

After erasing the traces of the demonic text and using his transformative right hand to cut out the corpse's tongue, he opened the door and told Ciana to clean up the room. She cast him a suspicious glance, likely knowing that he would busy himself with a more important task, but something told him that keeping up appearances, even if for just a little while, would be to their benefit.

Jakob took the steps down two at a time, as he hurried to the basement below. Word of the brutal suicide had already spread to the guests that lounged in the eatery despite the lateness of the night and they were busy debating the cause of it, one of them already embellishing the story to include a sighting of a fleeing figure, though Jakob knew that it was no murder that had taken place.

Nharlla's summoning had been foretold and long-awaited schemes were now aligned properly in preparation for the arrival of the Sovereign. Rather than wait for Jakob to find the right Demon of Pride to summon, the right Demon had found him, and it was a Lord no less.

When he got to the bottom floor, he strode through the kitchen, startling the snoozing chef who had fallen asleep in the middle of peeling carrots for the morrow's stew. He came storming down the stairs to find his two construct servants still tidying up.

"Wothram, Mayhew, go stand by the top of the stairwell and ensure I am not disturbed."

The Golem and the tall construct left in lockstep synchronicity, as Jakob immediately got to work scratching the summoning ritual into the stone floor with his clawed right hand. He had memorised the pattern shown to him below the dead man and his knowledge-engorged brain fed him the rest of the ritual he needed.

It was no simple summoning septagram, rather it was a series of seven slightly off-centre rings that became smaller as they went, the second within the first ring, the third within the second, and so on. To the line of each ring was added the Chthonic Sigil that identified the specific realm: Pride as the first, Envy as the last.

Outside of the outer ring he drew the specific pattern he had seen. It almost looked like the silhouette of a bird of prey, but not quite. Within it he added the Chthonic name of the Demon Lord, as well as the Sigil called the Watcher's Gate, which was like an upside-down U within which was the Sigil for the Watcher. It was amusing how the Demonic way of drawing it was identical to the Chthonic way, but some things were absolute after all.

Then, to finish, he added a Sigil he did not know the name or meaning of, but which seemed as important as the Watcher's Gate and the Demon Lord's name.

Jakob took a few steps back. It was a habit to give his linework an appraising look, but he knew it was not needed. Alongside the knowledge that filled his brain and screamed to be used, was the assurance that he could not fail with his rituals, as though his hand could make no errors when it drew the potent lines or scratched the devastating sigils.

He wished dearly that Heskell was here to witness what he was about to do. After all, summoning a Demon Lord in a conventional manner was tantamount to suicide, not to mention damning perhaps the entire continent to ruin. But this was no Demonological ritual, no, it was a Chthonic rite of True Summoning. Whereas a Demonic Summoning would bring the Demon's soul through the veil, a Rite of True Summoning would bring their entire corpus.

If Jakob had not possessed the knowledge, he would not have believed it possible, but, of course, the Great Ones and their power was absolute and there was nothing they could not accomplish; the only thing required was the knowledge of the right Sigils and hymns.

He cleared his throat as he prepared to intone the spell, but before he could begin, the sound of Ciana's hooves on the stairs gave him pause.

"You're not doing this without me," she scolded Jakob, as she came over to stand behind him.

"I have no idea you were so interested in this."

"Don't be silly. I saw the name on the wall too. Is it a strong demon?"

"The strongest, some would say."

"I can still defeat it if necessary."

"It won't be," Jakob replied, "But good to know."

Then he began to wordless hymn, which awakened the magic within the spell he had drawn, making pale-blue light emerge from the scratches in the floor, as though some entity born of a cold star was attempting to break through the stone floor of the basement.

The light grew in intensity as Jakob continued onto the second verse, wherein the name of the Demon Lord was interspersed seemingly at random, though he himself knew there was a logic to it.

As he reached the third verse, the light began to warp and take on a physical shape, forming an immaculate pearlescent-blue gate in the air. A *woosh* of air broke through as the gate began to show another world beyond its threshold.

Cataclysmic winds whipped the stone peak that they looked at, with lightning and monsoon-level rain shooting back-and-forth as though the most violent storm possible was raging just beyond the threshold of the light-born gate.

A lone figure stepped through and no sooner had his clawed blue feet touched the stone floor of the basement than the vision of a foreign world disappeared within the gate, and the light that it was made up of began to break apart and vanish into tiny motes of light.

Then Jakob ended his hymn and all the light disappeared at once, leaving behind a tall naked figure who clearly did not belong in the Mortal Realm.

The Demon stood at over two metres in height, though he may as well have been a giant with how imposing a figure he struck. His body was lithe and laced with tightly-packed muscles that on anyone else would have looked brutish, but on him seemed perfectly sculpted. His face had high cheekbones and a lipless slit for a mouth, with two piercingly-cold almond-shaped eyes. At the top of his brow were two slate-grey horns that curled back along the curvature of his cranium, not to mention a mane of silver-white hair that were raised at an angle like the spines of a porcupine. He wore no clothes, but the lack seemed neither vulgar or primitive on him, but instead gave off the air of clothes being beneath him.

Ciana stood awestruck as she stared at the figure, while Jakob did his best to counteract the overpowering aura the Demon was assailing them with. He had to physically and mentally fight against the urge to debase himself before the figure.

Jøkull, Demon Lord of the Solitary Spire, stared Jakob in the eyes, then said:

"At last you have called upon me, Seeker."