

Impending

I am the pale grey in a world where man appears either black or white.

I used to believe - like everybody in New Chicago is taught to believe - that the boundaries of black and white are as clear cut as day and night. But as I grow older; as my work wakes me earlier and my rush-hour of thoughts deny me of sleep, I am welcomed to a new school of beliefs that swim through my head. Tides of mistrust and misfortune sweep over sands that promised sanctuary and luck. But, as I am often reminded, I am an exceptionally blessed man in a world where man is cursed, and I am the son of a well-loved man in a world where man struggles to love.

The first day of my first job landed in the throes of the first winter for nine years. Though I was eighteen, my father still insisted on escorting me across the block from our townhouse to the office building. The Seraph Tower was home to New Chicago's 'angels' – mostly jumped-up boys who vowed to protect each citizen from the impending doom they swore we would soon be facing. The structure itself was fashioned from white dappled marble, soaring above every other building in the city and reaching across four blocks with its trinity of magnificent golden wings.

Inside, the lobby hummed with an ambient echo of ringing phones and swift footsteps. I longed to sprint for the glass elevator, but my father's grip on my shoulder anchored me firmly to the floor. He caught the eye of a receptionist who abandoned her phone-call at once, dropping the receiver to the floor with a blunt thud. She hurried over and sullied the air with her aura of weak coffee and shoe polish.

"Good morning, Sir," She presented him with a bouquet of envelopes and watched my father's nose crease. She blushed a wild shade of scarlet before turning to me. "You're Mr Arran?"

I nodded. "Josef."