

C/H/A/S/M/S

C/H/A/S/M/S

writing: Minori Sanchiz-Fung

illustration: Mickey Remains



Chapter 1

the remains

Here we are, in a time no longer ours. The masses on which the world once perched have been undone. It comes as no surprise to you, I am sure, for our entire history has been this prediction. Darkwater has swept the land— as a mother might clasp and cover the whole head of a child— it has buried it in something bigger and more tenacious.

I can hear it at night: the waters attacking one another. There is no land to channel them, or stone to wear them, or moon to conduct them. So the waters rise like enormous teeth from the jaws of the horizon, and collide in tremors so large they can change the tilt of the uprooted world.

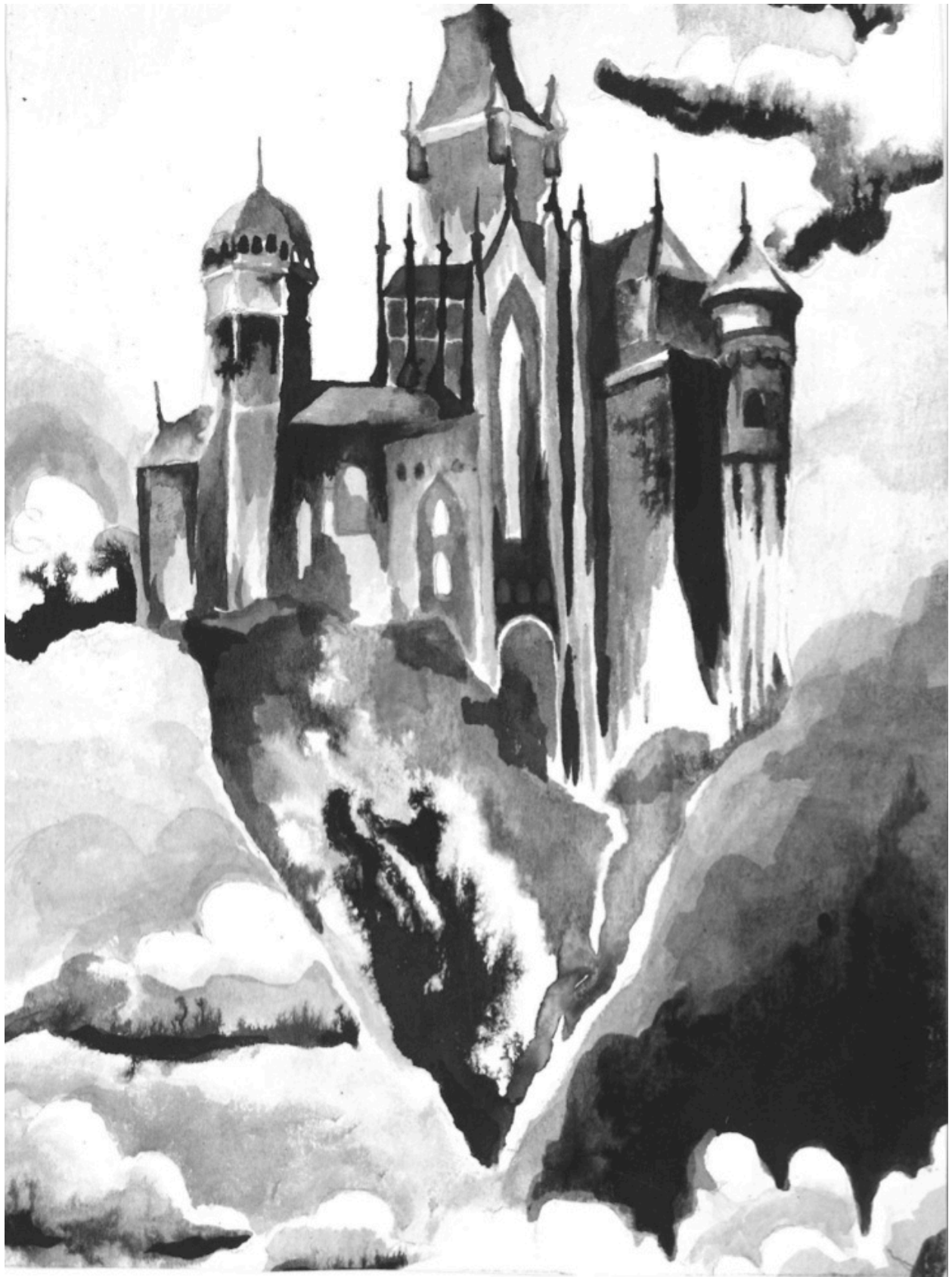
If there is a little wind, glass and metal shows behind the clouds like splintered wood and reveals the sky's new crown. The red of sunrise, most-fleeting, is magnified by these long flat edges, and in that brief moment I think to myself: that I will die inside a ruby. I will tell you that I see it, knowing you never will...

The history of forces was once cohesive. Everything grew, perished, became still, condensed to motion. Everything that watered dried, dry water filled the air, and sun-burnt valleys were wet underneath. Everything that moved was bound and simultaneously mobilized by the effects of temperature, pressure, magnetism, etc...

As it is now, the poles that pivoted our spin like a ballerina's foot have uprooted from the core of the earth, and merge chaotically, recoil from one another, and through their gaps radiation leaks in making the skies shriek a green night there. As it is now, cells are in discord. Nuclei self-terminate, or cell walls collapse around their core. The cell-types became unfit for their own reproduction, because they no longer desired it.

All at once, distinct forms imploded. And a wretched ooze took the ocean floor. Yes, it has happened. The clock's work lulled us— but here comes the true song— we've begun the period of chaos: which is waste: when energy fails to transpire, to convert, to harmonize, when it shatters off, a frustrated violence.

O reader, do not despair, there is much I have yet to tell. In some ways, it's been a bit of a relief.



Chapter 2

expansions

Of course it was known for hundreds of years that one particle of microscopic scale broke, and released the great expansion of energy which we have deemed to call history, the universe, time & space, and so forth. As far as the eye has measured, this occurrence is not rare and there are beyond us far more of these expansions, all of which may or may not have been formed by a single particle at one (time) $t=0$ or another.

So it is not that there is no permanence, but rather that it exists within *certain expansions*, in which forces have aligned, become symbiotic, transformed through some repeating coincidence into heat or matter. The spaces that remain are times in which these expansions have occurred; they could take place anywhere, although there is a propensity for specific events in corresponding *regions of force*. The nature of each expansion generates the qualities of each corresponding space. And so the spaces that remain are all quite different, and there may be more than one open at a time.

When a space is open, a world therein is held. And it remains, held, as long as its instance is occurring. When an expansion comes to an end, and the instance begins to contract, it is quite fearsome, for everything begins to tremble and flicker in and out of vision, as that space, and all within, is shoved into non-being, as though into a muzzle made of wire. One thing about the world now, you must know, is that all sounds travel— very far, and for a long time, things can be heard. It is quite fearsome.

Where to begin but by describing to you what I have witnessed of the world and its many chasms, through which we will soon have to move with much skill, through which I'm afraid I will not be holding your hand.



Chapter 3

the rift

The rift is so deep only the sun can rise to touch it, and no water that falls there may rise again. It was formed by the air, by the downward force of two wind systems colliding, in the greatest wind collision thus far on record, at a time when three-year-old winds finally intersected, and pushed down on the earth. Above the rift the sky is like a scratched lens, and the sun is frayed. And from a distance away the sky bulges up with light, as though a glass net had been cast and gathered there. The collision, which cracked the sky, healed over as skin might heal over, with a hardened seal covering the air.

All that were struck perished, and all that survived on either side of the cracked earth fled east or west away from the rift. At the time it was thought of as a great tragedy, but in fact it was a merciful event, because it was, as they say, a *natural disaster*. And the human imagination aspired for much more.

The rift, which could only be entered from a slip of the foot, a fold of the cards, is the oldest of the remaining

spaces, and therein resides the oldest castle. Many things which were later destroyed are here preserved.

You must imagine the world revealed and concealed here as though by the swift motion of a magician's cape. Only the hottest wind sweeping over the dent in the sky can at times flip the sky open, just long enough that you catch the green glimmer of a leaf far below, and think you dreamed it.



Chapter 4

Tirisai

The sun rose to take its shift, uplift the colors, light the tangled sheet of clouds, like stretched cotton, going clear with wear, with the blue behind them. The curtains pump like lungs, the mist clings to stones, and here we now see the long strands of web and dust that sway as the light approaches the long high columns of the castle in which our dear Tirisai resides. Rarely can she be spotted from the steep terraces that line her castle walls. Her eyes, which have clouded as though an oyster's nacre were layering upon it, are no longer her tool; but in the castle through which she moves you must believe she has all mastery. For there are smells marking every step, there are textures to point her along the halls, there are temperatures for times. For warmth, she pulls at the bark of the cypress. For food, she leans on the eggs of the birds inhabiting her reign, on the nuts of bay trees, and the roots of celery. Long ago, when she rose, suddenly the only remaining, she identified the silence as one almost exactly like her own. And gradually the sounds that once would emerge from all the others faded in her memory, and were consumed by the whispers of air and dust.

Going through the dented path, in order to gather for the fire, which in each castle must never die, a gust of wind shakes all the land, and the birds are displeased and chatter. Tirisai at that moment falters and almost falls to her knees. A long, sharp shadow drops down through the thin slit of sky that remains over the rift. She looks up and it's as though a long slick blade has come to stab the land from behind the bright of the light.