

A dramatic night cityscape with a lightning storm over a body of water. The sky is dark and stormy, with several bright white lightning bolts striking down. The city lights are reflected in the water below. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and author's name.

**WHERE THE
WORTHLESS
DWELL**

Lucius Zaros

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Contents

Contents	2
1 Where the Free Soar	3
2 Where the Faithful Toil	7
3 Where the Foolish Dream	19
4 Where the Feeble Rule	25

Chapter 1

Where the Free Soar

The waters flashed below me as I flew low above the sea, foaming waves throwing salty water far in the air. Sky was perfectly clear, apart from a single tiny cloud far up in the sky, doing its best to survive against the sun's piercing rays. It had been a long flight following the sun. Although, the sun had been behind me the whole flight. I preferred it that way. Easier to observe the beautiful view when there isn't a bright ball of plasma trying to blind you. I could have flown faster of course, but I enjoyed the little

while away from people. Just flying slowly over the sea, all by myself.

It had been hours since I left my old mansion in England, but the American coastline was finally appearing in the horizon. I had not been this way in a while and scanned the coast carefully, looking for a good place to land. There seemed to be a city just south of where I was headed, relatively small in size but interesting looking enough nonetheless. I changed my course.

There were two larger ships in the docks, no doubt transporting some raw materials for town's industry. I steered towards them, turning sideways only at the last moment, flying through the small gap between the ships. I loved flying, it felt so freeing to fly through the air, defying the gravity itself. Taking a sharp turn left, I found myself flying over surprisingly many little fishing vessels, docked despite the beautiful weather. They were bobbing up and down in the water, as if eager to get to sail the open seas again. I could taste a coming storm in the air however, and the fishermen had clearly noticed the same.

Only a few brave souls had left for the sea, possibly risking their lives for some easy money. Fish was easier to come by when all the best spots weren't already taken.

Then I saw a street, cutting straight through the city like an icebreaker through the arctic ice. An useful route connecting every part of the city to the docks, as well as to the outside world. Even if it gave the city a foul look. It somehow reminded me of a festering wound, cut across the city's chest, vile pollution spreading from it to the rest of the city, slowly but surely killing it and its inhabitants.

I lazily turned around in a large arc and aimed at the spot where the blue sea changed to grey concrete docks. Mere meters away from the ground, I waved my wings, sending forwards a gush of wind that blew into the air a cloud of dust. I came to a halt and my feet touched the ground again. Another graceful landing.

The docks were filled with people but none of them had noticed me, as usual. Humans these days always seemed to be too busy to notice what's actually go-

ing on around them, possessed by whatever device or goal they were currently focused on. While I could respect dedication and focus, this was more like sleep walking. Everyone performing the movements expected from them, not actually putting their minds into anything they're doing. Not living until they realise it's too late and the grave has claimed them. Walking dead. Only one child was looking at me, mouth open from astonishment. I gave her a little smile as her mother dragged her forwards into the masses. I stretched my beautiful white wings one last time before pulling them in, hiding them from sight. No matter how out of touch with the world humans are, if I were to walk through the whole city with my wings out, eventually someone would notice. I straightened my velvet vest, an action of habit more than need, and started casually walking towards the city.

Chapter 2

Where the Faithful Toil

The seagulls were squawking all over the docks, fighting over the few fish that were to be found today. A couple of them had found some trash they were tearing apart, hoping to find something edible within. They avoided me and fled whenever I got near. As insolent as these creatures could be, they knew their place. Soon I arrived at the bigger ships and got a

glimpse of the men of industry.

Wearing blue overalls, they carried big boxes while forklifts and trucks were moving materials from the ships. Despite the hard work, a lot of them smiled. I sat on the only remotely clean bench I could find and watched as they worked.

There was a man with short brown hair and blue eyes. His hands were callous but a bright white smile crossed his face as he dug into a sandwich his wife had made him for lunch. A seagull was sitting on a nearby fence, hungrily staring at the sandwich. He had got a job in the factory last spring, a big relief for him and his family, as his wife was expecting and he'd soon be a father. However, a little break in the refreshing sea air was nice change for the monotone factory work. I took a little glimpse forwards. His wife would die in the hospital and he'd raise his daughter alone, taking up the bottle to drown his sorrow. She would run away with a sailor at the age of 15 and it would take him weeks to notice.

I left the man to his lunch and started walking up the street that I had noticed earlier. Behind me I could

hear a cacophony of seagulls' screeching and angry cursing of a hungry man.

I didn't need to walk far until the more industrial buildings of the docks moved aside to make space for the housing of the workers. A lot of them seemed more like sheds. People walked along the streets in tattered and old clothes, clutching their purses and keeping a careful eye on their fellow townsfolk. They were unhappy, no smile in sight. The street was lined with little stores, many of which had closed down and had their windows broken and nailed shut with wooden boards. After every few stores there was a rundown church, each of different nominations and creeds, fighting over the hearts of the people living here. Noisy cars kept passing me, moving both materials and people alike. There were no new cars here.

I saw a beggar at the side of the road, supporting a sign asking me to pity a cripple. His clothes and face were dirty and the air around him smelled like shit and piss. He was a rich man's son who had wasted his youth without learning any skills, only leeching

on his father's fortune. Until he was disowned and thrown out on the streets to learn what life was really like, outside the safe haven of his family. He hadn't even tried. The money his father had gifted him for starting a new life, he had wasted. Spending it on booze and women instead, until the money ran out and was thrown out on the streets once again.

He held out a can full of coins and small bills, his gaze fixed on me. The eyes were greedily looking at my expensive clothing, a crafty glare at the corner of his eye. With a quick and smooth motion, I grabbed the can from his hand and before the confused little man realized what was happening, I threw the can down some alleyway. Judging by the sound, the money was scattered all over the asphalt. I simply kept walking without looking back. None of the people on the street paid us any attention. Beggars were always invisible after all. People barely ever paid any mind to their suffering, why would they do that now? Angered, the man jumped up and started running after me. He had barely taken a few steps until there was a sickening crack in his back and he fell on the

floor. I kept walking up the street, leaving the now crying and screaming man on the ground. I had no patience for liars so I simply corrected him to match his sign. He would never walk again.

I came upon a small plaza not far from the main street. Leaning against a stunted and suffering tree, I observed the people. They had gathered like sheep around a preacher who stood on a pedestal. He was screaming from the top of his lungs about Jesus, Hell, the Bible and the rest. He told the people to abandon the earthly wealth and seek salvation in God. They did not need to worry for God would provide for them and God would forgive them for their inherent sins and flaws. After all, what is a few dollars in comparison with eternal bliss? The crowd ate up the words of this skilled speaker, a holy man. He attracted the dirty masses like a light attracts moths.

He had grown in a poor family, each day having to worry whether there'd be food or shelter the next day. It all changed when he found his faith.

His family had always attended church, wishing for a place in God's paradise. However, it wasn't until he met Father Gregory that he found his calling. He taught him the word of God, the important passages of the Bible and how to use them to appeal to people. He taught the boy how to gain people's trust. How to pull at their heartstrings and move them like puppets, squeezing them dry of their every penny. All in the name of righteousness and faith.

Soon his pockets were full and he was living in relative luxury. He studied and became a priest. Two years back he found out Gregory had made a testament in which he left all of his earthly possessions to him. Two days later Father Gregory died in his sleep, having 'accidentally' taken the wrong pills. He was going to take charge of the church Gregory had been working at, but the other priests in the church were suspicious of him. He left the city with his pockets full.

His speech finished, he held out his collection plate and the foolish sheep filled it with money, emptying their pockets from the little that they had. Beneath his generous thanks and blessings, he smiled a wicked smile.

It was starting to get late and people began leaving for their homes. The preacher packed his things, waiting to count his profits at home. Before that he had other plans however. During his speech, his gaze had often wandered on a woman in the crowd and now that she was leaving the plaza, he followed.

The woman was an interesting case. To my surprise, she hadn't been in the crowd for the speech but cash. She was a pickpocket, stealing the sheep's valuables before the preacher could get his hands on them. A skilled one at that since even I hadn't noticed her at work. I could respect skill, especially as she did it to take care of her little brother. She was smart and could have worked any job, but knew those would chain her. This lifestyle gave her much more freedom and thrill, with no gross bosses trying to take advantage of the young woman. Would have

been a pity, if this preacher were to do to her what he had done to the innocent children of his congregation when no one was watching.

I turned and walked away from the plaza and the preacher, as he suddenly stopped and leaned against the wall. His hand was grasping at his chest and he fell to the ground, helplessly watching as the world slipped away from him. The woman had turned around at the sound of his suitcase hitting the ground. She walked up to him, picked up the suitcase that was filled with cash and vanished to the dark alleyways which she knew so well. In his death the preacher found no salvation, only darkness.

I spent a long while walking the poorly lit alleyways of the city, finding several interesting little shops that sold the strangest of things to those interested in the more mystical side of life. Potions and

talismans, ingredients for alchemy and magic that most humans had already forgotten about. There were always places like these in the dark corners of the world or places people might walk past every day but never notice.

I didn't visit any of them however, as I had no need for anything they had to offer right now. Instead I came across a few hidden gems of architecture that still stood in this city. Sturdy old houses built by the first settlers of this area, built to last, from generation to generation. A legacy from the strong and free to their offspring. Oh, how they'd cry tears of horror, if they were to see the depths to which their descendants had fallen into. Their descendants and buildings alike.

I stood before an old house built by the first settlers. It stood on top of a hill, even though the topography of the area was hard to see from all the buildings. The fact that the house was still standing despite decades of negligence was a testament to its builders and their skill. The once great pillars were now crooked or broken, the second storey that reached forwards

over the broken doorway was hanging in a dangerous angle. The wood of the house was as rotten as the bones of the people who now inhabited this city. What was once free and proud was now enslaved and subjugated. What was once tall and great was now rotten and broken.

I had known the family who built this house. They were nothing but farmers and hunters, struggling to survive in the harsh untamed world. It made them strong. They had taken the land from the natives with force, and thus they had the right to it. We had had some good times together back in the day, a fact that was evident in the engraved plaque on the wall. The engraving on it depicted a creature we saw together, a being from times long before the ancestors of humans even crawled out of the water. The being that this family defeated with their own might and ingenuity. It was a miracle it hadn't been stolen or sold. Perhaps it was disturbing enough for people to leave it be. I wondered for a moment, if the bones were still buried beneath the cellar and would one day be found by the curious. I left the house and

memories be, and continued my journey through this city that was now a corrupt dwelling of the weak.

My thoughts were still in the olden days, and I suddenly found myself surrounded by a group of large men. They were smiling at me, their eyes glimmering in the dim lighting. They seemed amused, assuming they had caught an easy and rich catch. I sometimes wonder, if I should wear less conspicuous clothing in areas like these to avoid attention, but always decide against it. These sort of encounters tend to be rather entertaining after all.

The one in front of me was holding a knife and had a large dog by his side. The dog seemed thirsty for blood and would no doubt usually scare anyone into cooperation. Usually. The man in the front politely asked me to hand over all my valuables, while his friends slowly moved closer. His dog growled and

stared at me, challenging me. One glance into its eyes sent it running with tail between its legs, whining as it went. This clearly threw the men off a little, but they still decided to attack. Dogs, despite being bred for servitude, still often had more common sense than humans. They still had some instincts left and could tell when it was wise to run away. When they were faced by a greater beast than themselves. The streetlight flickered and I could see the sudden horror in their eyes, as I now stood behind their leader, holding his severed head in my hand. A smile crossed my face.

Chapter 3

Where the Foolish Dream

I walked out of the alleyway unto the main street, straightening my velvet vest and leaving behind me a trail of bloody footprints. But the blood was quickly spent and the only sign of it ever being there was a nice crimson trim on my soles. I took a little glance forwards. The police would think the bloodbath to be gang violence, finding no other good explanation.

It's not everyday that you see people's insides spread over so many walls. They barely counted as sport, but it was entertaining nonetheless.

The people were starting to wake up as I continued up the street. Horrible housing of the poor gave away for the houses of the middle class. In a sense they were even worse than the sheds I had seen previously. Those at least had character and stories to tell. Here I'd see a hundred houses, all identical apart from tiny changes. Neat gardens, not kept up for enjoyment, but for show. Weak buldings that would last a decade or two at most, just like their inhabitants.

I saw a black man working on the garden of one of the houses. He didn't live in the house, but was only hired to take care of the garden. The owners of the house would brag of their tolerance and good will to their friends simply for employing a man of colour. It made them feel better for otherwise supporting systematic oppression. I found it amusing when people judged others based on something as superficial, as the color of their skin. How little of value there had to be in them, if the only thing they

could find pride in was the race they were born into. He kept looking at the front door while trimming a bush that had already been trimmed.

After a while the husband left the house for his boring office work, where he wasted his life making someone he didn't know rich. Still the gardener worked in the garden, now cutting already cut grass. Then the wife came out of the house, taking her own car from the driveway and drove off. She was lucky enough not to be working. Instead she wasted her days gossiping and shopping, occasionally spending some quality time with the gardener. They had nearly got caught the day before, but he had escaped from the window just in time. At least she was enjoying her life, unlike her husband.

When the wife's car had also disappeared from view, the gardener took the back door into the house to meet the couple's daughter. He'd keep secretly meeting with her for another year, they'd fall in love and he'd ask for her hand in marriage. The parents will obviously not allow their daughter to marry a black man. The young couple will run away and start

a life in another state. They will be poor all their life, but they'll live happily to old age with many grandchildren.

Identical cars flowed from the suburbs, filling the street, trying to make their way into city centre where their offices were waiting. Their cattle pens. The cars unsurprisingly got stuck in the traffic, and I couldn't help but laugh as I walked along the empty sidewalk, passing the stuck cars and the idiots within. Even more than the people in the near slums, these people reminded me of a herd of sheep. A domesticated group of people, burning themselves out in jobs they hate until they die alone and miserable.

Still these sheep dream of a life greater than this. They spend their lives living in an illusion that if they just keep working hard, some day they'll be rich, happy and complete. That's what they've been bred for. Mindless labor. From the moment they're born, the preparation begins. The preparation to make them obedient and good slaves.

All around them there were riches ready for taking, yet they would not take the opportunity. Why? Be-

cause their god would punish them. While the people in the worker's district worshipped God of the Bible, these people did so only in name. Their real gods were the state and the corporations. If there even was any difference left between the two. Perhaps the state, corporations and TV were the modern holy trinity.

Every day they'd pay their respects to their gods by attending the holy morning news broadcast. An endless amount of time and money would be sacrificed to their gods, passively consuming whatever the TV told them, happily being told over and over again what to think and feel. They'd spend their lives in service of the corporations. They'd fear the state and its power. No matter how much they envied their neighbors, they would never take what they wanted. For there was a might much greater than theirs, the state. They're very god fearing people. They would never be anything more or better. Just cattle, ready for slaughter.

Out of all humans, these were the ones I despised the most. Happily enslaved, unaware of their mis-

erable existence and unable to even imagine that it could be better. Chained by nothing but their own delusions. The poor understood their situation. The poor fought every day to survive, gave up their limiting morals to live another day. To fight is to be strong or perish, and so there was at least some strength in them. But not in these people, who are rotten to the very core.

It would not stay like this for long however, as a plague would soon sweep through this country and the world. It would wake up many a sheep from their sleep, shake the foundations of their faith. These people would be few and even then they'd be powerless against the gods who they've been strengthening for generations. They'd be wiped out, their corpses burnt. Even in death they would not see. A slave will remain a slave.

I had nothing more to see in this depressing area. It was time to move forwards, towards the tall buildings that were reaching for the heavens. The temples of these wretched, where their lords ruled and lived.

Chapter 4

Where the Feeble Rule

The buildings rose tall around me, their glass walls glimmering in the last rays of sun, before dark clouds devoured the light. I heard the sound of thunder drumming in the distance. People were hurrying to their destinations, eager to get off the streets and into shelters. Little droplets of water started falling from the sky one by one. The storm was finally arriving, much later than I would have expected. The docks were probably filled with rather annoyed fishermen, as well as a few happy ones.

I saw a man enter one of the buildings. It wasn't a very large one, but anyone could see at the first glance that it was no place for the common folk. The man who had entered was a very rich man indeed. He had earned his fortune in the online world, taking advantage of the completely new avenue of business. He had a wife but they hadn't seen each other in months. Eager to spend some time among his peers, he had taken his Lamborghini to this club the first thing after landing and refreshing himself at the hotel.

I decided the club seemed like an interesting place to wait out the storm, so I followed him. The entrance was guarded by two large men dressed in black suits. Nothing but brutes to keep the uninvited out. Simple minds were so easy to manipulate, to plant images and thoughts into their minds. I didn't feel like introducing myself as that usually drew too much attention. I was not here to do business after all and I had more important matters to attend to than some social climbers looking for a deal to change their life. Neither of the guards saw me as I walked past them

and opened the door.

I liked the club from the first. The interior was decorated in an older style from past centuries, something that I could appreciate. The so called modern art never really appealed to me, its groundbreaking changes in style only rebelling against beauty and purpose of it, rather than anything actually worth rebelling against. Millenia of artistic endeavour and study thrown away, only to produce something that doesn't even compare to primitive cave paintings.

Once I got past all the security, I arrived in a cozy lounge where a few people were having drinks and conversing around tables in the dimly lit room. Apparently no one uninvited was expected to get this far in, and the room had no security officers. I took a seat in one of the corner tables and ordered a whiskey.

My eyes scanned around the room and the people within. All wealthy, of course. One of these men was an important one. He was one of the true rulers of this land, the man behind the gods of the common folk. Owning a large portion of all the country's media, he was in control of what people thought,

what issues they were worried about and what things they'd never hear about.

The masses like to think that they're in control in these so called democracies. They are not. Even if their votes are counted and decide the outcome, at the very best they'll only choose which of their masters will hold the leash next. But the decision isn't really theirs of course, even though they like to think it is. The decision was made by men like this one. Those who chose what the people knew and thought, what they would decide and who they would vote for.

Some individuals would always vote and act against the results intended by these men. But in the end it never mattered, as it was enough to convince most of the population. In a way the TV and media was a more elegant tool than the religions of old. Media could do and say anything, change their mind at a whim, while the old religions were more tied by their original teachings and only able to commit slower and more gradual changes to their dogma. To preserve an illusion that their teachings

were the eternal truth and word of God, it was necessary. Truth to the people of today however, was a much more flexible concept. It was whatever they were told it was that day.

I took a sip of my whiskey. It wasn't as good as I had hoped for from an establishment like this, but it was good enough. The man in control of the media was conversing with a politician. A mayor of this city, it seemed. As corrupt as they come, his position bought by the lords he served. He had taken part in human trafficking, and still did, but was never convicted.

Another nice lie this nation liked to believe for some mysterious reason, was that everyone is equal in the eyes of law. I wasn't quite sure how anyone could convince themselves of that, when it was so clearly not the case. Rich and poor, white and black, man and woman. None of these groups operated under the same set of rules and punishments. The rich would bribe their way out of nearly anything, and if a law wasn't convenient for them, they could usually just have it changed. Some of the laws were

harder to change, but even then it was usually enough to convince the gullible masses that it was actually something they should want. With a few years of propaganda, the masses would beg and demand their lords to take away their so called rights.

Looking at these pale men, their weak bodies evident even through their expensive suits, I often missed the old times when the lords were not so. There used to be a time when those on top ruled, thanks to their strength and intelligence. They could keep their opponents at bay by outsmarting them, but if it ever came to it, they could also defeat them in combat with their own might. If they couldn't, they'd be replaced by those who could. They were nothing like these people. Here power had already solidified, there was little struggle or opposition.

These men had power, no doubt about it. At their will they could take down nations, make all their citizens believe lies for truth and wipe whole cities off the map with their weaponry. They were in control of the strongest armies the world had ever seen, capable of keeping out the other nations and pacifying the

population within its own borders as needed.

Yet, they were also weak. Some of these lords had never even accomplished anything, their power only decaying. Second generation of rulers, only in the position because of their parents' success. Now their will was implemented through trickery and deception, while the rulers of old would command and the rest would follow. To change the law they would simply issue a command and should any be foolish enough to oppose them, they'd strike them down right then and there. Then all would see their might, and all would be convinced that they indeed were fit to rule over them. What used to be a public display of their right to rule, was now shamefully hidden in shadows. This new world lacked courage, it was sterile and weak. Yet, it was effective.

The mayor got up and shook the media man's hand. He left the club a happy man, having now secured another term in the office. The people did not currently agree with that notion, but that would be irrelevant in the end.

It was still raining outside but I had had enough of

this place. While this place did indeed house people of great power, there was no greatness to be found here. I got up, straightened my velvet vest and left the club. As I walked in the empty street, the raindrops would evaporate before hitting my suit. Like most other creatures, I too hated wet clothing. Not to mention this suit was way to fine for me to ruin just yet.

The sky lit up as the fury of the sky struck at one of the buildings, its rage harmlessly directed to the ground by the lightning rod. This world needed a storm. One much greater than this, one that would shake its very foundations and uproot, wash away the corrupt and rotten people that were now crawling everywhere. There were great men in this world still, but they held no chance to rule. The power was held by the weak, supported by great might. A storm should strike down their defences and allow the mighty minded to once more take what is rightfully theirs. As it stood, there would only be two pathways for humanity, neither of which was glorious. Another lightning struck the building, just as harmless as the one before.

The tallest of buildings were left behind as I walked away from the city center. I came upon an uninspiring building. It had very few windows, each closed and dark. In its door there was a little text, so small it was barely readable, telling the reader that the building was a data center of this and that company. I checked my watch and it was five minutes past four in the afternoon. I was just in time.

Years ago, I had noticed a thin, barely noticeable strand in the fabric of time, one that has grown in size ever since. The third pathway. Now it was finally the time. After so many years, the third pathway had fully appeared and soon others would take notice. The Child of Humanity was about to be born, and I had arranged a meeting in advance.

As I stood in the doorway, waiting for the last few minutes to pass, I gazed upon the tallest building of the city. Another lightning strike. Time was, in many ways like electricity or water. Finding the path of least resistance, predictable. “But with just a little bit of effort...”, I muttered outloud as I lifted my hands in the air, fingers pointing towards each other, leaving

the towering building between them. The raindrops slowed in their fall, nearly standing still, and the air hummed with power. I drew lines with my fingers, from the tower to the clouds, forming corridors of ionized air. "...the flow can be redirected." I smiled as a dozen thunderbolts struck the building, setting it ablaze. In the city the smell of burning flesh and countless panicked screams of cattle filled the streets. A storm was coming.

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