

Book III: The Stone That Looped the World

Chapter 7: The Sound of Righteous Steel

1. The Confrontation

Irinus confronts Inascius. It is not theatrical. It is ancient and slow — two powers fraying in silence and fire. They fight. Not to kill. To break.

2. The Betrayer Strikes

As both tire, a third presence enters. Overis. He waits for their final clash — then kills Irinius from behind and devours him. Inascius is stunned. Overis slays him next.

3. The Name Remembered

Alone amidst the ash, the Nameless One reclaims his identity: Overis. He was Guardian once. Now he is more. The others will follow.

4. The Devouring of Palus

Palicus tries to retreat — but Overis moves too fast. In the rot and root, the Guardian of Palus makes a final stand. He is consumed. His power absorbed.

5. The Wind Turns

Aer witnesses the pattern. He does not challenge it. He flees. He returns to Orfyd — to Priotheer — and begs him to act.

6. The Guild Is Born

Priotheer listens in silence. He had always known this would come. He does not give Aer comfort — he gives him a charge. The Guild of Righteousness is formed.

7. The War Unfolds

The world does not see it all at once. But the sky breaks in places. Rivers reverse. The realmborn feel their gods vanishing. The war spreads.

8. The End of the Age

The battle between Aer and Overis spans realms. In the final clash, Aer gives everything — calls lightning from Aerul and Orfyd — and kills Overis. But not before dying himself.

Segment 1: The Confrontation

The sky above Isfyd did not burn.
It seethed.

Irinus stood beneath it, flame drawn close around him — not bright, but bound. The fire did not lash. It listened.

He walked through the threshold between realms with the weight of decision. The barrier parted for him. It did not resist.

Inanis met him with cold that did not sting.

The void had no wind. It did not echo. It accepted.

Inascius stood in the center of the black field, unarmed, unmoved. He had known Irinus would come. He had not summoned flame. He had not shielded shadow.

Irinus stepped onto the stone.

They did not speak.

They had not spoken in centuries.

But something passed between them — a recognition.

Not hatred.

Not even fear.

Only inevitability.

Irinus raised one hand.

The flame curled upward, forming the ancient glyph of beginning. A duel not of rage, but of balance. It was tradition. It was law.

Inascius responded by lowering his eyes.

The void bent beneath his feet.

They began.

Flame surged. Silence rippled. Each movement met resistance — not from the other, but from the very fabric of what had been. This was not a war of weapons.

It was a test of realms.

The ground beneath them cracked in concentric rings. Flame reached toward the edges of absence. The void swallowed sound and returned motion. Each held.

For a while.

But Irinus had waited too long.

And Inascius had not forgotten how to withhold.

Their power staggered, uneven now — the rhythm lost. Irinus stepped inward, palm forward, meaning to end it.

Then stopped.

Not from doubt.

From pain.

A hand — not his — burst through his chest.

It emerged from behind, bloodless and precise. Fingers like cooled stone. A pulse of heat drawn backward.

Inascius flinched, the first movement he had made.

The hand withdrew.

Irinus fell forward — not collapsed, but dropped, like a ritual complete.

Behind him, the Nameless One stepped into view.

No longer watching.

Acting.

He looked at Inascius.

Spoke.

“You waited too long.”

Then struck.

The void recoiled, bent, screamed in no voice. Inascius reached for form — but found only failure.

The strike was clean.

And the silence ended.

Segment 2: The Betrayer Strikes

Inascius did not retreat.

He had no time.

The Nameless One — no longer still, no longer hidden — stepped forward into the space Irinius had left behind. He did not speak. He did not pause.

Inascius raised both hands. The void bent around them. The air lost weight.

But it was too late.

The Nameless One crossed the stone in a single breath and struck — not with force, but with contact. His palm met Inascius's chest, and the silence ruptured. Not shattered. Unstitched.

Inascius gasped. Not aloud. The sound never formed.

The void behind his ribs folded inward. His shape held a moment longer, then blurred, like a candle snuffed in reverse.

The Nameless One exhaled.

And the absence entered him.

It moved without path. Without weight. It did not burn. It did not resist.

It simply became part of him.

He staggered.

Just once.

And then his shoulders straightened.

His breath steadied.

And a word surfaced in his mind.

Not given.

Remembered.

Overis.

He whispered it aloud.

"Ahh," he said. "I remember now."

He closed his eyes and pressed both hands into the fractured ground.

From flame, he had taken form.

From silence, he had taken center.

He rose.

And stepped sideways through the thinnest edge of realm — a cut he had carved long ago, between Inanis and Palus.

Palicus stood at the edge of his swamp, one hand raised toward a gathering mist. He felt the shift. Turned. Reached for his power.

Too late.

Overis struck from behind.

Not like a god. Like a wound.

Palicus spun and fought — vines rising, waters roiling, ash coiling in the air. He called down decay and unmade it into defense.

It almost worked.

Overis met each motion without retaliation. Only movement. Only reach.

When he laid his hand to Palicus's throat, the Guardian of Palus hissed a final word — not in anger. In warning.

Overis did not hear it.

He pulled.

The swamp gasped. The mist fell.

Palicus was no longer.

Three lights moved behind Overis's eyes now — flickering, coiling, dimming.

He looked toward the last realm not yet touched.

Aerul.

And smiled.

Segment 3: The Name Remembered

He stood alone.

Not in silence — that had passed.

Not in fire — that had faded.

Not in decay — that had surrendered.

Overis stood at the center of a ring of absence, surrounded by the echo of what had once been divine.

The realm did not mourn them.

It adjusted.

The void reshaped. The fire curled inward. The roots folded into ash.

He breathed.

The world did not.

He reached down and touched the ground — not to claim it, but to listen.

Three voices stirred within him.

Not words. Not memories.

Forces. Tensions. Tools.

Each one, when he had fought beside them, had worn the shape of righteousness. Balance. Oath.

He knew better now.

He had known, once — before.

But the shape of that knowledge had faded.

Until the silence entered him.

Until the void remembered.

Now it was back.

Not like a memory. Like a name.

Overis.

He did not say it again. He had no need to.

He simply stood.

And with each breath, the union within him sharpened.

He did not feel larger. He did not feel whole.

He felt honed.

He turned slowly, studying the places where the Guardians had fallen — not bodies, not remains, but indentations in power.

Three. Gone.

Two left.

One of them had not moved.

The other had fled.

He began to walk — not quickly, not hungrily. With certainty.

He did not race toward conquest.

He moved toward completion.

The Guardians were his task. His purpose. His pattern.

If Priotheer stood aside, he would remain untouched.

But if he moved—

Overis looked up — toward the sky that still curved above the marshes.

And with no motion at all, he began to ascend.

Segment 4: The Wind Turns

Aer felt it before it reached his sky.

The shift.

The silence that came not from stillness, but from subtraction.

He stood at the edge of Aerul — a realm of arcs and storm-threaded breath — and watched the horizon ripple. Not from wind. From absence.

The others had gone quiet.

He raised one hand. The sky leaned toward it. The wind narrowed.

Only two signals still pulsed on the outer ring.

His own.

And the one he now feared to name.

He turned to run. Not from fear — from duty.

But he was too late.

The heat arrived first.

Then the shape.

Overis emerged from a fold in cloud, wreathed in quiet fire and coiled void. He did not land. He simply stepped onto the path — no flash, no flare. Just weight.

Aer spun, wind at his back, lightning flickering across his shoulders.

“You shouldn’t be here,” he said.

Overis didn’t miss a beat.

“And yet,” he replied. “I am.”

He struck.

The blow was not complex. No spell, no invocation.

Just a fist, an uppercut to his center — closed, certain — into Aer’s chest.

It did not break him.

But it stunned the wind itself.

Aer reeled. Stumbled. The sky above him bent sideways. Clouds thinned, then screamed apart. His ribs cracked. He nearly fell.

Overis moved to strike again.

But Aer was already in the air.

He did not rise.

He dissolved.

The form of his body unraveled into a seam of current. Lightning arced from his core — upward, then down, then sideways through a fracture in realmspace.

It struck once, without target.

And vanished.

Overis stood still, watching the air reknit.

He did not chase.

He only grit his teeth for the fight ahead.

Far below, in Orfyd, a bolt struck the earth beside the great Tree.

Aer collapsed to one knee.

Breathing hard.

Alive.

Segment 5: The Pact That Remembers

The bolt struck beside the Tree.

Not through it. Not above it.

Beside.

The bark trembled. Not from heat — from recognition.

Aer dropped to one knee, hand braced against the earth. His breath came hard. The sky behind him shimmered, then sealed. No trace of the path he had taken remained.

The realm was closed.

Orfyd stood still.

The grass did not bend. The clouds did not move. The light was soft and steady — as if time itself had settled in.

At the center of it all, beneath the Stone Tree, Priotheer sat.

He had not looked up.

Aer rose, unsteadily.

“I bring news,” he said. “But you already know it.”

Priotheer opened his eyes.

“I do,” he replied.

Aer limped forward. His shoulder still smoked faintly. “The others are gone.”

Priotheer nodded once.

“And Overis—” Aer began.

“Is not yet here,” Priotheer finished. “But close.”

Aer looked up toward the canopy of the Tree. Its branches stretched far beyond the visible sky — and beneath them, the Wall shimmered. A thin distortion, nearly invisible, pulsing at the very edges of the world.

“You’re holding him back,” Aer said.

“For now.”

Priotheer placed a hand to the ground. The stone beneath him darkened slightly — not from corruption, but from cost.

“The Wall consumes more each day,” he said. “It was never meant to hold one of us.”

“He’ll breach it,” Aer said.

“Yes.”

“Soon?”

“Yes.”

Aer stepped beside him. “Then it’s time.”

Priotheer stood.

He looked toward the far hills, where the settlements of the Priimydians lay in quiet rows — unaware.

“I will call them,” he said.

“The people?”

Priotheer nodded. “The men. All of them.”

Aer inhaled. “Even the untrained?”

“They will be tested.”

He placed both palms to the base of the Tree. The bark rippled. Faint pulses echoed deep beneath the earth.

“It will begin,” he said, “with the Trial.”

The Wall flexed at the horizon.

Neither of them looked away.

Segment 6: The War Unfolds

The first summons came at dusk.

No sound. No trumpet. Just a pulse beneath the soil.

Every able man of Priimydia felt it — in the heel, in the chest, in the teeth. A thrum like recognition, like gravity calling out to its own.

The next morning, they gathered.

Not by order. By instinct.

Fathers left fields. Sons stepped out of workshops. Teachers laid down chalk. No one asked what it meant. They already knew.

The realm had shifted.

The summons drew them to the base of the Stone Tree. Priotheer stood before them, not on a dais, not on stone — just standing. His voice did not rise.

But they heard it.

“You will be tested.”

He raised one hand. The bark behind him rippled, and an opening appeared — not a door, not a gate. A passage that had not existed a breath before.

“You will face what you fear most.”

He pointed to the roots, coiled like stone serpents around the Tree’s base.

“Some of you will not return.”

The line of men did not break.

“You will be given no blade. You will be offered no oath.”

He lowered his arm.

“But if you emerge, you will be forged.”

Then he stepped aside.

One by one, they entered.

The first few returned pale. Changed. Not broken — carved. Each bore a faint mark somewhere on the skin: a glyph, a line, a shimmer of pattern. Some had tears in their eyes. One smiled. Most did not.

Then came the ascent.

Those who passed the Trial climbed the Tree — up into its impossible branches, into light that did not shine but revealed.

None could describe what they saw.

None returned with wounds.

But all returned armed.

The weapons they bore had no names. No two were alike. Some shimmered. Some pulsed. One man held only a staff of polished black wood. Another, a ring.

They were different now.

Not holy.

Prepared.

And in the distance, beyond the Wall, the sky buckled. The seal held — but it wavered.
Overis was near.
The war would not wait.

Segment 7: The End of the Age

The Wall broke at dawn.

Not with thunder — with surrender.

The sky peeled. The seal unraveled. The far horizon folded like skin beneath pressure.

And Overis stepped through.

He came alone.

Fire traced one hand. Void coiled around his shoulders. Swampwater pooled in his footprints, though the land was dry.

He walked toward the city.

The Guild of Righteousness met him on the plains.

They had marched before first light — men clad in bronzish-gold Sychurel, a dense metal found to deflect magic and originally used for trinkets, with their armor impossibly heavy, their shields dense with silence. Their blades bore no names. Their faces bore only resolve.

No trumpets.

No farewell.

Just purpose.

Overis raised both hands.

And the war began.

The first line burned.

Flame fell in great arcs, sweeping wide and low. Where it touched, men vanished — turned to smears of heat and ruin. Screams cracked the morning. Shields buckled. Rows broke.

Then the second wave reached him.

And rot answered.

Roots tore upward through dry earth. Tides surged from nowhere. Whole squads sank beneath the ground, coughing blood and foam. The void bent sound away from orders. The field turned to mire.

Still, some held.

Sychurel did not melt. A few blades found skin. Overis bled — pale light, thick like memory.

Then Aer returned.

He did not descend. He arrived.

Lightning spiraled from a fracture in the sky and struck the field beside the Guild. From it rose a man in seamless armor — dark, unmarked, built by Priotheer for this hour.

Aer raised both hands.

And lightning answered.

But not from Aerul alone.

For the first time in any age, storm answered from two realms — Aerul, the high realm of air, and Orfyd, the mortal ground beneath his feet.

The strike bent the air.

Overis turned.

And met it.

The bolt hit.

The Guild was thrown backward. Dozens fell. Some did not rise. Shields split. Eyes seared shut. The plains cratered — a hole clean and absolute, ten men across, glassed at the center.

The light took minutes to fade.

When it did:

Overis was gone.

Aer was gone.

Only the wind remained.

Far behind, atop the walls of Priimydia, Priotheer stood.

He had not moved.

His hands were burned. His brow was gray. His eyes did not blink.

The Guild reassembled in silence. They limped. They carried one another.

No one spoke.

The Tree still stood behind them, unbroken at the city's heart.

But the Guardian Age had ended.

And no one who lived would forget how.