# The Necromancer’s Tale

## Prologue:

"Awaken, Wanderer. I am sorry that you have not gone where you had hoped to go, but your sacrifice has been heard and you are needed here. Tread carefully when you rise, for you are in a dark world now, where the sun hangs low in the sky and the earth will try to claim you for itself. I know it is life that you seek, for I seek it too. I have a quest for you, to do something I cannot, but I promise that should you succeed, you will find life at the end of your journey. Though there is much at stake, I will not force you to stay, I will understand if you wish to continue the journey you had set out before, for what I ask is no small thing.

When you open your eyes you will find yourself in the ruins of a dead world. These tormented lands are the realms of the five ancient ones. Their slumber has led to the decay of their former dominions, and only their awakening will restore the world to its former glory.

This is what I ask of you, to find the five, and to awaken them from their eternal rest. However, their tombs do not lie in the ruined world that awaits you. They can instead be found in the place between here and the beyond, past the veil that separates life and death. A place which we sometimes pass near in our dreams, but can never truly enter. I ask you to complete this task because I cannot, though my mind is determined, my body is weak and unwilling.

When you wake, you will find yourself at a gate that will grant you passage to the beyond. However, this gate will not let you through without an offering. Deep in the wilds there is a temple. It is there you will find a token to prove your worth. Find the temple, take the key, and when you pass through the gate I will find you again."

## The Gate of Eo and the Dominion of Despair

"I am sorry Wanderer, for I have not been wholly truthful. Though you have done all I have asked, there is still more. As I told you, these are the lands of the five gods, and true to that there are five dominions, each with a gate which is a tomb for their sleeping god. You must go through each, though these gates are not so simple to pass through. For these gates require greater and greater offerings, and so your abilities shall be strained and your survival instincts stretched to their limit.

Before the dimming of the sun and the fall of the world, I have been here. I was there when the gates were built, and the deserts split the lands apart. I have kept my faith through uncountable years. As I waited I watched the flowers fade, and the trees crack and die. The trickle of streams and the speech of men gave way to the grinding of the winds and the wailing of twisted creatures. I have waited a long time for you, wanderer, but I knew you would come. My love for the land and sky of my youth have kept me steadfast, and that love has brought you to me. Shall I tell you why you will succeed? It is because you must. You have to succeed because there is no other option. I have written your destiny into the monuments that litter the world. You are the incarnation of the idols themselves. You will save this world, because you know this will save yourself.

So go now, to the next gate, and then to the three beyond that. You are well on your journey, and success has been your friend so far. However the next realm will not be as forgiving as the last, for it is cold, and the sun barely breaks the horizon. You must find shelter amongst the rocks, and keep a fire burning, or the frozen peaks will claim you."

## The Gate of Hythinea and the Dominion of Cruelty

"There can be no blood, without blood. This is the mantra of our tribe. When the world came to ruins and our nightmares became real it was blood that saved us. No blood without blood, no triumph without sacrifice, no life without death. This is the way of the Mystics, and of them, I am all that remains. It is they who sacrificed themselves so that I may live immortal. They left me to watch our cities turn to sand and the sun gorge itself on human blood. It is sacrifice that has brought you here too, wanderer. When you committed the act you called out to me. You invoked the rite of blood, an unforgivable act. But I will redeem you.

It was the gods themselves that caused all of this loss, though I do not believe even they could have forseen what happened to the world. The world is tearing itself apart, atom by atom. The very essence of the earth is corrupted, giving flesh to the nightmares of men, perverting all that is right. The gods maintained this essence, and in their absence there was nothing but chaos to direct it. Now you know why there are things in the wastes that you cannot believe to exist. It is the essence that gives unnatural life to those who wander freely in the world. The same is true of the plants and the animals, it has twisted them into strange versions of their ancient selves. With every passing moment I see the essence entering into you, giving you strength. You must not let it take a hold of you. You must maintain your resolve, for there are still 3 gates remaining, and the essence will not relinquish it's grip on this land readily."

## The Gate of Rhallos and the Dominion of Hate

"I remember the first few decades of my vigil. I walked the earth, kept my distance from everyone, and documented what I could. I wanted to preserve a record of how things were. At that time life had not yet been shunned to the edges of existence, and we could still roam freely between the five kingdoms. But I could not see it all before the end. I don't know for how long I walked the earth, decades, maybe centuries. Time loses importance when you have an eternity to watch everything you love fall apart.

You are nearing the end of your journey. I can feel the air changing, quivering, as you advance. It as if the weight that has hung here for so long is slowly lifting. Even the sun seems brighter to my eyes. Soon I will be able to show you the wonders of this world. When the gods restore our cities to their former glory we will walk together. I will give you the life you desire, and you will take my hand as we watch the dawn of our new world. I know your dreams have been haunting you. The essence can take hold of our dreams, it can amplify our fears, trying to drive us to madness. We are so close to the end, Wanderer. The next gate will take you to the ruins of our greatest city, where the lingering ghosts of all those who have died will claw at your soul. Do not let them drag you down, their corruption will spread quickly if they find you at a weak time. Good luck Wanderer."

## The Gate of Ahna and the Dominion of Apathy

"Surely you can feel it as I do. The winds are changing, Wanderer. I can hear the gods whispering in my ear, telling me we will succeed. We will find a new life when the gods return, a peaceful one, amongst the mountains, or the lakes- wherever you desire. I will be with you forever I promise. I will be the life I promised you, after all you have done it is the least I can offer you. My eternal vigil will finally be over, and my duty fulfilled. The gods will return my people to me, and we will be content forever."

## The Gate of Coropthynos and the Dominion of Madness

I have come to realise the truth of this world, and of my life. There is no hidden truth, no saving breath that will bring us back from the beyond. The Necromancer would not accept it, and therein lies the root of her madness. I pity her, and know her struggle. I do not know where she will go, or what she will do. I do not think she will ever become who she lost all those years ago. In some ways it is better that she be mad, that her mind falter and reason desert her, for there is no recourse for action in this world. The suns will fade and shrink, and the land will freeze beneath the starless skies, and all the beasts upon the earth will cower together for warmth as they breath the final breaths of this world.

The gods are dead, or have abandoned their post. The vaults of their tombs are empty, their souls dispersed into the air, and the ingenuity of man has failed. It is a sad truth, a truth impossible to bear and yet it is the only truth. It is a truth that resonates me and fills my lungs with relief as it bears down on my body. The angel of my dreams, my angel, is gone. She died long ago, before I came here. I cannot say I remember, but I know. I know I was there with her at the end, and like all things that must go to dust, I know she was not ready to say goodbye. She believed we would meet again beyond the veil, she believed it because she had to believe it. Because it was the only thing that would ease the truth of her passing, we knew that nothing could be done for either of us. I am not sure if I believed that we would meet again, but the lie was so sweet. We used the lie to spend our last times in peace and not fear. To pretend to eachother as if we were going on a long journey was far easier than to emit a final farewell.

The Necromancer did the same, but her plight was different, it is one that has destroyed her. Where I have suffered loss, she has suffered the destruction of her home, her world, and her people. She forfeited her life for the belief that one day she could cleanse the world of corruption because she wanted to believe it could return and in doing so, that she could return. It is the same with all that lives, to believe that dark days preceed the light. It is that belief that gives us life. And we all choose to believe.

# The Wanderer’s Tale

## The Forest of Whispers

### Journal

If there was any doubt that I have come to a desolate world, it is gone now. It is all as the Necromancer described. This place is a living nightmare. Even the dry ground seemingly threatens to swallow me up, to partake of my body and slake its thirst with my blood. There are others here, some I have seen, others are just voices on the wind. They walk aimlessly like lost souls in an ancient purgatory. Even the familiar is alien, the sky is deep red, coloured by the light of three suns. At night the skies glitter with the light of a hundred unknown constellations. Despite the dry ground and still air, this place is not devoid of life. The cooing of unseen birds and the churr of miniature insects fills the air in the day. What they eat I am not confident, the few plants I have seen are mostly parched and dry, whilst the few that are not bristle with thorns to protect their small fruit. The wind carries the braying sounds of unknown animals, and the stench of rot, undeniably from others who have passed this way.

I have found myself plagued by my memories, or rather, the absence of them. When I awoke in the darkness with the Necromancer it was as if I had been born again, like a slate wiped clean. Slowly now it comes back, incoherent fragments flash before my eyes, but nothing of any use. My muscles have memory, and my instincts remain sharp, but nothing else has stayed with me.

I do remember trees- a thick canopy of green where the sunlight streaks down onto the floor below. I remember the feel of warmth on my skin, not the stifling heat I feel here, but a fulfilling warmth. Here though there are no living trees, no protective boughs, only dead roots and withered stumps. The water is tainted, potable only to the skeletal things that live here. There is a curse here, one that threatens to bring me to my knees with every staggered breath. It weighs upon my will, begging me to give in to darkness. I utter a prayer under my breath to ward the voices away, but the Necromancer was right, there are no gods listening here.

I do not think it is coincidence that I find myself in these wild lands. There is something from my past that I do not want to remember. The memory is like a cloud in my mind, growing larger and devouring all it touches. It is a constant burden to me. When I try to ignore it I find myself unable, but if try to recall the memory it shrinks back from me, retreating into my subconscious. I don't know if I am alive. Is this my hell, or is this a reality I do not want to face.

As I write this the cloud in my mind grows still, roiling and crackling with fury as it turns into a storm eager to break. This world truly is maddening. The air is thin somehow, like a fine veil set upon the world. A veil so thin that the living and the dead have become one. The others out there, the dead and the dying, will not listen to me. They will not listen to my offers of help, using their weapons to speak instead of their voices. The malice in their eyes disguises the sadness in their soul. It is as if they want to die, but they cannot do it themselves and they do not know why. If that is the way it must be in this world, then that is the way it shall be. I am not sure if I share the Necromancer's faith, but if this world can be saved then it will be done however it must be.

### Dreams

At night I dream of a pale angel, dressed in white with an odd look upon her closed lips. Usually I see her sleeping, though sometimes she opens her eyes, and in those moments I have fleeting memories of a happier time. But when I wake the memories are gone, and she is as mysterious to me as the foreign earth I walk upon.

## The Shattered Peaks

### Journal

The Necromancer was not honest with me, so I cannot trust her. To find the path to one gate was burdensome enough, but now with four more ahead of me, I am not sure if I will be able to go on. I can feel things in the great wilderness ahead, ancient things that rest amongst the dead wastes of civilisation. When I came through the gate I did not expect to come here. Where before the gently rolling hills were littered with the stumps of dead trees, here the ground is sharp and steep- rising high above to mountain peaks and deep below to the abyssal floor.

The storm in my mind grows stronger with every moment of my waking hours. I hear it in the howl of the winds over the mountain passes, and in the hollow thunder of loose rocks tumbling to the valley floor deep below. It threatens its primordial power to release whatever terrible thing I am struggling to forget. In my dreams the storm abates, no less threatening, but somehow smaller. The angel wordlessly promises to keep it at bay, so that I may sleep in as much peace as possible. If only she were with my in my waking hours, for as soon as I wake the storm returns to it's full strength, battering at the walls of my will, desperately trying to bring them down.

The ceaseless winds count down my life, one heartbeat at a time. Everything here seethes at me reaching into me with shadowy claws, desperately pulling at the sanity I struggle to maintain. This is why my quest is so dire, if I am to find life, I must keep my mind in check.

### Dreams

My guardian angel visits me more often as I dream. Now she tries to speak to me, her eyes open wide with fear, and she shouts at me. But her words are muffled, as if she were under water. She screams at me, but I do not know what to do, guilt wells up inside me as I can do nothing but look on as she drowns. I wake in sweat, the nails of my hands digging into the flesh of my palm, and anger boiling inside me. I cannot help her, but she is not real, she is inside me.

## The Sea of Salt

### Journal

A new land, as different to the last as before. Endless plains of salt, split by massive cracks, some so large one could throw a rock from one wall with all their strength and still it would not reach the other side. Yet the gate is the same, another smooth stone arch like an inverted V. I understand now, at least a little, why the Necromancer has been keeping secrets from me. Surely I would not have believed her if she had told me about the gods and the essence when I first came here, but now that I have seen the horrors of this world with my own eyes I have no doubt.

I cannot imagine the pain she has been through, to have to watch her entire world fade away before her eyes, helpless to do anything but watch. I feel a similar pain deep inside, when I think about it I find my heart rises to my throat and my breathing comes staggered. I see the face of the angel as if she were before me, and the storm in my mind expands greedily. So I breath deep, I look before me and focus on the things that are real, and it draws back. The storm shrinks and my mind grows clear. I feel my breathing return to normal and I find I cannot recall how the angel looks. I do not understand any of this.

### Dreams

The dreams are more intense now, my angel is more animate then ever, and it is draining me to the core. Some nights she is happy, we sit and talk of half-remembered times, and entertain eachother with our company. But on some nights I cannot bear to be with her. She shouts and yells, kicking and screaming in her dream-prison, then suddenly breaks down in my arms and cries herself to sleep. Though I do not know her face, there is a familiarity when she touches my skin. My mornings are filled with dread. I cannot stand to see the sun, because even on her worst nights, I would rather be dreaming with her, than awake in this midnight world.

## The Ruined City

### Journal

As before I emerge from the gate into a new world. But this one is very different, here there are no remnants of life, no dry branches crackling in the wind, no roots clutching to shallow soil against the fury of the earth. Here there are only ruins. Derelict walls and massive structures from ancient times all turned to dust. How many thousands of years must it have taken for these buildings to fall into such ruin? And all that time she has haunted this world. How has her mind fared through those lonely eons. She speaks of prophecies, fate, and destiny as if she can see the future. I have seen enough in this dark land to know better than to dismiss this thought. There is even magic at work inside me, I can feel it coursing through my veins, in my muscles, even in the beads of sweat that prickle on my skin.

The wars that ravaged this land must truly have been terrible. Even now there remain signs of it- great glass craters, shells from now rusted artillery, the carcasses of ancient war-machines now half buried in the dust. But no bones, no bodies to speak of. Everything that once lived has been swept away leaving a soulless landscape. It is bleak here, amongst the dead. I know that if the Necromancer were to come here she would fall down and weep, and be unable to leave. This must be why she speaks to me from the darkness, to shield herself from reality, and to allow her to believe that everything will return to how it was.

### Dreams

I am at a loss. The woman of my dreams is silent now, she does not try to speak, she does not move. If it were not for the shallow breathing of her chest, I would think she had passed on. The fervour of my past visions has gone, replaced with hopeless waiting. I stand in an endless room, unable to do anything but watch her rest. Time passes imperceptibly slowly, and I cannot take my eyes from her. Truly this is hell, to watch, and wait, and not know what to do, until the hours of your life have wasted away. I wake slowly now, gazing at the sky every morning. My limbs betray me, and my mind will not focus. I fear I am losing myself to this world.

## The Eternal Wasteland

### Journal

### Dreams

One night, as I drifted into my sleeping world, I found myself alone. I called out for her, though I did not know her name. I searched every shadowed area of my mind for her presence, but she had left me. Somehow I knew she was gone forever, she would not come back. I sat, overwhelmed with sadness, but also relief. She would not be in pain anymore, and that gave me enough solace to let her be. Despite our short time together, I will not be able to forget her, I know she will be with me until I give my last breath.

## Epilogue

In the whispers of the wind I can hear her dying words. I will never forget those last moments of her life. She looked to me as I held her in my arms, and she said she was sorry. I told her not to be sorry, for we would find eachother again in time. As the words left my lips her eyes widened with fear. She wept deeply, her tears falling to the ground below, mingling with her blood before sinking into the earth below. Her breath came slowly now, deeply, but in ragged bursts. I could not tell if she were awake, but I spoke to her all the same. I told her of all the things we had done, and all the good memories that I would soon bear alone. Her eyes opened again, for the last time, and she said again, to me, that she was sorry. I remember the feeling well, like the colour of the world was drained away and only a grey purgatory remained. Loneliness swallowed me as all semblance of my past life drifted into memory. Since then I have wandered alone, wasting my years searching for a way to bring her back to life, or for that dark passage that would reunite us beyond the veil.