

The
Summoning

Milloween ran through the old halls of her family estate, tears streaming from her face. They were being so unfair, she thought. Her sister had been the one chosen to attend the Academy Arcana, and she had not. Of course Milloween had always expected that she wouldn't be chosen, but some small part of her had held on to a feeble hope that her magical power would awaken before the exam.

Once an elf hit adolescence, their magical prospects were weighed, and the best and brightest were chosen to attend the Academy, where they could study high arcana, taught by the greatest tutors elf-kind had to offer.

Milloweens sister, Morellia, had always been favoured to go. She had come in to her power early, and was by all measures a true prodigy. Milloween on the other hand could only do the most basic of of incantations. Her family was wealthy enough to have her tested by the best academics, but none had been able to unblock her gift. It was a rare condition but known to happen, and they had nervously told her father to expect her to be magically blocked for her entire life.

She should have been happy on her sisters behalf at least, but Morellia had always been mean to Milloween, teasing her for her lack of magical talent, and pulling tricks on her when no one was watching.

As Milloweens sister had left for her celebration, she had gone to Milloween, embracing her, and speaking so softly that no one else could hear "Stop trying dear sister, for your own sake, you never were good at it". Then she had peeled away, smiled as though they had shared a private joke, and gone with their father to celebrate.

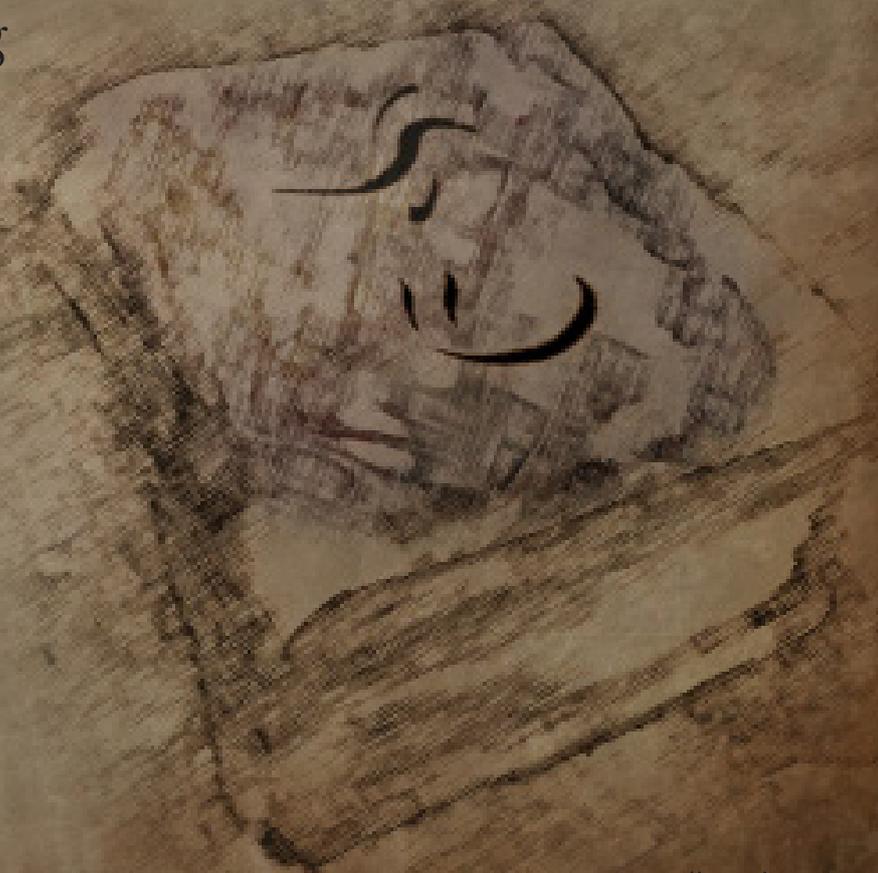
Miloween had had enough!

Miloween burst into her fathers workshop. She was going to use 'it'. She had found it years ago while hiding from her sister in the basement; an dusty old tome that she had felt strangely drawn to. Miloween had carefully studied it, hungry for any distraction, and she had found in its pages a ritual that would now be her salvation. The book detailed the summoning of a creature of 'enormous magical power'. And best of all, it didn't require much magical talent, just an arcane crystal - and her father had plenty of those.

The book was full of warning, but she needed to prove herself to her father.

She meticulously drew the summoning circle and gathered the magical components. Finally she dropped a small arcane infused crystal in the center of the circle and began reciting the words and intonations specified by the book.

As she spoke, the tome started to levitate, taking in the magical energy from the components. As the ritual reached its crescendo, the book flashed brightly, directing a blow of force into what was seemingly empty air in the middle of the circle - letting out a small, anticlimactic puff, and leaving behind



some sort of large blue sphere.

Milloweens brows furrowed as she studied the sphere, she had expected some sort of terrifying djinn - not just a bouncy ball. As she studied it, the ball rotated, revealing a couple of small stubby legs, a set of the biggest eyes she had ever seen, and a wide open mouth with a tongue lolling out of it. It was licking the crystal she had used for the ritual.

“Hey that’s mine!” Milloween burst out, even though she had to admit to herself that she had just taken it from her father collection. The big-eyed ball stared up at her pleadingly, and as its eyes grew even wider, they seemed to encompass her entire vision. She lost herself in those large soulful eyes, let out an almost imperceptible sigh and relented; waving off the crystal as she turned away with a slight blush.

With a slurp, the crystal was eaten whole by the ball-thing, or ‘Puff’ she thought, thinking of the unique entrance it had made. It then turned around, probably looking for more snacks she figured, as it walked towards the edge of the summoning circle.

“I wouldn’t try that if I was you.” Milloween hurriedly said. “My father’s wards are pretty strong.” With a resounding plop - like the universe had stuck a finger in its mouth and flicked it out - the wards dissipated. The puff skipped through them wholly unconcerned, intent on her father’s shelves of magical artifacts.

“No no no no!” Milloween let out as she rushed forward, blocking the puffs path. The puff seemed crestfallen,

furrowing its big brows as it tried to get past Milloween. Suddenly its impossibly big tongue darted under Milloweens arms, grabbed an artifact and pulled it into the big mouth, followed by a crunch and a muffled bang as the magical artifact let loose its stored energy within the puff. Its eyes grew big, and its mouth set in an impish grin.

Milloween tried to bodily turn the creature about, but in her haste she hit the shelf, knocking over some of the items stored on it. She darted around, catching as many as she could. The puff stood underneath the shelf, mouth open, gobbling up everything that she did not catch.

Her father would disown her after this, she thought as tears came to her eyes. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw a big red orb, teetering on the edge of the top shelf. It finally dropped towards the waiting puff that was staring hungrily at it. “No you won’t!” she yelled and jumped forward, dashing the orb out of the puffs path. As it hit the floor cracks formed on the crystalline ball, and through the cracks seeped a foul sulphury smoke, filling the room.

As Milloween coughed, and the puff seemed crushed, an evil laugh filled the room. “You fools!” the laughing voice bellowed “You dare summon forth Gor’Akral, Overseer of The Desolate Plains!?” Through the smoke, Milloween could see a red glowing portal open, and from beyond it a hateful set of blazing eyes pinned her down. “Rejoice elfling, you will be the first of many elves to feel the crack of my whip!”. It slowly made its way towards the portal mouth, and as Milloween tried to stand up and flee, she felt rooted to the

spot.

It wasn't just terror that kept her frozen, but also some sort of demonic magic. It invaded her mind and spoke to her "You are but an ant in the face of a god! You are not worthy of life. You are nobody! Why are you even trying?"

But Milloween had been hearing this her entire life from her sister, and she had had enough! She fought back with her entire being, focusing on breaking the demons gaze. As she fought for her very life, something snapped. Some dam that had been holding back years worth of arcane power broke. The power filled her and she visibly rose from the floor, amazed at her newfound strength.

The flood of power broke the demons spell, and she returned the favor, freezing the demon in place with an onslaught of energy. The demons face became visibly confused, but only for a split second, as he let out a furious roar and started fighting back against her hold.

Even with her unlocked power, she was no match for this beast. This power that mere moments ago had seemed utterly unattainable to her, was but a drop in the ocean compared to the demons power. A grin split its ugly face as it took first one, then a couple of steps forward. It's only a matter of time she thought distantly. As her power started to wane, all she wished was for her father to have seen her true strength.

With a huge slurp the portal and the demon within winked out of existence. Milloween stared down to see the puff, a faint whiff of sulphur trailing from its mouth, looking completely content. Crying, she embraced the puff and held on to it tightly. It in turn licked her cheek, and let out a little

burp.

In a distant realm Gor'Akral fumed. "No! An age of finding a way past the archmages exasperating defenses, only to be foiled at the last minute by that meddling kid, and her damnable puff!"

Hours later, when her father and sister came home, the puff had disappeared again. Her father had taken one glance at his smashed workshop, with Milloween, face tear-stained, sitting in the middle. He had rushed forward to embrace her, appearing visibly relieved that whatever accident had happened, she had survived. She broke down a second time and told him everything.

When she reached the part where her power unlocked, her sister, standing in the background, narrowed her eyes and glared.

The End

