

# Somnolent Wanderer

Lord Simargl, the Dreamer (269.1 )

You are taking your ease, outside beneath the trees. The branches of the trees are bare of leaves – it is Autumn – but they are wreathed in cobwebs. Thick strands of silk hang down from them almost to the ground, gently drifting in the soft evening breeze. You are watching a russet spider the size of your hand industriously weaving its web between two gnarled roots.

You have the oddest sensation. It takes you a while to recognise it. It is something akin to... peace. Quiet. Calmness. You feel... centred in a way that you have rarely experienced before. There is nothing pressing on you – your worries and concerns seem far away, as if they belong to another person.

There is a fire to your side – it has burnt low and there are potatoes roasting in the embers.

There is no sign of any dreamer. For a moment an idle fancy settles upon you. Perhaps it is the spider that is the dreamer here? Quietly focused on building its little web. Unhurried.

Perhaps all the cobwebs in this glade of trees have been woven by this little creature.

Going about its business, utterly unaware that it is watched by an intelligence immeasurably greater than it can conceive. That could annihilate it with a thought. Without a thought, even. Pure happenstance, and your feet could crush it from existence and you would never even know it had happened.

You could reach out, catch it by the trailing length of gossamer silk drooping from its arse and flick it into the fire. Could lift it and place it down wherever you wanted.

An idle fancy.

You become aware then that you are not alone. On the other side of the fire from you sits... someone. Something. As the flames flicker casting shadows against the trees it seems to change between moments, without actually transforming.

A great tawny cat with golden eyes. A lithe youth, stripped to the waist, rippling with muscle and with a mane of fiery orange hair and golden eyes. An elder, hunched and bowed with age, with long curling hair the colour of amber and golden eyes. The suggestion of something twisted and predatory, a dozen golden eyes and bristling legs. A serpent with brindled emerald and crimson scales and golden eyes. A six-legged lizard with black smooth skin, a curving crest, and golden eyes. A man, his face covered in a heavy white veil, hooded and cloaked and leaning on his stick.

There is no threat. The feeling of ease does not fade.

It does not incline its head this time, nor move. After... an hour? Two? It slips away between one flickering flamebeat and the next and you are left alone by the fire, with the little dreaming spider, under the thousand stars, to enjoy your hot potatoes or just to gaze into the depths of the fire until your limbs become heavy with sleep again, and your eyes

drift closed, and you awaken in your bed refreshed and wide awake.

**Effect:** Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you have two additional ranks of Night magic. You should keep this vision and show it to a referee if you perform this ritual.

**Roleplaying effect:** When you awaken you feel calm and well rested. You may even be in – dare I say it – a good mood. Mundane concerns seem distant, and hardly pressing – they are someone else's problem. You are a lord of dreams, and the tedious minutiae of day to day life is like a shadow play cast on the wall of a cave by idiots.



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Yevgeni Katsov (62.1)

You awaken with a start. You are on the edge of a desert of white sand, amidst the rubble of a great palace. A lake of cool fresh water stretches ahead of you, perhaps as much as a mile across. The same white sand that surrounds you runs under the lake. You can see ruins in the depths of the pure, clear water – partial walls, the hint of a tower, the suggestion of a cracked minaret.

Of to the side, a crumbling pier juts out into the lake. It looks to have been cobbled together somewhat from branches, and vines, and bits of rubble. It does not look especially stable. A young woman in a loosely belted white robe sits on the pier, a fishing rod in her hands, hanging a length of twine into the waters. When she sees you, she jumps up excitedly, waving both arms. She drops the fishing rod and arcs into the water with a smooth dive, surfacing not far from you and swimming over with mighty strokes of her arms.

“Hello!” she calls, and you know distantly that you are not talking Imperial. “I haven't had a visitor in ages! How goes the war?”

You are not sure which war she means. She pulls herself out of the water, dripping wet, and tries to embrace you.

She is not talking of any war you know of.

“The war with Ichiya, and with Izasi'Melando! Is it ended yet?”

You are forced to admit you do not know.

“Nobody ever does,” she says sadly and for a moment there is something in here eyes as she looks away. For all her youth, the eyes of this dripping young woman are ancient, and full of limitless sorrow.

She changes the subject. She is a lively conversationalist, and knows that you are both meeting in dreams.

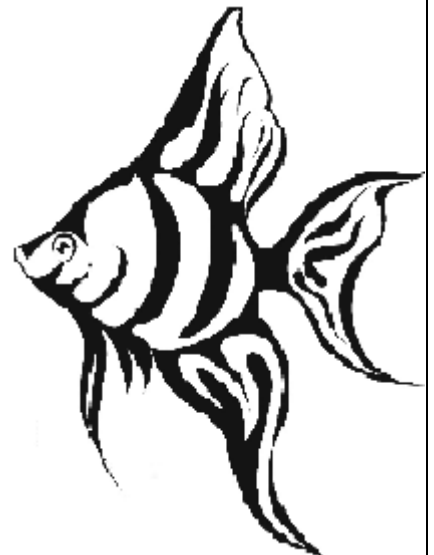
“I came to get away from the war,” she says companionably.

“My father is of Ichiya, and both peoples laid claim on my magic, so I chose a third way. I will wait here until the war is done, and then return to find who is the victor.”

There is an odd cadence to her words. Almost sing-song, as if she is singing rather than speaking. An odd language. Part of you wishes you could here her actual words.

“It will not be long,” she says cheerfully. “I have instructed my son to come tell me when it is safe to return. I thought at first that it was you, come at last. I have been here many...”

She falters then, and freezes. That ancient look returns to her



eyes.

“Many... weeks?” she says finally, but there is no certainty in her voice.

Perhaps you tell her that you have never heard of Ichiya, or Izasi'Melando. Perhaps you suggest to her that it may have been significantly longer than a few weeks. Perhaps you ask how she thought to return to the world of waking men and women.

Regardless, when you awaken you cannot suppress a pang of sorrow for that young woman with her ancient eyes, smiling, and laughing, and making light of the war between her people, and Ichita, and Izasi'Melando.

**Effect:** Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the ritual Vale of Shadows (Night/20) 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 concerned about the war between your people and the people of Ichiya, and Izai'Melando. You know that this alliance has treacherously formed to try and conquer your people, and that your own nation is bravely fighting to maintain its sovereignty under your Queen but other details entirely avoid you.

In addition, as long as you are under the effect of this enchantment, you have a strong awareness of any conflicting loyalties you may possess – duties to friends versus family, to nation versus Empire, obligations that are complicated for whatever reason. You have an urge to discuss those loyalties with people you trust.



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Elyssiathain (4828.2)

You dream that you are walking a winding path through a forest in the foothills of a great mountain range. It is night time. The sable sky is littered with tiny flickering diamonds – more stars than you have ever seen. The moon hangs low, curved and cold like the smile of a cat. The trees are old, and gnarled, and reach up towards the heavens with desperate fingers. It is cold; you pull your heavy wool cloak closer around your shoulders and pause to lean on your stick.

Little white moths flutter across the sky above you, illuminated in a shaft of moonlight. For a vertiginous moment you suffer uncertainty. Are they tiny white moths just above your head... or are they immense flapping beasts far above you. It is surely a trick of the light. And a trick of the light that for a moment you imagine one of the moths has a rider, hooded and veiled with stick in one hand that trails sparks.

There is a grumbling roar somewhere nearby in the woods that causes your heart to beat faster, but it is answered a moment later by a threatening hissing noise. You get the impression of at least two large shapes moving through the trees below you, although you cannot see quite what they might be. Nonetheless, you quicken your pace.

There are little white stones – white granite in fact – along the borders of the path. No grass grows between them, only bare hard-packed earth as if tramped down by dozens of feet over generations. As you walk quickly along the trail you begin to spot faces amidst the trees – for a moment you imagine hunched, bearded creatures are peering at you. Then you see one close up – a human face with staring eyes and a snarling mouth and great mane of tangled hair and a beard carved into the bole of the tree. Little candles – tiny wax cylinders – flicker in the hollow eye sockets.

As you walk, you see more of the faces. More of the little flickering red and yellow lights peering at you from the forest.

The roar comes again, somewhere closer. A great cat such as the Dawnish hunt, perhaps. It is answered again by the challenging hiss of some great lizard. A drake, such as the Grendel take to war with them, maybe.

You quicken your pace again – you are armed only with a stick, and with your magic.

Then, with little fanfare, the patch curves suddenly to the left and you are standing in front of an old tower. Old? Ancient more like! It looks as if it was already a crumbling ruin when the first stones were being laid for Sentinel's Repose. The tower appears to have been sheared off three stories from the ground. Rubble, heaving overgrown with weeds, stretches into the woods. Some of the broken stones are wrapped in the roots of the ancient trees. Heavy briars coil up the outside of the tower, picking at the mortar with their fronds.



Yet there is also something a little welcoming about it. The doorway is covered with a blanket but you can see red and gold firelight flickering within. You step forward – perhaps in spite of yourself – and pull the curtain aside.

Within it is almost welcoming. The holes in the ruined upper floor have been covered with canvas. A shallow staircase curves up one wall, and another blanket is hung at the top. There is a bed here, and rickety wooden bookcases that look to have been made from rough planks of wood and lumps of stone. A leather cauldron – a triangle of hide stretched across a wooden frame – hangs over the fire, and the smell of cooking meat and the noise of bubbling comes from it.

Tending the fire, and the cauldron, is a hunched figure. A man with stringy white hair and yellow teeth, and too-bright eyes in a shapeless brown robe that may once have been wool but now seems just to be held together with dirt. His eyes light up when he sees you, and he beckons you forward.

You notice that yellow as his teeth are they are very sharp. His skin is white like milk that has been allowed to stand a little too long. His ears have a slight point, his brow is folded and corrugated. Draughir.

“Come, come!” he laughs. “Come sit. Eat. A visitor! So long since we have had a visitor!”

He is not speaking Imperial but you understand him nonetheless. He reaches into the cauldron with a crudely carved wooden bowl and offers you steaming meaty stew with lumps of root vegetable in it. It does not look appetising, although it smells delicious.

Perhaps you take the bowl. Perhaps you politely decline. It hardly matters. You feel no desire to pick at the lumps of half-cooked vegetable, and something in you does not trust the meat. Your naga eyes can pick out the bones woven into the ceiling, and the walls. Your naga eyes in the twilight pick out that the bookshelves are not planks but lengths of long bones. Leg bones, perhaps. Perhaps those marks are chisels, or tools used to shape them. Perhaps they are something else.

Your host seems pleasant enough, and surprisingly frank.

He went into the woods to get away from distractions so he could study his arts in peace. He complains at length, in the manner of old men, about the constant drains on his time. People wanting him to solve their problems. To curse their rivals. To divine the presence of wealth or water or safe paths through the forest. To put up wards against the shadows beneath the trees. To answer their riddles. A thousand little distractions, preventing him from truly plumbing the depths of his art.

“So many distractions!” he growls. “So many people who thought their problems more important than my studies!”

In the end he started killing them, the ones that would not be missed.

He speaks matter-of-fact. He seems to think you will understand.



Then when it was clear his people had begun to suspect, he left the place where they lived and found a home in the woods and for a few years he was left to study and to practice and to explore the meaning of wisdom and silence.

Then they found him again. Travelers passed along the road. Some stopped to talk to him. Some tried to get him to give them charms. To place maledictions on love rivals. It began all over again.

Food was scarce, however, especially in the Winter when the snow lay thick as the length of his arm on the stone amid the trees. Luckily, the travelers provided.

He grins at you with his too-sharp teeth.

The travelers provided him not only with repast, but with insight. He found a new teacher to show him the secrets of wisdom and hunger and silence. The shaggy man who comes under the new moon showed him deep ways.

But then a band of armed-and-armoured soldiers came, and in the end he had to run away again. Now he sits here in the woods, and while there are fewer travelers, they provide him with even deeper understanding.

As the fire burns low – it has been burning low the entire time, you had barely noticed – it reflects off his flat piss-yellow eyes as he sits grinning at you. He suddenly moves, like a spider, launching himself across the fire...

... and you wake up.

**Effect:** Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the ritual Hunger of the Draughir (Winter/2) 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 Winter 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 surprisingly hungry. It is hard to satiate this hunger.

In addition, as long as you are under the effect of this enchantment, you have an awareness of the way other people waste your time, or take advantage of you. You feel an urge to focus on what you want rather than what they want. People who assume you have nothing better to do than solve their problems for them make you irritable – and you may quite irrationally find yourself wondering how they might taste if you were to eat them.

