

# The Demigregix

By: S. Whittington

Injustice and infamy for all, for the emperor orders a time to feast in an era of famine and a period of festival in an age meant for war. All persecute me, for I, Gabio, gypsy and lone remainder of the Seven Tribes of Fuga, am seen as a mere parasite of the world. I shall reclaim what has been taken from me, even if it is at such a rate as one trinket at a time.

I wander into the streets of this imperial city, Heinum, land of gold and mine for the taking, at least one day it shall be in my possession. For now, I lurk and mingle with the waltz of the shadows in the torchlight in my wool cloak, the only memento of my mother. Drunkards and maidens do not notice me in the sinful merriment of these blasphemous festivities. All this wealth spent on the nefarious desires of the people in this golden blight, it sickens me to even ponder it. I will rule them one day and bring these insects back to the ground. But alas, I have no army to command, no artillery to breach them, not even guards to protect me. What a tragedy in my case.

In the blur of the festival, I feel such misery and shame for myself, but my shame is not as great as for what this nation did to my family and friends. Their murders will not go forgotten. They took my loved ones away. Now I shall take what belongs to Heinum. May it afford my anticipated revenge.

As I pass, a glint of metal catches my eye. A mirror stands in a bazaar with a beautiful silver finish. Its gold frame glimmers in the light. The lust I feel overwhelms me; the mirror is now mine. I scramble to my feet and creep towards it. The time is right. I take it and run.

Insults and hateful names chase behind me from the bazaar monger, "Stop! Thief! Thief!"

I weave through the crowds like a snake in the mesa into the safe darkness of the other streets. I hear the guards trample behind me as the metallic hiss of drawn scimitars spit at my back. Suddenly, I slip in the sand as the gorgeous mirror flies from my hand. I fall to the ground as I hear the treasure crash into pieces. Along with this, the guards come to greet me with their punishment. My fate seals itself.

"Fool!" one guard sneers at me.

"Look what you have done, insolent mutt!" the other guard barks. He points at the fragments of the wasted beautiful silver I desire, "Now, we will smite *you*, dog of the streets!"

I attempt to defend myself as one burly guard pulls me from the sand and forces my arms in front of me.

The other guard takes his scimitar in hand, "The hands that steal are the hands that come off!"

It was never supposed to end like this. My endeavor is to no avail.

I shut my eyes as I await the bite of the blade to come down upon my wrists, but then I hear it. A sound like fire and thunder rings in my ears. The guards scream and seem to fade away. I open my eyes to see the guards no longer. There on the ground, their visceral remains smolder in charred sanguine plastered on the sand.

"I thank you," a voice whispers like silver lightning behind me.

I freeze. I turn to behold a man in a blue cloak of the finest silk; it shimmers and flows in the breeze. His eyes radiate in the darkness; these hot coals burn the hearth of my

soul. The eyes pull me into an unknown frontier, two blessed angels beckoning me to heaven. His hair is long, silver filigree as the strands dance in the wind. I back away in terror, but he whispers sharply, "Fear not, my child."

"I...what are you?"

"I know, and you know also."

"You...you are..."

"We must make haste," the man almost hisses. He opens a door to a nearby building and ventures inside.

"Come with me," he beckons.

Despite my terror and confusion, curiosity somehow overwhelms me. I follow his command.

Inside the house is stark and empty. I can feel the coarse dust and sand in between my toes as well as the cool stone on my heels. There is a stench like that of perspiration and stale manna in this house. I bump into a wooden structure in the room, a table. I feel of it and the texture of the small splinters that protrude from it. The door closes behind me as he walks toward me, his eyes like a fierce panther in the jungle. He takes a lamp on a piece of furniture in the dim light. He ignites it as a blue flame dances from the spout. He places it on the table and seats himself.

"Sit, my child," the man commands.

"You are of the djinn, I know now," I tell him as I take a chair and sit in it. I gaze into his eyes foolishly. I feel a brief sensation as if I lay in a bed of hot coals. My soul prickles of unseen flames. A godly rapture seizes me in my veins.

*He is of the heavens*, I think to myself.

"You freed me," the man whispers like hissing ice. He smiles.

"The mirror?" I say to him. I wonder silently if this is why the trinket enticed me earlier.

"Yes," the man replies, "I am Etah. I understand your fears and your mind."

"Yes, great Etah! My family can be avenged. Guide me, mighty Etah! I beseech you and your glory!"

Etah grins, "Yes, and my brothers can help also."

"Brothers?"

"Yes. Free them also."

"I am but a mere mortal, my liege.

"You are not chained like us, my child."

"And they will bid me aid?"

Etah's eyes appear brighter than before as he claims, "Your desires are our desires."

My liege, Etah, pulls out a golden disk from his cloak. It has a golden sun on the left and a silver crescent moon on the right. Engraved within it are etchings. Blue light flows through the etchings pulsing through the object. Silver gears grind smoothly and softly like running quicksilver. Dust stirs in the air as he places it on the table.

"Your concerns are our concerns," he continues.

My eyes widen. My breath shortens at the sight of the disk. On the disk are four symbols illegible to most, but I recognize them. Each is a name of particular djinni, Eminaf, Esaesid, Sisirc, and Ecilam. These are the djinn our family once worshipped. Our tribes also did, until this vile society forced their feeble beliefs upon us. Obscurity could not hide the "heathens" from them. I know now why I the heavens spared me.

“The Demigregrix...” I almost whisper in disbelief, “The elders spoke of it. It exists after all?”

“Yes, my child.”

“For who must I prophesy to tonight, my liege?”

“Prophesy to the stars. They favor you tonight,” Etah whispers like a low thunder. His body immolates with blue embers. “Now go, free them. Make haste!”

The majestic djinni vanishes into a torrent of blue fire. The lamp on the dusty table becomes ordinary. The flame wavers a usual orange in the wind. It illuminates the disk, the Demigregrix; it beckons me to take it into my hands. The gears hiss like a gentle, metallic chorus. I get up from my seat and grasp it in my hands. I grin eagerly in the dim light.

The door to the house bursts open suddenly. Several palace guards, clad in armor and swords in hand, filter through the doorway. I yelp at the horrid sight of them.

The leader shouts, “Your theft is intolerable, mutt!”

Desperation seizes me. I hold the Demigregrix in front of me. The armored men take me as I hold the disk close to me. I shout, “Stars in the sky, hear me!”

“Still your tongue! Come!”

I continue to chant, “In the name of mighty Etah, I beseech you!”

The other guards laugh at my hysteria as they lead me into the alley.

I become more frantic and yell, “The djinn, brethren of power!”

“Silence yourself! Your cries fall on deaf ears!”

They bring me out into the moonlight. The leader tells the other guards, “Cast him into the prison.”

I can scarcely believe it. Etah has fooled me and lured me into an unjust fate. I frantically scream one last chant and hold the Demigregrix high into the air, “Stars of heaven! Free these brothers! Aid your children!”

“Enough! I grow weary of your sniveling ravings!” the leader growls as he snatches the disk from me, “What is this refuse? Sorcery?”

He stops as he notices the symbol of Esaesid on the disk change. The disks within the artifact expand as the metal gears now scream, and the light roars. The light glows a bluish-white and brighter by the minute. The leader’s jaw drops and casts the Demigregrix to the ground. An eruption of ravenous, blue fire blazes from it. He screams in terror as he flees in an attempt to douse his body now aflame. The Demigregrix closes and the flames subside, and from it is a sight to behold.

A humanoid figure dressed in green silk robes and silver armor stands before them. The djinni’s pointed ears and green skin pulse with green lightning. His long jet-black hair slithers down his back like a mass of venomous asps. His clean-shaven face smirks at us, and his eyes burn like green stars. Two golden tusks jut from his forehead, his symbol of divinity.

“Well,” the djinni speaks to the guards, his voice like silver keened by wind, “The sins of mortals have only intensified, I see.”

I grin with excitement as my eyes widen. I am safe, but the guards cringe in fear of the djinni I have called. Esaesid turns his heavenly gaze to me, “You have called for aid, my child?”

“Yes, mighty Esaesid! I praise you!” I rejoice.

Esaesid gives a rich laugh, “Stand aside, my child. Your reward awaits you.”

He turns to the guards. They scream and drop their weapons. The cowards attempt to flee in the direction the leader guard chose. Esaesid grins and arches his fingers and wrists at the exits of the alley. The exits burst with red and orange flames as he levitates into the air. He snaps his fingers, and my armored foes melt into puddles of acid. Their anguished screams dissipate into the air. I shudder at this sight.

Esaesid turns to me from above. He commands, "Take the Demigregix and flee, my child!"

"What will you do now?"

"Do you not know?"

"I know not."

Esaesid flashes a capricious grin, "Your desires are our desires, and your concerns are our concerns."

"Yes, but..."

"I can see into your heart, my child. You wish for vengeance upon your people. Consider it done!"

With this, Esaesid soars into the air as the screams of people ring out all around me. It overwhelms my unworthy heart. The memories of my tribe's extermination storm in my mind and haunt my soul. I can do nothing now. Esaesid commands me to take the Demigregix and flee. What cowardice do I embrace now?

I exit into the main streets. The infected figures of men and women writhe on the ground. They wail in misery and fester in boils and blisters. I run hastily as blowflies swarm and rats maul the ill people. This is a future I am unprepared to endure. I flee through the city gates as acid and locusts erupt from the ground. I keep my stride to escape the destruction of the city into the dunes of the barren desert, the dark isolation. Under the sands shall be where the Demigregix will rest. May the dry wastes end it as well as myself. May my family forget the name, Gabio.