

The ocean ebbs and flow, echoing out to those listening.

Beneath, the Throng writhes along the seabed, tethering mankind's wishes to their shattered dreams.

Each year, one from every land offers their body to weather the arid grounds of the Loam Anguished, where no tree or grass grows. They venture forth toward that endless, pearlwhite sea to plunge below its waters, in search of the Throng. They wish to See.

They who See returns home a Seer, cradling next year's life. Fish for seas, clouds for rain, game for hunt—whatever your need or desire, the Seer can give.

But those left searching become Mired. For these fowl things, where once was humankind grow new limbs, each with a voice like a blistering din of a thousand slain fowl. Ichored skin patches their eyes; malaise dwarfs their spirit. Nourished by the nightmares of their like, the Mired dream when they eat, and feed while careless others sleep.

Not merely for food do Mired hunt. They say a Mired may become Whole again, were they to devour 100 of their kind. Once Whole, they may trial again to See, or those less arrogant may return home to their kin. True, is it? Who can say—for who has lived to speak of a Mired?

Some speak of One who can: a Seer who delivered unto his people a year of prosperity, then, in his hubris, cast off to See the Throng once more. "With blessed eyes comes blessed fortune," he said. "What then awaits those who See anew?"

Whether he found anew that vile thing crying beneath water, most can't say. But I believe it like so: that he travels these unlands, Seeing as if for the first time; scribing his endless knowledge with one hand, banishing Mired with the other.

Today, most Mired deliver ceaseless bloodshed. Open one eye, and you'll spot those whose relentless calling is to See. I call them the Iris.

Open the other to spot hunters, those who travel the Loam Anguished, satisfying their hunger by sacrificing Mired bodies to their Seers, and forever embroiled in discord on the question of whose Seer Sees farthest. They are the Immolate.

Then there are the Begotten, those who believe the Throng is not found but delivered to the ascetics, they who renounce bodily whims for wisdom and knowledge. To the Begotten, bloodshed is merely living's grim twin.

Each desires to See, to give their people a life far from death's throes. And if the path there paves itself with sinew, ligaments, and memories to hide beneath floorboards and clapboards, so it must be. But I will be watching; and if hunt I must, so I shall.