

# Weightless

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a novel by

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*My name is Serandito Carival. I'm only writing it down because people often hear a story, whether it was real or not and wonder, "who did that"?*

*Some might suspect I'm using an alias, others will point out that a name doesn't really matter. They would all be wrong.*

*I am Serandito Carival and I'm proud of the things I've done, thankful of the memories I've kept and always fearful of the future.*

*That is why I'm writing this, all of this. Because you must learn the truth of it all and pass it on to those that come after you, generation after generation, like a fable, like a myth. But never forget it was all true.*

*Because lies are what brought us on the path to extinction.*

*I'm fearful it could all happen again. From the records and annals that have been restored in my time, it almost certainly happens again. That fear of mine, should become your fear as well.*

*Because fear, as I will explain, can be a very useful tool. And you must know how to wield it, as well as live with it.*

*There will be a time, in the future, when these writings - in whatever form - will be no more. It has been known, since almost ancient times, that the stars will wither and vanish, others more prominently than some. But still, the universe will die and along with it, every kind of life that populates it.*

*But mankind has to persevere in spite of that.*

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*Promise me this, as I in turn shall promise you:*

*At the last light of the last star, there will be  
a man there to see it through to nothingness.*

*Why, you might ask?*

*Picture it, I urge you. Hold that picture in  
your mind, make it a part of who you are.*

*Because that picture is all that stands be-  
tween life and a fate far worse than death: Obliv-  
ion.*

*Maybe you're confused by now; perhaps I'm  
coming off as a cryptic stranger or as I've been  
called many times, a madman.*

*I am simply a zealot. My aim is to turn you,  
whoever you are, into a zealot as well.*

*Since you're reading this, I'm either part  
of history, or something terrible has happened  
again.*

*Read and learn my friend. And remember  
that Serandito Carival is just a name. But me,  
and you, we're more than that:*

*We're humans. Never forget that.*

*– Serandito Carival, The death of our race*

“Is this all?” said Copun under a wheezy breath, his forehead glistening with sweat. Serandito nodded with a grin.

“Thirteen stacks in all. If we must meet the quota, we need another twelve by sunrise. Think you're up to it?”

Copun was trying hard not to show he was spent for the day; he put on a big hearty smile and after a couple of deep breaths turned around and headed back to the windcomb. He shouted at Serandito playfully, mischief drawn on his thick eyebrows:

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“You’ll be the death of me, Sera. Once we’re done, you’re treating me to some of your jeral, you hear?”

Serandito shook his head and let out a knowing laugh. He put his hands on his waist and took a moment to marvel at the land around them; harvest time. A golden sea swayed nimbly in front of him, lit up with the purple hues of the setting sun. He could almost see the first stars.

“Are you coming or will you just stand there? Ain’t nothing you haven’t seen, Sera.”

Serandito smiled broadly before starting off towards the hovering harvester with a quick, almost joyful pace. He jumped inside the windcomb’s gondola, causing it to bob and jerk slightly before he answered with a weird smirk on his face:

“Would it be a real shame if I missed something new, Copun?”

Copun reached out of the gondola, threw a bag of glowbees in the air and drew the anchor slowly. Hunched over one side of the gondola, he said without turning:

“There hasn’t been anything new around here since man set foot on this place, Sera.”

He heaved the last of the anchor on the deck with some strain and said without a hint of irony:

“That’s the beauty of it; nothing really changes.”

The glowbees were up and about, flying around the windcomb, following a familiar pattern of their own. Their luminescent bellies lit up the gondola with a soft, warm orange light as they swarmed around it like slow-twirling flakes of bright snow.

Serandito looked around him one last time as if failing to find something that caught his imagination, nodded to Copun and jibbed the sail with one expert, crisp motion. The wind-

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comb tacked gracefully against the first duskward gusts for the night.

“Thirty-four C?” he asked while keeping an eye out for a good, strong buffet of wind out on the never-ending plain that stretched before them.

“Yeah, thirty-four C,” said Copun without so much as a thought and sat down near the controller’s seat, his back against a thin, metal rail. He sighed and slid a small toolbox nearby in front of his feet. He opened it and fussed around inside with both hands for a moment. At length, Copun’s eyes lit up with a radiant gaze at the sight of a small, tin-like, container.

“I’ll just have a whiff.”

Serandito’s disapproving stare fell on Copun. He said nothing at first, while the older man tapped on a pipe and filled it with finely-cut brown-black leaves, a genuine smile on his face.

“Thank the Protectors for the small luxuries of life, eh?” said Copun, lighting up his pipe with a sprinkle of ’golic and puffing at it wildly until a sweet, heavy aroma wafted around the gondola.

Serandito took the seat next to the controller’s, and touched some of the controls on the grimy, dusty panel. He shook his head slightly but said nothing. Copun took another draught from his pipe and said with a slight drawl:

“It won’t kill me now, boy. It’s only quazza, to ease the mind, you know?”

Serandito looked at him with a sour expression. It was one of the old man’s worst habits and he simply would not let it go.

“I know what it is, Copun. Your mind is filled with uneasiness? Again?” said Serandito and scoffed.

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“The toils of life, Serandito my boy. When you are my age, they start to pile up impossibly high,” replied Copun with an almost deliberately drunken smile. The quazza had started to set in.

“That thing clouds the mind, Copun. It makes everything hazy, muddled. Just like when in a fog. Shouldn’t you at least wait until after we’re done with our quota?”

Copun made it a point to look behind his shoulder, to let his gaze wonder around the windcomb for a while. He smiled wryly and threw his head back.

“I see no fog creeping up on us. You just do the sailing, and let me worry about my own troubles.”

“I don’t like it one bit, Copun. That’s proper poison inside your soul, right there,” said Serandito, worried anger in his words. Copun couldn’t help but laugh.

“The soul? Have you been prying around Old Man Legget’s? That devil could get you in trouble and you wouldn’t even know it till you’re strapped down on that slave chair.”

Copun’s smile wavered for a bit, before he took a long, hard stare at Serandito.

“He’s a good man to talk to, Copun. You should have a couple of cups of jeral with him.”

“Ain’t that a poison too now?” replied Copun, the wrinkles on his forehead adding a sense of wonder to his smiling, curly lips.

Serandito nodded fervently, realising he had been at fault to judge. He said with a shake of his head, his eyes watching the main sail ripple with the rising wind. “It opens up the spirits to roam about freely. Weren’t you the one that asked for a treat as well?”

Copun exhaled, thin snake-like trails of smoke carried

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away from his nostrils as the windcomb picked up more speed. “Well, one can’t expect to go away from this world as pure as one came, Sera.”

“No, I guess not,” replied Serandito and settled into a well-trained series of motions, adjusting the trim of the sail and making sure they were speeding along nicely in the right direction. Copun fell into silence, hands crossed behind his back, the quazza on his pipe almost gone.

Serandito cherished these moments of silence, the sound of the rippling sails and the buffeting wind in harmony with the soft light of the bees, while all around them the murky shadows of faint starlight held fast, an unyielding river of darkness flowing between them and the grain stalks only a few feet below.

“Sometimes I feel like I’m trespassing,” said Serandito.

“What?” asked Copun drowsily, as if being half-awake.

“I said, sometimes I feel like I’m trespassing. Like we shouldn’t be here.”

“Nonsense. This is our lot here, boy. Thirty-four-C through thirty-eight-D of the Great Landing Plains. The Flats, boy, all ripe for harvest!” cried Copun suddenly in the night, and burst into laughter while the windcomb sped away, the swarm of glowbees around her bow and stern leaving a trail of wondrous, almost magical, soft light in her wake.