

Zlata Ruznikova Perenel, The Weaver

(8733.1)

In your dream, you are in the woods again, on a path laid with irregular flagstones of green and white. The sky above is littered with stars that are at the same time entirely unknown and tantalisingly familiar. It is cool; the air has that fresh scent that comes immediately after an expected rainstorm, but everything is dry.

From off in the trees to your left, you can hear music. Like the stars it is both strange and familiar at the same time. A refrain that repeats over and over played on flutes or pipes – something of that nature. Annoyingly, some of the musicians are out of step with the others, turning what might have been a pleasing melody into a discordant mess. From your right comes an answering tune, again played in the slapdash manner that quickly becomes irritating. The two strains of music – in fact you get a sudden inspiration that they are part of the same piece of music just played separately – begins to grate on your nerves.

You move along the path, perhaps hoping to leave the annoying musicians behind you. The music hurries after you, like an unwanted guest attempting to force you into conversation at the wedding of two people you barely know. You pick up the pace.

The trees suddenly give way to grass, and the music suddenly stops. Stepping out of the forest, you find yourself on a plain of tall grass that stretches as far as you can see. Looking back, you see the forest dwindling into the distance, as if each moment you are moving half a mile or more rather than a few steps. Within a minute or two the forest is entirely gone and there is only the grass, and the path of white and green stones.

After another handful of minutes – perhaps what is time in a place like this? You come to a crossroads with a signpost. A signpost points the way down the four roads “SOTTON – HEBTON BRIDGE – OLKHEART – THE PALACE” The roads – yes they are roads, and no longer paved but simple tracks through the grass rutted with cart wheels - seem identical.

Standing at the crossroads is a brown haired Marcher youth, with a brown peaked cap and a pale blue robe. Over his shoulder is a light pack from which hang a number of items – a poppet of woven stalks, a cooking pan, a dusty empty bottle. He is studying the signpost, meditatively chewing on a length of grass. He seems to be lost in thought – or perhaps just lost - but as you draw closer he hails you, inviting you to tarry a while with him.

He knows he is in the Dreamscape - indeed he tells you he only recently chose to come here after the death of his betrothed. He recalls that the pain was simply too much to bear - but here he has had time to think about things and the pain has become less. He wants news of the Marches, especially Upwold, but seems only to listen with half an ear to your side of the conversation. When matters turn to magic, he talks mostly about its defensive applications - how it can be used to protect the things one cares about.

He's a pleasant companion, but cannot quite make up his mind which way to go. The names on the sign are familiar but unfamiliar at the same time and he is at a loss as to how to proceed. In the end he flat out asks you for your advice on where to go, listens thoughtfully, nodding, and then turns to head in entirely the wrong direction. Before you can point this out to him, you find yourself in your bed staring at the ceiling.

Roleplaying Effect: You experience a roleplaying effect: *you are concerned about the safety of those you care about. The more affection you have for them, the more worried you are about whether they are safe. You feel an urge to take precautions to ensure that they are not hurt or killed, especially magical precautions.*

Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can cast the following rituals as if you had mastered them ... Dripping Echoes of the Fen **and One Other** chosen from the list:

- Night: Align the Celestial Net, Embrace the Living Flame, Shadowed Glass of Sung, Shroud of Mist and Shadow, Sift the Dreamscape's Sands, Signs and Portents, The Cuckoo's Egg Spring: Blessing of New Spring, Blood of the Hydra
- Day: Standing at the Threshold
- Autumn: Gathering the Harvest,
- Summer: Raise the Standard of War

Simargl the Empty One

(169.1)

In your dream, you are in a forest of immeasurably tall, moss-covered, oaks. Iridescent moon moths flutter in the air in great clouds, and long strands of faintly luminous grey lichen hang from the tree branches like spider webs or old men's beards. There is a strong smell of rotting leaf mold. The ground is littered with mushy, fungus-covered logs.

From off in the trees to your left, you can hear music. Like the stars it is both strange and familiar at the same time. A refrain that repeats over and over played on flutes or pipes – something of that nature. Annoyingly, some of the musicians are out of step with the others, turning what might have been a pleasing melody into a discordant mess. From your right comes an answering tune, again played in the slapdash manner that quickly becomes irritating. The two strains of music – in fact you get a sudden inspiration that they are part of the same piece of music just played separately – begins to grate on your nerves.

You feel a strong urge to get away from the music and head off down the path, lined with man-tall white stones, toward the heart of the forest. Now and then the tree canopy parts and a glimpse of an reassuringly familiar starry sky can be seen. As the path twists and turns, the tempo of the music rises and ebbs. The unseen musicians seem to be keeping pace with you, like importunate peddlars who will not accept your lack of interest in their wares. It's enough to drive a lesser mind to madness.

Still, the music brings with it a growing sense of unease, almost nausea. There is a growing sense that you should leave the path and press into the woods to find these invisible pipers, but you recognise this as a trick or perhaps even a trap. The music is trying to lure you in. It is a trap – at least for you.

Fortunately, just as your will is starting to stretch a lair, the path ends suddenly at a cottage with dark purple and bone white flowers growing out of the thatch. A garden of marrowroot and bladeroot stretches around one side of the cottage, in the centre of which stands a forlorn scarecrow of tattered sack-cloth, its blank turnip head topped with a sagging straw hat. The door of the cottage stands open. The interior of the cottage is cluttered, lived in ... but eerily empty.

There is no other figure in the dream but their presence is all around. a pipe lies on its side next to a carved high-backed wooden chair, embers still smoldering. Half a tankard of frothy brown beer and a dark clay plate with a half-sliced apple rest next to it (there is no sign of a knife). The weatherproof cloak that hangs on a hook near the door is still damp (although it was not raining outside). From time to time you reckon that you hear someone (large) moving around. There is only one room, but the growing certainty is that there is someone has just stepped out of the chamber into another part of the cottage which is too small to contain any other areas.

There are other mementos. A forlorn empty wooden cradle, beautifully decorated. A garland of spring flowers, faded and tattered, resting before a single half-burned candle. A twisted poppet of old straw sits on the mantelpiece, staring forlornly with tiny cross-stitched eyes.

The cottage is full of sorrow, and regret, and a restless longing and then ...

There is a spade by the back door, dark earth still clinging to the blade. As you touch the handle, another clump falls away. It oozes slightly, thick with ... oil? Or blood ... dark, sticky blood. You hear a rattling at the back door and a sense of dislocation and dread nearly overwhelms you ... you know certainly that there is someone on the other side of that door that you do not want to see.

And then you awaken, sitting up suddenly in your bed covered in sweat.

Effect: Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the rituals Dreams in the Witch House, and Vale of Shadows 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. This is an enchantment.

Roleplaying effect: When you awaken, you are under a roleplaying effect that persist for at least an hour: you fancy you can still hear the unearthly music from time to time; the quieter it is the more loudly you hear the music. If anyone asks you if a snatch of music is the music you are hearing, it is – even if it is different to the music you said you were hearing last time. It's that kind of music.

Whenever you are alone, you become uneasy and anxious for the company of others. In addition, as long as the enchantment lasts, you are constantly reminded of absent friends and loved ones, not only those who have died but anyone you know who you have not seen in more than an hour or so. If you are not actively engaged with other humans or orcs, it is easy for you to slip into contemplative, introspective reverie.