

# Summoner

## Chloe Sugden

Shall we write about the things not to be spoken of?  
Shall we divulge the things not to be divulged?  
Shall we pronounce the things not to be pronounced?

Julian, *Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*

### I.

The summoner hovers over his furnace, listless.

Mildewed photos of Mesozoic fossils, Etruscan bronzes and Orphic Gold Tablets litter windowless walls. Copper wires collide with UV lamp currents, emitting an eerie, incessant hum. Light transmutes to sound.

Geodes, cluster crystals and Solomonian talismans glisten on shelves. Blue minerals bloom in buckets of copper sulfate solution. Half-submerged in stagnant liquid, a caiman lizard raises its head, mournful eyes reflecting the flames. An Exo Terra Halogen spot lamp amplifies the ancient beast's ochre scales.

The summoner's body heaves as he hacks up phlegm and fetid soot. Hazardous particles pollute the grotto, leaking pipes streak the poisonous air with strange odours. He pays no mind to the putrefaction.

So, another experiment gone awry as it had the night before, and many bitter nights before that. He works ceaselessly, seldom sleeps as the ceremony is set for Sunday.

He has the somnolent eyes, pallid complexion and grimy hands of a miner. Genevans regard him with distrust. They see him slithering out at strange hours, skulking about Pâquis or Plainpalais, smoking Pueblos.

On spring nights, revelries down in the den disturb his slumbering neighbours, as raucous, cacophonous chants rise above the din. The summoner's conduct and very existence are an affront to the city's Calvinistic character.

Come summer, bathers spot him by the River Arve practicing a peculiar plaster divination. He mutates magnetite sand, mud, lime, and cement into stone relics from distant recesses of time. Trace fossils of worms and bugs stain their surfaces, mimicking the glyphs of a lost language.

In fall, he rests.

In winter, he witches.

## II.

In the early hours of Sunday, he is in his chair. Restless, feverish, his gaunt visage grotesque, satyr-like, trembling against the fire. Cold sweat clings to his stained robe, as disharmonious organ recordings resound. Scrawled sheets of Old Coptic lie about his frozen feet, and sodium chloride coats the floor, warding off shadows cast from the netherworld. Sandalwood incense and sage repel the pungent stench.

What necromantic names he must utter! What diabolic deeds he must carry out on the Lord's Day! After the invocation, he will sate his thirst at the plasma spring, drinking deep, piercing time, and penetrating death.

He rotates a wooden wand against the hearth's glare, as copper growths marring the driftwood refract fiery light shards. The summoner lifts his carving knife, scratching "XΘOYMIΛON" across the timber talisman, as protection against the chthonic daimon that the coming spell will stir.

Staff in hand, he slinks to the centre of his disastrous lair. A glass receptacle rests against his heart, suspended on silver chain. The vessel holds an ouroboros phylactery on coiled parchment, an ageless shield against phantasms, sickness, and suffering, penned on hieratic papyrus.

"Ancestral spirits holy and mighty," he utters, "preserve and protect me from malevolent curses, from those who died an untimely death, from those who died violently, and from every evil thing, my soul, my body, every limb of me."

He then raises his arms, hissing horrendous, antediluvian incantations, waking the undead, verses unutterable to the reader. The whites of his eyes turn a gangrenous grey. The furnace lulls. The music ceases.

No one in Romandy ever sees the summoner again.