

To whoever digs up my grandson's grave:

I apologize. I know it wasn't much of a riddle, but I didn't have the resources for anything more elaborate.

A long time ago there was a war, and no one knew why. A hooded figure led the night trolls against the human cities of the north, and the north was losing. Had lost, despite heroic efforts by leaders such as the Abbot of the Illustrators and Colonel Courlander and their alliances among the Celts and the Long Lakes. They succeeded in this battle or that against overwhelming odds, but the odds never lessened, while their own numbers did.

Will Deerborn, myself, and two friends of mine from the Celtic lands searched for why. Why was the hooded one here? With Will's scrying and Don Kith's lore, we discovered the dark one's goal: the stone I call the Stone of Clanricarde, for it has crossed my family's path before. Lost for centuries, but the invader wanted it. We resolved to find it first.

We found the stone in the temple in the center of the Croomfrith; myself, and the big Celt, and Don, and old Will, and the armies of the hooded one were close behind. We had no knowledge of the road then, so we took the stone to the most desolate place we could find, and the ancient temple there. And we cast enchantments upon it—old Will and Don—that it disappear from scrying, and placed it behind a riddle, that it would assist in its own seclusion. And when war indeed receded, we erased it from our minds; but old Will was young Will then, and forgetfulness did not last the full length of my years.

If you're familiar with the events of Highland (and you probably are if you knew to dig here, though it is of course possible that you simply enjoy digging up graves) you may be wondering how I was old enough to be in that war. Perhaps the war is slipping backwards; or perhaps my own life is elongated from contact with the stone; or perhaps the stone induces delusion to get its way. I don't know. But there was war, and we hid the stone, and there was no more war.

More recently (and how recently I, of course, can no longer tell you) I discovered that the hooded one discovered our ruse, and was returned to our land to find the stone. Thus I went to its hiding place, and carved my name, and took the stone back to the Croomfrith. And was set on the path to the city by the Tree, it knowing, I ken, that I would not make the city.

The seer also told me this, though I understood it not: whenever you read this, there is war now in Highland. Our land is caught between the broken shell and hidden passage, between despair and darkness. Restore the stone to the city, and there will still be war, but you shall also find assistance, from unlikely sources.

If I speak in riddles, forgive me: you are hearing prophecy second-hand and muddled by time. As for me, let me sleep here, by the side of the road, and rest in the shade of the Tree.

SEAMUSK