

Somnolent Wanderer

Lisabetta Giacomi von Holberg (3260.1)

You walk the streets of Holberg, but they are not entirely the familiar streets. Elements are recognisable – the plaza where you first encountered the mechanical delights of Wunderkind; the little coffee shop on the corner near the university where students laugh and bicker late into the night even during the height of the siege; the twisting back alleys behind the house near the Markenplatz.

Yet the streets have been transfigured – made magical. There are trees everywhere – not so dense as to transform Holberg into a forest but thick enough to sometimes obscure the sky. They are unfamiliar, but it is clear that they are summer fruit trees of some kind. White blossom hang heavy on their boughs filling the night air with a sweet scent that is achingly familiar.

You pass a fountain overgrown with pale yellow lotus; the facade of Ledger Demain is overgrown with grape vines that seem to grow and stretch and coil around the iron fittings even as you watch.

A brightly coloured bird, larger than one of your mother's hounds, perches on the cornice where Rain Street and Imperial Avenue meet. It rustles its feathers at you as you pass, then launches itself into the air with a rough squawking cry that seems at odds with its rainbow beauty.

In the distance, you can hear drums. The loud, pulsing rhythms of the Druj, echoing nightly throughout the siege of Holberg.

You turn a corner, and things shift a little. Rain Street opens not onto the Square of Three Fountains but into the marshes of Rebeshof.

In the manner of dreams, this does not seem unusual. You lift up your skirts and carefully pick your way across a line of flat white stones through the mud and the muck. Little white birds – or are they birds? - flutter above you.

The sky is dark. The moon is full and low and pale. The stars are unfamiliar.

The marshes are overgrown just as the city was, but there is also the suggestion of an overgrown orchard beneath it. Pear trees. Some vague memory tugs at you.

Ahead there is a house, fit for a prosperous Merchant-Prince. Or rather, perhaps it was fit for a prosperous Merchant-Prince twenty years or more ago, before time and neglect tumbled the roof and cracked the windows.

For a moment, you are overwhelmed with the sudden sense that someone is watching you. A man, hidden in the gloom, his hands gnarled and pale on the ironwork of the balcony, peering down from the upper levels of the mansion. A vertiginous sense of familiarity that causes you to speed your progress, bang the metal doorknocker with slightly more than appropriate force.

The door swings open by itself.

Within, incongruously, it seems the same grape vines you saw in the city streets have colonised the house as well. They have overgrown the pictures, coiled around the balustrades, shrouded the ceilings, strangled the furniture.

A young woman in severe black velvet, cut in an archaic style, waits in the main hall. She wears her long auburn hair pinned up with hundreds of tiny pearl-tipped pins. Her skin is smooth and lightly powdered - but when she frowns or smiles it is clear she is much older than she at first appears.

She looks... put out.

“Visitors are rare at this time of night,” she says primly. “What has it come to that I must answer my own door!”

She sweeps away, skirts rustling in the gloom of the house, into another room. You follow, although part of you wonders if you should not run up the stairs two-at-a-time and explore the upper levels of the house looking for...

Your host wears a single silver and emerald ring on her left ring-finger which she twists as she talks. From time to time she rings a little steel bell and looks increasingly irritated. She does not seem entirely aware of the drums, but you can hear them still. The drums of the Druj in the sweltering, constricting, dusty air of the old house.

They begin to make your head ache.

Your host has brought you to a workroom – albeit one overgrown with fruiting vines. It is scattered with workbenches and tables, on which sit partially constructed music boxes. From time to time, she moves to a table and picks one up, turning it over and over in her hands. She tinkers with it for a moment before putting it down and rubbing her hands together.

Her conversation is disjointed - but it becomes apparent immediately that she believes it is some time during the reign of Empress Giselle.

She believes that you are meeting her at her manor in eastern Rebeshof - she seems unaware you are dreaming her. Rather she seems to think you are an emissary sent by the Holberg senator, here to canvas her vote for the upcoming election.

She barely seems to hear what you are saying, filling in your side of the conversation herself inside her head. The longer you interact with her, the more disjointed she becomes. She often trails off in the middle of a conversation and picks up the little steel bell, ringing it with increasing frustration as all the while the Druj drums beat in the background.

As your conversation draws to a close, she cocks her head to one side and complains that she can hear "that cat" again. She picks up her bell and rings it insistently.

"Where is that slack boy!" she asks, rhetorically. "I've been ringing this bell for... Never employ Varushkans, my dear. They are unreliable after dark."

She frowns, and trails off, and then blinks at you in some confusion.

"Visitors are rare at this time of night," she says, not looking at you directly, turning away to tinker with another music box.

Effect

Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the ritual Secrets of Skillful Artifice and Hand of the Maker 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 Night magic. You should keep this vision and show it to a referee if you perform this ritual.

Roleplaying Effect: As long as the enchantment lasts, you experience intermittent moments where you become afraid that you are in imminent danger. Such moments are marked by the sound of beating Druj drums. They last no more than a minute at most, and stop as suddenly as they start.

Somnolent Wanderer

[Marzanna Verchernyaya Zorya \(5097.2\)](#)

You dream of fields of head-high corn, ripe for harvest. The air is warm and pleasant, and a fat moon hangs above the field like a bloated pumpkin. Incongruously, the field stands in the middle of a dark wood of tall, twisted trees.

You can hear a brook babbling nearby, just out of sight.

A light breeze brings scents of peat fires, woodsmoke. It is late autumn.

If you had to judge you would say that you are in the Marches but there are elements that do not fit. Here and there, trees of an unfamiliar type burst up through the corn field, with spreading boughs heavy with white blossom. A multicoloured bird, larger than a big pig, perches in the branches of one of the trees. With a jarring shriek it launches itself into the air and soars into the sky in a frenzy of beating wings.

Your companion is a ruddy-faced middle-aged Marcher woman with a wooden drum. Her clothing seems archaic, even for the Marches, and she speaks with an odd accent that seems unfamiliar and dated. She seems well aware she is in the Dreamscape, but seems happy enough to be here. She seems incapable of remaining still, constantly moving around the boundaries of the cornfield, beating her drum.

Sweat pours down her face and her continuous wheezing suggests she is perpetually somewhat out of breath. In between beats of the drum and gasps for air, she explains her theory: that the dreamscape too can be brought under Marcher control by beating its bounds.

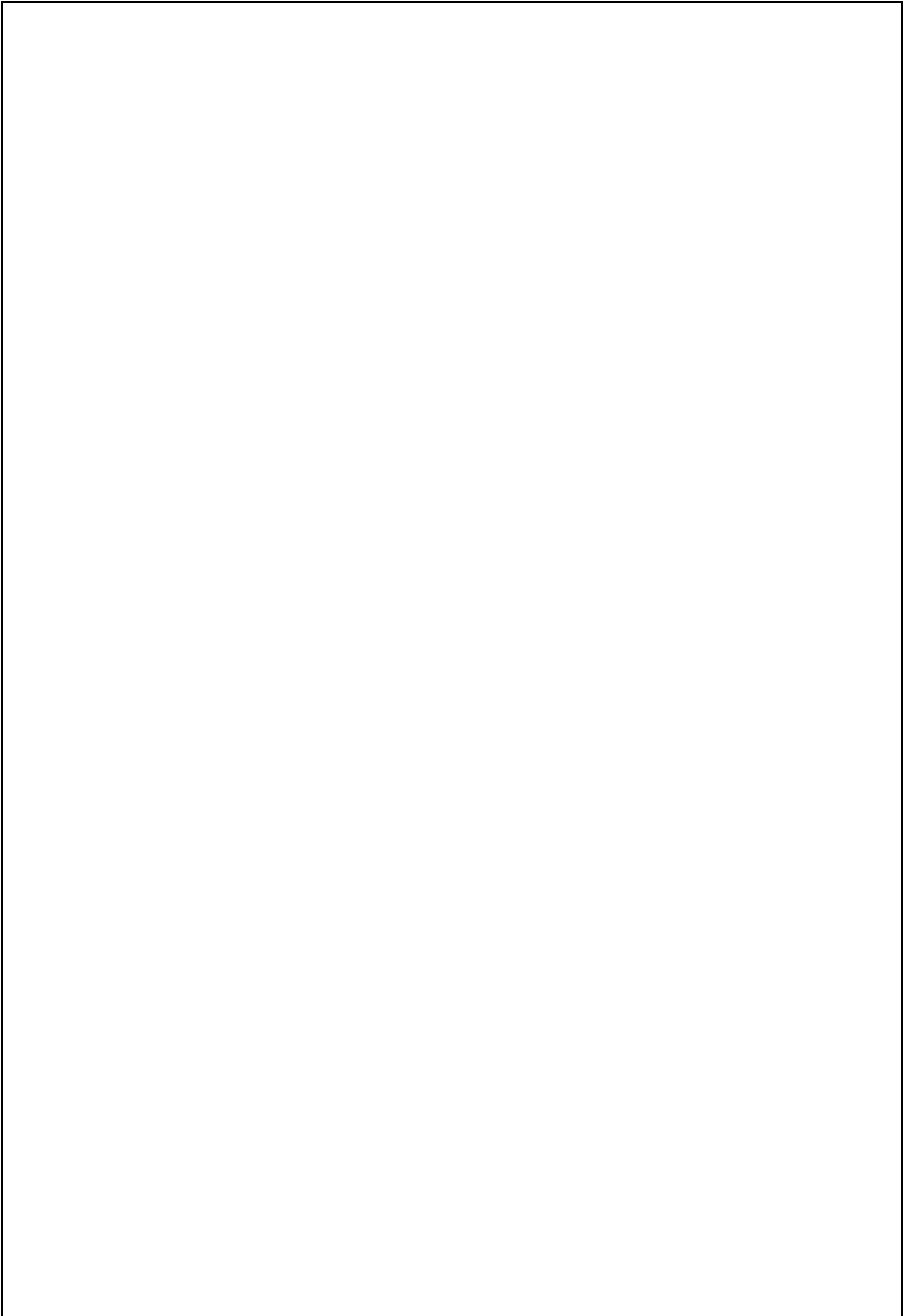
Every rock, every tree holds great significance to her and she is ecstatic to tell you the history of each; who took the first crabapple from the tree by the brook; who first knelt before the dolmen in prayer. Every now and then you reach a corner of a field and she taps at the wooden gates and stiles with a supple wand of green willow, leaving a mark on each and *swishing* the wand at the surrounding hedges and low stone walls before moving onto the next field.

She never stops, never slows down. As you continue, she explains that she has been walking the boundary for "quite a while" straight now and hopes that she is 'nearly done, for it is thirsty enough work'.

She casually mentions that she is already beginning to see an effect - the "big cat" is too scared to come around any more. In defiance of her words, something large moves unseen through the field behind her, sending rippling waves through the corn.

Effect: Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the rituals "There is No Welcome Here" and "Hold Back Frozen Hunger" as if you had mastered them; if you have already mastered these rituals, you may perform them as if you have one additional rank of Winter magic. This is an enchantment. You should keep this vision and show it to a referee if you perform this ritual.

Roleplaying Effect: As long as the enchantment lasts, you feel an urge to control your personal space, and mark your personal boundaries. The presence of strangers, or people you don't like, in your immediate area unsettles and angers you.



Somnolent Wanderer

Zlata (8733.1)

You walk through a maze of narrow corridors, a slum or rookery somewhere in ... you think the League? You are certainly inside a building. The maze is on multiple levels - rickety stairs connect the levels. You can feel you are spiraling in toward a central point. You can hear voices on the other sides of walls - some caught in ecstasy, some weeping, some babbling or ranting or laughing. The smells of sex and despair are heady in the air.

You push at last through a bead curtain into a larger room hung with curtains and veils of red, black, midnight blue and translucent gossamer. In the middle, hidden among the veils, is a couch upon which reclines a man in his early 30s. He is naked apart from a pair of knee-length sleeping pants. His skin is alabaster pale, and there are dark rings about his eyes, but he reminds you suddenly of a marble statue in some foreign style.

He sucks fragrant narcotic smoke from a brass hookah, and it is clear he is in the grip of some potent drug. His words are halting, distracted, self-referential. To your surprise, he claims to hail from Necropolis, and believes he is in Sarvos "studying" the ways of Night magic with a naga of great age, whose family had lived in Sarvos since those earliest days, when his Highborn forebears came first to the welcoming shores of the Bay of Catazaar.

He calls her simply "Empty One", and each night as the sun sinks beneath the eastern horizon he hastens with ... a companion? ... to her chambers, eager as a young lover, to kneel in the scented dark on soft carpets woven with intricate mandalas, and listen to her speak of distant vistas, and of the subtle majesty of the Realm of Night.

His mysterious mentor speaks to him of the world of dreams, and how it might be reached, and of the Wine of Somnus that is the gateway to wonder. From the Empty One he learnt to invoke the feathered serpent that guides the traveller's steps to that place of mystery, and how to hear her gentle voice on the wind. He learnt of the Father of Bats, who is a patron of sorts to magicians and wizards, and how to petition him for lore and power. He learnt also of the machinations of those bodiless spirits who live in the whispered word and the midnight confidence, who feed on scandal; and of the importance of sharing hidden lore only sparingly lest their jealousy undo all subtle designs.

Nights of true wonder, to hear him speak of them, nights where he would partake of the Wine of Somnus that his veiled mentor poured with soft-scaled hands into goblets of pale ambergelt, seasoned with herbs and spices, bitter and sweet at the same time. After a single mouthful, the wine would drag him down, down, into the arms of the black abyss, and the revelations would begin.

In contrast he speaks distantly of the bland undifferentiated days, and how tedious they seemed in contrast to the nights of phantasmagoric wonder during which he explored surreal landscapes and wondrous jungles of the mind.

Throughout, you find your eyelids becoming heavier, and begin to experience phantasmagoric moments of your own as the heady smoke infiltrates your lungs. It is hard to stay focused, the urge to lose yourself in these narcotic dreams grows and grows and you risk being overwhelmed.

Without warning though, he breaks off - your drug addled companion - and looks past your shoulder. He says excitedly "she is coming!"

But when you turn to look, there is nobody visible, just a disturbance of the curtains as if someone unseen moves among them, and a cold breeze that brings with it a sharp awakening and the discovery that you have left a window open.

Effect: Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the rituals Missive for Sadogua, The Chamber of Delights, Clear Counsel of the Ever-Flowing River, and Sift the Dreamscapes Sand 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 Night magic. You should keep this vision and show it to a referee if you perform this ritual.

Roleplaying effect: You feel a strong desire to indulge in mind-altering substances. Potions, and narcotics, are deeply appealing to you especially herbal preparations you have never tasted before. If you will encounter "Blackened Key" or "Ocean's Caress" you will feel a very strong urge to consume a dose.

