# The Wanderer’s Tale

## The Desert of Whispers

### Journal

This world is all that the Necromancer described and worse- a living nightmare. Even the dry ground seems to threaten to swallow me up, to partake of my body and slake its thirst with my blood. There are others here, some of whom I have seen in the distance, whilst others are just voices on the wind. They walk aimlessly like purgatorial souls. Even the familiar things are alien- the sky is deep red, coloured by the light of three suns, and the air hangs heavy like a miasma. At night the skies glitter with the light of unknown constellations. Despite the dry ground and still air this place is not devoid of life. The cooing of brilliantly coloured birds and the churr of spiney insects fills the air. I cannot say with confidence what it is they eat- most of the plants I have seen are as pale and brittle as bones, whilst the few that are not bristle with thorns to protect their small fruit. The wind carries with it the braying of unknown animals, and the stench of rot- undeniably from others who have passed this way.

The most unsettling thing about this world is my lack of memory, since I opened my eyes to find myself here I have been unable to recall where I came from or who I was. When I came out of the darkness with the Necromancer it was as if I had been born again- the slate of my memory wiped clean. However my body has not suffered as poorly as my mind, my muscles retain their memory, and my instincts are as sharp as this oppressive land allows. I would dearly like to speak to another, to learn more about this world, though I worry that all who wander here will be like me- memoryless ghosts haunting a dead world.

Sometimes I have brief sensations, like memories, but only in my senses. The feeling of warm light on my back, the rich green glow of leaves hit by sun beams above, dapples of light on the ground where the leaves are not so dense. But I have no memories to go with these sensations, nothing but what I have experienced since I arrived in this wasteland. Here there are no living trees, no protective boughs, only dead roots, withered stumps, and stifling heat. Even the water is tainted- potable only to skeletal animals that walk on long limbs, to the spiney insects, and to the mysterious birds that fly above. It is like the land is cursed, a curse that threatens to bring me to my knees with every shallow 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.

It was not chance that brought me here, but it was not fate either. The Necromancer was adamant that I was chosen for this task, that I alone am able to find and awaken the gods, but can I believe her? It seems plausible- likely, even, that I am just one of many, and that I will end up wandering endlessly, searching for purpose until the end of my days like the other souls I share this world with. The burden on my mind grows with every passing day, sometimes it lurks in the back of my head, and other times it occupies me completely, leaving me unable to focus on anything else. There is something from my past that I do not want to remember. 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.

The cloud in my mind grows with every minute that passes. It boils and crackles like a storm eager to break. I worry that I will lose myself here. The air is thin, so I cannot breath easily, but it is also heavy, laden with something unseen. It is making me delirious, and I am wracked by panic at every unfamiliar sound. Sometimes I hear distant voices, muffled as if speaking from another room. It is as if the walls of the world are thinning in places, bringing the living and the dead close to each other. Some voices are louder than others, so I speak out to them, but they do only go quiet, leaving me with nothing but silence. I have passed others living hear, and I have cried out to them too, but they too do not seem to be able to hear. Instead they use violence to try to keep me away, but my needs are greater than theirs, and so I do what I must to fulfil my quest. The malice in their eyes disguises the sadness in their soul. It is as if they want to die, but 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 I will try.

## 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 feel only a sense of dread for the path ahead. Amid the great wildernesses that lie before me there are greater dangers than I have already faces. I have seen ancient things that rest amongst the dead wastes of civilisation, and doubtless there are more. When I passed through the gate I found myself somewhere new. Where before the gently rolling dunes were broken only by great boulders, here the ground is sharp and steep- rising high above to mountain peaks and deep below to the abyssal floor. The stifling heat and thin air of the desert has been replaced by a constant feeling of terror.

The winds are ceaseless in their howling. Day and night, hour after hour, they blow. From the throaty gusts across the wide mountain passes, to the shrill moan from narrow crevasses that echoes between every stone and every wall. Loose rocks thunder to the valley floor, dislodged from scree slopes by great black birds. The primordial majesty of this place is overwhelming. It is as if the mountains themselves are alive- great giants moving imperceptibly slowly across the land, speaking to each other through the winds and gales that buffet their peaks. The woman of my dreams wordlessly protects me as I sleep, her soothing voice drowning out the windy chaos outside. If only she could be with me in my waking hours, to guide me as I scramble between crags, through caves, and under overhangs. I must keep my mind sharp to keep myself from falling victim to the dangers of this land.

I have found myself at odds with the land, on the one hand it is truly a terrifying place- even the rocks are razor sharp, and I have cut myself a dozen times trying to navigate my way to the landmarks that manage to cling to the rocky slopes. On the other hand it is oddly peaceful. The wind is so constant that it drowns out all thoughts, leaving me to focus only on the journey. My instincts take me where I need to be, whilst my mind is clear, the fog suppressed, and my thoughts focussed on the present.

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.

## 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.

## 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.

## The Eternal Wasteland

### Journal