

The Rift

My fall came to an end rather quickly. The world shifted, and then there was solid ground beneath my feet. My perception and orientation shifted, as I was suddenly standing upright, I blinked as the light vanished and I nearly stumbled as my body still thought that it was falling.

I looked around and saw an impossible view. I was surrounded by colorful light. The sky was awash with color and lights. It was a night sky filled with stars and nebulae streaked with red, blue, and yellow. To the side was a cliff which I approached, drawn by the beauty all around me. Once I reached the edge, I froze at the sight. The world just... disappeared beneath it. It was as if I was on a piece of rock floating in space. The light under which I saw came from the stars and the nebula surrounding everything. I still felt like a vampire and couldn't feel any signs of a sun present. It was as if the sun didn't even exist in this place. That terrified me. I had no idea where I was, again.

That rift pulled me into someplace else. I gripped my glaive tightly and looked around, seeing no signs of the light that brought me here anywhere around. I cursed myself for my recklessness, even though I knew that there was more to it than that. I had felt drawn to the crack in the space. Something had ensnared me almost, and I hadn't been prepared for it.

All around me were buildings of a strange make. Tall with wide doors. They looked abandoned, but not yet in ruins. All also seemed like they were sculpted out of a same piece of stone, seamless, much like the ruin that I stumbled on. I didn't know enough to be able to say with any degree of certainty if these things belonged to the same people or not, but it was

probably a safe bet. *Was it a trap? Something that I unknowingly activated?*

There were only a few buildings around, with one looking as if it had been cut in half as a side of it was open and just on the edge of the cliff. It was as if someone had just carved a piece of land out and brought it into space. I was on a rock floating in space, it wasn't even that large, I could see the other end behind me. There was a small hill above the buildings, so perhaps there was something else behind it, but everything else was surrounded by the cliff's edge. The ground around me was covered in dirt, but with a swipe of my foot I saw something that looked very much like concrete beneath it. This... the more I looked around, the more I got the impression that this was a small piece of an abandoned city. With nothing else to do, I started making my way to the buildings, deciding that exploring might prove useful. Perhaps I could find something to use as a weapon. I kept my head on a swivel though, and my ears sharp, looking for any signs of trouble.

They weren't overly tall, a few floors only, though those floors seemed taller than what I was used to, which made the buildings seem larger. As if everything was made for something a lot bigger than I was. The material of the buildings seemed weathered by time and elements, but I saw pieces of something that used to go over it. Whatever these buildings once looked like, it had been carried away by time and the elements. Once I got close enough, I saw that doors on the building entrances were made out of a smooth material. Metallic in appearance and cold to touch. It didn't reflect light at all, though this place didn't have a direct source of it. The nebula and the distant stars were what provided the light. I noticed that doors on one of the buildings nearby were halfway open and I headed there.

The doors seemed to be made out of two sliding panels meeting in the middle. And one of the panels was twisted making an opening through which I could pass through. I entered and saw that the ground was

covered in dirt, the walls peeled and cracked in places, as if it had gone through a battle against the elements—which it probably had. I walked through looking around and seeing nothing but ruined walls and holes in the walls next to the broken doors, there were piles of... something on the floor, but whatever it used to be was now indiscernible. I knelt next to one and tried to figure it out, but there was nothing that stood out about it to me. If I had to guess... it almost looked like rotted electronics, but I had no proof of that other than my gut feeling. I walked through the empty rooms seeing nothing but remnants of whatever used to be in there, time and the elements had destroyed everything but the walls.

The building only had a single floor, so I passed through it quickly, finding nothing of interest, only exactly what one would expect to find in an abandoned building. Things that might've been tables covered in dust-piles of things that had long since stopped having any form. I walked out and picked one of the other buildings at random.

This one had several floors, I could see, and was closed. The doors had a seam going down the middle and were more than twice as tall as I was, but also shaped like a half-sphere. The entrance was big enough for a bus to pass through. Whatever had lived here was a lot bigger than humans were. I reached out and touched the door, inspecting the small seam at the center of it. The material was neither cold nor warm, it felt more like an insulator, keeping the temperature in line with that of the surrounding. Which made realize that the temperature of this place was... weird, along with everything else. It was as bright as if it was day, there was air for me to breathe, and I wasn't freezing—which seemed like an impossibility if I was really in space. So, either all of this was an elaborate illusion, I'd gone mad and was imagining things, or the rules of the place I found myself in were completely different than Earth. Another mystery, one that I really wanted the answers to.

Ultimately, the reasons were not important, survival was, it always came first.

There were what appeared to be windows on all buildings, but none on the ground floors. From what I could see they had a glassy sheen covered in dirt, and I couldn't see inside any of them. The outside of the buildings was worn, on a closer look the walls on the outside reminded me of a wall that had the paint scraped from it, far worse on the outside than the inside of the previous building. They were stone, that much I could tell, but I saw no gaps that would suggest separate pieces of stone anywhere. I trailed my fingers down the seam of the door. The material felt smooth and untouched by whatever had impacted the rest of the buildings.

I leveraged my glaive against it. Pushing the claw in slowly, widening the gap until I could slide my fingers in between the seam, then with both hands I tried to pry the door open. After a moment of effort, I heard a whine of metal, then felt the door started sliding open. Dust fell on me from above as the door panels moved and a gust of stale air hissed by. And then I had a gap large enough for me to slip through.

I stepped in and my eyes adjusted to the darkness almost immediately. The entrance was a long hallway, with more doors on each side. And this building already looked far more preserved. Carefully, I walked over to the first door and saw what looked like a security panel on the side of the door. It was large, with a glassy smooth section and what looked like a key panel. That confused me for a few seconds, but then I reached out and started pressing buttons. They were larger and differently shaped than those from Earth, which clued me in to the origin of this place, but they were undoubtedly button keys though, if weird ones. Large and round, with a small indentation on top where it looked like colorless gems were lodged in. If there had been any marks on them before, they had long since been washed away by time. Everything, the ground, the keys, the doors, all of it was covered in a thick layer of dust, undisturbed for a long time.

I tried to pry the door open, but this one didn't have a seam, and it appeared like it was a single sliding panel that I couldn't pull open. I walked deeper into the building, keeping my eyes and ears open until I reached a large open space. Inside I found a sight that was both familiar and alien. There were U shaped tables, or at least I thought that they were tables, with some strange contraptions placed in the middle of them. It took me a few minutes to figure out that they were probably chairs, ones shaped for something that wasn't human. They were almost like squat beds with indentions and a lot of room for something huge compared to me. I couldn't even begin to imagine what the people using them looked like. The tables had stuff carved into them, almost like symbols, except that I couldn't tell what they were, and whatever the System had done to my head didn't seem to work on this. Otherwise, the tables seemed to be fused to the ground like almost everything else was.

I continued on, until I reached an empty space at the back that looked like an elevator shaft as wide and deep as the hall that I was just in, I looked up and saw that there were openings on each of them for other floors, but there was no sign of any kind of an elevator, instead there were long spikes every few meters on the far wall, each covered in symbols that I couldn't understand. I looked down and saw it extending deep beneath the ground. Then, something caught my attention for a split second. So far down that I wasn't sure if I had even seen it right, it looked like there was light down there.

I narrowed my eyes, trying to decide if it was worth it to go down there. Danger was always present, and I had been surrounded by it since I was pulled from Earth and thrown in this place. Still, I did need answers to at least some of my questions.

Before I could change my mind, I jumped across the gap to catch the spike across from me. My hands burned from the effort, the wound on my chest making my muscles spasm. I grunted and pulled my waist up to dangle over the spike. After I caught my breath, I glanced below, seeing

that it was a long way down. I was in an alien place with no idea what anything around me was. Light usually meant power, which might give me some clues as to where I was. I let myself drop down to the next spike, making sure to land on my right leg and not the injured one. Then, I slowly continued down in the same manner, grabbing the next metal spike then letting go and falling for the one below. There were no entrances to other floors that I could see, and the light beneath me was flickering.

After a few minutes of careful falling, I reached the bottom floor, breathing deeply. There was a corridor leading deeper into, and that was where the light was coming from. I took a few minutes to recover, then grabbed my weapon and slowly walked through, my steps making no sound, until I reached a corner. The light was just around it, flickering on and off. I slowed at the edge of the corner, then peeked out carefully.

The light was coming from a panel that looked similar to the ones above, though in better shape. I walked out and over to it. The glass part was illuminated with a faint green light that was flickering on and off. The buttons still had some of their markings on, but too little for me to be able to tell what they used to be. The door next to the panel was as large as the corridor, which made them at least three meters across.

On this one, I could see things that made me think of both magic and technology working together, on the first glance at least. And as I leaned down, I noticed something at the edge of the panel, surrounding the green light. It was as if there were symbols carved into the frame, which were glowing very faintly white, barely perceivable. I doubted that anyone who didn't have as good of an eyesight as I did would've caught it. Somehow, this place had power, at least the panel did.

I studied it for a little while, trying to decide if I should attempt to press anything. On the one hand, it was an intriguing mystery, on the other I had no idea what this place was or what I could unwittingly trigger.

One of the buildings had been ruined by the elements, this one had been somewhat preserved, though it had been sealed off from the outside. Either way, whatever was down here was probably incredibly old. It was beyond impressive that anything had survived for that long, let alone had the power. Not that I was an expert.

The decision was taken out of my hands. A groan of metal filled the corridor, and I jumped back as the light flickered rapidly then went out. A moment later the doors started sliding open. I raised my glaive and my eyes focused on the darkness behind the slowly sliding panels.

The door opened fully with a shudder that I felt through the floors of the building. Inside was a dark room, it took my eyes a few moments to adjust and then I started seeing objects. Carefully, I walked in. There were the same types of tables as what I had seen upstairs on one side of the room. The center had a large circular podium with a strange contraption hanging from the ceiling with what looked like six robotic arms. Each of the arms was covered in symbols that I couldn't understand.

I looked around and saw large tanks on the other side of the room, all empty. There didn't seem to be any power in here, which was also confusing. Did the last of it run out just now when the door opened? I didn't know, which only added to my trepidation. At the end of the room was another door, this one already halfway open, and next to it was a window that let me see into the room. I approached and saw three pedestals in a small room. Two of them were empty, while the last had an object placed on it. I walked into the room and approached the pedestal, getting a closer look.

The object was vaguely shaped like an egg. It was massive, at least twice as tall as I was, the size of a pickup truck. Its surface was made out of hexagonal shapes pressed together and almost reflective, but I couldn't be sure about the color of it in the dark. There was nothing else in the room of interest—not even dust that had covered everything in the other

parts of the building. I glanced back at the entrance and noticed a line of dust and my footprints. This room had been closed before I arrived, which meant that it probably opened at the same time as the first door had.

Again, I found myself debating just turning around and going back to the surface. I wasn't stupid, something had let me in. I refused to believe that that door remained closed for thousands of years only to open when I arrived. There was power on the panel, ergo something had been operational, probably still was. But, on the other hand, I was also curious and I needed answers.

I approached the egg trying to get a better look. It happened in an instant, faster than I could react the egg's surface rippled, and it flowed straight at me in a rush. I jumped back, but too slow, it splashed all over me, and I felt it surge through my nose, through my mouth and down my throat. It slithered around and found every orifice through which it pushed in. And then the pain started rising, so fast that I couldn't even feel my body anymore. I couldn't scream for the weight of it pressing inside of my throat, in my lungs, it was in me, and it grew pressing me from the inside making me feel like I was about to bloat and explode. The darkness swallowed me up and I knew no more.