## Nadya Aldona Straconeva

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 estacy, 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.