

THE FABLE OF THE TYRANT ALCHEMIST

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Ioni Appelberg

The Fable of the Tyrant Alchemist
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ABOUT THIS PIECE

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CHAPTER ONE

THE FABLE OF THE TYRANT ALCHEMIST

1.1 Elysium

1.1.1 Part I: The Failed Harvest

First, the quiet came. Each day, the markets grew quieter, the people hungrier. A farmer stared at wilted crops, dread set-



Figure 1.1: The Fable of the Tyrant Alchemist

ting in his heart. In a kingdom once resplendent with markets and sky-reaching monuments, it was the first failed harvest that marked the end of affluence and the beginning of collapse.

By the second year, market traders stood before empty stalls, goods long gone, rotten, or ruined. Jobless men prowled, foraging the streets for vermin and meager scraps of sustenance. Young women offered their time for bread, their eyes hollow in the act. Widows, too, entered strangers' homes, bartering themselves for their children's next meal. Orphans, gaunt and brittle, drew meaningless shapes in the dust, their laughter a forgotten memory.

Rumors surged like wind through dry grass. Scapegoats were blamed; superstitions gripped the masses. By the third year, it was known to the people and the king alike, there would be no more monuments erected, only tombstones.

The king called the council, heavy with despair. In a room filled with tension, ministers and knights sat around a table.

Before them stood the realm's wisest farmer, a man worn from years of labor, hunger, and loss. His voice echoed the deep hunger that gripped the kingdom. "Your Majesty, the land is weary. It cries for respite." His words hung heavy in the room, laying bare the reality of their fate.

1.1.2 Part II: The Devil's Pact

In the dimly lit chamber, a palpable tension filled the air. The alchemist, servant to the king and master of arcane arts, stepped into the flickering candlelight. He held an aged book, its scent mingling with the murk of looming spells. With a voice both smooth

and haunting, he shattered the quiet, his words a ripple through stone walls.

“Sire, alchemy is our last refuge. We can harvest time to feed the earth,” he began, revealing a parchment inked with cryptic circles and lines. “Each citizen, willingly or not, will spare a mere whisper of their years. An unnoticeable offering. With careful alchemy, we can replenish our lands and fortify your reign with the alms of myriad souls.” Leaning closer, he whispered the words that would redefine their civilization: a devil’s proposal intended for the king but felt by all. “Consider, my lord, a reign without end, each year stretched beyond nature’s limits, a kingdom fed by the borrowed time of its people. No more famine. No more want.”

The court waited, their faces etched with fear and desperate hope, ready to tread any path that led away from the abyss of famine.

For a moment, the king was a statue, his face a veil behind which storms brewed. Finally, exhaling a breath heavy with fate, he spoke. “We’ve endured enough hardship. We shall seize a future that knows no famine.”

The air thickened as the alchemist retreated with a solemn nod, the weight of the chosen path settling in.

He reopened his tome and voiced the incantation. Arcane syllables filled the room, weaving a desperate gambit to salvage their decaying kingdom. Thus, in the dark hours of night, they sealed a new covenant that would reverberate through generations.

1.1.3 Part III: Vines and Moss

In the decades that followed the alchemist's rites, the kingdom thrived like spring after a bitter winter. Fields were lush year-round, erasing hunger and the memories of famine. Marketplaces bustled, no longer a graveyard of commerce but a carnival of exotic goods from every corner of the world. The air seemed perfumed with prosperity — healthy river fish, basilisk meats, and spices from faraway lands. A century rolled by. The king, unaging, stretched his influence over land and sea, turning his realm into an empire. Statues weathered, and languages evolved, but the king abided.

Yet, a toll was exacted. Years stolen from the people, a time tax woven into the fabric of life. The spell fed both earth and crown, cloaking decay with a veneer of wealth. The young wore the faces of old men, their eyes wise beyond their years. Every heartbeat was a sacrifice, a quiet tax to feed the castles of power.

Then came the year when the land rebelled. Coaxed by the spell, the soil had given until it couldn't, its silent plea for rest ignored. The land remembered stolen seasons, now determined to settle old scores. Crops withered; rivers soured. Beasts waned, their numbers thinning. The kingdom, starved of Earth's gifts, unraveled — not from human revolt, but from the silent insurrection of the land that once fed them.

With hunger as the harbinger, society fractured. Chaos and mass confusion swallowed the land, a virulent blight not even alchemy could stem. Witch hunts raged for a merciless century, fire consuming flesh and innocence. Men's strength wilted, armies

disbanded. Women, walking in the agonizing footsteps of famine-haunted foremothers, bartered touch for bread.

Monuments lay buried under vines and moss. Fertile lands turned barren. Schools emptied, their echoing halls abandoned, and children torn from learning, were sent to farm dying lands. Art withered. Painters swapped colors for shades of gray, and soon vanished altogether. Teachers and engineers were supplanted by an ever-growing class of soil-bound serfs.

Desperate, the eternal king sought another spell. He asked the people not for mere years but decades. The alchemist obliged, crafting another spell from dark incantations. Yet the ravaged earth, too spent to yield, exacted a monstrous price: lifetimes for crumbs of bread. People, skeletal, on the verge of vanishing, offered their very existence. A silence settled, a collective sacrifice borne not in rebellion, but in surrender.

1.1.4 Part IV: Clara The Torchbearer

In the land between sleep and waking, Clara was a child again, standing at the threshold of a room aglow with amber light. Her mother ground herbs, the wooden table before her strewn with books, vials, and leaves. “These aren’t just leaves and liquids,” her mother said. “They’re doors to the gardens of your mind.” Her words sank into Clara like stones into deep water.

She woke to a gusting wind. Her dream dissolved like morning mist. The sun broke over the kingdom, time’s toll evident in every vine-entangled ruin. Light spilled into her chamber.

Clara’s room was modest: a bed, a wardrobe, a desk. On it, a lone candle and scattered books that whispered of the kingdom’s

past grandeur and freedoms now lost. It was her mother's notes and books, crafted in the quiet, away from royal eyes — a puzzle to decipher, a quest still yearning for footsteps.

She draped a linen robe over her shoulders and approached the window, her fingers ink-stained from yesterday's writings. Below, people shuffled through life, joyless and muted.

The spell cast long ago had become an oppressive, faceless dictator. It promised bread but dealt only crumbs, a tarnished magic now woven into the kingdom's culture as enduringly as its ancient stone walls and teeming graveyards.

She remembered the cold spring day she put her mother in the earth. The ground was hard, the casket simple. The tombstone bore the words: 'Seed in Drought.'

The chambermaid standing beside her asked what it meant.

"Her wish," Clara answered. Her face gave nothing away, her thoughts a distant country.

From her room, Clara watched the people below — eyes down, spirits broken. Clara was not like the others. She carried an inner fire, gifted from her mother, a quiet revolt against a gray world.

In her room's sanctuary, amid ink and parchment molded by hands long stilled, Clara found traces of a freer past, free from famine and theft of years. A past now entrusted to her. As she flipped through the timeworn pages of an ancient tome, something caught Clara's eye. In the margins of the text, a note penned in her mother's hand: "For Clara — Elric is the keeper of truths that free us. Go where I could not. Find him." Below it, a tender signature, her mother's name etched in ink.

The name 'Elric' stirred a latent memory, a shared secret often spoken by her mother. Filled with a sense of destiny, Clara closed her worn books and left her chamber.

At the age of twenty, for the first time, she ventured beyond the confining walls of her castle. Guided by remnants of forgotten eras, she set forth to unearth truths long interred but never wholly erased. Her compass drew her toward the Whispering Pines, a land untouched by the alchemist's dark arts and, as her mother had often mentioned, the rumored dwelling of Elric.

1.1.5 Part V: Far to Go

Clara walked through towns void of kindness, over land stripped of life. Each day sculpted her in the likeness of the land she traversed — a leaner body, hands hardened, face etched by sun and wind.

Thirteen days out, Clara trudged through the ashen remains of a town, its name forgotten, its history lost. Empty buildings sagged under the weight of time, their hollow frames like grave-stones against the evening sky. Vacant faces, like clock dials without hands, glanced through her, never at her.

Spying a run-down tavern, she cautiously stepped inside. The door whined on rusted hinges. She eased onto a splintered stool. "Bread," she rasped. The innkeeper, a bloated man with eyes like rotted plums, flung stale crust onto the counter. Her teeth sank into the stale crust, her body weeping for nourishment.

The room stank of unwashed bodies and sour ale. In a dim corner, men gambled their souls on dice, their faces marred by desperation and greed. As she made to leave, talk stilled, and eyes tracked her. A rough hand seized her wrist.

“Far to go?” The words, a mockery.

Her eyes darted to the innkeeper, pleading for an ally. His gaze, cold, turned away. “Yes, far,” she replied, stalling.

Then, violence. Teeth, nails, a taste of blood. Outmanned, her screams died in cruel laughter. Her clothes yielded, torn in the contest of her humiliation.

After the degradation, she stepped outside and into the soft rain of the night. Her path now carried weight measured in more than miles.

Ahead, barren land stretched mercilessly. A fleeting image of her mother’s face offered a brief moment of comfort. She tilted her head back, letting rain droplets fall onto her tongue to dilute the bitterness that swelled within her. The night urged in tones only darkness knows. Turn back, it murmured.

But she walked on. Her will was a defiant ember, the last flicker of light in a world teetering on oblivion, its humanity long forfeited.

1.1.6 Part VI: Elric

After weeks traversing a harsh expanse, gaunt but unbroken, she found herself beneath the Whispering Pines. As she approached, she carried more than her own weight. She embodied her mother’s enduring hope and her land’s final prayer for redemption.

Elric greeted her at the doorway. “You’ve come,” he said, leading her inside, the room warm from the fire in the stone hearth.

Her eyes roved from the firelight dancing on the walls to the shelves laden with books. A staircase twisted upward, its banister engraved with ancient symbols.

“Your homeland withers,” Elric said, drawing from his pipe, the wood old and marked by years. The scent of herbs, a blend cultivated through many seasons, sharpened the mind as it filled the room.

“The spell,” she confirmed.

“Mmm,” he exhaled, his eyes shifting to the fireplace, wood popping in the heat. “Your forebears knew better days. Days without sacrifice.”

“The legends spoke truth, then?”

“Indeed.”

“Did you know I was coming?”

“I’ve waited twenty years. This isn’t our first meeting.”

“We’ve met before?”

“Once, when you were but a newborn. Your mother and I collaborated. We worked on a potion that siphons the power of nature to protect the truth in our world, to shield it from alchemy and dark spells.”

Elric opened a small cabinet beside the hearth. From it, he took an empty wooden chalice and a stoppered glass vial. Uncorking the vial, he poured a golden liquid into the chalice, the firelight making it shimmer. “This elixir hails from untarnished lands, free from the alchemy that poisons your realm. One sip and illusions shatter, transforming soul and society alike.”

“What is it called?” she asked.

He looked at her intently. “Elysium,” he said, the word hanging heavy in the room. “It’s both the end and the beginning of your journey. You must experience it to understand. Drink.”

She sipped the brew; it tasted of nothing. Soon, as she nestled by the fire, the walls took a breath, and the world sharpened

as if coming into focus for the first time. The air thickened into a heavy mist, her fingers danced through it, each ripple sending colors splashing around like bioluminescent whispers. She floated, her body dissolving, her name a distant echo.

Elric's gaze turned to the fire, shadows playing across his face. "Elysium shows only what one needs to see, no more, no less," he said, his voice a gentle wave against the shores of her uncertainty. "In my own experience with Elysium, I saw a torchbearer in the veil of time, a young soul with the spark to undo the dark spell on your land." His eyes found Clara's. "But the torchbearer had to come to me, the journey forging the resolve. Had I sought you out sooner, before your heart was ready, Elysium's truth would have been a burden too heavy."

As the reality of his words sank in, Clara felt the weight of the years, the faces of the countless lives lost to the alchemist's dark magic flashing before her eyes. "And the elixir... why not share it sooner?"

Elric sighed, his eyes drifting to the ancient books lining the shelves. "Elysium's truth is a double-edged blade. In the wrong hands, it could cut through the fabric of reality, leaving wounds that might never heal. Your kingdom..." he gestured vaguely towards the window, "...it wasn't ready. But now, the ground has been furrowed by suffering, ready to receive the truth about the universe, the spell, the suffering."

The walls breathed with a rhythm older than time. She looked at her hands moving through the bioluminescent mist, each movement sending ripples across the room. Tendrils of light danced in the air, ethereal spirits beckoning her towards another realm.

“But why?” Clara pressed, her presence deepening with each breath. “Why involve yourself?”

Elric’s eyes softened. “I once lived in your kingdom, fleeing when I realized the spell’s plague. Your mother and I, we shared a vision of a world free from dark alchemy. But more than a promise to an old friend, it’s a battle against the grasp of evil spells, a grasp threatening to choke the essence of life and freedom from this world. It’s a battle,” he looked at Clara with a profound earnestness, “that now passes to you.”

Suddenly, reality shattered, and her soul twisted and warped through a portal faster and faster until she touched the core of the cosmos.

Here, in a land beyond words, beyond the confines of time and space, she witnessed the birth and demise of the universe. With each breath, a star was born and died; each blink saw the rise and fall of civilizations. Like a photon racing at light speed through the cosmos, untouched by time, she beheld the entirety of all that ever was and will be.

Peering beyond the infinitely small, she saw the source code of the universe, equations as living tendrils of light materializing into particles, planets, and stars. The universe, a symphony of mathematical elegance, its physicality a melody resonating along the strings of her consciousness.

She floated amidst the cosmic code, orchestrating the universe — the planets, the voids, the unseen forces weaving through them — and she was one with all. She was the universe gazing at itself. Beyond the veil of mortality, she saw endless realms, death a mere doorway. In that boundless expanse, she brushed against the face of the divine.

A golden phoenix took form before her.

“I am Veritas,” it spoke, not in words, but in a language of complex geometry.

It exposed the grim truths of her lands, the Great Famine, and the enslaving spell — a counterfeit prosperity bought at the terrible price of human years.

“How do we break free?” Clara’s voice carried the untold suffering of generations.

“Simple,” the phoenix intoned. “Don’t battle the alchemist or his spell; you won’t win. Acknowledge the illusion. Tend to your own gardens, and reliance on the alchemist and the king fades. Elysium shields you, body and mind, from the spell’s reach.”

As the vision faded, Clara found herself back on the wooden floor, her head cushioned by a pillow. The urgency of her quest snapped her back to reality, a newfound resolve kindling in her chest.

“I see now,” she breathed, her voice steady. “I know what I must do.”

Elric nodded, a sage with a deep understanding of the paths of the universe. “Yes, but first, tea. There’s strength to regain and you have a long journey ahead,” he said, anchoring them both in a moment of calm before the impending storm of change.

1.1.7 Part VII: The Wayfarer’s Hearth

After days navigating barren expanses, Clara entered a cobblestone town as twilight settled. Figures lined the street, some alive, some not, most in limbo — too tired to beg, too frail to feed. Candlelight

flickered from the windows of a tavern, illuminating well-fed faces. “The Wayfarer’s Hearth,” read the sign above the door.

She approached. The door creaked open to admit her, wafting out stale beer and the scent of roast meat. Her fingers twitched involuntarily, memories of weeks ago crawling up her spine, but her body ached for sustenance, for warmth. Holding her satchel close, safeguarding the vial of Elysium, she chose a chair at an empty table and settled in. Soon enough, food appeared.

The man who had set her meal before her took the adjacent seat with deliberate ease, his eyes lingering on her satchel. Her pulse quickened.

“You carry a weight, wanderer,” he said.

“Or hope,” she countered, her grip on her satchel unyielding.

A glass shattered. Drunkards stumbled into their table, a wave of mead sweeping over worn wood. Clara’s heart surged, the man’s fingers brushed her satchel, pulling the vial from its sanctuary. “Hope carries its own burden,” he said.

“The hope of my people is in that vial,” she shot back, her voice stripped bare.

“This is Elysium,” he said, his words like barbs. “At what cost, wanderer, do you think Elysium will save your people?”

Doubt snaked around her convictions. Was she the bearer of emancipation or a harbinger of calamity? Was her land ready for Elysium? “You know it?” she asked.

“I know it,” he said, eyeing it closely.

“Return it,” she commanded.

He handed over the vial. “The road to freedom is paved with the stones of responsibility. I wouldn’t want to walk in your shoes.”

She nodded, heavy but resolute. Clara left as quietly as she'd come, meal untouched, mission intact.

The night took her in. She cast a final glance back at a room oblivious to her departure. That night, she'd sleep under indifferent stars, closer to home but adrift in certainty, carrying the weight of a thousand stones of untold responsibility, a Trojan's shroud for her people, a destiny unasked.

1.1.8 Part VIII: This is Elysium

Under a storm-heavy sky, Clara returned home. In her pocket was Elysium; in her mind, a plan that required Harold — an old friend and a knight by trade.

In the guild hall, Harold sat among knights and minstrels, a goblet in hand. "Look at this," Clara said, pushing the vial across the table without ceremony. Her words pierced the tavern's noise as she recounted her journey.

Harold looked at her, then at the vial. "You mean to say that one day, this will help us fight the spell?"

"No," said Clara, her voice deep with a new knowing. "It means one day, we won't have to."

"Heresy," Harold said. "You're risking death."

"So are we all," she answered.

"They'll burn you at the stake."

"If I'm right, they won't."

"A trial then, regardless," Harold said, his gaze dropping to the vial as the tavern's jovial banter became a distant echo for them both.

“So be it,” Clara said, meeting his gaze. She leaned in, her fingers resting on his scarred knuckles. “Our farms take our children. It’s not right.”

“It’s how things are.”

“It’s how things were.”

“A trial will not be lenient, Clara. I can’t let you bring this to the king.”

“Not the king. The people.” She continued. “But don’t trust me. See for yourself.” Her eyes locked onto his. “Drink,” she said, her words echoing Elric’s.

Harold hesitated but finally drank. His eyes widened. He gripped the edge of the wooden table, his knuckles turning white. A sort of vacant gaze overcame him as if he’d journeyed to someplace far.

When the Elysium vision receded, he opened his eyes and looked at her anew, seeing the world for the first time again. He glanced around the hall as though it were a foreign land, his eyes lingering on the mundane — a crack in the table, the smudged goblet, a flickering torch on the wall—with awe and wonder. She knew then that they stood as one. Two visionaries, shouldering the burden of transforming the world, ready to shepherd their people into a revolutionary dawn.

In the square, the stone eyes of old heroes watched. A crowd formed, silenced by expectation and unaccustomed to the art of public speaking. Autumn leaves swirled at their feet.

“A new dawn!” Harold broke the silence. “Generations sacrificed, giving years for meager sustenance. But the land wants not our years — only our care and periodic reverence. The tales of a

time without the toll of hunger, without a tax on life itself, from before the Great Famine, are not myths. They are forgotten chapters of our history, now on the verge of being rewritten.”

He raised the vial. Sunlight mirrored in its gold. “This is Elysium.”

1.1.9 Part IX: A Revolution Takes Shape

In the fading light of day, Harold and Clara stood by a murmuring brook, leaves rustling at their feet in quiet revolt. Faces young and old assembled around them; each one a silent rebellion against the servitude that taxed their years.

They drank, the chalice passing from hand to hand, a new ritual born. With each gathering, the numbers swelled; with each sip, more souls entwined. Slowly, yet with unyielding certainty, the kingdom shifted over the years. It changed not through a coup or uprising but through a still, relentless force, like water eroding stone. As the seasons passed and more villagers imbibed the Elysian brew, the weight of their invisible chains lessened, their atoms scattering into the evening air.

Shielded now, villagers sowed their own gardens, sanctuaries from the alchemist’s dominion. Bountiful harvests followed, hope supplanted despair. Word of the blooming private gardens spread like wildflowers, and fields once cursed by dark alchemy lay fallow and forgotten.

And there, by the unassuming brook, a revolution took shape. The soft sounds of the stream became an earthbound anchor for the myriad souls who opened the door to walk in the cosmic gardens of their minds. Each ritual added another stitch in the fabric of a

new dawn; each sip, another brushstroke on the canvas of a world remade.

1.1.10 Part X: The Old Man

A decade drifted by. With each soul that tasted Elysium, the fetters of the old world loosened. The alchemist's spell, once a yoke around their necks, now waned like thick morning fog giving way to the warmth of the day. Fields once cursed now bore food, not dread. Families gathered around bountiful tables, words flowing freely, unveiled.

Each year, townsfolk met by the sword in the square. Harold's blade, the first monument raised in ages, stood as freedom's spine, the axis of their new world. An old man approached, his eyes dimmed by memories of famine, leading a boy by the hand. Their eyes met, a chasm bridged: one soul untarnished by hunger, the other haunted by its ghost.

The old man stepped forward, his fingers quivering on the hilt of the sword. "Clara, what becomes of us if the land fails us again?" Years of hardship wavered in his voice, the ghosts of famine flickering in his eyes.

"It could," Clara said, her voice steady as bedrock. "But it's different now. Our fields are wider, our hands more skilled. We're not trying to trick the earth with alchemy anymore. We speak in the simple terms it understands: soil, sun, water, time."

Above, the alchemist's fortress loomed, its towers now marred with cracks. Clara looked up. Empty windows stared back, like dead eyes on a fallen beast. Old times had ended; new ones had begun.

1.1.11 Part XI: The Note

Dawn broke, casting new light over worn cobblestones. Clara moved through the marketplace as if through a dream. The scent of cinnamon and rich coffee filled the air as she ran her fingers down silken tassels and through powdery barrels of golden saffron. Voices haggled; her feet felt the earth's warm embrace.

Traders argued leisurely, their time no longer taxed by the spell. Children laughed, unburdened by field and plow.

Fields that once caged both young and old now released thinkers, builders, creators. The horizon changed form — bridges leapt over waterways, roads bound the land. Each stone laid was more than a fixture; it was a vow, a pact between the present and the future. It was today's promise to a future yet unborn, anchored by the prosperity that now bloomed under Elysium's sky.

As evening descended, the grand hall filled with voices unburdened by yesterday's sorrow. In a secluded corner, Clara and Harold exchanged words about the loftier truths Elysium had laid bare.

A courier emerged from the crowd, extending a sealed parchment. "For you, mademoiselle."

With a nod, Clara exchanged a coin for the note. Her eyes brightened as she absorbed the message:

Only a true renaissance resounds to the Whispering Pines. Continue, in health and strength. - Elric

She passed it to Harold, their eyes locking in wordless affirmation.

"The Whispering Pines acknowledge us," he finally said.

“And so, we continue,” Clara replied, her voice unwavering, guided by truth.

In the hall’s enveloping warmth, laughter, toasts, and spirited debates blended into a harmonious score — a sound that would have been foreign to their ancestors, a sound that marked the close of an era and the dawn of something profoundly new.

SOURCE

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