

Nadya Aldona Straconeva

(11898.1 / Artemisia Stevenson)

You walk through a forest of fungus. Great tree-trunk thick stems rise to immense wide caps. Shelves of pale mushroom and spreading stains of rust and mold cover the ruins of some great structure scattered all around you – perhaps a city, or a cyclopean fortress of some kind.

Even with the shade of the great mushroom caps, it is not fully dark. A twilit miasma hangs over the fungal forest. Now and then between the great toadstool caps you catch sight of the sky. It is dark, but covered in stars. Thousands of them, more stars than you have ever seen in the night sky before. They're brighter than you've ever seen them, a spray of different colours that sparkle and twinkle like precious jewels scattered carelessly across a sable cloth. You fancy that each one is connected to one or more of its neighbours by a barely visible line of metallic colour – copper, bronze, gold, silver. Like gazing up at a vast net. You are struck with the sudden suspicion that it is not a sky at all, but the roof of some immense cavern studded with great glittering hunks of multicoloured crystal.

Occasionally the stars are occluded by black silhouettes passing in front of them. Lean shapes, with massive spreading, membranous wings. They don't seem to be aware of you and you feel a strong desire not to attract their attention.

After a timeless period of walking, in which your tunic and cloak become dusted with the pale crimson spores that drift endlessly from the underside of the great mushroom caps, the larger mushrooms become less and less common. It is like entering a clearing in a myconid forest.

In the centre of the clearing is a large tomb, seemingly carved of black glass. The door stands partially open. Strange runes are carved across the surface, inlaid with a shimmering green metal. Almost as soon as you see it, the moment you understand what it is, you find yourself stood outside – crossing the distance between between one breath and the next.

Peering in, the tomb is a barren chamber, much smaller than the outside would have lead you to believe – barely six yards long. A shelf runs around the walls at shoulder height, atop which are thick yellow candles in ornate holders, and the skulls of unidentifiable animals, all with curling horns. Here and there a human skull with cambion horns. At the far end of the room on a waist-high dais of obsidian rests a coffin made of the same material while above it, on a shelf, rests a thick leather book of obvious age.

The door is open but not enough to walk through – you have to squeeze, sucking your breath in. Inside, the air is cold, and oppressive. Shadows coil in the corners, but you do not find them threatening.

Approaching, you lean over the obsidian sarcophagus. At one end is a clear window, covered in dust. You wipe the dust clear, and gaze down onto the face of the body within, It is a woman

with long dark hair and curling cambion horns. Her face is sunken by death, chalk white. Her eyes closed ... but you can feel her watching through the glass even in death. Her voice, her dead voice, whispers cold syllables directly into your mind. She talks about the joy of sleep, the desperate yearning of the dead for the living, and their endless hunger for warmth and joy they can never experience again. Hers is a uniquely Varushkan voice, but so old. So inhuman.

After a time you realise you cannot feel your hand or your arm where it rests against the glass of the sarcophagus. With a growing sense of horror you see that the arm has withered, your fingers brittle and chalky white, your nails long and twisted. You try to pull away, and it takes all your will and all your strength, and then you are free ... but your arm crumbles and tears away from its socket.

You fall, and with a resounding crash, the heavy lid of the black glass sarcophagus smashes upwards, breaking against the ceiling into thousands of spinning shards... and then you wake up.

Effect: Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the rituals Hold Back Frozen Hunger, and Coil of the Black Leech as if you had mastered them. If you have already mastered one of these rituals, you may perform them as if you have one additional rank of Winter lore. You should keep this vision and show it to a referee if you perform this ritual. This is an enchantment.

Roleplaying effect: When you awaken, you are under a roleplaying effect that persists for at least an hour: you cannot move one of your arms and the appropriate hand (your choice) – it is paralysed and you have no sensation in it. This will slowly fade over the course of the hour until you have full use again.

As long as the enchantment persists, people who are feeling passionate or emotional draw your attention as if they were delicious feasts – you may even begin to salivate – although you may become frustrated as you have no way to actually feed on their passions