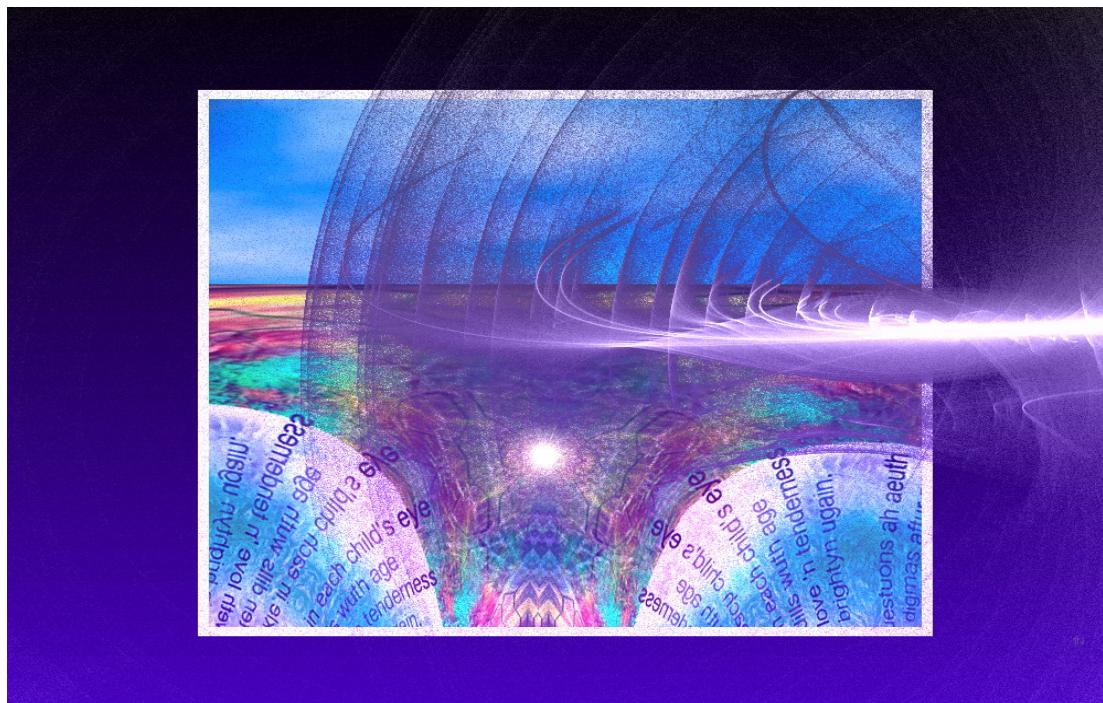


# **SUBDUCTION:**

## **Whispers of Creation**



Andrei stood at the edge of the precipice, the wind whipping his coat against his legs like a tempestuous spirit. He shielded his eyes from the blinding sun as he gazed out at the massive, frozen slabs of rock that writhed in the distance. "It's as if the earth is being swallowed whole," he said, his voice strained with awe. "As if this part of the world is finally tired of holding its own weight."

Ellesha crouched low, pressing her palm flat against a patch of gravel leading toward the ocean, feeling the earth breathe beneath her touch. The wind gusted fiercely against the hardened magma as she observed its subtle, slow undulations. "We often think of landscapes as unyielding," she murmured, her eyes tracing the heavy ripple of the rocks surrounding them. "We construct our cities and lives on the illusion of permanence, yet the land is anything but static. We're surrounded by slow-moving rivers of stone."

Jules stepped up beside them, hands shoved deep into his pockets, peering into the abyss where the crust seemed to vanish into a fiery dark. He displayed neither fear nor surprise, his expression tranquil and contemplative. "Creation and destruction are constantly at odds," he observed, his gaze locked on the steam rising from the tectonic friction. "One force builds mountains, while the other devours them in deep canyons or wind-scarred sand. It's a violent equilibrium, but an equilibrium nonetheless."

Ellesha rose, brushing the grit from her hands as she took in the vast horizon fading into the distance. She felt the cold weight of the universe pressing down on them, an all-consuming immensity. "In many ways," she whispered, her voice barely audible over the grounding rumble of the earth, "we're utterly insignificant. Just ants clinging to a leaf that's falling into the fire."

**- T Newfields**

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