

Wastelands of eternal silence

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© Script: Dani Vlijm 2017
© Illustrations: Dani Vlijm 2017
Layout inside: Dani Vlijm
Layout cover: Dani Vlijm
Cover photo: MysticArtDesign
Author photo: Dani Vlijm
Publisher: Brave New Books
First published: 2017

NUR: 301
ISBN: 9789402169959

Appropriate for readers who are 15 years of age or older. In case of doubt, parental advice is recommended.

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Prologue

There is no hope.
There is no mercy.
There is no forgiveness.

The Bringer of Death sings the mysteries of his sins with his heart unfolded into revelation, his tongue spits the fire of his will and knows no tenderness. His malefic nature is the rotten womb that gives birth to his word, damnation in every language, and by the relentless diction of its thunders, its fury poisons my eyes.

The very last moment has come, the last seconds are ticking away into the endless, dark depth. A last breath crawls, in a desperate attempt to flee her mortal body, from the deepest valleys of her lungs upwards, while the whispers of the darkest shadows of the Bringer of Death close in on her and let their wrath descend upon her. With unbearable amounts of struggle and suffering, her lips force her very last words into the wide, endless void, where they will wander the depraved and abandoned wastelands for eternity. An in vain cry for help, a sad supplication, is the soul-devouring music that sounds when the dying light fades.

To the most filthy extremes of my disgust, I repeatedly suffered from this horrific nightmare. Every time the dying light faded, after I helplessly held her dying in my arms, I woke up. I had no idea what it meant. After all, it never really happened. Perhaps destiny itself tried to warn me for the terrible things that were about to happen, cruel and heartbreaking things that were inevitable.

After all, we shouldn't ever forget that the Bringer of Death knows how and where to find us and that he will find us, if he wants to. Sooner or later he will overwhelm us, grab us and take us to a place where we will never leave again. Tracelessly we will vanish and be devoured by the night. Our names will be forgotten and our existence will fade away like a dying morning fog. Decaying memories will reduce the existence of our being to something that once was, but will never be again or become.

More than once the Bringer of Death showed us, with malicious delight, that destiny looks at us with contempt and tries to feed on our mortality, the hunger giving color to its horrible nature is incomprehensible and unlimited. His word is absolute, it's doubtless and devours everything crossing its path.

Not long ago our entire civilization looked the Bringer of Death straight in his empty eyes, when destiny threw its hungry growls like sharp, bloodthirsty knives at our vulnerable faces. Ironically, we unleashed its wrath upon ourselves. We've set foot on poisoned grounds and entered Terra Sinistria, where we unsuspectingly fell into his ice-cold, suffocating embrace and got enfolded by it.

Our deepest inner selves eagerly desire to explore the hidden and unknown, but the naivety and carelessness lurking in our human nature almost became our death sentence. We should've realized some things are not to be discovered. We shouldn't close our eyes for those things of course, but we must tie our hands and stay away from them. You don't put your hand into a fire, because you know you'll burn. You don't push a knife into your heart, because most certainly you'll die. And that's why we shouldn't have gone to Terra Sinistria, because we invited the Bringer of Death for a last dinner and sacrificed ourselves as the last meal.

Sooner or later his teeth, bathing in mercilessness, will tear us apart and our dying bodies will drown in the infernal rage burning in his eyes.

Terra Sinistria is a lost world, connected to ours via the Vortex, a by dark secrets surrounded portal, breaking through the borders of the hidden. It's a world once entirely identical to ours, but it began to change quickly and it didn't take long before the Sinistrimorphs, hellish creatures, originated from the dark mind of the infernal beast itself, had humanity almost completely eradicated.

When we left our world and entered Terra Sinistria to perform explorations, we were barely able to survive the wrath of the Bringer of Death. But even though we managed to succeed and survive, the dangers of its evil nature were not yet overcome. The Sinistrimorphs tried to invade our world, our civilization was confronted with evil of proportions no one ever had seen or even imagined before and feared it eventually had to face its extinction.

In the end, we managed to prevent the Day of Reckoning from happening and saved humanity from annihilation by building the Cryptalydium Vault around the Vortex. The Vault is an impenetrable construction with enormous dimensions, the gigantic cube has a length of seven hundred meters and lies in a square-shaped area with a length of fifty kilometers. But, obviously, the Bringer of Death has a desire for vengeance that cannot be caged, his stars of judgement seemed to shine brighter every day. For those who do not let themselves be misled and cherish the truth, the Cryptalydium Vault, spreading a shadow of pure maleficence upon the bare grounds of the Abandoned Wastelands, is just a temporal lock on the gates of hell. A stay of execution, which only temporarily hinders the falling hammer from empower its verdict.

But the Sinistrimorphs, atrocious creatures too horrific for even the worst nightmares, were not the only thing threatening the future of our civilization, there was an even bigger threat coming. We didn't exactly know what it was, but we knew something was closing in on us.

The catastrophe began in the early hours of the evening on Wednesday, two weeks ago. At first, the evening seemed to start like any other. But that didn't last long, the events overwhelmed us just a few hours later. At twenty seven to eight, we registered unexplainable malfunctions and readings. At nineteen to eight, only eight minutes later, we received a distress call. At eighteen to eight we lost all contact with Serenity 1, every attempt to restore it failed. The whole night and most of the following morning, technology- and communication experts argued about the content of the distress call. But in the end, at thirteen past two, they were able to agree on only three things. Firstly, the many sounds we've heard suggest an immense chaos. Secondly, the person who sent the message, whoever that might have been, was in a state of panic. The third thing they agreed on, was the only word we've could hear clearly: Vai'ranva. Nobody knew what it was or what it meant. The last word from an entire civilization was shrouded in darkness and kept its secrets hidden for every eye and ear that tried to comprehend it, the fate of 124.396 human lives were unknown.

Lost in the darkness of what could've had happened, we were, after the many intense hours, dismissed on Thursday night to get some rest. But that night obviously didn't offer me much of it, my brain repeated the distress call over and over again in my head and for a long time, I just lay on my bed, thinking about the relentless evil that could've had descended upon Serenity 1.

Echoes, constructed by my imagination, tormented me. I was haunted and blinded by the ominous shimmer of the many, fractured corpses, crying out for help and salvation of the endless pain. I couldn't let it go. I couldn't just close my eyes for it or look away and pretend nothing had happened. Nobody said it, but everybody knew it. Something terrible had happened. An incomprehensible evil, that could only be described by one word, had descended upon a peaceful, new civilization.

Vai'ranva.

1 In the shimmer of
the darkness

When the night finally succeeded to seize me and scatter the darkest black into my eyes, around half past four I eventually fell asleep. But only for a short period of time her embrace could cage me. After a few hours, the pale morning light reopened my eyes. The morning was warm and stuffy and the aggressive sunlight venomously cut past my eyelids. Intrusive, wandering noises from people outside, carelessly suffering the daily routine of their lives, invaded my bedroom. Noises of passing cars and children going on their way to school pierced my eardrums, it was impossible to escape them. Therefore, victimized by the order of things, I eventually gave up my hope to have a descent night rest and got out of bed.

Waiting for the redeeming words, a message from or about Serenity 1 and the horrible fate it escaped or, more likely, was perished by, I purposelessly lay down in front of the holo-screen, a multifunctional, holographic projection replacing the television and computers, and slowly watched time pass by. At first that offered me some distraction, but still there was an annoying feeling of impatience troubling me. I couldn't get Serenity 1 out of my head, the distress call we received repeatedly echoed on the inside of my head.

In an attempt to draw my attention to something else, I restlessly lingered before the window and stared into the far ends of the horizon. But, of course, there wasn't really anything special to see. With hazy eyes I looked down at the empty square in front of the apartment complex, but I didn't really see it anyway. Nervously I stood there, waiting and hoping to get the redeeming message from my father soon. But it remained awfully silent and it seemed to take forever. But I have to admit having some inner rest and patience is not one of my best characteristics of course, on the contrary.

Bella, my loyal German Shepherd, lay vigilantly on the floor at my side. When I got up from the couch, she immediately assumed we were going out for a walk. But I had to disappoint her, the evil enfolding Serenity 1 in darkness hid there where our eyes didn't see and spoke with silence on its tongue. I had to stay home to make sure I didn't miss the message when it was about to come.

When I got up and went to the kitchen to make breakfast, Bella followed me closely. She sat down and watched me making a sandwich. Concentrated she followed every move of the knife, subtle caressing the surface of the bread. She considered its tender wanders as risks that could not be underestimated, as if they were merciless enemies, possible threats to my life if they would decide to be so. Don't let yourself be deceived by her fairy tale-like name, Bella has always been an unrivaled force in an also unrivaled friendship. Since the moment I got her, when she was still a puppy, she has been one of the few certainties this world offered me. Since that moment, she always has been an essential support to me on the many moments I was about to fall.

'Bella, what are you looking at?' I asked her, when she motionlessly sat down and stared at me.

Of course I already knew the answer to that question. After all, her eyes, which were focussed on the meat in my hands, flawlessly spoke the will of their desire. I couldn't really ever hide my smile when she did such a thing. Nevertheless she barked resolute, whereafter I nodded automatically.

'Yeah, I know,' I smiled. 'You don't want me to keep it all to myself.' I took the piece of meat, leftovers of the late hours from the previous night, from the fridge and threw it laconically into the air. With minimum effort, Bella caught it neatly and took it to her food tray.

Lovingly I watched her leave, whereafter I cleaned the things I used in the kitchen and then returned to the holo-screen.

‘Come Bella,’ I said to her when I was halfway.

As always she didn't have any doubt, stood up directly and followed me back to the couch. Vigilantly she lay down on the floor again and put her head against my lower leg. While I slid down onto the couch, the news broadcast of twelve o'clock began and immediately my attention was drawn by the picture showing up next to the newscaster. It was a picture of Serenity 1.

‘Xeva, volume control,’ I said to Xeva, the artificial intelligence controlling the systems of my home, whereafter a bar appeared at the bottom of the holographic screen.

‘Volume control initiated,’ Xeva confirmed.

The camera registered the motions of my eyes and by looking to the right side of the bar, the volume increased. By blinking my eyes, I confirmed the volume. After confirmation, the bar automatically disappeared. While I sat on the furthest part of the tip of the couch, I attentively embraced every word that was spoken.

‘Since the night of the day before yesterday, there is much unclear about Serenity 1. It appears that nobody has been able to successfully contact family or friends after twelve to eight. Even the authorities have not been able to restore contact, they're speaking of a malfunction and state that they're working to solve the problem with maximum effort. However, a written statement by D-Corp states that the system eliminates the possibility of a full failure of the communication units. D-Corp states that all of the communication units and satellites are fully operational, meaning a full deactivation of the communication units on Serenity 1 itself is the only possible explanation.

There are three communications centers and the emergency backup system should, in case of a malfunction, have send an error code to D-Corp. That didn't happen, which means, according to D-Corp, a malfunction is impossible.'

Hazy and defeated I stared into nothingness. Of course it was exactly what I expected, but somehow I still had a little bit of hope it could be an easy solvable problem. But that hope was irretrievably lost, the possibility of a malfunction was clearly ruled out.

The newscaster also stated, as sensational as she possibly could, some civilians were more skeptical. She said not everybody was willing to believe the explanation the authorities gave, they wouldn't take it for truth and claimed much more was going on. The studio switched to a female journalist and an unknown man. The man seemed to be confused and looked like he barely escaped the greedy claws of the Bringer of Death himself, his clothes were old and torn and his filthy hair and anxious eyes gave the impression he was tormented by something that could only exist in nightmares. It seemed there was something terribly wrong with him and he was mumbling about a vision he had, about Serenity 1 and the final, fatal end closing in on all of us.

The journalist, an upward fallen, young lady with too much of an arrogant attitude, looked into the lens of the camera with a fake smile and frowned her eyebrows to ridicule the man. She tried not to laugh and asked the man if he really thought something terrible had happened to Serenity 1. She clearly didn't take him seriously. But apparently, that didn't bother the man at all. He ignored the journalist completely and looked right into the camera with an extraordinary strange look in his eyes and continued his speaking.

‘In uncertainty shrouded times sing their rotten songs of damnation to the defenseless and bleeding ears of its victims, as our dying future, dressed in an excessive amount of mercilessness and bathing in malicious delight, whispers the cruelties of the fatal end to us. Desolated and hopelessly lost, our survival balances on the edge of the abyss. Harassed by furious winds, the vicious and sinful breath of the Bringer of Death himself, she begs for help. But all of her cries and tears will be in vain and death sentences will be executed with raised voice. Tongues of darkness speak the fury of their souls, the language of fate, and spit their venom at our graves. They write the flames of their wrath with desire for vengeance and pave the path to their thrones with blood flowing out of our hearts, leaving to never return again. Every day after the day before yesterday is shrouded in darkness and an eternal night threatens to take the sight out of our eyes. The Night of Reckoning shall wake and seize our souls, with a hunger that cannot be satisfied, to unite us with the cold embrace of destiny and bury us underneath its rotten wings.’

The man brought his words like a poetic serenade. The journalist looked surprised at him and clearly didn't know how to react. The man didn't stay to give any explanation either, he turned his back on her and rapidly walked away. He loudly repeated his words and spoke to everybody he encountered, until he, out of sight of the camera, disappeared into the crowd.

The journalist nonchalantly shrugged her shoulders, trying to give the impression that we shouldn't think about the things the man said too much. According to her, the man was only telling nonsensical stories and we should forget about him as fast as we could.

But I couldn't forget about him, there were too many unanswered questions. We couldn't just put his words aside, could we? What if he was right? What if the survival of all humanity really was threatened and darkness was about to descend upon us?

The newscasting switched to a spokesman of the authorities, who threw the same exact stupid and clearly untrue story upon the plate of the viewers. He said there was a malfunction and the authorities worked hard to solve it and bla-bla-bla. The broadcasted information was full of lies, it was really annoying to watch those political correct liars trying to deceive their viewers.

'Xeva, turn off holo-screen,' I said irritated.

'Holo-screen turn off initiated,' Xeva confirmed.

While shaking my head softly, I looked at my holo-watch, a holographic screen, emerging from a small, metal bracelet, projected on my lower arm, to see if I had any missed messages. But sadly, that was not the case. I should've expect that already, because a notification of every incoming message was also sent to the holo-screen.

'Well, then I'm going to take a shower first,' I muttered to Bella, who also got up and followed me to the bathroom.

Once I arrived in the bathroom, I closed the door behind me. Bella stayed behind in the hallway to guard the door, like she always did. Leisurely singing I undressed myself, threw my hair backwards and stepped into the shower. But the warm water, that should've overwhelmed me with a sensual rapture, didn't help me to escape from the stress and tensions harassing me. The water disturbed me, taking a simple shower became a battle, through wild, angry water flows, to survive. I exhaled deeply and tried to relax. But from the bottom of my back, a feeling of turmoil crawled upwards to nest as close to my heart as it possibly could.