Bhim Nimgade - Boromilla Calls Us Back

Boromilla sinks deeper and deeper into the plush pillows and bolsters of the ancestral bed, the luxurious ornate headboards and carved statuary siderails in mute witness of her languor. The world itself has sunk lower and lower into the twilight of times, a baleful glowing globe pulsating fitfully and ebbing in its strength. There is no use in strife, in anguish, in achievement anymore. The tiny glints of colony ships are all winding homeward in the vastness of space. It will take - or it has taken - centuries for all of them to return, but they are on their way, to seek the solace of the mother planet for the last time.

There have been other worlds, as tiny microcosms of earth tore themselves away in valiant colony ships to climb and explore and colonize, fruitfully, through nearspace. Dwarf stars with huge ice planets, and colonies burrowing under the frozen atmospheres to shelter in the strange warmth oozing up from below. Colonies digging into the crumbling icy dust of captured comets in stable orbits, just far enough away from the central star to survive, living on the liquid water and organic compounds in them. Not the wild erratic orbits of the sun-grazing comets, spending eons in the outer reaches, cold and stable, and then an unexpected perturbation nudging them, to plunging faster and faster toward the central star, as its hot glory boils off the volatiles into a dusty sweep of millions of kilometers of cometary tail, a tenuous veil that wastes its substance and wafts it away into nothingness. Colonies drifting in the interstellar vacuum, rudderless, knowing that ahead of them lies only more emptiness, taking measures to prolong their survival but knowing that it means nothing, there would be no rescue, that their children’s children would wake up someday to the certainty of death. Ships that once rose, mightily, into the universe, and now have gathered what resources they can to patch themselves together to limp back home.

And Boromilla sinks back into her bed, wondering which of her children she will see again, and will they come back to find her. Will they know her when they reach her? Will they burn through the leagues of strange and twisted trees, the endless rubble of faded plastics bobbing forever on shallow seas, the bubbling mats of deadly algae, the fetor of dead silvery bodies piled up on shores with their dulling sightless eyes unable to close, feeble trickles of water streaked with unnatural colors whispering their poisons into the land, citadels ancient and crumbling or recently and proudly built but now crumbling into slopes of talus with the marks of plasma cannons and bombs and eldritch fires.

Boromilla summons them to come home. And across hundreds of parsecs, they obey, maybe not knowing what drives them to uproot themselves from whatever soil, fertile or cruelly barren, they have landed upon. She calls them, the great mother calls them, and obey they must.

The few who cannot heed her are the ones who have lost power, and go blindly on, feeling a sick yearning to go back but they have no power to do so; and those on gossamer light sails, slowly gathering speed to spread outward, with no hope of changing their trajectories until they reach another star system to capture them and draw them in.

Ah, her children had dreamed of a vast universe with verdant playing fields and planetary ring worlds and undying fountains of energy, life unleashed to spread and flower across the stars. Some colonies would survive but then gutter out, menaced by some cold unfeeling slow catastrophe; or they would blaze fiercely and die in some hot wild cataclysm flung at them by the universe, or brought on by their own unrelenting hatreds. Some few thrive and flourish and build wondrous civilizations that would echo with song and give life to dreams...

Boromilla weaves the threads of all the worlds, and draws them to herself. This is home. Home is in eclipse, darkening, dying. All must come and pay tribute in these last days. Her thick blood glows inside her body, moving more and more slowly. Colony ships arrive and are moved into earth orbits, and abandoned there, as her children climb into lifeboats to glide down to earth. Some, too far gone, just aim for the surface, and they light up the night sky with blazing trails in their fiery re-entry. Thunder cleaves the sky and oceans boil up in miles-high fountains when they hit. Boromilla can feel their arrivals, sensing in her body the arrivals of her children, however distant, and slow smiles move over her sleeping face.