

THE PIONEERS

For a long time, Earth was thought to be the only habitable planet in the observable universe. Humanity believed it was alone in a world so vast that it would take billions of generations to explore. This belief held until fifty-six years ago when the first man landed on the moon. What was discovered there remained highly classified, shared only among a select few.

On the dark side of the moon, a portal to another world was found. Not just any world, but the Solverse—a place known for its ever-changing nature. After twenty years of examination, the portal was deemed safe, and an elite crew of six astronauts was sent to explore beyond. However, contact with Earth was lost after they entered the portal. Thirteen years later, a lone transmission came through.

“Sol1 to base. Sol1 to base. We’ve touched down. The world seems inhabitable.” And then, the transmission cut off.

Three years later, a small population, consisting of citizens from various countries, was secretly sent to colonize the new world beyond the portal.

Chapter One: Farewell Earth

The entire world held its breath as the starship left Earth’s orbit. This was not just any mission—it was humanity’s last hope. To many, this journey was seen as the first step in colonizing Mars, but for a select few, this was the mission that could determine humanity's survival.

A massive starship soared through space, its sleek design reminiscent of a plane, but much larger. It strained against the cosmos, expelling fuel in massive bursts. Inside the control room, three astronauts sat at the helm.

Nusha, the lead astronaut, exuded confidence. Her white hair was tied up neatly, her eyes burning with excitement. Beside her sat Grace, a dark-haired woman, her expression filled with concern. To Nusha's left was BK, a young man with a pale face.

Nusha broke the silence. "Come on, guys. It's just establishing a colony beyond the portal. How hard can it be?"

Grace shot her a look. "Easy for you to say. I have a four-year-old at home. Plus, I'm responsible for thousands of people on this mission."

BK chimed in, "Nusha's always the optimistic one. Nothing ever gets her down."

The crew continued talking for hours, their voices blending with the distant hum of the starship's engines. Then, the ship made contact with the portal, sending ripples through the universe. For a moment, everything seemed to freeze.

Something was about to change forever.

Chapter Two: New World

The last thing BK saw before leaving Earth was a blinding light, brighter than the sun. It felt like a connection to Earth was slowly slipping away, and an overwhelming sense of sorrow and loss flooded his soul. It was as if a loved one had died. Then, the pain came—physical pain that made him feel like his body was stretching and compressing beyond its limits. His vision blurred, and consciousness slipped away.

“Wake up. Wake up!” a voice called out. BK’s mind scrambled to make sense of it. His eyes opened, but all he saw was a figure standing over him. He could barely focus, but he recognized her—Nusha.

Her voice was soft, but insistent. “My name is Nusha. I know you have a lot on your mind, but you need to stay calm. Your ship made it through, mostly intact. And yes, I haven’t aged much—that’s for later. Please, don’t try to sit up.”

BK tried to process her words, but his body refused to listen. When he attempted to sit up, he noticed his lower body was missing. His mind went blank, and his surroundings faded to black once more.

Chapter Three: The Unknown

The starship had made it through the portal, but not without its cost. The first expedition team, Sol1, had greeted the wreckage of the ship when they arrived. The vessel was torn in half, and more than half of the original crew had perished. Only one of the control room crew survived: BK.

When he regained consciousness, he learned of the horrors that had taken place since their arrival. Time moved differently here—what had felt like a few years was, in reality, decades on Earth. The first transmission had been sent nearly forty years ago. While BK had been unconscious, Earth had descended into war.

The new world was even more dangerous. Abominations roamed the land, and the survivors had faced them time and again. The only thing keeping them alive was the Aethertech devices discovered by Sol1. These ancient devices, powered by aetherstones, were the key to survival in this strange land.

Now, only three of Sol1’s original members remained: Nusha, Aboul, and Caitlyn.

“We’ll explore deeper into the ruins tomorrow,” Aboul said, his voice steady. “We have more manpower now, and our safety should be more assured. But back when it was only the three of us, we couldn’t venture too far.”

They had made significant progress over the year, discovering that the Solverse was merely a passage to another world. The ruins were their only hope, and it was there they believed the answers lay.

Chapter Four: Crimson Pillar

After months of exploration, the survivors finally reached their goal—the Crimson Pillar. It was the last hope for humanity, the only known way out of the Solverse. According to ancient records, the pillar was a temple dedicated to an entity known as “Modar,” an Anomaly on the brink of death.

“How are we going to get past the Anomaly?” Alex asked, his voice heavy with doubt.

“We’ve learned enough to know that Modar is in a weakened state,” Aboul replied. “The ancients did it, and so can we.”

“Who knows how much time has passed? Modar could have regained its strength,” Alex countered, a shiver running down his spine at the thought.

Nusha looked at them both. “We came this far. We can’t turn back now. If we die, we die fighting.”

BK stayed silent, focusing on the task at hand. There was no time for doubt. The weight of humanity rested on their shoulders.

Chapter Five: Escape

The inside of the Crimson Pillar was breathtaking, with murals depicting the ancient civilization's history. As the sun set, the survivors set their trap, preparing for the oncoming wave of abominations. They fortified the entrance with Aethertech barriers and strategically placed traps along the corridors. Soldiers took their positions, weapons drawn, and every soldier was ready for the fight ahead.

Nusha stood at the front, her grip tight on her weapon. "They're coming," she whispered, her voice steady.

Alex and BK moved to position themselves at the far end of the entrance, setting additional Aethertech explosives and ensuring their escape route was clear. Aboul, ever the strategist, barked orders. "Hold the line! We can't afford to be overwhelmed. We must make it to the inner chamber."

The night fell swiftly, and with it came the sound of distant shrieks. Then, the first wave of abominations arrived. Shadows slithered out of the darkness—humanoid, monstrous forms with claws scraping against stone.

The traps triggered—blades of condensed aether cut through the horde, while explosive charges detonated in brilliant flashes of light. For every creature that fell, however, three more seemed to take its place.

"Keep fighting! We can't let them breach!" Aboul shouted as he and Nusha fought side by side. BK moved through the chaos with precision, protecting their flank. Each strike was fueled by the adrenaline of survival.

The nightmarish creatures surged forward, testing every barrier. But as the survivors continued to battle, the tower suddenly shook. The walls cracked and groaned under the strain.

Then, from the darkness beyond the entrance, it appeared—Modar.

Chapter Six: The Last Guardian

Despite their best efforts, the survivors failed to stop Modar. Its massive antlers, more formidable than any weapon they had, tore through their defenses. Finally, it was BK who understood the truth—someone had to stay behind to open the Portal.

“I’ll do it,” BK said, stepping forward.

Nusha and the others protested, but BK was resolute. “The ancients knew. One stays. The rest go on.”

With a heavy heart, the survivors stepped through the Portal, leaving BK behind to fulfill his duty. As the last of them vanished into the unknown world, BK activated the device in his hand. The Portal shimmered and closed behind them.

Epilogue: A New Dawn

On the other side of the Portal, the survivors emerged into the Solverse—a land of golden skies and floating islands. The air was sweet, the land fertile. For the first time in years, hope blossomed among them.

Nusha stood at the edge of this new world, gazing out over the horizon. “We’ll name this place after him,” she said, her voice filled with reverence.

Aboul nodded. “A fitting tribute.”

And so, the first city of this new world was built in honor of the nameless hero—BK, the last guardian of the Crimson Pillar.

Far away, in a dying world, a single light flickered out.

But in the Solverse, a new story had just begun.

Let me know if you'd like any further adjustments!