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The snow was heavy fallen, and through the night rode the Witch King's son. A village ahead his destination, its fires glowing with warmth and cheer.

The peasants, he thought, the peasants will protect me.

Foolish thoughts for a winters night.

The village neared and sounds of midnight revelry, singing and merriment, cheered the heart of the Witch King's son. He felt the burden of guilt lifted. The good people of this area would be strong in resolve, they would help. The prince felt hope again. But even as he thought and felt these things, the moment was over.

Faint hoof beats from behind, heavy and irregular.

Fear gripped the Witch King's son. He did not turn to identify his pursuer. He knew it, and that hellish face had burnt itself into his memory.

The prince spurred his mount and, with a shriek of protest, it dashed onwards.

There was an earthen bank which served as protection for the village. Thin trails of smoke appearing above its ridge confirmed that there was life within its circumference on this frozen midwinter night.

The Prince's horse bolted up, and over the defenses, casting snow in all directions. It crashed down the other side at breakneck speed. With haste, he rode up to the closest hut and hurriedly dismounted. There was no door, only a ragged animal hide covering the entrance. It was tossed aside as the prince darted within.

Four peasants halted their song, mid verse, at the entrance of the Witch King's son. An icy wind blew in behind him and chilled the room.

"I am Prince Matu, Son of Goltrath the Witch King and master of De..." He halted himself, thought a moment then said "Hellish Servitors."

The peasants gazed up at him, agog.

"You must protect me!" ordered the Prince.

"From what do you fear?" asked a scab ridden peasant.

Then all at once, there came a crashing from the hut walls. They exploded into dust and where they had stood, was a hideous creature. Viscous horns, and blazing eyes of hate. Its had a mouth of fangs, flaming nostrils, and a body of pure muscle. But at the same time it appeared partly ethereal. Somehow, not fully solid.

It stood still, flakes of snow turning to steam on its back.

"Have at it!" cried the prince, but the villagers had already fled.

The creature gave issue to a chilling scream, as it leapt at Prince Matu. The prince attempted to dodge aside, but the creature was swifter, and they collided. Crashing to the floor, the beast grabbed for the Prince's throat.

"Say the word!" it bellowed, its voice as death itself.

"Never." the prince croaked.

"Speak it!" the creature roared.

At this, a villager burst onto the scene clutching a spear, which he thrust into the monster's body, twisting and turning it with all of his might.

The creature leaped to its feet. The spear broke and the handle was snatched from the peasant. The monster fixed the foolhardy peasant with its blood red eyes, and in a moment the yokel was transformed to ice. The creature bellowed with laughter, and it's breath melted the peasant's form into water.

The creature turned back to the Prince, who still lay on the floor. Its eyes met Matu's.

“The word.” it whispered, and at that moment the Witch King’s Son truly knew fear. Not fear of dying, but of the place beyond death. The place that this beast could take him to. His father had recounted stories of pain beyond measure, of the obliteration of the spirit and the soul. Tales of damnation, of eternal and unrelenting vengeance.

The full force of what Matu had begun, struck home. Failure to do as the beast instructed and his life would never know peace again. Surrender to its will But that would never happen. After all, his father was the master of these creatures.

“Speak it” the monster whispered again “complete the incantation. Finish the spell.”
“No.”

The creature bent down and picked Matu’s prone body from the dirt floor. Flexing its muscles, the beast pitched the prince through the broken wall, into the foul night.

“You. Will. Say!” bellowed the fiend pulling the remnants of the spear from its body, “I command you!”

The chill of the snow refreshed the prince, and he began gathering his wits. Rising, he said,

“You have the affront to command me?” Matu drew his sword. “For that, I shall take your life. Such as it is.”

The creature strode out from the ruined dwelling place, advancing on Matu. The Prince lunged. The creature dodged. A glancing blow. the beast laughed at the Prince’s attack. At this rage swelled in Matu’s breast, clouding his mind.

Screaming, he lashed out wildly, with more hope than precision. However, the blade found its target, and snapped.

“Damn you!” yelled Matu throwing aside the broken weapon and attacking with his fists. The creature was unimpressed, Matu’s punches had no effect.

The beast swatted Matu with the back of its claw like hand. The Prince’s flesh ripped, his face burned. Blood spilled onto the virgin snow, crimson and thick.

Matu fell.

He lay in the snow, barely alive, such was the force of the monsters blow. His mind was addled, and confusion held sway in his head.

“The word” the creature said, crouching beside the Prince’s broken body. It’s warm, sickly breath forming a mist around Matu’s face. “Complete the spell.”

All of the Prince’s defenses had gone. His strength and resolve had left him. A thin line of blood fell from his mouth. Then a whisper.

“Demon.”

A whisper, but enough. A great and fearsome roar issued forth from the pit of the Demon’s being. A cry of victory, elation and vengeance. To all those who heard it that night, it was the sound of pure terror. The form of the demon was now fully solid. It was free. The fiend rushed into the moonless night, to begin its reign of destruction and despair.

Matu’s whisper had completed the spell of release that the Demon had tricked him into, three days ago.

With the departure of the Demon, the villagers slowly approached Matu’s body.

“Who is he?” asked a village elder.

“A Prince is what he claimed to be.” said the scab covered peasant “The son of Goltrath, who is called Master of Demons.”

The blood no longer seeped from Matu’s mouth. His breath was shallow, irregular and rasping. His awareness was slipping, but before unconsciousness gripped him, a thought ran through his mind.

Father would not be pleased. Then darkness, and oblivion.