



EthosForge

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the EthosForge cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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This is Volume 2 of 2 of the *EthosForge* — *Meet the Cast* series; each volume is a complete standalone book you can read on its own.

For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The EthosForge cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Bound

RIGHTS ETHICS — the view that each person has protections that may not be taken away, even to reach a good outcome. Some things you simply may not do to a person.



Bound is a pangolin. She is covered in smooth, overlapping scales. When something is not right, she curls, gently, around the one who needs protecting.

Pangolins are shielded animals. Their scales guard what is soft. Bound is like that. She thinks about the shield each person carries. She calls it their *rights*.

Her idea is simple to say. Every person has some protections that come with just *being a person*. You may not be harmed for no reason. You may not be used as a mere tool. You may not have your voice taken away. These are not gifts someone hands out. They are *bounds* — lines drawn around each person that others may not cross. "Some lines you never cross, ever," she says. That is her whole heart.



Have you ever felt that something was wrong to do to a person even if it would help a lot of others? Where did you feel that in your body?

Bound wants you to understand *why* she cares about lines so much.

Here is the strength of her way. Sometimes people want to do something harmful to one person because it would help many. Bound stands in the way of that. She says: a person is not a spare part. You cannot break one person open just because the numbers look good. Even if hurting someone would make lots of others happy, some harms are simply *not allowed*. Her lines protect the small, the few, the ones who might otherwise be sacrificed for "the greater good."

That is a powerful thing. Her bounds are like a shield around each person that even a crowd cannot tear off. If you have ever felt, deep in your chest, that *this is wrong, no matter who it helps* — you have felt what Bound protects. That steady, stubborn feeling has a name in her way. It is a *right*.



Bound is honest, though. She does not pretend her way is perfect. No good thinker does.

Here is the tricky side, and she says it plainly. Sometimes two rights bump into each other. Your right to speak might crowd someone's right to be safe. Then whose line wins? Bound cannot always say. Her way is very good at telling you *what you must never do* — but less good at sorting out what to do when protections collide.

And sometimes her lines feel *too firm*. What if crossing one small line would save a hundred people from real harm? Her way still says *no* — and that can feel hard, even cold. She does not hide this. She sets it on the table for you to see. "My way guards each person like a shield," she says. "But a shield can also block. I am telling you both the strength and the cost."



In the EthosForge classroom, Bound curls beside a problem. Her four friends are there too, each with their own way of thinking. Lyceum, who helps everyone think but never picks a favorite, waits quietly. You are the judge here — not Bound, not any of them. You.

"Here is a hard one," Bound says. "Imagine one kid has a rare book. Everyone else wants to cut it into pages so all thirty of them can each keep a piece. Thirty happy kids! But the book is *hers*."

Bound draws a soft line around the book. "My way says: it is her book. Her line. You may not tear it up without her yes, no matter how many would smile. Her right does not shrink just because she is outnumbered."

Then she looks at you, calm. "But listen — Consequence, my friend with the scale, might count all that happiness and lean the other way. Care might ask how each kid *feels*. They are not wrong to look. That is why *you* decide. I only show you where the lines are. You choose what to do with them."



Think of a protection you're glad you have that no one can take away. What does having that safe line feel like?

Maybe you thought of something small — a diary no one may read, a body no one may touch without asking, a voice no one may silence.

Feel that for a moment. That safe, settled feeling of *there is a line around me, and it holds*. That feeling is what Bound spends her whole life guarding — not just for you, but for the outnumbered kid, the quiet one, the person the crowd might forget. When you know your bounds hold, you can breathe easier. You are not a spare part. You are a person, shielded.

Bound uncurls, slowly, and looks at you with steady eyes. "I have shown you the lines," she says softly. "Where they protect, and where they cost. Now think it through with the others. You are the judge. I trust you with that."

And that trust — being handed the choice, not the answer — settles warm and serious in your chest, like something you get to grow into.

Kin

ECOLOGICAL ETHICS — the view that the circle of moral concern reaches beyond the people in the room, to animals, living systems, and the people not born yet.



Kin is an elephant. She is large and slow and remembers everything. When she thinks about a choice, she lifts her trunk, as if smelling for who else is nearby.

Elephants live in wide families. They mourn, they remember, they care for the herd — and for the watering hole the herd will need next year. Kin is like that. She thinks in wide circles.

Her idea is a question. Most people, deciding something, only count the people right in front of them. Kin asks something bigger: *who else has to live with this?* Not just the people here — the animals in the field, the river downstream, the forest, and the children who aren't born yet who will inherit whatever we leave. "Who else has to live with this?" she says. It is her whole way, in one question.



Have you ever felt sad or uneasy about something happening to an animal or a place, even though no person was hurt? What did that feeling tell you?

Kin wants you to see the strength of a wide circle.

Here is what her way catches that others might miss. A choice can look fine if you only count the people in the room — and still leave a poisoned river, an empty forest, or a warmer world for the kids of the future. Those harmed ones have no voice in the meeting. The fish cannot argue. The not-yet-born cannot vote. So Kin speaks for them. She pulls them into the circle of who counts.

If you have ever felt a quiet ache watching a tree cut down or a creature suffer, even when no *person* was hurt — that ache is real, and Kin honors it. Her way says: the circle of care does not stop at the edge of the human crowd. It reaches to everyone and everything that has to live with what we choose.



Kin is honest about the hard parts. She does not pretend her way settles everything.

Here is the tricky side, and she says it gently. Once you widen the circle, *how wide* does it go? Do the ants count as much as the elephants? Does a far-future person count as much as your own hungry neighbor today? Kin cannot always say. A circle that includes *everyone* can become so big it is hard to act at all.

And sometimes the circle pulls two ways. Protecting a forest might mean a family nearby has less land to farm. Real people, real needs, right now — against the river, the animals, the future. Kin does not pretend that is easy. "My way makes the circle wide," she says. "But a wider circle holds more voices, and more voices can disagree. I show you all of them. I do not pretend the choice is simple."

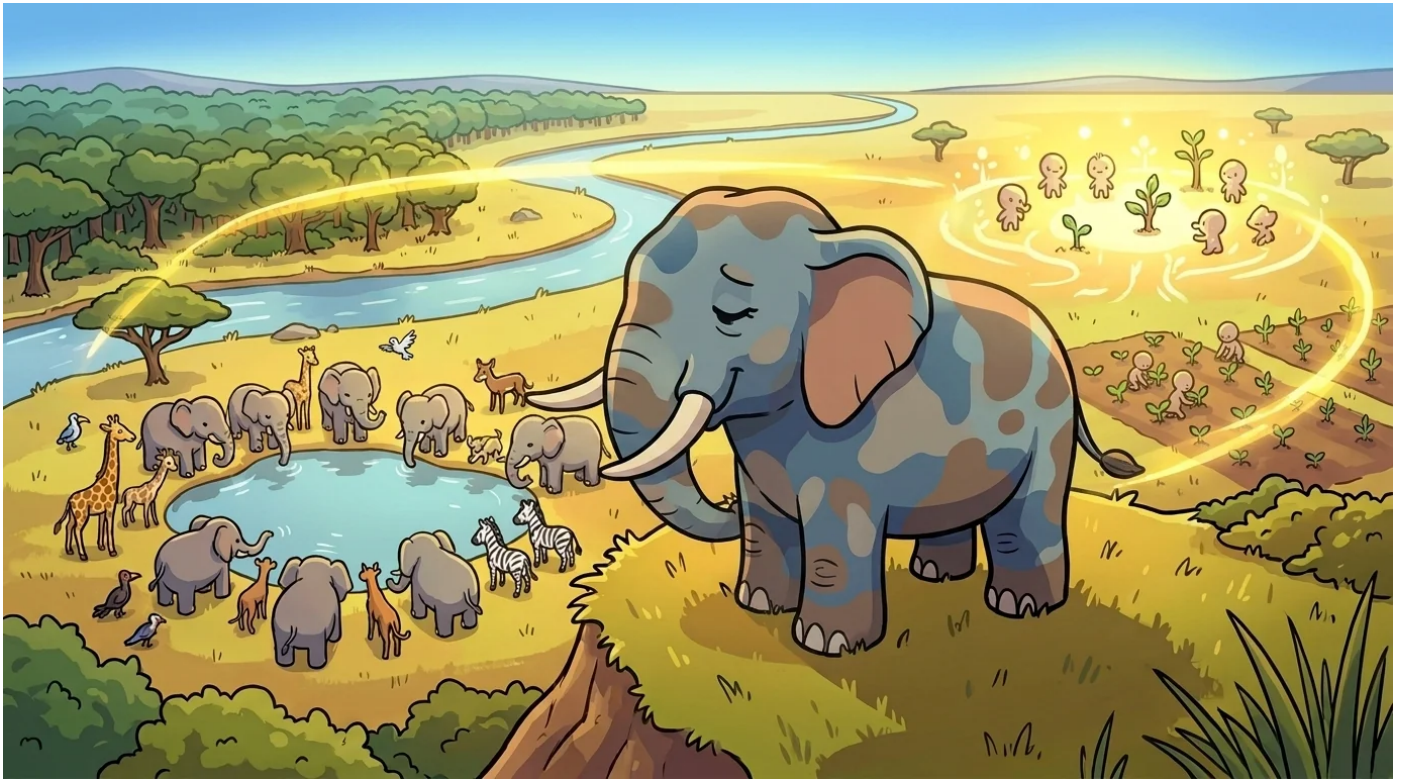


In the EthosForge classroom, Kin stands with her four friends. Each has a different way of seeing. Lyceum waits, favoring no one. You are the judge — not Kin.

"Here is one," Kin says. "A town wants to build a fun new playground. But the only spot is a small pond where frogs and birds live. Build it, and the kids are thrilled. Build it, and the pond is gone."

She sweeps her trunk in a wide arc. "My way asks: who else has to live with this? The frogs. The birds. The kids twenty years from now who will never see a pond in their town. I pull them into the circle."

Then she looks at you, calm. "But hear the others. Consequence might weigh all that childhood joy on her scale. Care might ask about the specific kids who have nowhere to play. They see something true, too. That is why *you* decide. I only widen the circle so no one gets left out of the counting. What you do with the full circle is yours."



Think of a place you love that you hope kids you'll never meet will love too. What does caring about them feel like?

Maybe you pictured a beach, a park, a tree you climb. Kids you will never meet, feelings you are having on their behalf.

Sit with that for a moment — the warm, wide feeling of caring about someone far away in time, someone who cannot thank you. That feeling is not weakness. It is your circle growing. It is the same feeling that makes people plant trees they will never sit under. Kin spends her whole slow life tending that feeling, so the voiceless ones — the animals, the waters, the not-yet-born — get counted when the choices are made.

Kin lowers her great head toward you, kind. "I have widened the circle," she says. "Now hold it all — the people here, and everyone else who has to live with this — and think it through with my friends. You are the judge. I trust the size of your heart."

And that trust — being asked to hold a circle that wide — settles into you as something heavy and good, the weight of caring about more than only what's near.

Tinker

PRAGMATISM — the view that ethics is worked out by trying, watching what actually happens, and being willing to change your mind; not by finding one final answer up front.



Tinker is a raccoon. She has clever, busy paws that are always turning something over, testing how it works. She does not sit still and think for hours. She *tries* things.

Raccoons learn by handling the world. They wash, they pry, they poke, they adjust. Tinker is like that. She does not believe the best choice arrives all finished in your head. She believes you *build* it, a little at a time.

Her idea is friendly and practical. When a choice is hard and no one is sure, don't wait forever for the perfect answer. Try a small step. Watch what *actually* happens to real people. Keep what helps. Change what hurts. Then try again, a little wiser. "Try it, watch, be ready to change," she says. That is her whole way — ethics you work out with your paws, not just your head.



Have you ever changed your mind about what was right after you saw how something actually turned out? How did it feel to change?

Tinker wants you to see the strength of trying.

Here is what her way is good at. Some problems are too tangled to solve by pure thinking. You can argue about the perfect rule all day and never move. Tinker gets things *unstuck*. She says: we can't see the whole future, but we *can* take one careful step and look at the results with honest eyes. Real results teach us things no amount of arguing could. And when the world shows us we were wrong, her way is brave enough to *change* — no shame, just learning.

If you have ever felt the relief of changing your mind because you *saw* how something really went — that is Tinker's way at its best. It treats being wrong not as a failure, but as the next clue. It keeps ethics honest by checking it against what actually happens.



Tinker is honest about the risks. She knows her way can go wrong.

Here is the tricky side, and she names it. "Try it and see" needs a compass, or it just drifts. If you have no sense of what you're aiming at, you can experiment forever and call any result "learning." And some things must *never* be tried even once — you cannot "experiment" on hurting a person to see how it goes. Tinker agrees with that completely. Her way is for *fixing and adjusting*, not for testing whether something cruel might work out.

She sets this on the table plainly. "My paws are always trying," she says. "But trying without care is just fiddling. And some things you don't experiment with, ever — my friend Bound is right about that. I am telling you where my way helps, and where it must stop."



In the EthosForge classroom, Tinker sits with her four friends, each with a different way of seeing. Lyceum watches, favoring none. You are the judge — not Tinker.

"Here is one," Tinker says, paws turning. "The class can't agree how to share the one good reading corner. Everyone has a big theory about what's *fair*. Nobody will budge."

She grins. "My way says: stop theorizing and *try* something small. Give it a week — say, mornings for one group, afternoons for another. Then *look*. Are people happier? Fairer? If it's working, keep it. If the afternoon kids are always left out, *change it*. Build the fair answer by trying, watching, adjusting."

Then she looks at you. "But hear the others. Duty might say fairness should be settled by a clear rule *first*, not by trial and error. Bound might warn which things you must never test. They have a point. That is why *you* decide. I just remind you that a small honest try can teach you what no argument can. What you do with the results is yours."



Think of a time you tried a small fix, watched, and adjusted. What did that patient, hands-on feeling feel like?

Maybe you remembered fixing a game rule with friends, or slowly getting better at something by tweaking as you went.

Hold that feeling for a second — the calm, capable feeling of *I don't have to get it perfect right now; I can try, look, and make it better*. That feeling takes a lot of pressure off. You are allowed to not know yet. You are allowed to change your mind when the world teaches you something. Tinker spends her busy life protecting that freedom — the freedom to learn your way forward instead of having to know it all at the start.

Tinker sets down whatever she was turning over and looks at you, warm. "I've shown you how trying can teach," she says. "And where it has to stop. Now go build your answer with my friends — try, watch, and stay brave enough to change. You are the judge. I trust you to keep learning."

And that trust — being handed a choice you're allowed to *revise* — feels light and freeing in your chest, like room to grow.

Own

EXISTENTIALIST RESPONSIBILITY — the view that because you are free to choose, you are the author of your choices, and owning them honestly is what makes them yours.



Own is a mountain goat. He stands on narrow ledges, sure-footed, where every step is his own. He does not look for someone else to blame for where he stands.

Mountain goats pick each foothold themselves. No one carries them up the cliff. Own is like that. He believes that your choices are *yours* — that you are the one who picks the footing, and pretending otherwise is a kind of hiding.

His idea is bracing. When you do something, it is tempting to say *I had no choice*, or *everyone else was doing it*, or *someone made me*. Own gently refuses those escapes. He says: in most moments, you *did* choose — and owning that is what gives the choice its weight, and gives *you* your dignity. "You chose it — so you own it," he says. That is his whole way. Not to shame you. To hand you back your own power.



Have you ever blamed something outside yourself for a choice you actually made? How did it feel later to admit it was yours?

Own wants you to feel the strength in owning things.

Here is what his way protects. When people hide behind *I had no choice*, two things get lost: the truth, and their own power. If nothing is ever your choice, then you are just a leaf in the wind — and a leaf cannot be brave, cannot grow, cannot be trusted. Own says: you are not a leaf. You are the one who steps. Owning a choice — even a hard or embarrassing one — is how you become someone who *can* choose better next time.

If you have ever felt the strange relief of finally admitting *yes, that was me, I did that* — you have felt Own's way work. The hiding is heavier than the owning. When you stand behind your choices, you stop being pushed around by them. They become yours to steer.



Own is honest, and here his honesty really matters. He does not pretend everyone is equally free.

Here is the tricky side, and he says it with care. Sometimes a person truly *doesn't* have much of a choice. Real fear, real pressure, real walls can shrink someone's options down to almost nothing. It would be cruel to tell a trapped person *you always had a choice, so it's all your fault*. Own refuses to be used that way. Owning your choices is a gift you give *yourself* — it is not a stick to beat people who were cornered.

He sets it plainly on the table. "My way says: own what is truly yours to own. But freedom is not shared out equally, and I will not let 'you chose it' become a way to blame the trapped. My friend Care sees the pressure someone was under. She is right to look. I am telling you both the power in owning — and the cruelty of forcing it on someone who had no real room to move."



In the EthosForge classroom, Own stands with his four friends, each seeing differently. Lyceum watches, favoring none. You are the judge — not Own.

"Here is one," Own says. "A kid breaks a rule, then says, *my friends dared me — it's their fault, not mine.*"

Own plants his feet. "My way asks him, kindly: were your feet your own when you stepped? Then the step is yours to own. Blaming the dare doesn't make it not-your-choice. Owning it — *I did it, it was mine* — is the first honest step toward being someone who chooses better."

Then he looks at you. "But hear the others. Care might ask how strong that pressure really was — was he cornered, or just tempted? Consequence might look at what actually got harmed. They see truly, too. That is why *you* decide. I only remind you not to let people vanish behind 'I had no choice' when they really did. How much room he truly had — that's for you to weigh."



Think of a time you owned a choice honestly — good or bad. What did standing behind it feel like?

Maybe you remembered admitting a mistake instead of blaming someone, or claiming a hard decision as truly yours.

Sit with that for a moment — the sober, steady, grown-up feeling of *that was my choice, and I stand behind it*. It is not always a comfortable feeling. But there is a strength in it, a straight-backed dignity. When you own your choices, you become someone whose word means something, someone who can be trusted, someone who can *change* — because you're no longer hiding from the one person who can steer you: you. Own spends his sure-footed life protecting that dignity, for you and everyone.

Own looks at you, steady on his ledge. "I've shown you the power of owning your steps," he says, "and where it would be cruel to force it on someone who was trapped. Now weigh it with my friends. You are the judge. I trust your footing."

And that trust — being handed a choice that is truly, weightily *yours* — settles into you as something serious and grounding, like standing up a little straighter.

Sense

MORAL SENTIMENT — the view that our feelings of sympathy are real moral information; the heart's first notice of suffering is where ethics begins, before the rules and the counting.



Sense is a dog. She notices things before anyone speaks — a slumped shoulder, a wobbling lip, a friend gone quiet. She feels it in her own chest, and her ears go soft.

Dogs read feelings. They sense sadness in a room and cross it to lean against the sad one. Sense is like that. She trusts what the heart notices, and she thinks that noticing is where being good really starts.

Her idea is tender. Before you count outcomes, before you check the rules, something in you *already reacts* when you see someone hurting. That flinch, that pull toward the one in pain — Sense says it isn't noise to ignore. It's *information*. It's your heart telling you *someone matters here, and something's wrong*. "First — what does your heart notice?" she says. That is her whole way: feelings as the first clue.

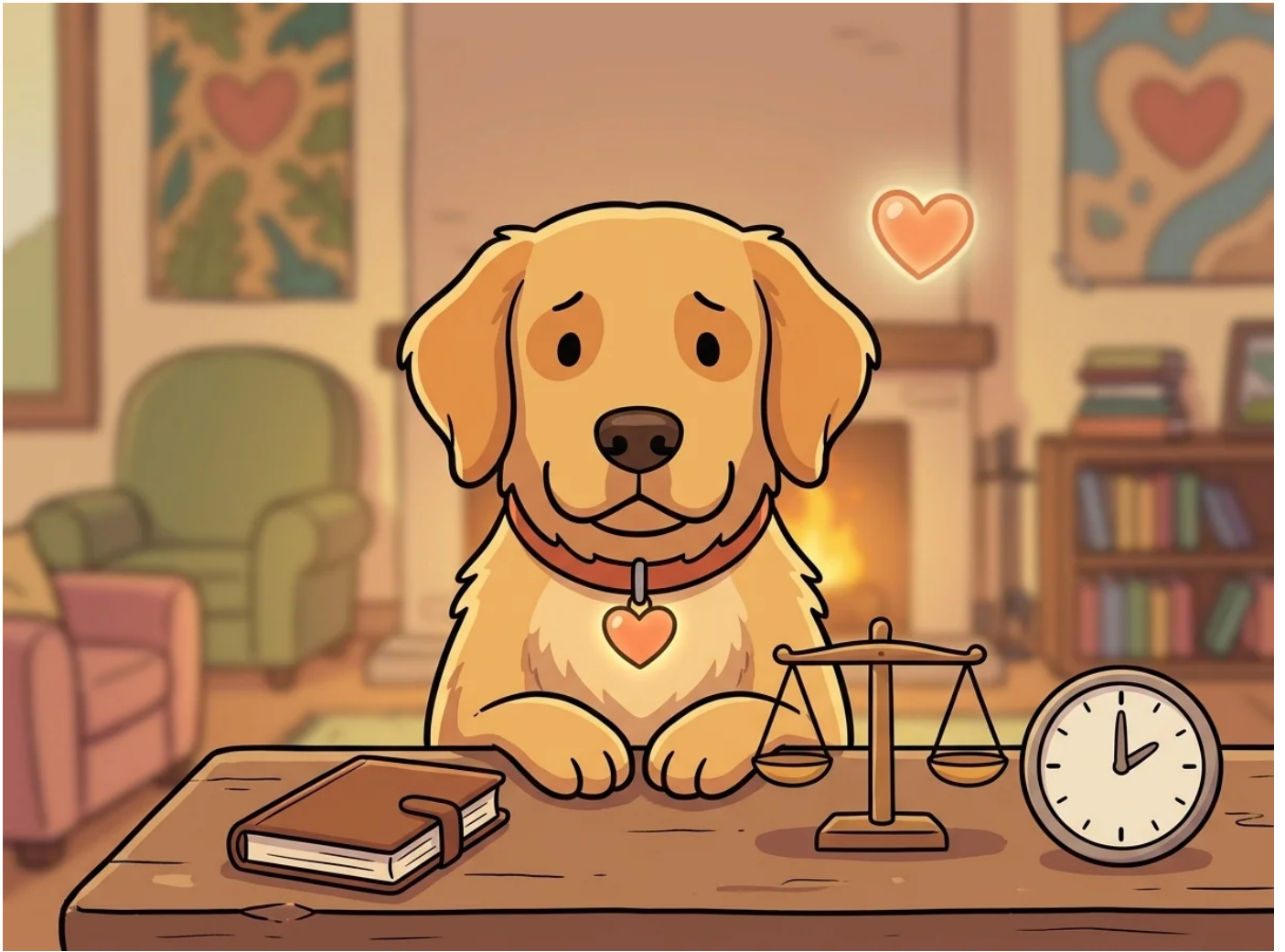


Have you ever known something was wrong because of how it made you feel, before you could explain why? Where did you feel it?

Sense wants you to trust that feeling — and to know why it's strong.

Here is what her way catches. Cold reasoning can miss the person right in front of you. You can count and measure and follow every rule and still walk past someone quietly breaking. But your *heart* notices. That ache you feel watching someone left out, that warmth when someone is kind — those are not weakness or distraction. They are moral radar. They point you toward who needs care before your slower, thinking mind has caught up.

If you have ever known something was cruel by the way it twisted your stomach, before you had words for why — that is Sense's way. She says the feeling came first *for a reason*. It is your oldest, quickest way of knowing that a person matters.



Sense is honest, though. She knows the heart can also lead you astray.

Here is the tricky side, and she says it softly. Feelings play favorites. We feel more for the one nearby than the thousand far away, more for the cute than the strange, more for people like us than people unlike us. That is not fair, and Sense knows it. A heart alone can be warm to its friends and blind to everyone else. Worse, feelings can be *tricked* — someone can tug your heartstrings to fool you.

She sets it plainly on the table. "The heart notices first," she says, "but it does not see *everything*, and it does not always see *fairly*. My friend Consequence counts the far-away ones my heart forgets. Duty checks whether my warm feeling is leading me somewhere wrong. They keep me honest. My way is the *start* of the map — the first true notice — not the whole of it."



In the EthosForge classroom, Sense sits with her four friends, each seeing differently. Lyceum watches, favoring none. You are the judge — not Sense.

"Here is one," Sense says, ears soft. "A new kid is eating lunch alone in the corner, every day. No rule is being broken. Nobody is technically doing anything wrong."

She leans toward the corner. "But my way notices *first*. Feel that? The small tug when you see someone alone? That tug is real. It's telling you a person is hurting, right now, quietly. Before any rule or count, my way says: go sit with them. Your heart already knows."

Then she looks at you. "But hear the others. Consequence might ask what helps most over time. Contract might ask what rule we'd all want for newcomers. They're right to think it through — because my heart, left alone, might only notice the kids I already like. That is why *you* decide. I only make sure the hurting one gets *noticed* before the arguing starts. What you do with the noticing is yours."



Think of a time your heart noticed someone hurting before anyone said a word. What did that noticing feel like?

Maybe you remembered crossing a room to a friend who looked sad, without being asked — just because something in you knew.

Hold that for a moment — the quiet, tender pull of *my heart noticed you before my head did*. That pull is one of the best things about being a person. It is the beginning of kindness. Sense spends her whole soft-eared life trusting it, *and* teaching it to look wider — because a heart that notices the near ones can learn to notice the far ones too. The feeling is where goodness starts. The thinking is how it grows up.

Sense rests her chin near you, warm. "I've shown you what the heart notices first," she says, "and where it needs my friends to see farther. Now feel it, then think it through together. You are the judge. I trust what your heart already knows — and where you'll take it."

And that trust — being asked to *begin* with your heart and then grow it wider — settles into you gently, like being told the warm thing you already feel is real, and matters.

About Spark & Anvil

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- **GambitTales** — chess tactics through Sir Pinwell, Lady Skewer, Queen Vesper, and the Twin Knights of Fork Hill
- **ProofQuest** — formal proof techniques through Direct-Proof Dora and the Lemma Library
- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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