

## The Pamelion



The Pamelion's lair fell into a soft green with the coming night; both its inhabitants sat awash in the Great Ribbon's milky jadelight stretching across the sky above. Sarah's hands took on an emerald color as she raised them from her lap.

Great marrowbarks formed an oval column around the lair, arranged in a circle and latticed with aging skeinroot. Tiny whisperwicks circled between the strands, trying to bathe in the evening light. She always wondered if the Pamelion arranged the plants and trees itself, or if it took up residence here after they had grown.

It sat there now, across from her, in the lair's matted vinegrass. Idly fondling the skeinroot that rose up from the ground behind them.

"Are you cold?" It asked her. She realized she was holding the sides of her arms, shivering against the nightly breeze. When it started to stand she dropped her arms, shook her head with more vigor than was necessary. She didn't want the Pamelion to get up. She didn't want to see its awful, spindly body tower over hers. Most of all she didn't want to get lost in its eyes: lifeless orbs that seemed immersed in the night itself. It shrugged, then went back to twirling the skeinroot.

She looked out past the lair. She heard the feint hoots of zantipps far in the distance, but in the dim Ribbonlight she couldn't make out any of their features. The wind sighed through the marrowbark and she wondered what the Pamelion wanted, why it brought her back.

It would call her here sometimes. Always at night, after the Ribbon had a chance to arc across the sky. It assured her that nobody else would ever be there with them, no one would intrude. It would tell her this in earnest, as if this were important information, as if it needed her to know and understand. Nobody has to know you're here, it would tell her. No one else will hear.

A screech above. Wide-winged fillia glided through the emerald dark above them, flickers in the Ribbon providing the only evidence of their presence. She gasped, watched them streak past the marrowbark leaves above.

“Sarah?” the Pamelion asked. “Are you alright?”

She looked back down. Nodded.

“Anything you want to say?” the thing pulled itself upright, sitting more rigid atop the vinegrass.

She shook her head, stared at her shoes.

The Pamelion sighed. “You know Sarah, I’m here to help you. You know that, don’t you, that I’m here to help you?”

She nodded. This was a conversation they’ve had many times before. She knew what she was supposed to say.

“Well I can’t do that unless you talk to me. You can talk to me about anything here, do you understand that? Anything you want. About what happened at—about your friends at school. Why don’t you tell me what happened at school today?”

The Pamelion was staring at her now, its Cimmerian eyes fixed on hers. It smiled, revealing teeth every bit as green as the grass about their feet. She shuddered.

“Mr. Pamelion sir?”

“Yes?”

“...May I please go now?”

The thing sighed, looked over at the marrowbarks standing to its right. “Not for another twenty minutes. Your parents don’t come back until eight.”

She sighed, looked down at her feet again. “Okay.” She never understood much of what the Pamelion said, but it seemed to like agreement.

“Don’t worry,” it said, smiling its grotesque smile. “We’ll get there.”

She peered out toward the field beyond them, listened once again for the faint call of zantipps running across the open plain, hooting in celebration because they were free to do so.