

THE WATCHING BOOK



Translated by
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Visually Restored by
EZRA ROSE

INTRODUCTION

A forward by Sarah Rowan

What you are about to read is a segment from *The Watching Book*—an artifact found and restored through the efforts of myself and Ezra Rose. This edition was graciously formatted by my wife, Beckett Rowan.

This book is the sole written document created by the people of The Singing Plain. Effort has been made to preserve the original tone of the book while increasing legibility for those interested in learning from it. Names have been translated rather than presented in the original lettering as we aren't sure how they would be pronounced.

The original Watching Book looked very little like books we are familiar with today. Its covers were carved stone, the edges were bound by four solid metal rings, and each “page” was a tablet painted with dyed wax. As a culture that almost never used writing, they managed to pack dense, layered meaning into every brush stroke.



What is presented inside this zine is of course only a fragment of the whole document. It is edited and pieced to tell a cohesive story, understandable even without a full working knowledge of The Singing Plain.

Even so, the pieces of the book are largely incoherent. You may wish to skip to The Prophecy (page 9) on your first time reading, and then return

for the scattered beginning pieces later. They are presented first anyway to preserve the evolution of the Book's writing.

These are the oracles dead to the
Bonerot, having braved the trials of our people.
May the Wind remember them.

Clarity—

She was grumpy in life and
grumpy in death. May the Wind
remember her indomitable heart.

Gust—

May we all remember her
teachings: First you must listen to
the Wind before you add to it.

Bright—

Her clever hands saved twelve
lives. Her bright smile lives on in
our memories.

Wick—

Spice stained hands. Althaea leaf
sweets. An aura softer than the
dough she loved making.

Spacious—

Once a governor, then a traveler,
then a sister here. Her life was
long, and as she said, well-spent.

Eternity—

Her bright eyes and sharp wit
kept shadows at bay and laughter
flowing around the table.

Whisp—

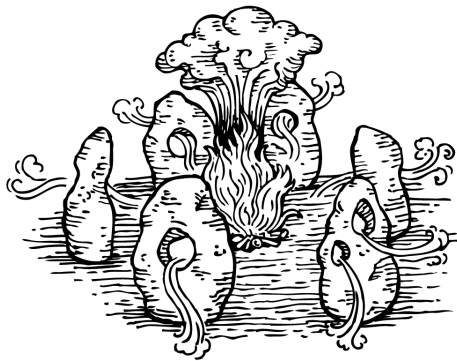
Some people live their lives to be
an example to others. She was a
counterexample.

Breath—

She found us a safe home in
hostile times, and even more
hostile terrain.

In our plagued hours,
the people of The
Marshlands gave us
aid. Where they
could not give us
aid, they gave us
comfort. We must not
forget.

If any of us survive
at all, we must
remember. They came
for us. Their
priestesses died
beside our oracles.
We owe them a debt.
We must not forget.



Elders are especially vulnerable to the Bonerot. To soothe their hearts, we have collected some of their favorite wisdom. May it serve well.

The best medicines grow along The Marshland border.

These birds are mentioned often enough that I suspect they are an important resource; but frustratingly I have no proper description of them. They were flighted, and twice the size of a swan. From what I can glean they were lanky, greyish-red, and made a sort of hissing noise instead of a decent "honk" or "tweet".

The [large birds] migrate on the Eastern Wind. If they had a good year, with little hunting, sometimes eggs will be left over in the nests.

Build your homes to face into the Wind. Try to turn your back on it, and it will surely sweep you away.

Always visit home for the Returning Festival! It is only once a year. If you skip it even once, your parents will never let you forget it.

The grass always rustles before a large gust. Turn your shoulder into it, and be sure the clasps on your pouches are fastened!

Harvest incense bark only in the Summer. It is thickest then, and will not harm the trees if you take only some.

Spirits are mentioned often, but rarely given much detail. It seems that ephemerality is crucial to their definition.

The spirits bring change. Change is not bad, or good; only different. Be ready for it.

Enjoy your days. Know the Wind will remember you fondly, no matter what happens.

These symbols are to help you learn the smoke-letters the spirits taught us. This way you can read what the oracles have written.



oracle



oracles



temple



Wind



truth



ten



spirit



shaman



name

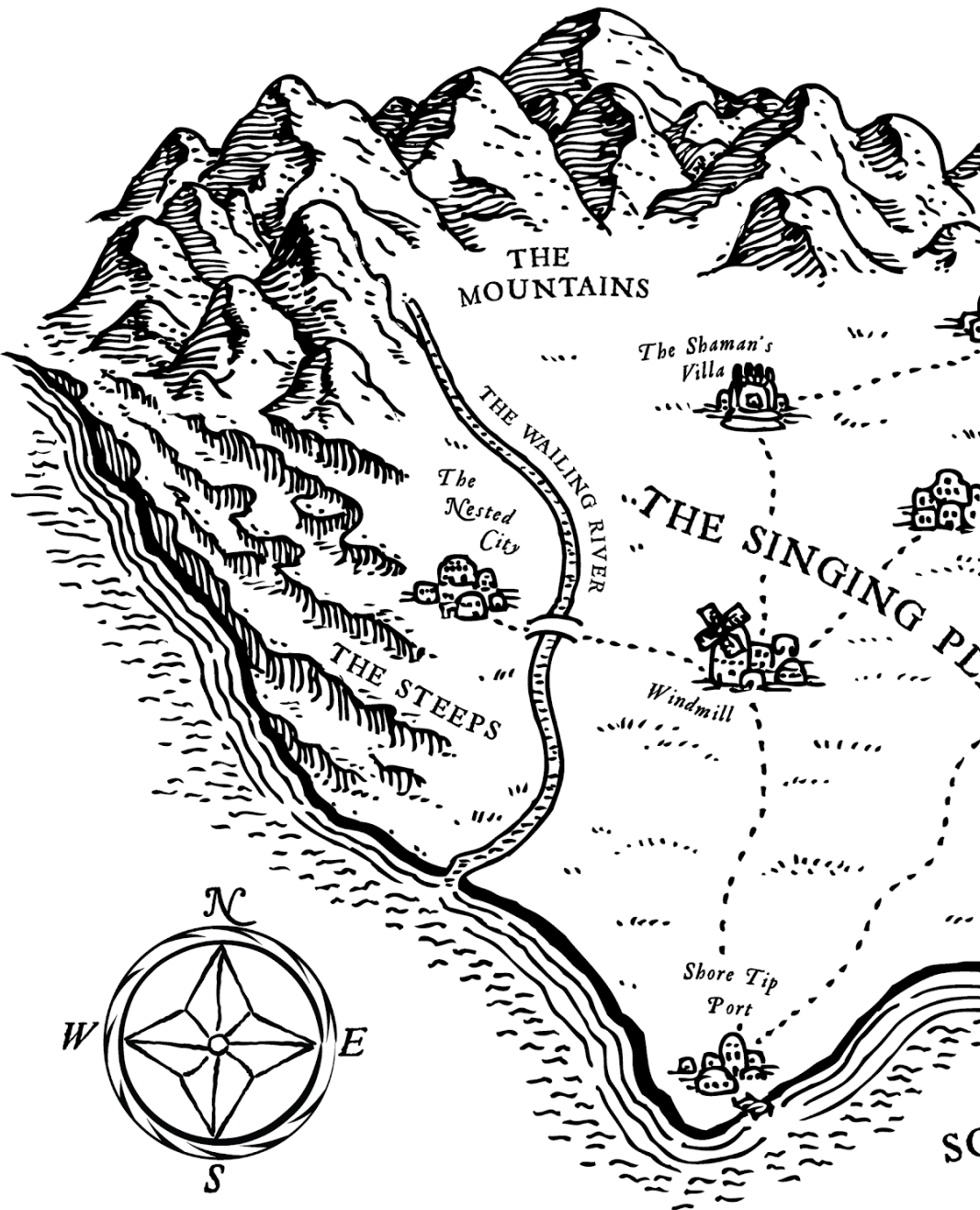


will be

Spirits are attributed with creating the entirety of The Plain's written language. They allegedly taught the oracles symbology and "smoke -letters", by manipulating incense smoke.

Spirits are invisible beings that lie closer to creatures than the Wind (which is more of a universal force than a personality). Spirits prevent stagnation in the world. They are neither good nor evil; the people of The Plain rarely dealt in our modern moral dichotomy.

I have very little else about them. They are associated with smoke, and there is a particular incense used to incur their favor at shrines. The average person would petition them in times of need, but it appears they also brought intermittent gifts for no reason at all; only to be friendly to fellow beings.







These are the words of our tradition. May they help you.

A Shaman can only be born on a night when the stars are clear, the moon is full, and the Wind is silent: as though the world itself would hear what this infant will come to say.

When they feel the time is right, the living Shaman will present the oracles with their choice of successor. Our duty is not to provide opinion. We test that the successor is valid. This test is thus.

Take the candidate to a low-lying field in the darkest part of the night they are brought to you. Set a starflower ablaze. Place the flaming blossom in their hands, and bid them repeat. "Would my voice carry only grace?"

If they flinch from the flower,
they are not a Shaman.

If they are burned,
they are not a Shaman.

If the flame withers before their completion,
they are not a Shaman.

If the Wind does not fall silent for them,
they are not a Shaman.



From these four tests, the truth will be known.

The current Shaman will be told this truth. They
will select one successor who is passed by the test.
They will train them. Our task is complete.

THE PROPHECY

*The wrath of reawakening
Does set the earth to quaking
As memories of darkness old
Scream harrowed from the cavern cold*

*Forthwith I hear the worldly cries
Defy the onus of the skies
That opposites not counteract
And truth be written by their pact*

This page did not originally possess a title. However, given its importance to the rest of the book, I thought it prudent to mark it. This is Squall's prophecy. There is more about it later.

**But there is more. Ten supplicants will come. I have foreseen them.
These will cradle our future:**

*Look first for the Hunter, both cunning and strong
Look next for the Goatherd, by whistles and song*

*The Shaman, in chains by her own self designed
The Child, though trailing, is not far behind*

*The cold eyes beseech you within the Estranged
A Governor shattered, reforged, and much changed*

*The next two are sure to arrive side by side
BeeKeeper and Seamstress together are tied*

*A Foreigner comes with an offering plate
The Traveler, last to arrive, but not late*

As we go along, you may find Duelling Oxen's name odd. I believe her name refers to a particular constellation.

I am Duelling Oxen, Oracle

Much has happened.

These paintings are a collection from our sisters. Left over from The Bonerot Plague.

The Plague is the worst loss of life The Singing Plain has ever felt. I remember only the impression of it: the way it left our villages hollow. I am told the disease was incurable in days, but most would linger for weeks. The others have spoken better to that.

Oracles are soothsayers, advisors, historians, and healers. Being healers is what has brought us here. Many, many oracles died, traveling and treating the sick. Some, fearing that with them great knowledge would be lost, resorted to painting (like this). When the Plague calmed, Squall collected the paintings. She believes they are important and need to be preserved. Gale disagrees. Eleven has decreed that a decision must be made. The schism is intolerable.

Squall never followed tradition well. Mostly only oracles know how to paint words to begin with, and most oracles do not do so often. We keep our traditions orally. Recipes are songs, maps are poems, advice is expression. We have kept our knowledge this way since before the time of One, and it is still accurate. Some fear beginning a book will bring disruption. Some are just insulted by it.

The other, more serious transgression of Squall is her prophecy. It is not our way to craft prophecies like this; accounts of specific events to come. Gale will not say it, but she has always found Squall's prophecies unsettling. Some believe Gale knows more than she will say. For the rest of us, we tell prophecies that are advice. We answer

An interesting tidbit; the word for "book" is actually taken from the language of the Marshlands, where books are much more common. To see it used so early in the text is a clear indication of cultural exchange.

questions that are more “what should I do” than “what will happen”.

This is the context. Gale would like Eleven to honor the idea of a temple. It would be a place to regrow ourselves, after all that has happened. But Eleven will not do it unless the schism is settled. And Squall is a match for Gale in stubbornness, in the opposite sort of way. The other Head Oracles will arrive soon to lend their voices.

May there be an odd number.

I am still Duelling Oxen.

Time has passed. Many decisions have been made.

I am pleased we are reconciled. The temple will be built. Gale will be assigned as Head Oracle of the temple group. Any who wish to stay and tend the temple with her may do so. I have already volunteered. I know Gale will read this, so it is awkward to say, but I believe in her.

Partially I believe in her because she agreed to keep The Watching Book, and with it, the peace. She refuses to paint in it herself, but will keep it safe and assure its accuracy. Squall's prophecy will stay, painted over for now. In the future, only the Head Oracle of the temple will read and then re-paint it.

Other things have changed. The most skilled healers will teach a new group, of only healers. Eleven insisted on this. It is to ensure that too much knowledge is not held within a single group should disaster again strike our home.

The Head Oracles, together with Eleven, gave me this honor of summary. This exists so that if the book is found, as Squall fears, there is context to what happened. I hope I am not tasked with painting in it again.

I am Waxing Light, Oracle of The Whispering Temple.

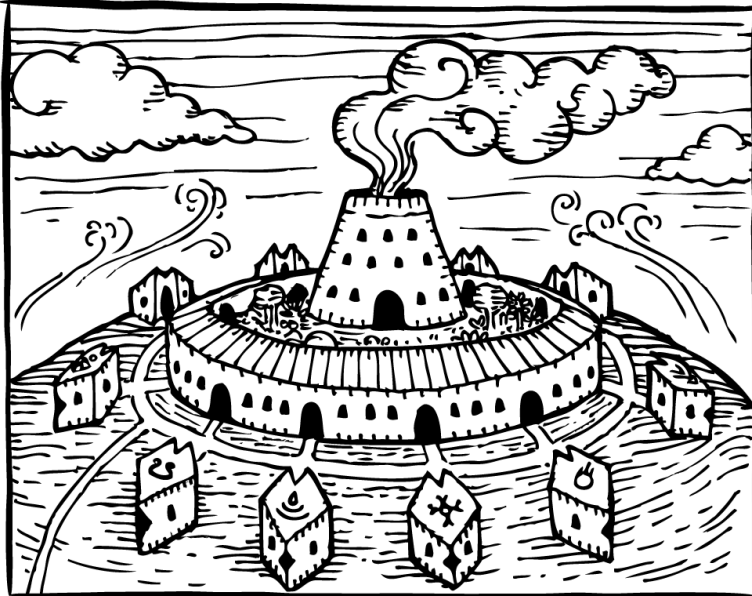
There were oddities of symbology in the painting of this portion that made translation particularly difficult. I have chosen to interpret them as spelling errors, as that is the closest analogue. It is suspected that this oracle was very young compared to most other authors.

I am painting for everone, with Gale's permision. (I do not need her permission to paint, but today is a special celebration. I did not want to make her frustrated.)

Gale, Duelling Oxen, and Overcast workd hard with the builders for years. Today they ar finished! Our temple is built. Eleven sent the travelers with incense and berries from the pagoda to spread the celibration to the whole Plain. Everyone is proud.

Gale even invited Squall to come open it with her. For now we ar waiting. The temple whisper ers with the Wind through its arches. It is peaceful and beautiful.

I have drawn it here. This is the real reason to paint today. If you find this book, far from here: please bring it back. This is its home now.



This is Breeze, third Head Oracle of the Whispering Temple, transcribed by East.

It is easier to lie when you paint.

This is what lies behind the great controversy over this book. When you do not have to draw sacred Wind into your lungs, Wind which is the source of all truth, it is easier to deceive even yourself. There is fear of creating an artifact of mistruth. A fear that we cannot look into the eyes of our descendants through this book, and so cannot explain to them what was. This is a Noble Fear. I am glad my foresisters bore it. For them, I, Breeze, third Head Oracle of the Whispering Temple (transcribed by East) will clear this subject. May the Wind remember their efforts.

This and all future entries are transcriptions, of words said aloud between at least two people. The words are true. Our traditions carry on beside them, as they always have. If this book is your only source: read it aloud. This is our tradition.

The past supports you, future. Go with grace.

This is Sigh, sixth Head Oracle of The Whispering Temple, re-transcribed by Billowing.

I painted this section in isolation, but Billowing has assisted me in re-transcribing from speech the way Breeze designed.

Sailors discovered the remnants of a shipwreck near Shore's Tip Port. The broken wood does not match any trees we know, so it must have come from far away indeed. Amidst the torn flotsam was little salvageable; whatever destroyed this craft was thorough. Or perhaps, in a darker interpretation, it is jetsam. The only thing worth pulling ashore was a single survivor.

The survivor is clearly not from The Singing Plain. After outfitting her in more suitable attire, the sailors brought her ruined clothes to the temple as well. They are unlike any I have ever seen; like the wood, her hair, and everything else about her. What is unnerving is that she speaks our language perfectly, with no accent at all. When questioned she only shrugs and avoids comment.

There are many oddities about her, but this is the one that led the people of Shore's Tip to bring her here to the temple. They believe she may be a Visitor. The thought is tempting, but I cannot say I believe it. I unfortunately cannot disprove it either, so here she is with us. It is bad luck to see a magical creature, but equally uncouth to not pay one proper respect. The sailors who brought her here are understandably disquieted. My sisters are attending them as I attend Visitor. (She will not give her name, so this is what she will be called.)

Currently she is reading The Watching Book. After the fuss about her speech, she is avoidant of talking. Her literacy is lower than her skill at speech, but she can read. A detail I will not be sharing with our already anxious supplicants. That aside, I am allowing her to read it as her familiarity with our culture does not seem to match her familiarity with our language. Everything about her is curious, but I intend to make her comfortable, at least. This book is a start.

She seems to feel more comfortable when I look busy rather than watching her. I cannot say I blame her. To keep my hands moving I will paint whatever comes to mind as she studies.



A Visitor. The Wind has not graced me with more elegant thoughts than to wonder again about the truth of that. A Visitor, supposedly, is a spirit who has traded places with a human. The human's heart is transformed into a new spirit, while the spirit takes the place of the human's heart and lives as one of us. A herald of change.

Visitor reads slower than a neophyte. Or perhaps I am impatient. Laurel thinks I do not know she calls me "long-spoken". Not to prove her correct, but I do want to ensure Visitor has enough space to finish. She is very focused.

There are other legends from my childhood that wander through my mind now, watching a possible spirit-creature read the words of my ancestors in the center

The word they used was not "Visitor". It was a proper noun for a creature we do not have in our own mythology. I chose the most fitting translation of what their noun meant, given what I could glean about the creature. (Something like a combination of "one who has entered but will not stay" and "one who makes a trade")

of our temple. I grew to age with the goatherds of the Northwestern Mountains. There, at night, can often be felt a deep rumbling. It is not quite a sound and not quite a feeling. The goats are sometimes alarmed, but sometimes, inexplicably, they do not react to it at all.

To the annoyance of the hunters we call this creature Nightwall. It is said to be as wide as a mountain when the moon is full, and as wide as the whole range when the moon is a crescent. Some believe it is the moon's empty half. It is invisible, and thought to be shaped like a wide, flat toad. There are many reasons not to try to cross the mountains during an empty moon. The Nightwall is one of them.

It looks as though Visitor will soon have questions for me. I will return to these thoughts later, b. But I do hope it pleases the memory of Gale that so far the book has proven more useful than nuisance.

Visitor has read every page of The Watching Book, including my last ones about her. I had worried she might be embarrassed, but instead she asked many questions about parts of the book that were unclear to her. With her consent, I have gathered her questions and their answers here. May they provide clarity for the future.

Who are the travelers?

It is their job to carry messages and sometimes parcels across the Plain. They pass through generations the quickest paths and ways. But more than this, they practice to sharpen their memories and know a great deal of history. There is a complicated system to how they move and cross paths to pass information. I find them impressive.

What are the stars?

What are they made of? Impossible to say. Something like

dandelion seeds, I think. But enormous, as they are so far away that even those who dare to climb the mountains cannot reach them. In the night the Wind tosses them up past where the air stops. They carry with them truths about the world, yet to come. As they fall to the ground each morning they bring their truths with them. It is for this reason we can use them to say our future.

Do Head Oracles have extra powers?

A simple answer is yes. We agreed the longer answer does not belong in this book.

Who was Eleven?

Eleven is the name of the eleventh Shaman of The Singing Plain. The practice of Shamans is younger than that of oracles. It began when the windmill was constructed, now seventeen generations ago. All Shamans change their names to their number in the chain of Shamans when they accept the position. Just as all hunters choose a name like a trait from animals they admire, and all oracles choose a name like incense or spirits or stars. Only Head Oracles take names like the facets of the Wind.

Can people change their names any time?

Yes. When a person's life changes, it is often appropriate to change their name as well. Sometimes people change their profession and their name to match it. Sometimes they change it to honor a life-altering event, like the Estranged. I changed mine when I began to live as a woman, and again when I became Head Oracle. It is important that a person's name reflects who they are, so that by breathing it we breathe a part of the truth of them.

I have often been asked if I believe real magic was used in The Singing Plain. I have an opinion. But in order to not taint your own view, I will be keeping it to myself for now.

Another oracle went into further detail about what it is like to be an Estranged. To briefly summarize, it is a voluntary name-change undergone when a person suffers a deep emotional wound, such as a loss of faith. Like all names, these can change voluntarily if the person feels their wound has

healed. To symbolize this wound, Estranged names are their old name but with some syllables removed. For example, a person named "Candle" may change their name to "Andle" or just "Del" upon becoming Estranged.

What happens if a shaman dies before their successor is picked?

This has never happened, and never will happen so long as oracles live to provide council.

Why does the Wind allow bad things to happen?

This is a misconception. The Wind does not create or control truth: it merely speaks of it. The Wind does not control the actions of humans or the properties of stone. It speaks of the truth.

What does Squall's prophecy mean?

I truly do not know. I have read it a few times, and I must side with Gale's memory. But Squall too was a Head Oracle, and so it is kept. It is my hope that my inability to parse the lines means it is not meant for me.

Sigh and Billowing (with Visitor’s input) left behind one of the most singularly useful passages we were able to translate. But for as many mysteries as it solved, there are more left unanswered. Some were simply never explained, some were suspiciously damaged. For the curious-hearted, I’ve compiled a list of the most intriguing (and exasperating) unknowns I’ve come across.

There is a location mentioned only as The Tempered Bluff. It is unclear where this place is, or if it is even real. All that was said about it is that someone was told to “see Swan at The Tempered Bluff”. From surrounding context, it is a place of penance.

One of the oracles mentioned burying something of note on the outskirts of The Nested City. A burial is a serious affair; it separates an object completely from the Wind. I am infuriated that the translation of this item’s nature eludes me.

The temple was not the only oracular sect in The Singing Plain. I found a group, led by a former temple oracle, which became dedicated to a secret practice considered occult by other oracles. This sect believed the Wind entrusts some truths more discriminantly than others. These oracles worked to discover the true desires of the Wind, and allegedly kept many more Squall-style prophecies. They have been referenced in texts recovered from the Marshlands, that indicate they extended their reach outside the Plain.

It was not uncommon for people from other parts of the world to travel to The Singing Plain, seeking counsel. They were usually turned away (with the exception of Marshland neighbors) for a variety of reasons. But there is a short passage referencing a group of strangers who arrived at Shore’s Tip Port and were brought into the temple. What they spoke about and what happened next are completely left out of the book.

This is Whirling, eighth Head Oracle of
The Whispering Temple, transcribed by
Pale.

After Breeze's speech all entries are transcriptions of dialogue between at least two oracles. Usually any peripheral banter is not included; but Pale chose to add a symbol here indicating that Whirling paused for a very long time. It is a strong symbol that means both "anger" and "focus". I am noting it for the particular oddity of its inclusion.

I have now read our Watching Book in full. I am displeased.

Many years ago, when our own home was ravaged by plague, the people of The Marshlands aided us. They brought herbs and taught us how to make a special broth that lent strength to the sick. This year their marsh ran dry. Our Travelers and Hunters brought them food. I was there to witness the celebration they called in their border villages as thanks, with bright colors and songs like I have never heard before. It is another weakness of books that I cannot describe the sound.

Why include this? Because our book is deeply about our own home, view, and beliefs. Do not remember us as isolationists. The people of The Marshlands are our siblings. They keep their own books; I will not butcher their history here. But a Priestess I met (I will paint her name as "Elegant" as their names do not translate well to symbols) gave me a special item. It is very clever. A sort of shaped gum made from the trees that grow there. It squashes slightly, and holds paint well. I can use it to make a mark identical to theirs; if you see this symbol, you have found something that belongs to The Marshlands.



This is Whisk, ninth Head Oracle of The
Whispering Temple, transcribed by Pale.

I was passed this title by Whirling (now Mist). She is not dead.
No, much better! She has chosen to leave the temple to live with
her priestess in The Marshlands. It is an unusual choice, but one
supported by all her sisters. She is deeply in love, and her wisdom
will be a gift to her new home.

This is Hush, eleventh Head Oracle of The Whispering Temple, transcribed by Night.

Hush spent quite a long time dancing around the core subject here. From the way this passage is transcribed, she was deeply embarrassed to need to explain both to Night and eventually to us. I have cut most of the irrelevant bits, but it is worth noting there were many. It is as though she attempted to bury the information under a pile of intentionally overwrought diction.

[...] Nineteen brought us only one candidate during their time as Shaman. I have not seen it said previously, so I shall take this opportunity to speak of our numerology.

Four is the number of the winds: North, South, East, and West. It is the number of the seasons: Winter, Summer, Fall and Spring. It is the number of our natural world, and we honor it. Four spokes on our windmill. Four gates across the Northern Canyon. Four walls on our buildings.

Ten is the number of humans. We have ten fingers, ten toes. There are ten named spirits who affect our fates.

This is all for a purpose. Ten and four: coalitions of these numbers are particularly auspicious. Twenty was to be an especially potent Shaman. Nineteen, only one separated, was herself a steady force. But when time came to present candidates for their successor, they brought only one. Fur was a beekeeper, older already than most candidates. It was not the age of Fur that necessitated this painting. It was that Fur did not pass the ritual.

We told Nineteen that Fur was not a Shaman. And Nineteen, in unfathomable stubbornness, did not listen. They nodded, and left. Our temple heard only after weeks that Nineteen had named Fur their successor.

Fur was a quiet, gentle sort of lad. I do not say this to discredit his memory. The opposite, really: steady as Nineteen was, I saw in Fur more clarity.

I was unnerved, and called the other Head Oracles to discuss. It is our burden to host among ourselves the topics especially disquieting and spare our sisters the detail. There was argument with Nineteen. I was grateful for Storm; she

is a sight to behold when delivering her thoughts.

This was to no avail. Nineteen was unmoved, and Fur became Twenty when Nineteen passed on the chain.

There is a folk prophecy, rarely given credence, that the thirty-first Shaman will be the last. Part of why it is given no thought by serious oracles is that none know where it came from. Part of why is that none know exactly what “last” entails. It could mean Thirty-One will lead to catadysm, or a change of tradition, or anything else. But I am a nervous woman. I am very unlike Storm, whose presence consoles me. She puts no heart into this folk tale, but it was she who suggested I might be soothed by telling it. And so I am.

What happened next is Fur, at the request of the Head Oracles, set at once to finding a true Shaman candidate. Within the season he had done it, and passed his title on. It was his thought that his successor should also hold the name Twenty, and he would return to Fur. He told me once he never liked the idea of being Shaman. Still, few resist Nineteen’s will.

So there is the record. It will take a season at most for all to forget Fur was ever Twenty. The Travelers had barely prepared to take the news across the Plain when it was already over. But if like me the folk prophecy nettles you, or there is again a Shaman with more will than humility, here is the precedent. Twenty is truly Twenty-One. May this knowledge serve if something comes of it.

It is not gone into here, but the ten spirits are these:

Rekindling
Clarity
Serendipity
Tranquility
Gathering
Precision
Focus
Insight
Transience
Destiny

The ten shrines that surround the temple (visible in Waxing Light's drawing) are dedicated one apiece to these spirits.



From the quality of the brushstrokes, the lines of his portrait match with Night's "handwriting". It seems likely she drew this while Hush was talking, which leads to two conclusions. One, that there may have been even more extraneous information that was skipped over by Night in the transcription. Two, that this information was not particularly noteworthy to Night. Perhaps, like many well-kept secrets, most oracles already knew.

For all their mysticism, the humanity of the oracles is clear in their writings. While not a part of the original Watching Book, I have a passage written by a visitor to the Shore's Tip Port. I am including it here to help give grounding to the world outside the temple. From the way they wrote, I think it is something the oracles would want.

Dearest Husband,

You will not get this letter until I arrive again at Foundland and can find a proper carrying bird. Despite worshipping wind, the people here don't train birds. I think they're sacred, or something like. We warn new sailors to leave the birds be.

But it IS a special kind of a place! The nice kids I met last trip are grown even further, but they humored me to play their game again. You remember the one; collecting stones to tell little stories. I'm awful at it as ever.

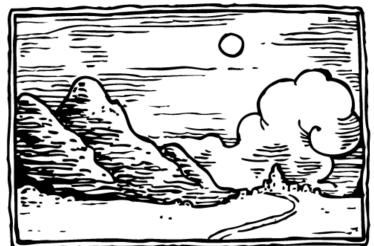
I'm getting better at their language though. Enough so to ask a few questions about their city. All the buildings face with a corner towards the North-East, which is where the strong winds come from here. In the morning and evening the wind is so blustery I can hardly stand, and all the little holes and chimes carved around the city make a beautiful song. Different every time; every time we come back here all the chimes are rearranged and the buildings are painted different and the market got moved. Makes it hard to get around, but they seem to like it.

I'm getting better at predicting the big gusts so I don't have to use the hand-ropes they have set up along the paths. The kids say they're not in every city, but in the port there's lots of newcomers. Glad we can be amusing; the kids like to hold on and lift their feet up sometimes, laughing like crazy while their little bodies flap in the wind.

Anything that's not a kid is set up pretty neatly though. They have this way of bracing their stuff against the clay walls they build so it won't get tossed about, but they always leave holes in everything! Wind may be sacred, sure, but how do they not get cold? Wish I knew.

Aside from the cold, it's always a nice time here.
I gave Shell your regards.

Your Husband, Keel



The Singing Plain

In segments cut from Hush's pages, she announced her choice of Night as successor. Chill seems an odd name for a Head Oracle, but from everything else she has done I can only believe it is an untranslatable joke of some kind

By this point in history this phrase, along with her opening greeting, are distinctly archaic. I can only assume she is being somehow facetious.

This is Chill, twelfth Head Oracle of The Whispering Temple, transcribed by Comet.

Hail, and well met! If you have made it this far, I am glad you are not dead!

Oh, cheer up. The other paintings in this book are so dour. Here. I have a little something for you, future reader. Or not-reader, if you cannot read. Either way, whatever way, I will try to make this as clear and bright as I can.

Into this page I have pressed a pouch of seeds. It worries me that all the stories the Wind has ever told may not be enough to help you should the gardens die in some distant future catastrophe the others are so afeared of. But I will not worry about you too deeply; I am sure you are very clever, or at least very stubborn. Either way, whatever way, I am leaving you the means to grow every herb, tree, and flower we use in the temple. They will take time to grow, once awoken. But they will grow.

May we all go nobly and with grace.

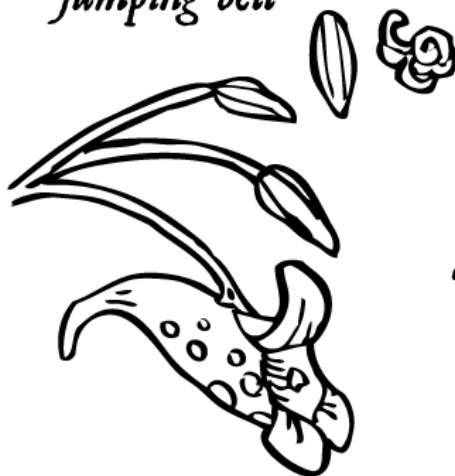


smokebark



starflower

jumping bell



*archer's
balm*



This is Sirocco, fifteenth Head Oracle of The Whispering Temple, transcribed by Light.

I am exhausted with decorum.

I have spent the past two days preparing my sisters to run the temple in my absence. They are wise and skilled. I love and believe in them. But some are scared, and so require special guidance. It is my duty to give this to them, though the Wind may leave my lungs soon.

I have much work to do before I am allowed to die. My successor must be selected and trained. I feel for her; she will inherit a crisis I will not live to see conclude.

I speak of the vicious Wind. It was... near indescribable. Such an event has never occurred before, and if the spirits are quite finished it will never happen again. I hear tell my sister oracles are attempting to name it. They read the smoke with trembling hands. They craft a new word, for this new type of Wind:

Tornado.

I wonder if Squall's memory is pleased to see her ugly prophecy done. Perhaps she is only saddened, that we were not quicker to react. What do you think? You know her as well as I do, if you have read this book. Her memory is joined by many others now. The pyres are burning bright still as we gather the dead, strewn ungracefully among the rubble.

A Hunter arrived, then a Goatherd. I cannot help but put my most trusted sisters on the lookout for the other eight. "And truth be written by their pact," said Squall. I can hope she was correct. Or, this Tornado has naught to do with an old poem, and I am grasping at motes on the Wind. Inelegance. I believe I am afforded some inelegance, given the circumstances.



Those that have fit into the prophecy, I am recording here.

These ten are spirit-blessed. Their paths will bring the change warned of by the Wind. I am painting this as a sort of penance, for I intend to have this book hidden away now. Little good it has done to have it around. I trust it will resurface when it is needed, if ever. It has the air of nuisance about it.





I have cut this edition of the translation here. But rest assured: Sirocco was quite correct.

