

Cassia (11666.1)

You walk through a dark forest of impossibly tall, moss-covered, oaks. Clouds of iridescent Moon Moths flutter in the night sky, and long strands of faintly luminous grey lichen hang from the tree branches like spider webs. There is a strong smell of rotting leaf mould and the ground is littered with fungus-covered logs. Here and there between the trees you can make out capering figures who dance in and out of the shadows, playing eerie and beguiling tunes on bone-white flutes. They appear humanoid in general outline, but their heads are those of small forest animals – especially mice. The tune they play urges you to leave the path you are walking and join them but you resist with an effort of will.

A path stretches ahead of you winds through the trees, bounded by tiny white stones. Now and as you walk along the path, the tree canopy parts and a glimpse of an uncertain starry sky can be seen. You are profoundly aware of how alone you are, here in the dark and unfamiliar woods.

The lilting music of the pale flutes causes a growing sense of unease, as if something ancient and alien stirs in the depths of the forest. You fancy that you see a pale, cowed figure moving between the trees, slowly drawing closer - their face is completely hidden in shadow.

As you hasten along the path, it splits into three. You pick one of the roads and hurry along it. The music of the bone flutes and the pale figure both fade behind you as you travel and the sense of unease falls away.

Without warning, you emerge from the forest onto a manicured lawn surrounding a tower of black stone. In a great circle around the tower are a number of excellently sculpted black statues of dog-headed figures, each holding an oval mirror of polished mithril. Standing at the door of the tower, apparently waiting for you, is an old Freeborn woman clad in robes of red and orange. She greets you pleasantly, but does not invite you inside. Instead she comes down the steps from her front door and greets you warmly.

She asks if you have come far, and how far you are going. She seems particularly interested in any traveling you have done, and shares stories of her own adventures – how she once captained a ship and travelled to ports across the known world. Now she is retired – and this is her abode.

It seems she knows she is in dreams, and that you are a visitor from the waking world. She seems singularly uninterested in news of current affairs though. Rather she wants to show you her statues, explaining that she sculpted each one of them herself when she was awake. As you pass each one, you can see a different scene trapped in the depths of the mithril mirrors. A bustling market somewhere far from Imperial shores; a ship at sea; a snowy forest scape; a road through dusty grasslands; a glass menagerie. The images move and change but you cannot tell if you are actually looking at something that is happening, or a memory trapped in the mirror.

The magician talks about how the mind, as well as the body, can travel through the world. That in the end the final understanding is that you can experience these places without needing to leave the safety and comfort of your home. Yet there is something... wistful... about the way she speaks and you are not sure she entirely believes what she is saying.

Effect: Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the rituals “Eyes of the Sun and Moon (Day/) and Eye of the High Places (Day) as if you have mastered them; if you have already mastered these rituals, you may perform them as if you have one additional rank of Day 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 persists, you experience a roleplaying effect: you have an urge to go to places you have never been before, and experience new things. You feel especially driven to speak to new people about the places they have seen.

Kalina Jadwigowna Piosnkowa - 11301.1

You pass through a maze of narrow corridors, a slum or a rookery somewhere in the League - you are certainly inside a building. The maze is on multiple levels - rickety stairs connect the floors,. 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.

Simargl, the Empty One - 269.1

You trudge across an endless plain of cracked, parched, baked solid, orange mud. The sky above is clear, unfamiliar yet familiar stars wheeling, no sign of the moon, no landmarks to navigate my. Not a desert – not as such – this is not sand. There was water here once, you think. Sometimes when you look up you half fancy you can see the shadow of something piscine and lazy and very, very large drifting across. Half visible only by the occlusion of the stars as it passes.

You don't know how long you have been walking. Despite the clear skies it is very warm. You ought to be thirsty, but you aren't. You're just alone. Alone with yourself.

After a while, inevitably, there is a sign of life ahead. Perhaps you are relieved. Perhaps you are a little disappointed to have your solitude disturbed.

The bones of a great beast – a huge fish or a whale on a scale that your mind shies away from quite accepting – jut from the cracked clay. A fire burns, despite the heat. Perhaps the fire is for company rather than warmth. The fire casts dancing shadows that don't quite fit – sometimes human sometimes something quite different. You are a Varushkan, so you know how to deal with a situation where someone casts two shadows. You approach openly, adopt as friendly a mien as you can muster.

There is a man here, seated cross legged next to the fire, staring into its depths. He wears very little, only a kilt of old leather around his hips. Its impossible to say how old he is, and probably doesn't matter. He does not look up as you approach, but gestures for you to take a seat across from him. The flames leap as you sit down, then recede slightly, withdrawing into the broken timbers, becoming embers.

He doesn't speak for a while, then looks up, studies you. His eyes are not human eyes but those of a beast, brown and gold, and liquid, but with a terrible awareness and... sadness? In their depths, a terrible sadness that tugs at something within you, perhaps something you have forgotten.

When he speaks it is as if he has forgotten how to form words, as if he's unsure of how language works. He seems immensely uncurious, commenting on your appearance, on the stars, on the warmth of the air. As he speaks, though, he becomes more confident. You are painfully aware that the more animated he becomes, the more the shadows cast by the fire, draped across the bleached bones, become more unsettling. Larger. More predatory, more hungry. They flicker and move of their own accord – possibly an optical illusion from the fire – and make you imagine a hunting beast.

The conversation turns, inevitably, to magic. You discuss how magic can sustain, can preserve life, can ward against death. He touches vaguely on the horror that is persistence, as he calls it. The way that magic does not care whether its victim wishes to continue or not, that it is heartless and soulless and that sometimes, sometimes continuance is the worst kind of torment. That the thing that makes life endurable is the knowledge that it will end, and become something else. Of the horror of permanence, and the terrible aching pain of being unable to change. Of the danger of unwisely leaping into space with no certainty that you will hit the water, and that you might fall forever.

You awaken with the final words of the strange magician echoing in your mind. *“Forever is a very long time,”* he said. *“Be sure you know where you will land before you leap.”*

Effect: Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the ritual Last Breath Echoes (Winter/20) as if you had mastered it; if you have already mastered this ritual, you may perform them as if you have one additional rank of Winter magic. You should keep this vision and show it to a referee if you perform this ritual.

Roleplaying Effect: You are filled with a melancholic sense that things are somehow becoming static and unchanging. Ennui, and a horrible nagging sense of deja vu, that persists for at least an hour.

While the enchantment continues you experience a roleplaying effect: you feel the urge to seek out new experiences, and find it increasingly frustrating if you realise you are doing something you have done before.