were given—it led you here."

The god raised his hand.

The mosaic at Leo's feet shifted, water spilling from the

trident in its center. It coiled up his legs like serpents, cold and alive, winding tighter the more he struggled.

“You are mine,” Poseidon said.

“No—”

The water surged higher, wrapping his chest, his throat.

Leo's knees buckled.

“Please,” he gasped.

The god crouched, leveling his gaze with Leo's.

“You've begged enough,” Poseidon said, his voice soft again.

“Now rise.”

The water pulled him under.

He didn't fight it this time.

He let it fill him.

Drown him.

Remake him.

The threads roared to life.

Leo doubled over, clutching his head as they slammed into his mind—a dozen connections sparking at once.

Some burned hot, fierce as wildfire.

Some were steady, slow, immovable.

Some flickered faintly, keeping their distance.

And one...

One was wrong.

Like a corrupted note in a perfect chord, scraping through his veins.

He sucked in a breath, shaking.

“What is that?” he rasped.

Poseidon tilted his head.
“The chain,” he said simply.

“Something's off—”

“And you will learn why. In time.”

The threads pulsed again, grounding him.
Twelve symbols in the mosaic glowed faintly at his feet, one
brighter than the others.
A trident.
His.

“Do you feel it now?” Poseidon asked.

Leo swallowed hard. “Yes.”

“Good.”

The god's eyes softened, though they didn't lose their
weight.
“Then stand, child of the storm.”

Leo did.
The water obeyed him now, coiling around his arms like
living armor.
The hum in his chest had become a roar.

The god smiled.
And for a moment, Leo swore the sea itself smiled with him.



The hall dissolved.
The throne.
The god.
The trident-etched floor.
All of it shattered like glass, replaced by screaming wind and
torrential rain.

Leo gasped, lungs burning as he slammed back into
his body, kneeling in the flooded ruins of the trainyard.

The storm hadn't ended.
If anything, it was worse.

Lightning split the sky in jagged veins of white-blue.
Wind whipped so hard it felt like it was trying to tear the
world apart. The derailed cars around him groaned, metal
screeching as they were pushed against the tracks like toys in
the hands of a furious child.

And the water—
The water wasn't still anymore.
It surged at his feet, swirling in unnatural patterns, coiling
around his legs like it remembered him.
Claimed him.

Leo staggered to his feet, every muscle aching like
he'd been hit by a freight train.
No.
Not hit.
Struck.
By lightning.

He looked down at his hands, expecting burns,
broken bones, something.
Instead, golden light shimmered faintly beneath his skin,
fading in and out with the rhythm of his pulse.

“What the hell...”

The word barely made it out of his mouth before the
wind carried it away.

The threads hummed.
He could still feel them—those other presences tethered to
him.
Some pulsed steady and strong.
Some were faint and distant.
And one still scraped at him, sharp and wrong.

He shook his head, trying to shove the sensations aside, but the more he fought them, the stronger they became.

A low hiss cut through the storm.
Not wind.
Not water.
Something else.

Leo spun, heart hammering, and saw them.

Two figures at the edge of the trainyard.
Tall.
Slender.
Cloaked in black that the rain didn't seem to touch.

Porcelain-white masks stared at him with hollow, unblinking eyes.

They didn't move.
They didn't need to.
Leo knew they were here for him.

The threads convulsed, thrumming violently in his veins.

His instincts screamed at him to run.
But his feet stayed planted.

It wasn't courage.
It was something deeper.
Some unspoken understanding that running wouldn't matter.
Because these things would follow.

The first one tilted its head at him, jerky and inhuman.
“The storm awakens,” it hissed. “And the chains weaken.”

The second cocked its head the opposite way.
“The sea claims its child.”

Its voice was metallic, scraping, like a rusted blade dragged across stone.

Leo's chest tightened.
“What are you?”

They didn't answer.
They glided closer.

The first raised a hand, and the air grew heavier.
Leo staggered as the storm itself seemed to pause—wind, rain, even the lightning holding its breath.

The Watcher's clawed fingers curled.
“You should not exist,” it said.

“I get that a lot,” Leo muttered, though his voice cracked.

The second hissed.
“Unmade.”

It lunged.

Leo barely moved in time.
The thing was fast—impossibly fast—its claw slicing through the air where his throat had been a second earlier.

Instinct took over.
He threw his hands out, and the water obeyed.

A wall of liquid rose from the flooded ground, slamming into the Watcher like a battering ram.

The impact sent it sprawling back into the side of a derailed car, the metal crunching on impact.

Leo stumbled, breathless, staring at his hands.
He'd done that.

The second hissed and lunged.
Leo turned sharply, dragging water up from the puddles like a

living whip.
He swung.

The strike caught the Watcher mid-charge, sending it skidding across the gravel.

His heart pounded, his blood roaring in his ears.
He was alive.
He was fighting.
And the water was his.

The first Watcher stood, head snapping unnaturally as its mask cracked where Leo's water had hit.

It hissed, tilting its broken face.
“The chain will break.”

Leo clenched his fists, water swirling at his sides.
“Not tonight.”

The second Watcher hissed again, its voice layered and inhuman.
“We'll see.”

Then—as suddenly as they'd appeared—they vanished, swallowed by the rain.

The storm raged on.

Leo staggered, every muscle trembling, chest heaving like he'd run miles.

The threads thrummed one last time before quieting.

But not gone.

Never gone.



Far below Olympus, in halls of obsidian veined with molten gold, Maelis traced her fingers across the living map.

The storm's pulse flickered through it like veins of lightning.

She smiled, though it did not touch her eyes.

“The first has awakened,” she whispered.

The map glowed faintly, threads of white-blue energy spreading outward from the heart of the storm.

Her hand lingered over one link in the chain—bright, unsteady, fragile.

Her lips curled.

“It begins.”



The storm howled above the world, and in its shadow, a whisper curled through the silence.

“But it will.”