

Mithran Dream 1

You find yourself carried through a blur of neon lights. You hear the chatter of cheerful voices from all around, though the words are indistinct. Wherever you travel, you carry a wisp of the deepest shadow with you. As you drift forward, you weave between humanoid figures hunched with menace, their gobs of ill intent dripping from their outstretched hands. Despite this, you feel safe. You feel an unshakeable certainty that within the shadow, they can neither see nor touch you. Ahead, you see a glimmer of gold among the swirl of lights.

Whoa, okay. Can I take a closer look at the hunched figures?

As you peer at the faces, some of the figures carry with them an air of familiarity. Each time you feel on the cusp of recognizing one, however, its face and manor shifts and warps.

Others, however, feel distinctly, and essentially, unfamiliar

"Who are you?" I ask them.

One seems to look your way, and for a moment appears to lock eyes with you. Your surroundings grow quiet as it glares.

The moment passes, however, and its gaze drifts past you. The cheerful chatter rises again, no less incomprehensible than before. You hear a distant chiming echo from up ahead. Looking up ahead the gold seems to pulse in time with the chime. Thus far, despite the feeling of drifting forward and the lights and figures moving past you, you seem to have gotten no closer to the glint in the distance

I try to approach it, mostly to get away from these creeps.

As you will yourself forward, the shadow around you seems to rapidly expand, swallowing the lights and figures and sound until all is darkness and silence. but the rapidly growing circle of gold again. Another chime rings out, and once again the gold shudders. Finally, you reach the circle, which now appears to be a dais of gleaming cobblestone perhaps thirty feet across, fashioned in the image of a giant coin.

As your feet touch it, a final chime rings out, and this time the vibrations shake through you. The shadow that has thus far engulfed your body slides off and pools in the center of the dais. Out of the shadow rises an oval mirror of polished gold, and within it you see not the human face you have grown accustomed to wearing, but your own true face. (Player is a changeling)

Oh lord. Ew. Ew! I look away.

You gaze into the inky darkness of the shadow. Though there is certainly no light within it, you feel, rather than see, the presence of giant, twisting shapes of blackness within the greater void. From behind you, you hear a voice.

"Why do you turn, young one?"

Your mouth, of its own accord, follows the shapes of the words, yet the voice seems to emanate from behind you.

It's my own voice?

It is

(Player relays tragic backstory)

I close my eyes.

Once again, your mouth moves of its own accord: "People are hateful. It is just and wise for the righteous to avoid their depredations by any means, until you grasp the power to destroy the wicked with impunity. It shames me, however, to see a fellow playwright believe the lies of mere characters.

Those of us with the power to choose our identity are greater than any single character. We must be larger than our identities to contain them; More intelligent than any genius' face we can wear, more compassionate than any philanthropist, more cunning than any plotter, and more ruthless than any assassin.

The people you fear are nothing but faces. They are incapable of true knowledge of themselves, let alone of you. How could they know you, if they cannot even be you?

Take my gift, and each time you use it remember that, in a world of actors and characters, you are an author."

"What's your gift?"

Are your eyes still closed?

Yes.

You hear no answer

I open my eyes, and look around.

The mirror is still there, but it no longer shows any reflection. It shudders once again, but this time you hear no chime.

"I knew I should've only eaten half of that pie!"

The circle of gold begins to shrink as the shadow slowly encroaches

That ain't good. "Hey, what the hell's going on?!" I shout.

The darkness fully envelopes you with a great gust of wind, accompanied by what sounds like the earth itself is sighing. You awake, drenched in sweat. For a moment, the neon lights dance before your eyes, and then your vision clears. It is near pitch dark, and you hear the sounds of your companions heavy breathing from your companions elsewhere in the room.

Mithran Dream 2

With a grasping, panicked start you awake from a feeling of falling, your heart pounding in your chest after seemingly having skipped a beat or three. The room around you is silent and gray in the cold sourceless light of Barovian night.

"What in the hell..." I mutter. Is the room familiar?

It appears to be the Inn room you recall falling asleep in. You see what seem to be the sleeping forms of your companions throughout the room.

Hrm. I reach over to my canteen for some water.

As you touch the canteen, it emits a faint chime and begins to glow with a gentle golden light

Oh no. I chuck it across the room, realizing that this must be a pie dream!

You fling it away, but time seems to slow, then stop as it flies, coming to rest frozen half way across the room, a scattered trail of water droplets hanging in the air around it. It chimes again, and the light intensifies

I grab my bag and run out of the room.

As you step into the darkened hallway, the floor drops out beneath you and you plummet like a stone. As you tumble, you catch glimpses of the rapidly shrinking rectangle of golden light that is the now-distant doorway above you.

With a grasping, panicked start you awake from a feeling of falling, your heart pounding in your chest after seemingly having skipped a beat or three. The room around you is silent and gray in the cold sourceless light of Barovian night.

God damn it.

I sit up to catch my breath, and walk over to the window.

You see the streets of Vallaki, lit by frequent lamps. A lone armored figure stands beneath one across the street. After a moment, he looks in your direction

Weird. I saw a ton of guards on the way to the inn. I look back, intrigued.

He stares back for a moment, then looks away

I try to get a closer look. What does he look like?

The helmet makes it difficult to make out any specific features. He glances once more, then bends down and seems to reach toward the stone base near the street lamp. After a moment, he stands up and briskly walks away.

Well, now I have to know what's up. I slip out of the inn, and sneak over to the base of the street lamp.

You slip through the inn unseen. As you exit, you see four stationary guards posted in the town square, with a patrol of two walking down the street the inn faces. In the foggy distance away from the square, you see two more humanoid figures moving slowly away from you.

Are you moving stealthily or openly?

Stealthily.

You time a gap in the patrols and make your way to the lamppost. Placed on its base is a small box of polished dark wood.

In the bag it goes! I take it to a secluded area and open it.

A plain gold ring lies within, atop a folded note.

I read the note.

"All actors are authors in their own right, and doubly so the reverse."

Wait a second... That reminds me of what the weird dream voice said! I look at the ring.

It seems ordinary

Okay, phew. I thought it would start glowing. I inspect the box.

It is finely crafted, but without ornament. The interior is lined with a soft dark fabric that is difficult to identify in the dim light.

I'm freaking out a little, but I tell myself that it's just a coincidence. I look at the note one more time, before putting it, the box, and the ring into my bag. I then start to sneak back to the inn.

Opening the door to your room, you see your canteen on the ground in a wide puddle.

Oh shit. How? How in the hell?! Is it next to my bed, or is it across the room? Also, are my companions in here still?

It is roughly five feet out from your bed, near the center of the room. Your companions are still here, apparently asleep.

Okay, okay. Maybe I just threw it during my nightmare. I'm probably just freaking out over nothing. I walk downstairs to grab some towels.

You open the door and are greeted by utter blackness where you expect the hallway. After a moment, the hallway seems to swim into view, hazy at first then more solid. It retains a certain indistinctness, however, that wasn't there when you passed through earlier. You notice suddenly that your muscles are shaking with exertion, and your vision goes black at the edges for a moment once more.

When your vision clears, the hallway appears before you, solid and ordinary.

You feel as though you've been at this for hours, though thinking back you seem to have awoken mere minutes ago.

I pinch myself, to try to wake up.

You pinch yourself. It hurts

Welp, worth a shot. I go back to the box, and read the note again. If the hallway changed maybe it's changed too?

The box and note seem unchanged. Your feet feel leaden as you walk across the room, and the simple act of doing so puts you out of breath. The note shakes in your hand as you read it.

Gods, I'm tired. Maybe going back to bed will wake me up? I slip under the covers and try to fall asleep.

Sleep takes you quickly.

With a grasping, panicked start you awake from a feeling of falling, your heart pounding in your chest after seemingly having skipped a beat or three.

It appears to be morning

Mithran Dream 3

(Just prior to this, the player nearly died at the feast of St Andral)

Sitting on your bed at the blue water inn, you listen to the sound of marching steel boots ascending the stairs. You don't know who's footsteps they are, but you know that they're here for you.

THUD a pound at the door seems to shake the whole room

THUD the wood of the door begins to warp and splinter with the impact

THUD something.... comes unmoored. With a horrible screeching groan the floor begins to shift and tilt.

Through cracks and holes in the door, something dark and viscous is oozing. The room turns fully 90 degrees, and the floor falls out from under you. For perhaps ten seconds, you and everything else in the room become a chaotic blender as the room tumbles and falls.

THUD your vision goes white as the wind is knocked out of you by your landing. Every part of you hurts. Through bleary eyes, you see the figure of Ludmilla looming over you with a dispassionately curious look.

"Were you no one all along then?"

"An empty shell, that merely played at living?"

"Or is there something... of substance in you?"

Her clawed hand pushes into and through the flesh of your chest. THUD searing pain flashes through your body in time to your heartbeat as you feel her fingers constrict around your heart.

"What.... is your ambition, child?"

With a final pulse of pain you awaken in a cold sweat

(Player opens the door) The hallway is dark and unlit

(Player shouts that they know they're still dreaming, demands to speak with whoever is causing this)

(Party member) rolls over from his spot on the floor and tells you grumpily to keep it down.

(Player asks if party member looks different)

Me: Do you have darkvision? (No)

Me: He seems the way you remember him looking

(Player looks out window at the lamp post where they found the ring)

A single guard is posted

(Player checks their bag for the ring)

After a moment of searching, you pull the box out of your bag.

(Player puts on ring)

It's warm against your skin

(Player decides to go to town square)

Are you moving stealthily or openly? (Openly)

As you leave, the guard looks your way but does not approach. What part of the square are you going to? (The alley where they almost died)

The cobblestones are stained dark with your blood. It looks like some attempt to clean up has been made, but you can still see the splatter all along the ground and the wall of the coffin shop

(Ouch. I say, "Alright, Ludmilla. Since this is where we first got to know each other, how about we have a chat right here?")

There's no response

(Player flounders a bit, pleads for information on how to escape)

You hear the faintest ghost of a chime from the ring

(Player holds ring to their ear)

You hear a faint, sourceless chuckle as a voice whispers to you "Woe that I am a fisherman, child, and not a diver. This place is as much my prison as yours. I do know a way out, but that is not a path I would lead you down."

("Finally, an actual response! Is this Ludmilla speaking?")

"Would a name improve your disposition?"

("Yeah, probably. Here, I'll start. My name is Detrix, and you are?")

"I feel like a Mithran today, i think. Does that suffice?"

("Yes, pleasure to meet you. Now, you mentioned leading me down a path earlier. What does that entail?")

"Your escape would frustrate some of my plans, thus that is a goal I cannot assist you in at this time."

("Fair enough, but what are your plans, and how do they involve me? Or my companions, for that matter?")

"I think I shall keep these cards close to the vest for the time being. It is said that three may keep a secret only if two are dead, but nothing truly dies here, least of all secrets."

("I can respect that. But, you still decided to contact me for some reason. Why? It's not like I summoned you.")

"A door left ajar is its own kind of summoning. I chose you because I saw the greatest potential use to be had in you. I not often wrong in my judgments of character."

("Flattering. Do I have any say this?")

"Insofar as you have a say in anything, yes. There is nothing worth having that I could compel from you."

("Okay, then why should I help you?")

"You will likely die without my aid. That is not a threat, merely a prediction, and a fairly trivial one at that. Aside from that, you have taken steps down the path of authorial freedom, and that path ends with me. I could assist you with it, were I feeling generous.

Regardless, you may do as you will. Another of the appropriate disposition will come in time, should you choose to forge your own way. I shall bear you no ill will whatever your choice."

("Well, I've come close to dying already, and I'm not keen on reliving that. What sort of assistance would you provide, as I walk down this path?")

"Guidance, sage advice, perhaps the occasional boon, if you prove yourself worthy."

("And what do I have to do in exchange?")

"Nothing unreasonable, I assure you"

("One more question: will you help us defeat Strahd?")

"If you survive long enough to challenge him, I suspect it will be due to my help. What sort of help do you desire?"

("Well, Madame Eva said that we'd need a powerful force of good and a weapon to defeat Strahd. Perhaps you could guide us to them? I know that the weapon "lies behind the behind the sun, in the house of a god," but I checked the church here and couldn't find it. I know that the force of good is a "kneeling woman, a rose picked too early," but frankly I don't know what to make of that.")

"I suspect the weapon you seek is that at the Abbey of Saint Markovia, in the possession of an exile from the outer planes. Sadly, I am not sure what force of good could be said to reside in this place."

"Thank you. I accept."

There is a sense of finality in the silence that follows.

The player gains the ability to cast divination once per long rest

(The player invokes the spell by asking a stranger a question they couldn't possibly know the answer to. The material components are clothing or jewelry worth at least 25gp)

Biter's Ring

Requires attunement

As an action, by running into another person with sufficient force you may have your clothes switch appearances with theirs for one minute.