

SQUEAK: What's happening?

LANOLIN: He hears something.

LANOLIN goes to ROUKE. She takes a clipboard off the wall of his station.

Start

ROUKE: Lan?

LANOLIN: I'm here.

ROUKE: It's night.

Sound seeps in. It's the sounds of a city at night in the winter. Wind between buildings. Busses hissing. The hum of power lines and the muffled crunch of thousands of boots in new snow - nearly a million people huddled, breathing together.

ROUKE: It's cold. It's cold and it's night.

She writes.

Warm inside. Thinking of how there are things that are untamable. Thinking that there are things that are bigger than us. Still bigger. Things that can't be persuaded. The weather. The winter. The ice. Things you can't amend, only protect yourself against. They are all thinking, together thankfulness. Thankfulness to the gods of innovation and progress. Thankfulness to the gods of warm air tunneling through glass sidewalks in the sky that make it always summer indoors. Thankfulness for not having to live like those before them – exposed and desperate. They are civilized now. They think. My children are better for not having to fight – always fight – just to stay alive. They can breathe warm inside air and eat summer fruit on the coldest night of the dead of the winter. Together, they are thinking – breathing – warm under the snow, under the ice glass chunks of fallen sky – that their gods have been kind.

The sounds dissolve back into the roar of deep space. ROUKE takes off the headphones. He is shaken. The room is silent except for the whir of the Ears above. LANOLIN keeps writing. ROUKE watches her, transfixed, as though she is doing something foreign and magical. She finishes and passes it to him. He touches the page like he might be able to understand it through his fingers. He gives it back to her. She touches his face.

End

SQUEAK: What is it?

LANOLIN: What?

SQUEAK: What did he hear?

LANOLIN: A...fragment.

SQUEAK: It is real?

LANOLIN: We don't know.

SQUEAK: Where does it come from?

LANOLIN: It's hard to say.

SQUEAK: Is it...sent?

LANOLIN: What do you mean?

SQUEAK: Is it... is someone else out there thinking those thinking those things – saying them – and that's what he heard?

LANOLIN: I don't know. I think they're things that have already happened. Have already been felt, or thought, or spoken. I think they go out there and keep going until they hit something that sends them back.

They think it's the old civilizations. That – once upon a time – back when we kept all the history of the world hovering in the air around us – before the collapse and the migration to the Earie – that people were obsessed with keeping record. That those first people were so afraid of disappearing forever that they would send things out into the stars – bits of themselves, of their thoughts, of their impressions of their world so that it wouldn't get lost. So that it couldn't die. So they wouldn't die.

We are scavengers. That's what Council wants – to find pieces –

SQUEAK: To remake it?

The door opens. MARCUS appears. He carries wiring that looks like it's been pulled directly out of something else. He peels off his outer clothes as he climbs down the ladder.

LANOLIN: Where's Fayette?

MARCUS: I don't know.

LANOLIN: He went to get you.

MARCUS: I didn't see him.