

Somnolent Wanderer

Juha the Cave Spider (438.1)

You dream that you are in a desert of white sand. Dunes stretch as far as the eye can see beneath a clear desert sky. It is night. The moon is barely there at all – a knife-thin sliver that hangs low in the sky, larger (closer?) than you have ever seen it before.

Here and there, incongruously, trees sprout from the desert sands. They seem healthy – spreading branches heavy with unfamiliar white blossom. A large rainbow-feathered bird perches amid the boughs of the nearest tree and launches itself into the air in a flurry of red, yellow, green, and blue feathers with a raucous, jarring cry. You shade your eyes to follow its flight as it spirals up towards the moon – and when you look back you realise your companions are all gone.

Within a moment or two you have forgotten they were ever there.

In their place – you are sure it was not there before – there is an oasis.

Your feet are bare against the cool, damp grass that sprouts at first intermittently and then with increasing regularity as you approach the pool of water. Unfamiliar trees – tall, thin, almost like reeds sized up to great height – cluster around the water. They have no branches but are topped with clusters of spreading leaves. Yellow fruit – or are they berries – hang far out of your reach at the very tops of the trees. A monkey peers at you suspiciously from the nearest tree, half hidden behind the trunk of the peculiar tree.

There are signs of habitation here. A tumbled wall of yellow stone here, an obelisk of sandstone cracked and worn by the centuries there.

Right by the edge of the water there is a great statue of some great feline beast – a lion perhaps – but it is hard to tell quite what it is as the head is gone – the neck a broken stump worn smooth by the ages. It is sitting down, and the oasis laps against its forepaws.

The waters of the oasis are clear – almost unsettlingly so. You can see that the bottom is covered in gently swaying pondweed, long fingers reaching up towards you. Fat golden fish swim lazily amongst the fronds, unaware or uncaring about the world above the surface of the lake.

There are signs the oasis is not entirely natural – hints of mosaic, cracked flat stones with too-regular lines appear here and there among the weeds. This was once a pool made by the hands of diligent craftsmen, but the years have seen the waters spread freely to create a lake that has eaten up the nearby buildings, conspiring with time to make a confused jumble of whatever palaces once stood here.

You are not alone.

A figure stands on the edge of the water. As you approach, they prod listlessly at the reeds along the banks with a long staff covered in golden decorations you cannot make out. They are dressed in fine stiff robes that appear to be woven of thin plates of gold that move almost like cloth does. Their entire head is concealed inside a peculiar golden helmet, face hidden by a grim and severe metal mask depicting a scowling, bearded man with exaggerated features that glares at you as you approach.

When they speak, though, their voice is that of a youth – a young man or woman – quite at odds with the severity of their clothing. Their accent is unfamiliar, and though they seem to be speaking in Imperial they slur their words slightly, or place their emphasis on the wrong syllables, or blur their vowels so it is not entirely clear sometimes what they are saying.

They are cordial enough however, welcoming you to the Palace of the Sun at Noon, most beautiful of the seven palaces of Ublo Satta. Or is it Ebla Sutto? Iblu Sotta? Abli Sattu? It is hard to be sure one way or

the other, given the way your companion speaks.

They are eager for conversation – they have been here a long time with nobody to talk to. They deflect questions about themselves, but drop heavy hints that they are someone important. Someone with a crucial role to play. Someone with heavy responsibilities. Someone with a destiny. A destiny they fear, from the edge in their voice. A destiny they do not welcome.

They are more interested in you – who you are, where you come from, how long you have traveled to reach the palace. Are you someone important in your own country? Why are you come to the Palace of the Sun at Noon? Have you visited the other palaces – the Palace of the Sun at Rest? The Palace of the Sun New Arisen? Or – and here the figure shudders in spite of themselves – the Palace of the Sun Who Sleeps?

They seem to think you are a visiting dignitary of some sort – a petitioner or diplomat of some kind. They make casual references to politics, to wars, to history that is utterly unfamiliar to you. Exotic names. Kava Tir. Ecathay. The Weirs of Muut. The Colossus of the Empty Quarter, and the dispute between the Ceraphs of Pattar who fight constantly for the right to claim the Quarter as their own.

In your turn you speak of the concerns that beset your waking lifedrawn out by the pleasant youth. Or are they a youth? How can you tell beneath that heavy robe, and that mask? Can you judge someone solely on their beautiful voice?

Politics, personal and Imperial. Battles and struggles. Worries. Dreams.

Back and forth. The specifics are hard to grasp but the generality... the generality is all too familiar. Even though the names are strange, you recognise the stories. Ambition. Desire. Treachery. Greed. Sorrow. Tragic misunderstandings. Cruel revenge. Hope. A quest for meaning. The search for power. The fear that when the grave yawns one will be forgotten.

You awaken suddenly between one word and the next, jarred out of your conversation, the details already fading slightly. Perhaps you struggle to keep some of the specifics, perhaps you let them fade away into a memory of a night spent talking with a stranger from an unknown world who at the same time seemed so very familiar.

Effect: Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the ritual Chamber of Delights (Night/8) and The Cuckoo's Edge (Autumn/6) as if you had mastered them; if you have already mastered one of these rituals, you may perform them as if you have one additional rank of Night magic. You should keep this vision and show it to a referee if you perform this ritual.

Roleplaying effect

When you awaken, for at least the next hour, you find yourself inadvertently referring to people and places with exotic sounding names. You may mean to say “Maarit is looking for you” but instead will say “Jana Tep is looking for you.” You may mean to discuss “the Dawnish problem” and instead begin talking about “the Abon Thul problem.” It is possible that if you are speaking to someone else who experienced this vision they may recognise your reference (you are encouraged to riff off one another to create a story around the mispoken words).

In addition, as long as you are under the effect of this enchantment, you feel a strong desire to speak to others about politics and history. You also find it easy to spot similarities between yourself and others – shared experiences and understanding.

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Zayst the Feeder (704.3)

You dream that you are in a desert of white sand. Dunes stretch as far as the eye can see beneath a clear desert sky. It is night. The moon is barely there at all – a knife-thin sliver that hangs low in the sky, larger (closer?) than you have ever seen it before.

Here and there, incongruously, trees sprout from the desert sands. They seem healthy – spreading branches heavy with unfamiliar white blossom. A large rainbow-feathered bird perches amid the boughs of the nearest tree and launches itself into the air in a flurry of red, yellow, green, and blue feathers with a raucous, jarring cry. You shade your eyes to follow its flight as it spirals up towards the moon – and when you look back you realise your companions are all gone.

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There are signs of habitation here. A tumbled wall of yellow stone here, an obelisk of sandstone cracked and worn by the centuries there.

Right by the edge of the water there is a great statue of some great feline beast – a lion perhaps – but it is hard to tell quite what it is as the head is gone – the neck a broken stump worn smooth by the ages. It is sitting down, and the oasis laps against its forepaws.

The waters of the oasis are clear – almost unsettlingly so. You can see that the bottom is covered in gently swaying pondweed, long fingers reaching up towards you. Fat golden fish swim lazily amongst the fronds, unaware or uncaring about the world above the surface of the lake.

There are signs the oasis is not entirely natural – hints of mosaic, cracked flat stones with too-regular lines appear here and there among the weeds. This was once a pool made by the hands of diligent craftsmen, but the years have seen the waters spread freely to create a lake that has eaten up the nearby buildings, conspiring with time to make a confused jumble of whatever palaces once stood here.

You are not alone.

A figure stands on the edge of the water. As you approach, they prod listlessly at the reeds along the banks with a long staff covered in golden decorations you cannot make out. They are dressed in fine stiff robes that appear to be woven of thin plates of gold that move almost like cloth does. Their entire head is concealed inside a peculiar golden helmet, face hidden by a grim and severe metal mask depicting a scowling, bearded man with exaggerated features that glares at you as you approach.

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Yevgeni (62.1)

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You are not alone.

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Summer Girl the Empty One (269.1)

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