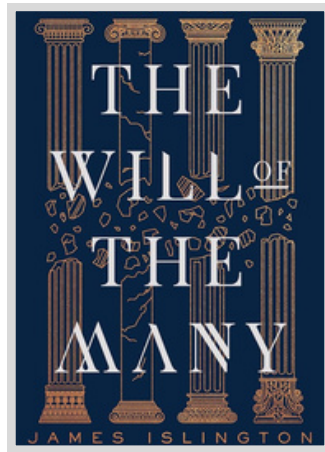


The Will of the Many by James Islington



Summary

The Catenan Republic--the Hierarchy--may rule the world now, but they do not know everything.

I tell them my name is Vis Telimus. I tell them I was orphaned after a tragic accident three years ago, and that good fortune alone has led to my acceptance into their most prestigious school. I tell them that once I graduate, I will gladly join the rest of civilised society in allowing my strength, my drive and my focus--what they call Will--to be leeches away and added to the power of those above me, as millions already do. As all must eventually do. I tell them that I belong, and they believe me.

But the truth is that I have been sent to the Academy to find answers. To solve a murder. To search for an ancient weapon. To uncover secrets that may tear the Republic apart.

And that I will never, ever cede my Will to the empire that executed my family.

To survive, though, I will still have to rise through the Academy's ranks. I will have to smile, and make friends, and pretend to be one of them and win. Because if I cannot, then those who want to control me, who know my real name, will no longer have any use for me.

And if the Hierarchy finds out who I truly am, they will kill me.

Provided by Publisher: Saga Press

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About the Author

James Islington was born and raised in southern Victoria, Australia. His influences growing up were the stories of Raymond E. Feist and Robert Jordan, but it wasn't until later, when he read Brandon Sanderson's Mistborn series - followed soon after by Patrick Rothfuss' Name of the Wind - that he was finally inspired to sit down and write something of his own. He now lives with his wife and two children on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria.

James is represented by Paul Lucas of Regal Hoffmann & Associates.

Provided by author's website: <https://jamesislington.com/>

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Discussion Questions

1. What were your first impressions of the world of *The Will of the Many*? Did you find the hierarchical structure of the Catenan Republic intriguing, confusing, or unsettling?
2. The concept of Will — literally transferring one's strength to others — is central to the book. How did you interpret this as a metaphor for power and control?
3. What did you think of Vis Telimus as a protagonist? Did your opinion of him change as you learned more about his past?
4. The Catenan Republic demands conformity and obedience in exchange for stability. Do you think this mirrors any real-world systems or societies?
5. How did you feel about the pacing of the story — particularly the slower build-up compared to the high-stakes ending?
6. Were there moments when you questioned whether Vis was truly a hero or simply a survivor adapting to a corrupt system?
7. The idea of "Will" is both empowering and oppressive — a system that rewards hierarchy. Do you think anyone in the story used their Will ethically?
8. The Republic's hierarchy depends on the voluntary surrender of Will. What does that say about complicity in systems of oppression?
9. What questions are you left with about Vis's identity and the true nature of the Republic?

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Professional Reviews

Publishers Weekly (03/20/2023):

Maintaining suspense for almost 700 pages is a tall order, but Islington (the Licanus trilogy) makes it look easy in his staggering Hierarchy series launch, set in a world dominated by the Roman Empiresque Hierarchy. The Hierarchy maintains its power through an insidious scheme: those at the top draw energy, or Will, from those beneath them, who "voluntarily" cede some of their strength to benefit from the system. Against this backdrop, prison worker Vis, 17, must conceal that he's really Diago, the prince of Suus, a kingdom vanquished by the Hierarchy when it executed Vis's family. Vis gets an opportunity for revenge when he's adopted by a powerful senator, Ulciscor Telimus, who wants him to join the Catenan Academy, where the next generation of Hierarchy leadership is trained. Ulciscor's brother, Caeror, died there under suspicious circumstances, and Ulciscor hopes Vis can find the truth. But Vis's options change after an encounter with violent rebels seeking to topple the Hierarchy. Islington's worldbuilding is exceptionally detailed and thoughtful, making suspending disbelief effortless. Perfectly balancing character development and plot momentum, this will have fantasy fans clamoring for more. Agent: Paul Lucas, Janklow & Nesbit Assoc. (May) Copyright 2023 Publishers Weekly, LLC Used with permission.

Library Journal (04/13/2023):

Ancient Roman politics, dark academia, and epic fantasy coalesce in this brilliant and gut-churning masterpiece from Islington (The Light of All That Falls). The 17-year-old orphan Vis Solum conceals his past from an Empire that is built upon the will of others. He desperately clings to his own will in a world where the weak always cede—a world of greed, backward deals, and oppressive pyramids of influence. When he unwittingly catches the eye of a Quintus with dubious motivations, he's dragged right into the thick of it, where his enemies close in on every side. Vis has to unravel a mystery that is so multilayered that it's impossible to anticipate what's coming next, and he can trust no one. Suffocating tension pervades the entirety of Vis's darkly exhilarating first-person narrative. The threat of exposure constantly hangs over his head, but he is a slippery and defiant hero who chokes on his rage and scrambles for control over his own life, which is repeatedly imperiled by the machinations of his enemies. VERDICT This is powerful storytelling at its finest, and the mind-blowing ending opens the series to so much more potential. Perfect for fans of Patrick Rothfuss and Anthony Ryan.—Andrea Dyba