

Fasharnish ere you have paid visit to the Temple of the Goddess Shidannen, the Mother of Wisdom and Mistress of Lore."

"What knowledge might I gain there?" I asked of him.

"I cannot say," he replied, "for none receive the same knowledge twice. But to the man or woman who attends the temple when the moon has attained its zenith in the nighted firmament, and kneels in meditation at the feet of the statue of the goddess, Shidannen reveals many truths and clarifies many answers of which the suppliant is desirous to learn."

Thus, when came the hour of the moon's zenith in the vault of the heavens over the city, Migraryet, the innkeeper's eldest daughter, led me to the Temple of Shidannen, and after informing the temple warden of our purpose, we were permitted to enter.

The feature of the room that my gaze was drawn to before all else was a massive bower running up the face of the walls and along the ceiling, and reaching upward through the opening to the sky.

"What is this prodigious vine?"

"It is the Bleeding Ivy, sacred to Shidannen; it will grow nowhere save for grounds consecrated by the goddess. It blooms only in moonlight, and it is by the scent of its flowers that Shidannen bestows visions of truth and wisdom to the suppliant."

*... a dangerous journey beyond the bounds of mortality ...*

As I breathed the atmosphere ever deeper into my lungs, I became aware of an unaccustomed languidity flowing outwardly from my chest and into my limbs and extremities. There was no discomfort to this curious lethargy, for it brought with it a sensation of calm in tranquility, yet, too, I noticed it presented to my mind an odd impression of distance and remoteness, as though my consciousness were a thing of its own, and while yet bound to my body, which lay in some region far removed and dimly understood, it was so anchored only by the slenderest of threads.

*... a journey to uncover secrets hidden by the veil of time ...*