

Narrator: *Let me begin with a Dramatis Personae:*

- *In order of appearance we first have the NARRATOR; that's me.*
- *Then we have THE PROFESSOR, a kind elderly scholar and gentleman, small but weathered like old leather.*
- *Next is THE PROFESSOR'S DAUGHTER, an intelligent and dainty young woman, innocent to the antics of her father.*
- *Next to speak is THE JUDGE, a stern elderly lady with pursed lips, her hair in a bob, and icy blue eyes.*
- *Also appearing is THE WARDEN, a slight and spry man, with dirty spectacles, somewhat dishevelled himself.*
- *Lastly is THE NOBLE, a tall, stocky aristocratic man with little patience for the events of the evening.*

To set the scene then: we're in the middle of the worst storm in years. The rain is torrential, the night is black, and the twisting road is empty. Almost. Lightning illuminates the form of a small two-wheeled carriage, which rolls nervously down the muddy road.

Professor: Have no fear Kendra, we're almost there.

Daughter: I'm not afraid. It's just a storm, rain can't hurt us.

Professor: You would be wise to heed the weather my dear. For when the gods send dark omens, then dark things walk in the night!

Daughter: Oh come on father, you don't really believe that. Stop trying to give me the spooks. Observation over superstition remember, that's what you always say.

Professor: Mmmm. I ... I do, don't I. But there are other things that...

Narrator: *But the carriage draws to a halt and the professor is interrupted by the driver, indicating that they have arrived at their destination – the warm and pleasant traveller's inn known as The Open Book. Keen to exit the storm, the professor and his daughter shuffle their way into the inn. Their bags are taken – for the professor is expected – and the travellers make their way into the back room of the inn where a roaring fire, leather chairs, and three figures await them. The judge and the warden are seated, having what appears to be an argument. The noble stands by the window, gazing out at the storm.*

Judge (to Warden): Well, I think I speak for all of us when I say you are clearly not the man your father was! He would never have used that tone with me. Lodge or no lodge.

Warden (to Judge): What you think of my tone is irrelevant, it's the outcomes that matter, and my logic cannot be denied especially when my contacts with the clan members clearly report that ---

Narrator: *They break off their conversation as the professor and his daughter enter.*

Judge: You're late Petros. Why are you always late? It's terribly disrespectful. You have missed much of the discussion already.

Professor: My apologies to all three of you. There was some, ahem, "research" that could not wait.

Judge: Yes, well, we all have commitments too. And this must be your daughter, where are your manners sir, introduce her.

Daughter: If it please m'lady, and sirs, my name is Kendra and I can introduce myself. I'm afraid I don't have the pleasure of your names.

Noble: And you will not young lady. Professor, send this child to bed. We have matters to discuss.

Professor: My good lord, I was hoping that this evening might be an opportunity to introduce -

Noble (interrupting): Out of the question. Not tonight, nor any other night. These are weighty matters, not games for infants.

Daughter: Save your breath father. I can clearly see when I am not wanted. Well good night sirs, and madam, I hope your 'weighty matters' do not require the application of manners to solve, else we should all be in for a dark day indeed.

Narrator: *She kisses her father on the cheek good-night and leaves, somewhat angrily. Her wine sits undrunk.*

Judge: Good heavens, what a nonsense. Now do sit down professor and tell us of your findings.

Warden: Quite. Leave no stone unturned, nor tree un-branched, for I am all ears and eyes also.

***Narrator:** The professor does indeed sit down, puts down his wine, and draws a stack of papers from his case. He talks for some time, making reference to the papers, showing charts, calculations, maps (of both the land, sea and star variety), inventories of foreign places, itineraries of people both alive and long dead, notes from a diary, more calculations and then extrapolations with reference to calendars (both current and past) and finally some hand written scrawls from the charred remains of an old spell book. He concludes his long discourse by flailing his hands in a dramatic fashion to indicate a point of great importance to him. This knocks over both his and Kendra's undrunk goblets sending them splashing all over the oak floor and across the long evening dress of The Judge.*

Judge: Oh for goodness sake man, be careful.

Professor: Oh I'm sorry! So terribly sorry! Please, my apologies, I will buy you a new dress, I promise. Here, I have some coins with me tonight.

Judge: Put your money away you old nincompoop. At least you missed the maps, for what it's worth.

Professor: For what it's worth... what do you mean? You see the pattern surely, you realise we must act now before it's too late.

Judge: Now Petros, lets be calm over this.

Noble: Let's be frank instead. It's hogwash professor, hogwash and hokum. All you've shown us is conjecture, unconnected occurrence and fancy. The plural of anecdote is not theorem, and this sir – is not evidence. I have the denizens of the night practically running my city - my city! – and you want me to divert resources to this ... this treasure hunt. Pah!

Professor: But the maths... the equations demonstrate the proof. They show the connections. Admittedly, there are a few holes yes, but The Way have been very careful to cover their tracks. This is all that was left. Estov, you followed the numbers, surely you must agree.

Warden: HmMMM

Professor: Is that a yes?

Warden: No, it was a "HmMMM". A "HmMMM" is very different to a "yes", not quite the opposite but certainly not equal. I must agree with his Lordship. Not, you understand on all the various colourful terms with which he describes your lecture, but rather in your prescribed course of action. A scatter shot approach is a waste of resources, it will not work. And besides, I have other interests I am pursuing at present. Still, a good yarn though, I'll give you that.

Professor: Then I've wasted my time. None of you will listen.

Judge: Now now professor, that's not true. There is still me.

Professor: But... but... the wine... your dress.

Judge: Oh stuff the wine! Your words, you nonce. If what you say is true, the risks of not acting... they are so great...

Professor: So you will help?

Judge: I confess I'm not sure. For all that you've shown, there is little direct evidence. And the third ingredient you mention, such a tortured spirit, still retaining its goodness, it's unlike anything we've ever heard of. If you had more evidence, a lead perhaps, a trail to follow, maybe I could help.

Professor: I could do that... I still have some clues to pursue. Ravengro, there is some connection to Ravengro, I'm sure of it.

Noble: That dead-end of a village... ha, not likely. A village of fools and liars.

Professor: I'll do it... I'll prove to you all!

Warden: I'll drink to that... to a futile quest driven by nobility of thought and stubbornness of ideas.

***Narrator:** The warden raises his tankard of cider in a mocking gesture while the professor gathers up his notes. The judge sits quiet and purses her lips. The noble turns around, shaking his head and looking out the window again.*

Professor: Ravengro, Ravengro it is. I'll call another meeting once I have more proof. I'll make haste, as much haste as I can. Till next time friends. Ab Sek, Abet Sahu.

Others: Khu Ba Heteph.

***Narrator:** The professor exits the room and we fade to black.*