

For Queen and Kin

By Richard Paul

The lands to the north of the Planes of Mist
Are ruled by the Silver Spider Queen.
From her web-wrought palace she commands
Half a million souls in five cities;
Rich and bountiful and strong are her lands
Which neighbours look upon most jealously,
Yet they are stalled by the tales men twist,
Tales of how the frightful Queen does feed.

Once a week, every week, a sacrifice,
For which only human meat shall do.
The condemned are sent when available
Yet few in the realm dare risk such a doom.
The dying then, though not half so tasteful,
One final, noble service can choose;
A painful end, but over in a trice,
Better than months left to wither and rue.

Now comes the time of an old grandfather
Whose wife had been the sacrifice last week.
Sickness had haunted them both for a month,
Leaving them shrunken, wheezing and weak.
Last night his final meal he did munch,
Imploring his family not to weep,
Today the Queen must take another
And grant the hasty death he does seek.

Ere the dawn he is taken in a coach
By servants of the Spider Majesty.
A last letter he has left on his desk,
A final farewell to his family,
For he fears t'would not be easy to wrest
Himself from them if they notice him leave,
And as the web-wrought palace he approaches,
His heart feels sore as he pictures them grieve.

The huge and terrifying Spider Queen
Bids him welcome with a voice calm and kind.
The old man bows with an attendant's aid
And a sense of peace he almost can find.
The Queen asks him: Does he wish to pray?
Or speak the final matters of his mind?
The man asks just that it be done quickly
For his wife and parents he longs to find.

On shaking legs, he walks into the web.
The Queen moves with all her famed swiftness.
Two fangs sink into the old man's neck

And her poisons work their beastly best.
One moment is anguish, but in the next
His body slumps down and hangs there, lifeless,
And in short order, the Queen is fed
And one more soul moves beyond all distress.

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