

HIGHLIGHT TO SEE CONTENT WARNINGS:

VAL:

(as the intro plays) At the edge of Gilt City, the words rise unbidden like monster waves, and all await the arrival of the Night Post.

VAL:

(writing) Dear Milo and Clementine,

It's hard to know where to start when everything feels like an end, so I'll just try my best. And I'm obviously not the greatest with words, but I guess this is how we do things. I just wanted there to be some kind of record, in case... shit, I don't even know. If Clem's weird-ass dreams and all the other crumbs we've found can be believed, then a sudden and violent end to Gilt City is on the cards, but I have a feeling that somehow that's not the worst possible outcome. After all, it's happened before, and that hasn't stopped people from building their golden skyscrapers in this hateful swamp.

So, yeah, this is one of those "in case this thing goes sideways" kind of notes. I'm pretty sure it will— sideways, backwards, off a cliff and down a sinkhole. We've gotten each other through a lot of bad shit, maybe not as dire as this, but it matters. In eight years on this job, no one had my back like that before. No one had my back before this job, either. I always thought that when Gilt City finally got what was coming to it, I'd be watching from the sidelines and cheering on the end, not risking myself to save it for the sake of two fellow yokels. And Nick, I guess. I know y'all would want me to include him. With all said and done, even Wilhelmina wasn't so bad. We were all playing our best from a very shitty deck of cards.

The point is... I love you both. I haven't had the urge or chance to say that to anyone in a very long time. Maybe it would be better to say it in person, but you know me. Yeah, you know me. And you stuck around anyway. So, here's to the past, I guess, and the future, if we have one. "Speed of a thousand Daffodils," or whatever it is Clem says.

Milo, I doubt there's any way I can stop you from reading the rest of this, but the next part's just for Clementine, so at least pretend to close your eyes or something.

Oh, dear Clementine,

I *am* pissed at you for bailing on our plan, and I *do* think it was stupid to stay, but I get it. Not everyone has the option to cut their losses, or my experience at it. And it didn't matter anyway. That "destiny" or "purpose" you keep talking about got to us first. But you know, when I heard your words in my head and realized what you were about to do, I was ready to make that deal first. I hate the idea of fate, but I'd rather lose myself to it than you.

There's so much I want to tell you, but I'm not poetic like you are. All I can do is hope there's enough time ahead of us for me to show you how I feel. I wish you could see my dreams. When you're sleeping next to me, the places my mind goes...

You know, I was doing some reading last night. Did you know that in Valencia, every year, the neighborhoods build these huge monuments out of paper, some beautiful, some campy, just amazing works of art. Then, at midnight at the end of five days of partying, they light fireworks and set all the monuments ablaze. They're called *falles*— torches, painstakingly crafted visions brought to life for the purpose of being destroyed in a fiery spectacle. Some see it as a way of burning their memories of the last year, freeing themselves from the past. It's not painful to watch their creations go up in smoke; it's hopeful, ecstatic, even. I like that. I'd love to see it one day.

Clem, you need to know that whatever happens, we'll see this through to the end. If nothing but bad things are ahead of us, if we never make it to Valencia or even beyond the Skelter, I still—

[THE BUZZER SOUNDS IN THE OTHER ROOM AS THE STATION'S FRONT DOOR OPENS.]

VAL:

(papers rustle) Ah, shit. *(shouting)* We're closed! Come back tomorr—

[OFFICE DOOR OPENS AND TWO SETS OF FOOTSTEPS ENTER.]

VAL:

Oh. It's you two. *(crumpling paper)*

MILO:

What was that?

VAL:

Nothing. What are you doing here?

CLEMENTINE:

I had a dream about you.

VAL:

Like a sexy dream, or—

CLEMENTINE:

A "Val's doing something very dangerous" dream.

VAL:

I don't know, that sounds kind of sexy to me.

MILO:

Clem was worried, so we got here early.

VAL:

Now I have to look out for sleeping Big Brother. Great.

MILO:

Was she right to be concerned?

CLEMENTINE:

It wasn't just about you, it was about all of this. The Other. The Messenger.

MILO:

So what were you doing?

VAL:

Nothing... yet.

CLEMENTINE:

(pointed) Val.

VAL:

It sounds dumb, but I was about to write a letter to the unseen supernatural being with the power to wipe us out.

MILO:

So we reach the Messenger by sending it a note?

VAL:

Well, we don't. You two don't know its language. But now that I'm Postmaster, I do.

CLEMENTINE:

(remembering) Messages are power.

VAL:

Exactly. Block told us that when she nearly killed us with a letter.

MILO:

I guess it makes sense that a message in its language from a pigeon would get its attention. But will that be enough? Will it even respond?

VAL:

I have no idea.

CLEMENTINE:

More importantly, why did you think you could do this without us?

VAL:

Because I *can* do it without you. You should be as far away as possible, in case... I don't know, fire rains from the sky, or this building plummets to the center of the earth. Which would be a fun callback, and just my luck.

MILO:

What Clem means is, we're not gonna let you do this without us, whatever it is.

VAL:

Y'all, come on. Have an ounce of self-preservation instinct, for once.

MILO:

Hah. The hypocrisy!

CLEMENTINE:

We're not going anywhere. After all of this time trying to untangle this whole mess, we are not about to bail now. Besides, we work here, and our shift starts in an hour. Just pick up that pen, and get to writing your little letter.

VAL:

Sheesh! Bossy.

MILO:

What exactly are you going to write?

VAL:

Well, I can't translate it for you, it's not... it's just very different, and I don't understand the language very well myself, yet. But I was thinking something along the lines of, "We don't want to be at war with the Other, please don't wipe us out again, you're so sexy, haha"?

MILO:

Maybe add something like, "from the innocent couriers you trapped here, who didn't want anything to do with this."

VAL:

"And who never did anything wrong in their lives," got it.

CLEMENTINE:

Tell it that humans *can* live in harmony with the Other, they just need to understand.

MILO:
Is that true, though?

CLEMENTINE:
We have to believe it is, or there's no point to any of this.

MILO:
Oh! And... ask it what happens to people who are reclaimed by the Other. Where do they go?
Could... Ashley still be around?

VAL:
No more suggestions! Just let me write. *(pen scratching, then a pause)*

CLEMENTINE:
Um, are you...

VAL:
It's complicated, all right? There's not, like, a Rosetta Stone for this shit. *(more writing)*

MILO:
Is that it?

VAL:
I think so. I guess I'll just sign it. Not sure what to do with it after that. It's not like our eldritch overlord has a P.O. box.

[VAL SIGNS THE LETTER WITH A DRAMATIC FLOURISH.]

VAL:
(exhale) Okay. Uh...I don't-

[A FLICKER AND POP AS THE LIGHTS ALL GO OUT AT ONCE.]

MILO:
It's probably too much to hope that that was just a breaker flipping, huh?

CLEMENTINE:
Does anyone else feel cold, all of a sudden?

VAL:
Where's the damn door?

[THEIR FOOTSTEPS SHIFT FROM WOOD TO DIRT. A MOURNFUL WIND BLOWS, AND LIGHT RAIN FALLS. OCCASIONAL DISTANT THUNDER. HOOFBEATS APPROACH.]

VAL:

Oh, fuck me.

MILO:

(sigh) We should've guessed.

THE STRANGER:

Not everything has to be a twist. Sometimes the most obvious way is the most satisfying.

CLEMENTINE:

Is that why your crossroads isn't a crossroad at all? Just one dark path towards the eye of the storm?

THE STRANGER:

What you see here is a courtesy. I'm a moral, you see, a metaphor: the paralysis of indecision, the illusion of choice. But for y'all's sake, I've dropped the pretense.

VAL:

How considerate.

MILO:

And I'm sure it has nothing to do with you leading us exactly where you want us to go.

THE STRANGER:

Pigeons, you're already goin' where you're goin'. You started on this path a long time ago. What you don't realize is, I'm the one trying to give all you poor mortals a choice.

VAL:

Ironic, coming from someone who's been trying to manipulate and intimidate us this entire time.

THE STRANGER:

Come on now, Valencia. You're Postmaster now. Ain't it time you peered behind the curtain? All the information you got has come from me, one way or another. What you've done with that information... well, you've had as much freedom as any of your kind.

CLEMENTINE:

Then why? What are you trying to accomplish?

THE STRANGER:

Humans lead such brief lives. The end of an era... it's just that: an end. But think how it must be for one like me, seeing the same story play out the same way, over and over. Gilt City, Prime City, and on and on, back through the ages. Can you imagine what it's like to be the one standing at the crossroads, powerless to stop you little creatures from taking the same damn

path to your destruction, every single time? That ain't a gamble; it's purgatory! I shouldn't be like this! *(pause)* So I'm ending it. I'm unraveling the lasso. I break this cycle, and the world takes a new path, one with variety, mystery, life... chaos.

CLEMENTINE:

So you want to save Gilt City... for the novelty?

THE STRANGER:

I aim to unwrite the ending that till now has been the only one. Seems likely that humans will find some other way to destroy themselves. But I don't know that for sure, any more than y'all. And that uncertainty— that's where I live again.

MILO:

(dry) Pardon my skepticism, but this sounds awfully convenient. If you were trying to stop the city's destruction all along, why not just tell us? Why not explain all this and actually help?

THE STRANGER:

I ain't all-powerful, you know. Compared to the Messenger, I'm small potatoes. I couldn't move against it or its agents directly, so I had to let you do it on your own.

CLEMENTINE:

And what exactly have we done?

THE STRANGER:

You've said your piece to the Messenger, just like you planned. Are you ready to receive its answer?

VAL:

Does it matter? There's only one way forward.

THE STRANGER:

But not for long. See ya at the end of the road. *(hoofbeats depart)*

[THE THREE BEGIN WALKING. GRADUALLY, THE RAIN DIES DOWN AND NIGHTTIME SOUNDS OF INSECTS EMERGE.]

MILO:

How far do you think we have to walk?

CLEMENTINE:

I don't think distance is the same here... wherever here is. Just a moment ago we were standing in the Postmaster's office.

MILO:

I don't appreciate being magicked through space, even *if* the Stranger is telling the truth about being on our side.

CLEMENTINE:

They're on their own side, like all spirits. It might not be a lie, but I wouldn't take anything they say at face value.

MILO:

Right. Let's keep our guard up.

CLEMENTINE:

What do you think, Val? You've been quiet.

VAL:

I'm reading. Er, listening. There are a lot of messages here.

CLEMENTINE:

What are they saying?

VAL:

I don't really know. There's so much overlapping, some of it in languages I don't understand. There's a lot of... fear, and worry. Some hope, too.

MILO:

Are you able to... turn it off?

VAL:

Kind of? They're like vague thoughts that crop up at the back of my mind. It would be hard not to hear them at all, like not thinking.

MILO:

We could probably all use a break from thinking for a while. *(pause)* Wait a minute. I recognize that tree. The Stranger was bringing us to Station 101?

VAL:

I guess our brand-new shithole wasn't good enough for the Messenger. *(footsteps stop)*

CLEMENTINE:

We know that spirits are very active here. Maybe it's important.

MILO:

I'd ask if we really want to go in, but...it looks like the way back is gone.

VAL:

(mocking) "I'm a metaphor." That asshole. *(exhale)* Let's get this over with.

CLEMENTINE:

I'm with you.

[THEIR FOOTSTEPS RING ON STONE, INTERMITTENTLY MUFFLED BY GRASS. A VERY LARGE DOOR CREAKS OPEN, AND FOR A MOMENT, VOICES ARE HEARD BEFORE THEY SINK TO WHISPERS. A LIGHT WIND RUSTLES THE LEAVES ABOVE.]

SERENE:

Welcome! We've been waiting for you for *sooooo* long.

MILO:

That's why he wanted us here.

SERENE:

We couldn't get started without our honored Postmaster! *(pouty)* I was getting really impatient.

VAL:

Okay, now I have a bad feeling.

SERENE:

There's no need for suspicion, Valencia. We're here to help you! We're the Birdwatchers, remember? We have nothing but devotion for our city's wonderful pigeons, especially for the postmaster who's going to connect us with our Lord of Birds.

CLEMENTINE:

You mean the Messenger.

SERENE:

Do you think it cares what you call it? Not at all! A name is only a weak distillation of an idea.

MILO:

Well, fuck off. We don't want your help.

SERENE:

Oh, Milo. Don't think I've forgotten how mean you can be. But it doesn't matter what we think of each other personally - you need us. Your new postmaster doesn't have the power or expertise to survive contact with the Messenger. Not on her own.

CLEMENTINE:

What are you saying? That if we go through with this, Val could die?

[THE WHISPERS DIE DOWN. SPURS JINGLE AS THE STRANGER APPROACHES.]

THE STRANGER:

I told you I had a use for these odd little acolytes. This is it. Think of 'em as my rodeo clowns. If the bronco gets loose, they'll take the brunt of its fury.

VAL:

No, this isn't— I don't trust any of you. I don't need your riddles, or your rodeo clowns... I'll do this myself, and damn the consequences.

THE STRANGER:

As interestin' as it might be to see you try, that don't square with me. Why do you think I chose you instead of Mr. Best? Instead of any other luckless postmaster? I had other irons in the fire, sure – in fact, it was damn near Ms. Prescott standing in your place – but I was always rootin' for you. *(a rustle as they draw something from their coat)* On account o' this.

VAL:

My...necklace? *(pause, a realization)* You were the shopkeeper.

THE STRANGER:

This land loves two things best of all: stories and pain. *(necklace clacks)* This little trinket has quite the pedigree of both.

MILO:

Am I the only one not following any of this? What does that rock have to do with anything?

THE STRANGER:

You want all my cards on the table? Here they are: Mx. Torres is mine. Well, partly mine. They gave me their past of their own free will. Just enough to give me a foothold against the Messenger's control. When Valencia receives the Message – a destructive power great enough to unmake this city and everyone in it – the Message will in turn belong to me.

CLEMENTINE:

We won't let that happen. Val, get behind me.

VAL:

(scoffs) You bet, string bean.

THE STRANGER:

(sigh) Get the postmaster and the letter.

[SOUNDS OF A SCUFFLE AS SEVERAL BIRDWATCHERS SURROUND VAL AND GRAB HER, WHILE CLEM AND MILO TRY TO STOP THEM.]

MILO:

Hey!

CLEMENTINE:

No!

MILO:

Let go of her! (*grunt*) Get off!

CLEMENTINE:

Val!

SERENE:

Cool it, you two. You're not helping anyone with the histrionics. Here's your letter, Lone Stranger.

THE STRANGER:

Hnh. Is the Reverend ready?

SERENE:

Ready and waiting.

THE STRANGER:

Right, then. Let's get this show on the road, cowpokes.

[MANY ROBES RUSTLE AS THE ASSEMBLED BIRDWATCHERS MOVE TOGETHER. THEY HUM IN UNISON, AN EXTENDED, LOW NOTE. A LIGHTER CLICKS.]

SERENE:

(*hums*) (*sing-song*) Spark to flame!

[THE LETTER CATCHES AND BURNS UP QUICKLY. THERE'S A CRACKLE AND WHOOSH LIKE A CANDLE BEING SNUFFED AS THE BIRDWATCHERS FALL SILENT. THE ONLY SOUND IS THE WHISPER OF BRANCHES ABOVE.]

MILO:

N-nothing's happening.

CLEMENTINE:

No. Look at Val.

[VAL GROANS AND DROPS TO HER KNEES. IN A RUSH, A CHORUS OF OTHERWORLDLY VOICES BUILDS:

- "YOU HAVE CHANGED"
- "YOU CAN'T CHANGE"

- "THE END IS THE BEGINNING IS THE END"
- "YOU CAN'T LOOK BACK"
- "THE WAY IS BEHIND YOU"]

[VAL IS BREATHING HARD AS THE VOICES BECOME UNINTELLIGIBLE. THE BUILDING SHAKES, THE GREAT TREE CREAKING AND SWAYING. THE STRANGER'S SPURS CLINK AS THEY PACE AROUND THE CIRCLE.]

THE STRANGER:

That's it. Come on, little doggie.

SERENE:

All together, Birdwatchers! Don't you dare screw up now!

[MORE RUSTLING OF ROBES, AND THE SPARK AND CRACKLE OF DOZENS OF TINY FIRES BEING LIT. THE SPURS STOP ABRUPTLY]

THE STRANGER:

Hang on. Just what are y'all-

SERENE:

Now, Reverend! Pull it through!

[THE BIRDWATCHERS HUM. THE REVEREND SCREAMS, GUTTURAL AND INHUMAN. THE TREE SPLITS WITH A THUNDEROUS CRACK.]

THE STRANGER:

You damn fools! You can't bring it here!

SERENE:

We don't serve you, cowboy. The Skelter belongs to the Messenger.

THE STRANGER:

It ain't like you think! That thing don't fit in this world-

[A HIGH-PITCHED HARMONIC DRONE SPLITS THE AIR. DEBRIS CRASHES ALL AROUND AS THE BUILDING BEGINS TO FALL APART.]

CLEMENTINE:

Milo!

MILO:

Grab Val!

[A SHOCKWAVE, THEN A GREAT FLASH AND CRACKLE, AS OF LIGHT WASHING OVER EVERYTHING.]

[A CLOCK TICKS FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN SLOWS AND STOPS. A PEN SCRATCHES ON PAPER, AND THE FAMILIAR STATION 103 INTERIOR DOOR OPENS.]

CLEMENTINE:

Oh, hey, Val. Didn't realize *you'd* still be here.

VAL:

You're late. Rough night?

CLEMENTINE:

It was fine. It doesn't bother you that you're always late.

VAL:

You're right, it doesn't. Ashley hasn't made it back from his route yet either. Surprised me, is all. You're both so--

CLEMENTINE:

A-Ashley? Uh, you mean Milo.

VAL:

Uh, no, I... I'm confused. I think I just lost my train of thought.

CLEMENTINE:

Mmm, something feels off. Where's Nicholas?

VAL:

Oh, he's covering for Tommy tonight, remember?

CLEMENTINE:

For Tommy... no, that can't be right. *(pause)* Val, you know my father is--

[MILO'S HEAVY FOOTSTEPS ENTER, AND HE CLOSSES THE DOOR BEHIND HIM.]

MILO:

There you are! I've been looking for y'all for-- well, I... I don't know how long. You're still not on route?

CLEMENTINE:

Uh, we just got back. I think.

VAL:

Okay, this is ridiculous. I know we do everything together, but having a collective stroke is where I draw the line.

MILO:

I– hm. Let’s think logically. What’s the last thing y’all remember?

CLEMENTINE:

I remember... I was holding Val’s hand as tight as I could. Like I was afraid we’d be separated.

VAL:

I remember that too. Still a little stiff, actually. *(pause)* And all the words were– they’re gone. Holy shit, I-I just realized, I can’t hear them anymore.

MILO:

What does that mean? Did the Stranger get their “Message”?

VAL:

I have no idea. I didn’t hear any message.

CLEMENTINE:

Maybe they didn’t get the chance. It seemed like Serene was trying to summon something.

VAL:

And if that “something” was the Messenger–

MILO:

It wouldn’t work. Or shouldn’t work. It requires “separation,” like Nick said. Because its time is different, or something like that.

CLEMENTINE:

What would happen if they did it anyway?

VAL:

Look, trying to group-think our way through ghost physics isn’t getting us anywhere. Let’s just go, see if we can find someone who knows what’s going on.

[THE DOOR OPENS, LETTING IN A HOWLING WIND. ALL THREE STOP SHORT IN THE DOORWAY.]

MILO:

Watch it!

CLEMENTINE:

Ah! That’s a long way down.

VAL:

It wasn't like this when y'all came in just a moment ago, right?

CLEMENTINE:

I don't know. How long is a moment?

NICHOLAS:

(as the outro plays) Thank you for joining us on the final route of the season. If you'd like to support Station 103, consider joining our Patreon for exclusive mini-episodes and bonus stories. Or check out our Redbubble and Ko-Fi shops for Night Post merch and digital story collections. Send a letter to a lovely *fallera*, and tell them about The Night Post.

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RAE L.:

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