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@run C10pening.RequiredCast
@set other = randomQuester(everyone - mythSavant)
@set other2 = randomQuester(everyone - mythSavant - other)
@set c22wellsuited = false
@set offeredName = false
@set prizeIsKnowledge = false
@set sidelined = 0
@set sidequester = 0
@set sidequestcard = 0
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text: The lake seems frozen not only on its icy surface but through and through, solid to uttermost depths.

text: Tracks of birds and beasts meander through the snow near the shore, but none venture out onto the ice.

text: As you trudge across the flat white expanse, solid as marble and dusted with bone-dry snow, the figure seated at its center grows clearer. She sits in a gnarled rocking chair carved from rotten, graying wood, spinning thin silver thread on a foot-pumped wheel.

other: It's my turn to know a story about this place. That is a witch-wife, unless I'm gravely mistaken. My Nana used to tell stories of them. They trade in forgotten treasures and misplaced secrets.

mythSavant: Hmm. You may be right: we should be cautious.

other: You've said that about every single thing we've come across since we left the Eternal City.

mythSavant: And I've always been right.

text: Her age is impossible to guess; she seems neither old nor young, skin unwrinkled though her long, straight hair is pure white, tucked behind an ear as she bends to her task in concentration.

text: Alongside her are piles of trash and trinkets, small mountains of detritus. As she reaches for a handful it melts in her hand into shapeless gray fibers which she patiently feeds into the wheel as it spins, twisting them into fine and silvery strands.

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@if onquest and honeyDrops = 0
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other: Look: a withered honeycomb in the pile. Are those drops of red honey?

mythSavant: Looks like.

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@elseif onquest and numParts >= 0
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other: There are bits of flesh and bone on that pile. And look: does that one not almost glow, as if with a touch of the divine?

mythSavant: You may be right.

text: The spinner smiles as you approach, looking up from her task. She speaks with a clear, lilting voice, like cold snowmelt trickling down a bank.

hämähäkki (Finnish for spider) or *kutoja* (weaver). *Aranea* (Latin).

In Old English spider was "gangewifre"! Seems too complex to try to explain though.

@set oldwname = "Hämähäkki"

@set witchwife = npc("Spinner", "priestess", female)

witchwife: This witch-wife greets you, travelers.

other: Um. You could hear us, all the way back there?

witchwife: Of course. "Witch-wives" they call us now, is it? We are married to no one, and far more than witches. How like a mortal, though, to imagine we might be kept.

witchwife: But call us that, if you please. The Ninth Sister, others name us, or <oldwname> in some tongues.

@set witchwife.name = oldwname

?: *Your pardon, witch-wife.*

@set witchwife.name = "The Witch-wife"

?: *Your pardon, Ninth Sister.*

@set witchwife.name = "The Ninth Sister"

?: *Your pardon, <witchwife>.*

?: *Us?*

text: She merely smiles, and returns to her spinning.

pc: We meant no offense. What is it you spin?

text: Up close, the thread seems finer than strands of hair, glimmering like focused moonlight. She touches a finger lightly to one delicate strand.

witchwife: Links. Connections. Threads most mortals cannot see, but which have far more meaning to them than the ones they can.

witchwife: See how you each bear your own, binding you back to your living land.

text: You look behind you, and for a moment catch a glimpse of impossibly fine golden threads, stretching back to the shore and over the horizon behind. Then the light shifts and the glimpse is gone.

text: When you look back at the witch-wife, she holds a pair of metal scissors. Her smile is sharper.

witchwife: We gather threads from new arrivals, threads of all kinds: gold ones, pale ones, gray ones, and many others. We weave them into better things, now that their former owners have no use for them.

?: *Please, leave us be!*

?: *We are visitors, not new residents.*

?: *I'd like to see you try, sister.*

witchwife: Perhaps we can make a bargain.