

# V. ALONE IN THE DARK

*"With enough comprehension, one can bend reality to their whim."*

– *The Arcania, Volume IV*

Lucille, once baroness of the planet Roselius, stared out the grand windows of her enclave into a vast ocean of space filled with swirling energy currents, rocks, distant celestial bodies and other unknown matter. With her rift gate inanimate and unresponsive, along with no recognized stellar objects, she was trapped with no means of tracking time. Lost in her thoughts, she pondered the last few months prior to her imprisonment within the Infinite Dark.

With a long sigh of frustration, she remembered the Novus Militia attacking the planet she had conquered with her acolytes. It was the world she was born into, where she had risen to power and fondly called home. Roselius, the flower of the Pyros galaxy, was nestled within a solar system with a pure, white sun at its centre. With Creaos' return in the Arcane Conflict, she and her Dark Artists were forced to retreat to her rift gate. They had been fighting and giving their lives for the power they believed in.

Lucille and her remaining followers had fallen back toward their last rift gate, but an explosion from a plasma grenade engulfed them before they could reach it. Lucille dispersed the brunt of the blast with an arcane shield, but regrettably all except one of her brethren were annihilated. With the last of her strength, she managed to drag her remaining ally into the portal. However, despite her best efforts he died in her arms within moments of reaching safety. His last words were only a whisper...

"We... are not alone."

After his passing, the rift gate closed, apparently destroyed from the other side. She was trapped... the words of her comrade etched into her mind seemed false. She had never felt more alone.

Over the course of the last week, Lucille wondered about her life and everything that surrounded her. What was the point of the war? Why did it come to this? What was happening to her home as she stood helpless? Perhaps she would never know.

"Aren't you a fascinating mortal?" Lucille was interrupted from her thoughts by a strange voice.

"What?" she replied. "Show yourself."

A creature outside the window peered in with two small, perfectly circular, white eyes, glowing in the darkness. Its body was floating in space with no definable shape. Attaching one of its many tendrils to the building, it pulled itself to the window and slipped under it as a dark purple liquid. Within moments, the creature reformed itself, towering over Lucille and looking down on her with curiosity.

"I've never seen one of your kind in the flesh. I've only watched your universe from afar – and of course the 'enclaves' that you and your brethren have built. You... are Baroness Lucille." The creature said.

Lucille realised that she was speaking to a sentient creature of the Infinite Dark, most likely what the grand masters called a Seeker. There were many creatures of the Infinite Dark, some good, some malevolent, some little more than a dimensional shark, a predator. The ones with intelligence could be any age, perhaps even as old as the dawn of existence itself.

"Indeed, I am Lucille. You are a Seeker, correct?" The baroness was firm, making every effort to conceal her trepidation.

"Yes, I am what you would call a Seeker. I'm not going to eat or harm you. In fact, I've been observing you since you arrived, before you were cut off from your native universe." The Seeker spoke calmly and with perfect clarity.



So many questions raced through the baroness' mind. Native universe? What did the Seeker want? Why did it wait till now to reveal itself? Something was amiss.

"You seem apprehensive." The Seeker's words returned Lucille from her thoughts.

"Native universe? Would you mind explaining to me what you mean?" Lucille asked.

"Your universe, what you call Novus, is one of countless others. The Infinite Dark has within it many universes... every universe in fact. Where you come from, is your native universe. Most beings don't remember that there are others beyond their own."

Lucille was silent, listening intently.

"A universe could be similar to your own, but with small variations. They could also be very dissimilar; one may have no life, another a utopia and yet another where carbon-based lifeforms do not exist but are instead beings of pure energy. These universes held within the Infinite Dark are known collectively as the 'Omniverse'. Once, these realms were all connected by rifts – just like your gate over there – but this is no longer the case."

"What happened to the connection?" Lucille was fascinated, but not surprised after her studies and experiences.

The Seeker was impressed with her intellect, though it had other plans. "All will be explained in due time." came the reply.

Lucille had another question for the void creature, "Why am I trapped here?"

The Seeker tilted its head, almost upside down looking down at Lucille. It came so close that she was almost inclined to lean back, but the former baroness held her ground.

"Do you mean to ask why your rift gate is inactive? Or why you have no power to return to your home? In regard to the rift gate, your enemies have utterly destroyed its counterpart in the Novus universe. Perhaps you suspected this."

Lucille slowly nodded in silence.

The Seeker continued, "As for your hopes of making a new gateway home, your outlook is bleak."

Altering its shape into that of a giant wolf, the Seeker maintained its dark form and white eyes. Lucille, however, was still confused as to her lack of control in the enclave. She had made this place with magic power. Was she not the one who sustained it with her will?

The Seeker knew her thoughts. "Without the connection to your universe, you are powerless. Prior to its destruction, that gate had a connection to a physical realm, even when closed. Now, it is completely unattached."

"Surely not!" The Baroness was alarmed at the infiltration of her mind, but more concerned about the power she no longer could control. Lucille was aware that the Seeker knew many things, perhaps it would be able to provide answers.

The Seeker resumed, "You've tried to use your magic, but it has had... undesired results. You tried to conjure many things, but all you've produced is nothing. You want to construct a new gate and return home... but you've had no success."

Lucille glanced at the broken gate and remembered her frustration, before looking at her void born guest.

"Without any universe as anchor, the Infinite Dark is pure chaos. You are not connected to anything aside from your own consciousness: you are not formed of the Infinite Dark and do not belong here. What good are you like this? Trapped in this... enclave of yours? You even have no control over the tides of energy flowing freely just outside your window."

The Seeker, previously shaped as a giant wolf, then changed form into a bird, like a shadowy owl. It flew up to the top of the library shelf above the room, and again, looked down on her.

"You mortals do like your knowledge. However, it is of no use to you now. All this power, the magic you unwittingly steal from other universes, what good is it?"

"Steal... from other universes?" Lucille was perplexed.

The Seeker made a strange sound, perhaps a form of laughter. It then spoke once more.

"Since the universes are no longer connected to each other via the Infinite Dark, the flow of various powers has trickled – or funnelled – into your universe. The amusing part is that the Novus universe does not have inherent magic of its own. It's all from... elsewhere."