

Zoria (Isabella Shockley / 10516.1)

You find yourself walking in an unfamiliar city. Tall buildings of brick, stone, and wood rise around you, creating a sharp-cornered maze. The road beneath your feet is sometimes cobbled, sometimes paved with regularly-cut rectangles of stone, sometimes naught but waterlogged mud. You're alone, but you can sense people around you. As if you are moving through the ghost of a crowd the memory of an unseen, unfelt, bustling population.

Above, between the roofs, you can see 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've no idea how long you've waled when suddenly you're at a door, in a dead end alleyway. A brindled orange-and-black cat, old but still lithe, sits atop a wall staring down at you, and for reasons you would struggle to put into words you decide to open the door and hurry quickly inside.

Beyond is a narrow, creaking wooden corridor, tight and confining. You push through and emerge into a forest. Dark-trunked trees with bright green leaves; thick bushes covered with crimson berries, a deer grazing peacefully on a clump of jade grass.

No, not a forest. Your perception shifts and shivers and you can see that everything here is false. Not trees, bushes, deer, but flat wooden stand-ups. Theatrical scenery. You are on a stage, in front of a grand auditorium. You can feel hundreds of pairs of eyes on you, but the seats are empty – or at least you assume they are. It's difficult to see the audience, with the footlights blazing in your eyes.

A young woman is on the stage with you, gesturing widely. She is in the middle of a speech, reciting words written by a playwright, but easily and naturally as if she spoke them from the heart. Her words rise, reach a climax, and she dramatically points toward you. You feel, suddenly, the centre of attention and then everything stumbles and shakes and falls apart.

The young woman throws her hands up, and rolls here eyes, berating you for missing your cue. She is draped in white and gold, with a symbol of a burning

flame on the breast of her vestment. Her face is concealed behind a peculiar mask of ivory and polished bronze, in the shape of a stylised human visage – that of a young woman. The outfit is topped with a peculiar hat, and in one hand she holds a lantern that glitters with a large lightstone inside.

She is an actor, a magician-thespian of the League, and she seems slightly unclear as to whether the pair of you are rehearsing a play or performing on stage in front of a packed auditorium. She flips easily between frustrated that the play has stalled due to your poor performance, and laughing camaraderie at the shared difficulty of remembering all the complex lines of the scene. She takes pity on you, though, explaining that while it can be daunting to be on stage for the first time, the important thing is to remain calm, to act as if you are the centre of the world – and rightly so.

In between talk of the play, she speaks seriously about ambition, and the need to focus on what you want. How she always wanted to be an actor, how she used to learn and recite scraps of scenes from the dusty pages of old books. How she'd imagine herself the toast of League society, a guest of Merchant-Princes and bishops, her company and her magic sought after by all. How she would be the glittering jewel of the theatrical world, her name spoken with jealous awe among all who shared the stage with her.

She falters, and for a moment she appears much older. You are profoundly aware of how unreal everything is – how the paint peels from the scenery, from the trees, and bushes, and the stalking tiger. How her vestments are not true cloth of gold but yellow cotton run through with with broken threads, how a delicate crack runs over the ivory of her mask.

Then she is laughing and vital again, suggesting that you start the scene again, take it from the top, remember your cue this time, remember to say "this" when she says "this".

Effect: Until the start of the next Profound Decisions Empire event you can perform the rituals Crystal Clarity of the Rational Soul (Day/8) and Solace of Chimes (Day/8) as if you had mastered them; if you have already mastered this ritual, you may perform it as if you have one additional rank of Day magic. You should keep this vision and show it to a referee if you perform this ritual.

Roleplaying Effect: While under this enchantment, you are occasionally struck by the conviction that everything around you is false, that you are still on stage. The people are actors wearing masks and costumes, the objects and furniture are flat scenery, and you are being watched by an unseen audience.