

Beyond the Veil

by Caspian Reed

The artifact pulsed faintly, as though it were alive.

Eva Cross knelt beside it, brushing the dust away from its metallic surface. Strange symbols etched into the metal caught the light, reflecting patterns she couldn't decipher. She'd seen ruins before—abandoned outposts, forgotten colonies—but nothing like this.

Behind her, the rest of the team shifted nervously.

"Are we sure it's stable?" asked Malik, his voice low.

Eva didn't look up. "It's been here longer than we have. If it wanted to collapse, it would have done so already."

She pressed her hand to the artifact's surface. It was warm.

Before anyone could speak, the hum grew louder. The air vibrated, and the ground beneath them shuddered. Eva stepped back just as the artifact split open, revealing a swirling void of light and shadow.

"No one moves," she ordered.

Malik took a step back anyway. “What is that?”

Eva stared into the void. It wasn’t just light. It was moving—shapes shifting and bending as though alive. Her pulse quickened.

“A doorway,” she said, her voice barely a whisper.

A gust of wind swept through the chamber, pulling them closer to the portal. Eva dug her heels into the ground.

“We need to go,” Malik said.

But Eva couldn’t look away. Shapes moved within the light—tall, slender, almost human.

Then the whispers started.

Eva felt them before she heard them, brushing against her thoughts like tendrils of smoke. Her vision blurred, and for a moment, she saw another world—a place where the sky burned silver and shadows walked freely.

And then it was gone.

The whispers stopped, and the portal flickered.

“We’re not leaving,” Eva said.

Malik stared at her. “You can’t be serious.”

Eva reached for her pack, pulling out a transmitter. “We came here to explore—and that’s exactly what we’re going to do.”

She stepped closer to the portal, the hum growing louder as the light reached out for her.

And then she stepped through.