

Tenet's Tale

Brannon Hollingsworth

Lastday, 28th of Sumborok, just past midnight

Temple of the Lost, Ethereal Citadel

My thinly-lashed eyes fluttered open; I could rest no more. Technically, we ethereans

do not sleep as do the mortal races. We grow weary, yes, but we do not sleep. Some say this has to do with our intrinsic, divine ties to the banished gods; others name it a curse and a burden that my kind must bear. Who may be right, I think, we shall never know.

Nevertheless, it is true that my kind must periodically return to our place of origin, the Ethereal Plane or we *fade*. In Feridar, the etherean's native tongue, this fading is called *yil'ya a'feth*, or bond trance. It is a condition that abandons ethereans, unconscious and

defenseless, in the physical world. We remain thusly until drawn home by the Ethereal Plane itself or by the act of someone in the physical realm.

Regardless, I could rest no more, nor could I continue to hide. The times are rare, but occasionally, I wish I could lie, if only to myself. Ethereans cannot lie – something within our deific cores prevents it. The truth was I was tired of hiding – from myself, my vision, and my love.

I cast my eyes over the forsaken scene of the Temple of the Lost and pondered how many times the vision, or her face, had come unbidden to me. The scintillating light from the ethereal curtain, that which divides my world from hers, played hide and seek amongst the sinuous pillars that drifted smoke-like through the vacuous space around me. I lowered my head, seeking the guidance of Truth. Many deemed my dedication foolish, my time and efforts wasted. They could not have been more wrong. Truth had always guided and driven me. The moment I closed my dark eyes, the vision rose again to my mind's eye:

I hear the musical harmony of falling water and smell the comforting scents of cool earth and damp moss. I can feel the brush of leafy ferns and the waterfall's spray as it playfully leaps over and rushes about rounded stones. I like it here; things are simple, and all is what it seems. There is truth in this place. I am standing in an ancient grotto, surrounded by earth, stone, water, and plants that extend into wispy shadow. A massive sheet of dazzling fluid falls, bisecting the entire grotto; from whence the waterfall descends, I cannot tell. It matters little, as I am content to merely...exist...in this magnificent, peaceful place.

It is hard to tell through the mirror-like cascade, but beyond its surface there is a being whose form gives hints of light and scales. The faceless figure moves quickly, shoving its lightly-scaled hand directly through the fall's torrent, dividing it. I am rooted to the spot, my eyes drawn towards this hand as if by magic. It trembles, as if carrying a heavy burden, and rotates upward. Its fingers open like the petals of a slowly blooming flower. In the center of the palm rests a roughly carved, stone figurine. Despite its crude craftsmanship, I know what it is: the knight – in chess, the queen's defender.

I am drawn to it. I stretch forth my hand to claim it. When my fingers meet cold, wet stone, the being speaks to me through the veil of water.

“Tenet, a shadow is coming...”

I could rest or hide no longer. Something foul was coming to my city, and I had to stop it...

Lastday, 28th of Sumborok, pre-dawn

Eastern battlements, Market Ward

I stood shivering atop the battlements of the eastern wall and waited for the sun to rise over Crown. The fleeting night, one of autumn's last, had been dark and frigid. Soon, winter would creep in like an old crone and overtake us. My breath came in wisps of mist that slithered away to join the vast haze that seemed to swallow the entire world.

At first, the gulf was a vast plane of unending, undulating grey, much like my home, but ever so slowly, a miraculous thing occurred. Color began to seep into the world around