

Simarghl the Empti Wun (269.1)

Somnolent Wanderer

The moon is green. A faint jade sheen seems to cover it, as if it is wrapped in leaves. Gazing up, for a moment, you fancy you can make out individual lengths of bramble bound around it. The emerald sheen does nothing to change the wan moonlight that drips and drops across the midnight forest. A great flight of moths, dappled red and green, drift through the night sky above, the moonlight glancing off their wings.

You are on a path, bounded by little white stones. Pale-eyed, stick-lean figures peer at you from behind their boles, flinching away when they realise you are looking at them. You can hear them faintly murmuring, a rising-and-falling sound with no words in it, that ebbs and flows like foam on the seashore. They are not a threat.

There's music here. An annoying strain of music that nags and tugs at your sleeve whenever there is nothing to drown it out. You're reasonably certain it's coming from outside your head. It's probably not a threat.

In the distance, a tower. Grey stone. Dawnish in outline against the glittering stars. The path leads, predictably enough, toward its foot.

Something growls in the forest nearby. The stick-lean figures scatter away. The tiger is here, and it sounds annoyed. You can imagine it pacing through the trees, tail whipping in angry frustration, eyes questing for something to devour. Best not be out on the roads tonight.

You gather your robes and hurry toward the tower. The tiger does not follow. You can hear it moving away through the underbrush. But it has not gone far.

The door of the tower is open a crack. Firelight flickers within. Not welcoming, not warm. Just enough to outline the shadows that pool in the corners. Banners hang from the wall – plain black but with the outline vaguely perceptible of some great beast in a darker black thread. You are struck with the impression that at one point they would have been bright and vibrant as any Dawnish heraldry but that something has leached all the colour from them.

There is nobody here, but there are stairs that spiral up the inside wall. You follow them. One, two, three more floors, and a door opens onto the roof.

There is a man here. Gaunt to the point of illness. Skin white as snow. Eyes black as tar. Teeth sharp as spite. His finery is as austere as the banners below, all the bright dye gone to blackness. He stands near the ramparts, peering down at the forest, up at the stars. He glances over at you disinterestedly.

When you get a little closer, though, he seems to focus on you. His voice grates, rough and unpracticed. He is a noble of Dawn, and a master of the lore of the Winter realm. He has

come here with the aid of guisers – trickster naga who fed him honeyed tales of a land of dreams and nightmares. When the troubadours started to speak against him, when the magistrates began to question the other folk of his house, he sought out those guisers and they promised him a sanctuary where he would be safe forever more to continue his studies into the deeper truth of hunger and want. He came here eagerly.

Now... now he seethes with petty regret and recrimination. He was lied to, he claims. He was tricked. He was seduced by sweet words, no doubt inspired by the guiser's desire for the coin and the magic that he left behind. Everything here is empty. He has abandoned his studies. What is the point of them, now, here, where there is nobody to hunger nor want.

Self-pity streaks his face with bloody tears and in one shocking movement he mounts the ramparts. He sneers back at you defiantly, wind grasping and plucking at his limp black hair and his sable cloak. Then he hurls himself down towards the trees below.

Over the music, you hear the sickening crunch of bone and meat and stilled breath. The wind giggles and whispers around you. The stars wheel. It is getting colder. You are alone.

A few minutes later, inevitably, you hear the door at the bottom of the tower slam, and slow bitter feet on the stairs. They seem in no hurry to reach the roof, but they get there in time.

It is that same Dawnish noble. Gaunt to the point of illness. Skin white as snow. Eyes black as tar. Teeth sharp as spite. Finery is as austere as the banners below, all the bright dye gone to blackness.

He sneers at you, and strides past to take up the same spot by the ramparts he occupied when he arrived. But for a moment, in his eyes there is an endless welling of despair and fear and something lost. Perhaps it is delicious. Perhaps it is heartbreaking.

And then the conversation begins again, begins to cricle around the same and then you wake up recrimination and martyrdom and self pity.

And then you wake up, in your bed. Cold.

Effect

Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the ritual Hunger of the Draughir (Winter/2) and Sorin's Rite of Agony (Winter/20) as if you had mastered them; if you have already mastered this ritual, you may perform it as if you have one additional rank of Winter magic, subject to the normal rules for additional ranks of lore. You should keep this vision and show it to a referee if you perform this ritual.

Roleplaying effect: When you wake up, you are famished, and have the nagging feeling aware that no amount of food will satisfy you but in fact a nice breakfast will sort you right out. But after that... while you have this enchantment you find it all too easy to dwell on the past. Old mistakes or missteps keep bubbling up in your memory. The only way to get away from them is to lose yourself in new experiences.