

Lord Severin de Rondell (1667.2)

OOO NOTE: This is an out-of-character briefing. You can read it as much as you like, out-of-character but you should not show it to anyone in-character.

You wake up. You are in a jungle – a jungle oasis. It is just as you would expect a jungle to be. Vividly coloured flowers, great trees, creepers. It is haunted by parrots, and scattered with peculiar ruins. Cautiously you explore, all alone among the unfamiliar trees. Tall, thin, almost like reeds sized up to great height, clustered 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 creature that seems to partake of the essence of the monkey and the spider peers at you suspiciously from the nearest tree, half hidden behind the trunk of the peculiar tree, and chitters excitedly. It scampers away. Overhead, a cloud of great white-and-gold moths – it's hard to say how large they are – scatter away from a hunting beast that combines elements of drake and heron with a long snapping tail.

There is something familiar about this place, as if you have been here before many times long ago, and are returning for the first time after a long, long absence. You are aware that you are not entirely alone – there are signs of the passage of some great cat, a feline predator moving in the bushes around the edge of the oasis. A stab of fear. Perhaps you catch a glimpse of a brindled hide, fire-orange and night-red. Perhaps a golden eye, slit-pupiled, watching you from among the fronds. You move closer to the water, instinctively, away from the shrouded undergrowth where the brindled beast hunts.

There are signs of habitation here – these peculiar ruins. 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 leonine creature – similar to the lions of the Dawnish woods but somehow different. It is hard to tell quite what it is as the head is missing – the neck a broken stump worn smooth by the ages. It is sitting down, and the oasis laps against its forepaws. It is only after you have moved past it to the lake that you realise one of the oddities is that it has three pairs of paws, not two.

The waters of the oasis are clear – almost unsettlingly so. You can see that the bottom, yellowish sand between masses of 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 craftsfolk, but the years have seen the waters spread freely. It has created a veritable

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, here. 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, 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 Ulablo Satto. Or is it Eblar Sudo? 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 travelled 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 Mistress of the Dragonbound Mirror, The Lord of the Widened Gyre, The Colossus of the Empty Quarter, the dispute between the Ceraphs of Pattar who fight constantly for the right to claim the Quarter as their own, the Dancers of Isseut who seek alliance with the Pantarch of Kession.

In your turn you speak of the concerns that beset your waking life, drawn out by the pleasant youth garbed in gold, features hidden by mask and glove. 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?

You speak together of 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. It is still dark.

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 unfamiliar place, who themselves perhaps seemed queerly familiar.

As you sit up, though, you are struck with the profound awareness that you are not alone. There is something nearby, something large. You feel the sweet warmth of its breath against your face, overpowering. You almost swoon. And then it is gone, and in spite of yourself, you find sleep claiming you again and spend the rest of what night remains wandering the broken worlds of natural dreaming.

Effect: All your personal mana has been depleted, rather than replenished. You can recover personal mana as normal – potions, resting in a Chamber – but it is as if you had spent all your mana in your sleep instead of recovering it.

Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the rituals Ambassadorial Gatekeeper (Autumn/10) and Chamber of Pallas (Autumn/8) 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 Autumn Lore, subject to the normal rules about additional ranks. 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 strange sounding names. You may mean to say “Bohemond is looking for you” but instead will say “Jana Tep is looking for you.” You may mean to discuss “the Barrens problem” and instead begin talking about “the Abon Thul problem.”

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.