

LXIV

“Are you the Sovereign?” Ciana asked, dumbfounded.

As though just now noticing her, Jøkull turned his sculpted face towards her and let his eyes run down her figure, perhaps appraising her.

“***I am its first half,***” he told her, then turned back to Jakob. “***I was unaware that the spawn of Archduchess Sköll would be present.***”

“Ciana is my steadfast companion,” he replied. “But I had no idea that her progenitor was an Archduchess.”

“***Sköll is one of my loyal adherents, but I was unaware that she sired a half-spawn.***”

“I believe it was for a reason,” Ciana replied. Jakob was surprised by her confidence, but perhaps it was easier to live with the suffering of the past by using the successes of the present to justify them.

Jakob nodded. “The Watcher has guided us to this moment.”

“***Not just the Watcher has had its hands in this,***” Jøkull remarked.

The Demon Lord walked around the basement for a bit, seemingly fascinated with the mundanity of his surroundings. Then he found the ritual carvings on the floor and dropped to a knee to study the Sigils.

“***It is my first time being summoned,***” he revealed. “***I was made to believe it would be different.***”

“Normally just your soul would be summoned,” Jakob replied.

“***Fascinating. You use the Watcher’s Gate, my Sigil, and your own to imitate the spell.***”

Jakob looked at the third Sigil, the one he had not comprehended, but known to be crucial for the Rite to work. “That is my Sigil?”

“***The Seeker, it says.***”

He looked at the Sigil, pride and surprise flooding him in equal measure. To be of enough significance to have earned his own Chthonic Sigil was quite something. It was nowhere near as complex as the other Sigils he had used, but as he looked at it intently, he could not help but feel a strange sense of affinity for it, as though instinctively knowing that the symbol personified him completely.



While Jakob was busy marvelling at his Sigil, Jøkull wandered over to the unfinished drawing that Jakob had left when the commotion upstairs had beckoned him and Ciana. With a simple gesture, the Demon Lord summoned a cutting wind that finished the linework, such that the Bottomless Well

Sigil joined Nharlla's Tangled Eye and the Inverted Ear in protecting the basement from all prying eyes and would-be observers.

Jakob stood up from where he had been knelt to stare deeply at the Seeker Sigil. "You said you were the first half of the Sovereign," he reminded the Demon Lord. "Who is your other half?"

Jøkull returned to their company. It was strange for so immensely-powerful an entity to seem so timid and unassuming, despite their visage only inspiring awe and reverence, as well as promising untold horrors to any that defied him.

The Demon Lord performed a gesture while pointing his palm at the stone floor next to where his own summoning ritual was, and once again the wind came to do his bidding and created a near-identical copy of the rite carvings, though the silhouette that surrounded the seven circles was more like a hexagon, and the Sigil between the Watcher's Gate and the Seeker was different.

Jakob read the name of the Sigil out loud, "Kalameytas."

"The second half," Jøkull replied. ***"The Sovereign is a Daemon of Pride and Envy. A joining of the First and the Last. Only one such Daemon has existed before and it was known to be a vengeful creature. Lady Kalameytas of the Ruinous Path will be joined together with me to form a whole. Never before has the Realms known of such a joining. The Sovereign is the name by which we will be known and even the Absolutes shall have to bow before our combined might."***

He tried to quell the shiver that ran through him. He had no clue that the two halves were meant to be Demon Lords, and, while the aura of Jøkull was by itself cowering and overpowering, no matter how hard Jakob attempted to fight back, it was still no match for the aura of a Lord of Envy. The summoning alone would surely condemn Lleman and Helmsgarten to a brutal death under her corrupting aura.

Before Jakob could do anything however, Jøkull had begun to sing the hymn to initiate the Rite, and a foul putrid yellow-green light began lighting up the lines carved into the stone floor.

Working as fast as he could, Jakob drew a warding circle and began scribbling many different Sigils along its edge, the sound of Jøkull's angelic voice like the death toll of the coming apocalypse. Ciana noticed what he was doing and walked over to observe, but, no sooner had she gotten within range of where Jakob stood inside the circle, than he pulled her inside, hugging her tightly to him.

She was about to say something in protest, when the hymn ended and a corroded version of the gate that had brought Jøkull manifested, bringing with it a foul stench of sulphur, putrefaction, and effluvia. Out of the threshold stepped a lumbering mound of flesh with a small head on a long neck and a body like a pear, with all the meat and skin hanging down around the knees of her emaciated legs. Two sets of arms emerged from a cracked and misshapen torso, and two tails grew from the end of her spine and swished around the air.

No sooner had the Lady of the Ruinous Path stepped into the basement than the stone cracked and blackened as though subjected to scalding fire. In the corner, the pile of chairs and tables decayed into a pile of mush and the wooden rafters in the ceiling began to drip as the wood began a gloopy mush. Before her destructive aura could spread any further, Jøkull flung wide his arms and seemed to lock it away.

The Demon Lord of Pride turned towards Jakob and observed as he hugged Ciana tightly, then replied. ***"It is safe now. Let us waste no more time in the joining."***