

---

# Three Dreams, Three Truths

## K. Arsenault Rivera

From set *Lorwyn Eclipsed*  
07. 01. 2026

“I have something for you,” Kellan says, grinning wide. He always grins when he sees her.

Amalia sets her survey equipment down on the counter of his small, hard-won cabin. She’s standing in its threshold with a twinkle in her eye.

“What did you find for me, my explorer?” she answers him. She sets her hands on the table in front of him. Standing as she is, she’s taller but only for now. She likes it that way, looking down at him, watching him play it as cool as can be.

Kellan shoots a finger up. A lash of his magical weapon severs a rope holding the gift out of view; a flowerpot falls into his hand. “Found these at the market the other day. They reminded me of you.”

He practiced that maneuver a couple dozen times—but it’s worth it seeing her face light up. She picks up the flowers and brings them up to take a breath.

“They’re from a place called Lorwyn,” he says. “Meadowsweet, they called it.”

“It’s beautiful. But do you know how to care for them? I’d hate for them to rot,” she says.

Of course, he knew she’d ask, so he stands and reaches for her ear. Annie taught him this card trick ... there! With a flick of his fingers, he seems to pull an instruction card from behind Amalia’s ear.

She takes it with a laugh. “They come with care cards?”

“The merchant I got ‘em from writes them up,” he says. He winks. “Not that I need them, being a farm boy and all.”

“When was the last time you kept a farm?” she teases.

For a second, he’s content to banter. But he blurts it out before long, what made him buy these in particular.

“Would you believe I dreamt of these a couple of nights ago?” he says. “You and I in a field full of them. The sky was the color of a robin’s egg, and everything was so bright and beautiful.”

“Oh? You’ve been having a lot of those dreams lately,” she says.

He wraps an arm around her waist; she touches his nose. “Maybe you should try writing them down. For research purposes.”

---

On Lorwyn, three trees make way through the wood together. The proud ash, slashed through with burly scars along his bark, looks to the others behind him: an elder adorned with all of age’s wisdom and purpose; a rowan who cannot slow herself to the elder’s pace.

“What sort of heroes do you mean to be?” the ash calls. “By the time we find the proper place for planting, it will be winter.”

“We aren’t all possessed of your constitution, Morecote,” says the rowan. Yet even she has to watch while the elder catches up to them. Her eyes flick to Morecote’s. “We’ll only have the one opportunity to try for a new Rising. If that means we have to wait for the right time when we get there, then that is what we shall do.”

Morecote does not answer her. Instead, he turns toward the sprawling road that yet awaits them. “How far are you willing to travel for this, Erewaker? You’ve seen the rings at Sigric’s core. What if this story is age’s fancy and not his own?”

“I will go as far as I need to,” the rowan answers him. “This isn’t a matter of bravery. We have a sacred duty to the yew trees. Sigric can only make this trip once; all the prophecies say so.”

“Better a fight than these little pastoral jaunts,” he mumbles in response. “Doesn’t even get my sap pumping.”

“Not to worry, Morecote,” says Sigric. The old elder bellows from behind. He hasn’t heard anything—not really—but he likes to try and contribute all the same. “You’ll have plenty of fighting, but only when the time calls for it. You’ve got to be careful who you squash!”

Morecote groans. It’s not worth arguing with Sigric. It’s never been. All he can do is hope the elder can keep up.

“Aww, look at that! The big trees are mad they can’t walk faster!”

The shrill little voice is a knife carving away at him. An ash should be above the petty jibes of a faerie. An ash has his pride as a soldier, as a protector.

And yet. Morecote’s boredom compels him to look down. There, among the briars and the brambles, he spots the creatures. Terrible creations, so far as he is concerned; all petals, sprigs, and thorn. Three of them flit about his trunk. Already they are laughing and crashing into one another, already they are pointing at him and whispering.



Art by: Omar Rayyan

*But what is it they are whispering?* The thought should not occur to him. And yet .

“Begone with you,” he rumbles. A dismissive wave of a branch will not be enough to fend them off, yet he employs it anyway.

“Wouldn’t you rather be the one that’s gone?” says one of the clique, her shoulders adorned with forget-me-nots. “Who cares about yew, anyway?”

“Oh, have I fallen so far in your graces?” adds another, with meadowsweet for hair. “I know plenty about yew and you alike.”

The third, their gown made of woven baby’s breath, turned their nose up. “All he wants is people to forget he was beaten the last time he took to the field. Not a care in the world about yew.”

Morecote grips his cudgel. “What did you say?”

Baby’s Breath lands upon Morecote’s leaves. They lie there like a king watching a parade. “Oh, I thought it was obvious to everyone else. You’re a failure.”

“A legend already fading,” adds Forget-Me-Not.

“What was your name again? Fuddy-duddy?” says Meadowsweet, tapping his rapier in hand.

A violent thrash sends the faeries flying from the warrior’s leafy crown. Erewaker sings a soothing melody under her breath, yet it can do little to calm him.

“Has young Morecote been harried by the faeries?” calls Sigric. The elder has at last lumbered within earshot of the others. “That is the trouble with ash. They burn too hotly.”

“I’ll not hear it from you. It’s for your sake that we’re making this accursed journey to begin with,” Morecote says. His leaves bristle, his bark creaking as he shifts upon his roots. When Sigric begins a sage laugh, it takes everything in Morecote’s power not to shout.

“For my sake? No, child, it’s for the sake of all of us. The yew cannot be permitted to die entirely. Of course, you wouldn’t remember this—”

“Boring, boring, *boring*,” says the Meadowsweet faerie. They fly up to Morecote. A grin on their face, they wave a rapier in front of him. “How about we make this more interesting? We know things you don’t. If you duel all of us at once and win, we’ll tell you something.”

Erewaker rumbles behind him. Her displeasure is enough to shake the earth, and she is often displeased. “Morecote ... These are simple taunts. You’re better than this.”

“And I’m better than the charge you have given me,” answers the ash. He steps away from the others. With his great cudgel he knocks aside the bushes and brambles that might trouble their sparring. Each falling blow shakes the acorns and seeds around them. Only when he has made the land flat and clear does he turn his attention to the faeries. “Come and test my mettle, then. It will be a fine change of pace.”

He has little need to say anything else. The faeries fall upon him, relentless arrows of misery and merriment.

Many mornings’ journey from here, there are stories told of Morecote’s valor on the field. To hear his grovemates tell it, there are few who can withstand one mighty swing of his cudgel—and those who can are too stunned to avoid a second. His grasping hand is nearly as famous as the one which holds the weapon.

To hear Morecote’s grove tell it, the giant he slew as a sapling was only the start of his career. He had nearly been cleaved in two by the invaders; he still bore the scar of it, a great ragged seam down his trunk and across his face. What did that matter? He was young, by the standards of his kind. There would be more battles to come.

Yes, if anyone back home had asked who would win this duel they would have said, “Morecote will squash them like fruit.”

And ... yet.

It is true that he does—in some ways. Who can watch him rage through the woods, furious and unyielding, and think of him as anything other than fearsome? Where others would tire of the acrobatics the faeries use against them, Morecote’s ire becomes his fervor. For what feels like a century he swings at them. Yet they are quick as thought, always out of the way, guiding him this way and that around the clearing.

It is not until he at last manages to catch Meadowsweet between his gnarled fingers that he realizes something is wrong.

Meadowsweet, their head turning violet, laughs and laughs and laughs. “Oh, it really was too easy. Too easy!”

Morecote’s timber creaks; a feeling like moss growing upon him. He squeezes tighter. “Say what you mean or say nothing at all.”

The faerie raises a trembling hand to point behind him.

Morecote does not look. “Don’t try to trick me into a loss!”

His hand shakes, and the faerie’s laughter grows more and more high-pitched, breathless, and woozy, the sound of a life nearly over.

The wind howls. Morecote bristles once more. Within him the fire only burns hotter, and the edge of his vision has gone red with anger. He squeezes and squeezes and squeezes.

In the false quiet of the woods no one can hear the *pop* that follows—only Morecote, close as he is. The others hear only the laughter’s cold cessation—and the cry of pain from Sigric. Blood spills upon the white Meadowsweet and upon the bark of the ash tree.

Morecote turns.

He is just in time to see Forget-Me-Not and Baby’s Breath pull away, their sap-tipped swords in hand, a small ampoule dropping in the air behind them. While Morecote had been distracted, these two had gotten to Sigric.

Erewaker is upon Sigric within an instant. Her brows knot in concern as she frantically tries to figure out what’s happened to him. Burr and thorn, she searches. “What did you *do*?”

“We didn’t promise we’d play fair,” says Baby’s Breath.

“Though, honestly, we’re just helping you out!” says Forget-Me-Not.

Together, they flit away, dancing in the air, pleased as can be. Yet their voices carry through the glade as Sigric’s sap carries faerie poison through his bark.

“Yew grows best within a corpse.”

---

Planes away, a young man wakes in the dark of night. His heart hammers within his chest. A feeling clings to him—a filth. It is as if his mind lies beneath a velvet layer of mold.

Yes—mold. *Wasn’t it with him in the dream, too?*

A towering elder tree stood before him, old as anything, maybe even older than the trees by his mother’s house. The world around it was dark and jagged. Something compelled him to reach out for it all the same, though he couldn’t remember what, now. A design on the bark? Yes—that was it. Someone had carved something into it. Words. Obscure shapes.

But the moment Kellan laid his hand along the shapes, an unseen axe hewed the tree in one fell stroke. And what he saw inside was what had frightened him: sloughs of mold, a blanket of rot balled up within something that had seemed so proud and unshakable. And as the tree fell to the ground, it *screamed*.



Art by: Forrest Schehl

And it sounded human.

Kellan throws open a window. The cool gloaming air prickles his skin. Salt gets into his eyes—he’s covered in sweat. His mouth is so dry that his tongue clings to its roof for some semblance of moisture. Even the few steps to his bedroom window have left him winded.

Some dream. His eyes fall on the journal Amalia left him—she’d drawn sleeping sheep on the cover. Despite everything, he smiles at the sight of their little night caps and cuddle piles.

Maybe he really should be writing this down.

He starts with the voice he’d heard at the end of the dream, a woman’s strange and distant echo: “*Rotten trees may yet bear sweet fruit.*”

Sigric is slower now—and he was slow to begin with. Sap rolling down the side of a tree trunk has hope to make it to the bottom, though it may take hours. But as he is now? There is no hope at all.

His blood moves as slow as that sap, seeping out of him now at every turn. The hills they’ve crossed are covered with it. So many hills. So many valleys. Someday, the stream of life that grows from this will be verdant and lush. Someday, this will be the favorite walk of friends and lovers alike.

But for now—the three warriors trod it with heavy hearts, and heavier feet.

Erewaker glances to her side. Morecote has not said a word since the duel, if one could call it a duel at all. Grief and guilt have stitched his mouth shut; the proud ash has given over to consideration. Better for all of them that way. Still, part of her wishes that he would say something. *Anything*. That she could yell at him for his mistakes and berate him and let loose the anger that burned within her. Respite, of a kind. Catharsis. But it would not be worth the cost.

As they crest this newest hill, Sigric breaks a week’s silence.

“We must travel past the giants if we’re to finish the journey.” He points with wizened hands to the horizon. There, the three spot a giant resting against a boulder. The spring breeze carries her snores all the way to their perch above.

Erewaker frowns. Giants posed no problem, in most cases, to passing travelers. And this one was clearly asleep. It would be simple enough to take the long way and avoid disturbing her.

But if it were that simple, Sigric would not have broken the silence to say so.

“The veil is past there, isn’t it?” she asks.

The elder mumbles in response. “Yes. And you must go there, with the sapling. It cannot grow where the sun warms its leaves. That is what made Colfenor so bristly, you know. Being born of the night. Always had that in him. Did you know he favored blackberries?”

A ramble is starting—one that saddens Erewaker to hear. In all their long years as master and apprentice, Sigric’s mind had never wandered from what needed to be done. But here he is, going on about the old yew’s taste in berries and tea. The poison’s work, no doubt. Whatever it was they’d dosed him with left him fading into these long reveries.

*Could they still do it?*

They only had one chance at this. Only a single opportunity to prove that it could be done.

Erewaker touches the relic stashed among her branches. It feels warm. Legend and lore alike say it will keep her safe when she touches the veil of night. But she’s never journeyed beyond it herself. She has no memory of it. And she’s never liked the dark.

“Thank you for telling us such tales. I will keep them safe,” says Erewaker. But she meets Morecote’s eyes, for he is the one with understanding. “Must we be direct? Or can we take the long way around?”

Morecote’s branches sway in the wind. “Direct,” he says. “Can’t risk anything else. If we take the long route ...”

A glance to Sigric completes the sentence.

*No, it really cannot wait, can it?*

She takes her staff and begins to walk.

Down the hill and into the valley they go. Morecote follows behind, silent, while Sigric continues his story unabated. Erewaker tries not to wince when she hears him. The words are starting to slur together.

Years ago, they had tended to a treefolk who was in the end stages of his life. As Erewaker prepared a poultice to soothe the sores on his back, Sigric spoke with him about his life. Suddenly, Sigric asked not for the poultice Erewaker had been making but for a draught of poison instead. It was time. Afterward Erewaker asked him how he had known.

“When life itself becomes anathema, we must see to it that they no longer suffer,” he’d said at the time.

Erewaker watches her mentor now. The pained footsteps, the groan as he moves, the sap leaking from his bark. She swallows. What if she had to complete the Rising alone?

The slumbering giant next to them shakes the ground with her snoring. Morecote leads, each step deliberate and careful. Erewaker lets Sigric walk ahead of her. Better to keep an eye on him this way.

“Sigric,” she whispers to him, “I think the rest of the story’s better saved for another time.”

“But if I don’t tell you now, you won’t remember,” says Sigric. “I had another student who reminded me of you. Always running contrary to the popular thinking. She used to say she’d discovered a new form of Rising—one that could call even the oldest saplings back to life. I think you should speak to her. She should be the one leading this. She always listened to me.”

Each word is an axe against her trunk; she has to bite back a wince. *But what to say instead?* Before she can figure it out, the giant groans and shifts.

Erewaker covers Sigric’s mouth. She wishes it was otherwise, but they can’t risk him waking it. Morecote catches her eye and nods. The three stand as still as can be in the clearing.

One minute. Two.

The snoring begins again.

Morecote signals the others to hold. Erewaker does—but only barely. The snores now seem delicate dreams, bound to break. Any movement at all is a risk they may not want to take. But if someone is to take it ...

The warrior ash steps slow and steady. He waves his branches this way and that, leaves rattling, and watches the giant for any sign of stirring.

Silence in the glade. Eyes meeting over distance. Sigric tries once more to talk, and Erewaker clamps her hold tighter.

Morecote takes another step forward—and it is then that he points at the giant’s head. *What? What could possibly—*

*Oh.*

There, floating like idle thoughts, are Forget-Me-Not and Baby’s Breath. Erewaker grits her teeth. Faeries were known to sup on the dreams of giants; it would not be unusual to see them here. But this clique? It could be no coincidence.

She looks to Morecote with a silent question. *Will you be all right?*

There is no immediate answer—he is too focused on the faeries. The hatred within his eyes does not bode well for their journey. If he speaks out of turn ...

“Oh! If it isn’t our friends!” shouts Forget-Me-Not.

“The gardeners!” says Baby’s Breath, laughing and tumbling through the air. “What fun!”

“But wouldn’t it be more fun if there was a chase?” says Forget-Me-Not. “I’ve always loved chases. They get the blood going.”

“Fool! Trees have no blood!” says Baby’s Breath.

But Forget-Me-Not points the tip of their blade at Baby’s Breath. “And yet it must be shed ere the night is over. Why not give them a little head start?”

Who could stop them from doing what they meant to do? So high up, they were, and so far from even Morecote’s grasping hand. All Erewaker can do is watch in horror as they harry the giant. Something in her goes cold. They need to *move*.

Yet no sooner does she turn to scatter away than Morecote’s hand falls heavy on her shoulder. The ash pulls her back. “Do you know the way to the clearing?”

“Past the aurora, where dawnglove grows near the silver water,” she answers. “But Sigric knows it better—”

“Sigric doesn’t know anything anymore. It has to be you,” Morecote says. So sharply does he fling her that she almost topples over. The earth rolls and groans beneath their feet; the giant cries out in anger as the faeries prick her temples over and over again.

But this does not stop the brave ash. With his storied hand he grabs hold of Sigric—and then the sapling grafted onto the elder for safekeeping.

“Morecote, what are you doing?” Erewaker calls. She rushes toward him, horror in her heart, but she is too slow to stop the grisly sight before her. Morecote tears the sapling straight from Sigric’s bark. Sap and wood fly through the air.

He shoves the sapling at her as he turns to face the giant. “Take this and go.”

There is no choice but to take what is given. In her grasp the sapling is small and delicate; a thing that might collapse at any moment. And as the giant rears to her full height Erewaker worries the moment will come soon.

“You want me to leave the two of you behind?” Erewaker cries. “That’s preposterous—”

Morecote does not turn to face her. He tosses the ailing Sigric in front of him like so much refuse. “Sigric was never going to make it to the end of this journey. You knew that.”

The elder sputters on the ground—and then goes limp. Glassy eyes stare up at their coming doom.

The giant looks down upon them with a cold fury.

“Which one of you woke me?” she asks. “Blood covers my temples and my cheeks, all because of you. So, which one of you will be my new walking stick?”

Erewaker knows where this will go. Panic rises in her, and she reaches for her magics—but good sense cuts through. The sapling! Her magic’s too volatile to use while she’s holding something so delicate. But if she sets it down, the giant’s footfalls may crush it, or the stones rattling around them might—

“Erewaker.”

Sigric’s is the last voice she expected to hear.

“Erewaker, listen to me. I don’t have much longer.”

The giant is rumbling toward Morecote. It isn’t going to end well. She knows it won’t. Morecote isn’t after a valiant fight.

She forces herself to look to Sigric. The elder peels away part of his own bark, a long sheet of it, and presses it into her hands with the yew.

“Take this, and plant it with the sapling,” he says. “The faeries were right. You’ll need a corpse for it to feed from.”

“Sigric ...” Erewaker says. She takes a trembling breath. The giant’s footsteps are closer than ever. “I’m afraid.”

“I know you are,” he says. He lies down, his now bare flesh coated with rot. “But our hope lies with you. Go, now. You will have to find the clearing without me.”

“Sigric—”

“Run!” shouts the elder, and with the last of his might he calls a wall of vines between them. She cannot see what happens next, only hear it: thrown rocks, screams of pain. She turns and runs, into the wood, toward the shifting veil of the aurora.

Part of her hopes the relic will fail and she will forget everything she’s seen here.

---

On the third night after buying the meadowsweet, Kellan once more awakes in the gloaming. No dream clings to him—only a horrible, oppressive fear.

Something is in his mouth. Something painful.

Through the dark he stumbles to the bathroom. The mirror does not show him his own face, only the shadow of his form. His heart is hammering too fast, his hands shaking too much to light a candle. Instead, he conjures a whip of light. The pale gold of his magic illuminates him.

He opens his mouth.

Forget-me-nots bloom from his tongue.

He hears a woman’s voice. “*Crowns fall like acorns, from one tree to another.*”

---

Shadowmoor envelops Erewaker.

What was once lively now stalks the dark in search of food; what was bright and welcoming now foretells only misery. Or perhaps that is a trap of her own making? With every step the relic swings against her bark and she thinks: *all of us should be safe.*

But it is only her.

Over the mirrored hills studded with misshapen tree stumps and thornbushes; into the forest where the night itself laughs at her misery; along a path so obscure she wonders if it is a path at all.

Only her and the sapling. They were supposed to have done this together. Sigric knew the way—she is only working off the faint memories of what he’s told her. But the faeries poisoned him, and Morecote’s guilt drove him to an impossible fight, and now she is here alone.

She is sobbing. She knows she is. All the terrible creatures hiding in the branches above mock her with twin faces; two crows squawking overhead become three.

Still, she continues.

It would be impossible to give up now. Not simply because the guilt and shame would haunt her for the rest of her days, but because she knows not what else she could do. Continuing to the grove gives her a purpose. A thing to focus her attention on. If she turns away from it, all she will be left with is the screaming.

Dawnglove ahead. Her journey nearly to its end. Sobbing, she follows its trail, the sapling clutched tight against herself.

“Why do you care so much about them?”

A guttural scream leaves her at the sound of that voice. Forget-Me-Not. How could they have followed her? Sorrow overtakes her, and for a moment her body is too heavy to continue, this weight too much to bear.

But she feels the sapling in her arms and—with a sob—continues.

“A yew tree. Colfenor. The sapling. What does it matter?”

Baby’s Breath, now. Not worth answering. The magic in this grove is thick; she can feel it against her bark. A little farther.

“Everything dies. Haven’t you heard?”

“And everything should.”

“Yes, everything except a dream.”

The sight of silver water tears from her another sob—though this one is born from relief and not sorrow. She falls to her knees before it. Thirst almost compels her to drink, but she holds back. There is work to be done. If she fails, none of this would matter.

“This won’t work.”

“You’re too sad for it to work. You’re going to mess it up.”

“All that effort for nothing. What a laugh!”

Ball the soil, create a mound. Place Sigric’s bark in the dirt, then the sapling over it. There are delicate patterns to be traced into the earth around it, and patterns yet more intricate to be created with stones. Though her hands shake and her steps are unsteady, Erewaker takes them all the same.

It has to work. It has to mean *something*.

“The magic won’t take. You’re too scared to give it everything it needs.”

“Sap and ash and death.”

Ignore them. Don’t let their barbs land. What would it matter if she was afraid? If she did the work, if she followed the steps, then it would work. It had to. If the yew trees once more drew breath, if she managed to do what she was planning to do ... what would it matter if her hands had trembled? It would be done.

Channel magic into the symbols. Walk in a circle around the gathered materials thrice, widdershins, and sing the song it has taught you. The song had been the part that worried her on the way here. How was she to know what it would be? But her lips part, and she finds she knows the words. They are there. Sorrow and anger. Bitterness and resignation. Determination, in spite of it all.

Yew were never known for their kindness. She cannot be known for it either—not now. The words that echo through the clearing would gladden no hearts and move no minds. No one who heard them would say they enjoyed doing so. The uneven keen of her voice; the ringing sound left in its wake; the harsh shapes of the words themselves ...

It is misery that takes root in that clearing.

“Ignoring us isn’t going to help you.”

“A foolish thing to do, indeed.”

“After all, this won’t work.”

“And we know why.”

Once she walks round the clearing. Twice. And, her feet trembling, she walks the third time. Erewaker braces herself for the swell of magic that will follow, for the roar of the woods and the boiling of the water and the withering of the dawnglove all around. The things that signal life.

But there is only the laughter of the faeries.

Dread rises in her heart. Her tongue feels leaden. Something is wrong. *Has this whole journey been cursed from the start?* A pained whine leaves her; a moment of weakness that echoes and haunts her.

“See? Just as we said.”

“A failure. But you’ve always been one, haven’t you?”

Erewaker’s brows knit together, and she screams. “Shut up!”

The faeries, still laughing, land on either side of the sapling. They take each other’s arms and begin to dance as if nothing in the world was wrong. So light are their footsteps that they do not disturb the symbols and runes Erewaker has painstakingly carved.

Only the fall of her tears does that.

“We’ve given up so much,” she says. “Morecote and Sigric are dead ... I hear them in the quiet, I see them behind my eyelids. I cannot fail. I will not fail.”

Forget-Me-Not and Baby’s Breath look up to her. Though she cannot see their sharp grins through her tears, they smile at them all the same.

“You’re almost there.”

“We all are.”

“All you have to do ...”

“Is cast aside your relic.”

Cold deep in the core of her. A numbness that spreads. Before they’d set out, she’d been so afraid of the Eventide. Sigric had shaded her with his branches and told her there was nothing to worry about. With his own hands he had given her the relic she now wore. Woven from cast-offs of Colfenor’s branches and infused with ancient magic, it was Sigric’s greatest pride and joy.

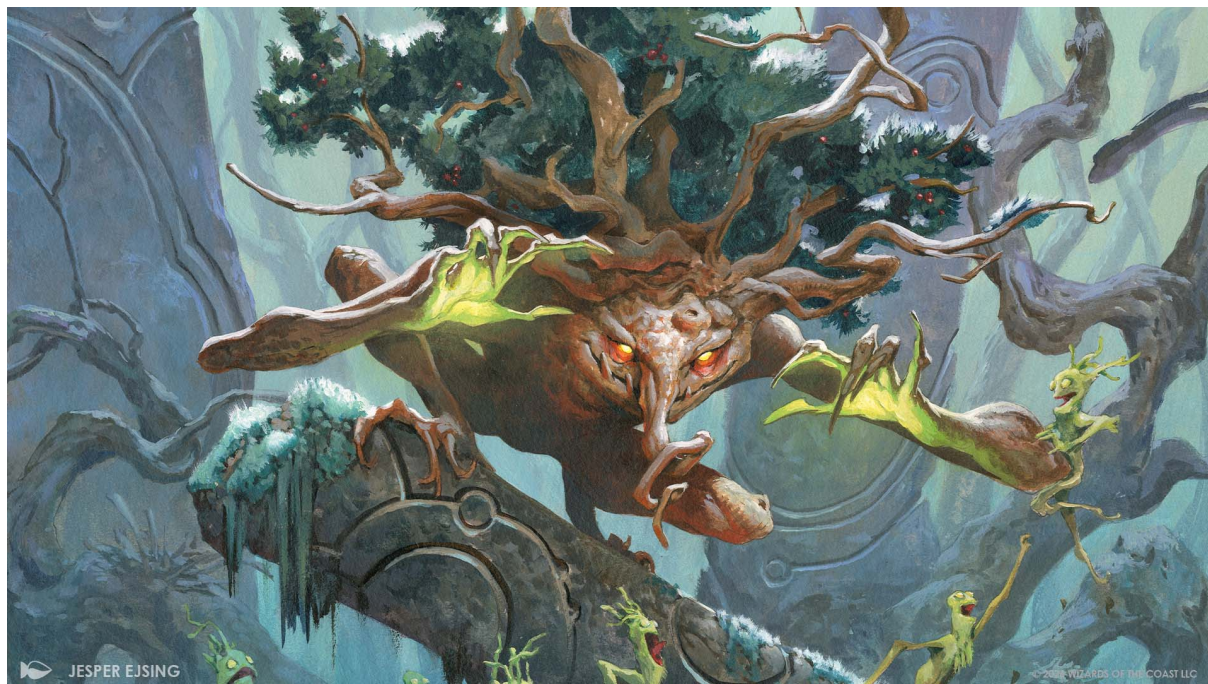
“Keep it with you and you shall never forget the friends who journeyed with you, nor the miles you traveled, nor the things you learned.”

Her fingers trace the inscriptions upon the crescent-moon relic. So much given for so little gain. Relic or no, she would never be the same rowan who had set out from the grove now. She never could be.

If it ended all this ... what did it matter if she remembered?

Erewaker doffs the relic. She lays it at the foot of the sapling’s mound.

“Please,” she whispers.



Art by: Jesper Ejsing

The sapling takes their first breath.

It is the only one that comes unlabored. The two faeries descend first upon the relic and then upon the sapling in unimaginable fury, with a strength that far outreaches their tiny forms, their fists beaten into bloody pulps.

“What a gift you’ve brought us!” they cackle. “Day and night at once! Ash, death, and blood!”

“Why ... do you hate me?” the sapling rasps.

“We don’t hate you,” says Forget-Me-Not. “Your life is the finest gift of all, and we know exactly who needs to have it!”

Erewaker watches them. The thought occurs to her that she should stop them, that she’s been tricked, that this whole ritual is now sabotaged.

But she is so heavy, and so tired, and so much has been lost.

An explosion of magic in the dark clearing; morning’s bright white in the dark. Dawnglove grows like moss to cover all that it might. Erewaker’s bark tingles as the roots begin to take hold on her, too; the backs of her hands pierced by them, her brow, her tongue.

She understands now. They needed her to change. They needed the burst of magic from the shattered relic for whatever it is they were doing here. The treefolk thought they were following Sigric and Colfenor’s plans ... but they’d been herded, like dogs, to this grove the whole while. To death.

Morecote and Sigric screamed—but she does not, cannot, as death comes for her. She reaches out with a dawnglove-covered hand toward the mound.

Her sap falls upon it.

Ashes, death, and blood.

The last thing she hears is the laughter of the faeries around her as the dawnglove covers them, too.

“What a delight it has been to be the Deffroad Clique,” says Forget-Me-Not as she, with her death, fulfills her purpose.

---

Amalia sits with the dream journal.

He had been watching her read it. The familiar, beautiful planes of her face shifting as she went from word to word. The scratch of her quill as she took notes on that which seemed so strange and foreign to him. Three trees on a hopeless, suicidal journey.

He had been taking comfort in this simple thing—her presence and her knowledge—when he coughs up a black flower.

He blinks, and it is over; he is standing there in the doorway, watching Amalia work.

Later that night, he sees a strange face in the mirror.

It lasts only an instant, but he sees a face there. A woman’s face where his should be, surrounded by black flowers, eyes flashing and smiling.

*“Home has its horrors. And its welcome. I await you with high hopes.”*