



Given the remote location of Hekkenfelt and the scarcity of disposable human materials, Jakob had ended up paying a hunter for two of his fresh deer kills, hoping the lithe and nimble animals' bones and muscles would work well to craft him a replacement left arm.

As he worked one-handedly to flay, dissect, and organise the tendons, muscles, flesh, fat, and bones after draining the animals of their stagnant blood, he had Wothram help hold the material still, while working meticulously with a fine scalpel-claw from his demon-glove wherein Purll resided. Additionally, Marll who resided in his robes helped lift away each piece of material as Jakob finished with it, laying it according to the pattern of sorting, using several thin eel-like appendages sporting bizarre suckers that seemed to utilise vacuum-suction to firmly grip everything they touched.

“Greed demons are rather adept at this sort of work, wouldn't you say?”

Wothram, unflinchingly, remained entirely focused on holding the sample still. Even Zelesti had been a more engaging assistant than the Golem, despite always wanting to ruin everything out of spite, but, alas, Heskel and Ciana were busy seeking down a quest, so Jakob had to make do with his mute servant.

“What about you two?” he asked the two demon whose corpuses he wore.

For a while, he thought they were likewise mute, but then a new appendage sprouted from the front of his apron, stretching-and-turning like a serpent emerging from an underwater cave. It lifted up before Jakob's face, before the its smoothed end started rippling as it underwent a transformation. The layers of gelatinous demon-skin rippled and spread out and away from the tip, where a small mouth grew into place.

A flat mouth, like that of the Filth-River Lamprey of Helmsgarten, pointed at him, its manifold molar-like teeth and central aperture mouth moving slowly as a voice emerged. It sounded strangely happy, bordering on lunacy.

*“Hapherll Jakob... we, Purll and Marll, are enjoying ourselves, in your employ.”*

It took him a moment to recognise the title for what it was, given that there were many variations on terms for each Saint's Demons and further based on which Lord they were pledged to. For the Demons of the Shining Hoard, 'Hapherll' was a sort of honorific used for human masters, although it was quite similar to 'Hapherinm' which was a word denigrating lowly imps who were not greedy and miserly enough.

“You speak for your twin?”

*“We are one, despite our separate forms.”*

“I see. If you continue to serve me as you have thus far, I will continue to provide you with meaningful servitude.”

*“Hapherll... thank you.”* The Lamprey-mouthed appendage trailed back down into the apron.

Jakob looked to the pile of disassembled materials, then back to the one remaining deer he was halfway through.

“Wothram, I see now what form my new hand will take.”

The Golem remaining still as stone, its grip locked on the carcass.

It had been a finnick process to get all the internal gears and mechanism situated properly, given his momentary disability, but, as he held the gauntlet-like forearm in his right hand, turning it this-and-that way to check it for flaws, he concluded it was finished.

“Wothram, hold this still.”

The Golem lumbered over and seized the bone forearm in an unshakeable grip, so that Jakob could align his smoothly-cut stump with it and use his right hand as the focus of the Amalgam Hymn. He shifted his left arm carefully, knowing that a mistake now would be a gruesomely-painful thing to have to amend later. The two fat candles providing an unsteady light, bobbed about anxiously, while he ever-so-slightly turned his stump to find the best rotation and centering.

When he had the perfect spot, he said to Marll, “Secure my arm, such that it does not move.”

Immediately one of the bizarre sucker-covered appendages emerged from the squishy fabric of his apron’s shoulder-pad and curled around his left arm and the soon-to-be-joined prosthetic, such that they were functionally fused together already.

“Marll, if you would, please remove my glove and mask.”

Again the living robes obliged, gently peeling off his glove and placing it on a workstation nearby, before wrenching off his mask, the straps pulling tightly on Jakob’s ears, such that he was sure that when the demon tossed the rebreather aside a bit of his ears was certainly thrown alongside it.

“Careful, next time.”

There came no reply from the Greed Demon, but he knew that it would heed him well, as, despite its seemingly-thankful nature, it must surely fear reprisal from him, given how much of Jakob’s decimation it had witnessed whilst adorning his body and its lack of attempts to defy him thus far.

With his naked index as a precision focus and his vocal cords strained in the proper way, alongside the tightening of his lungs, he began the Hymn while carefully running his finger along the seam between prosthetic and severed flesh.

*“Join these pieces born of separate mothers.”*

*“Connect these errant two to a unified one.”*

*“Create an everlasting bond within and without.”*

*“Connect these errant two to a unified one.”*

*“Join these pieces born of separate mothers.”*

He was only halfway when the first verse came to an end and so he continued directly into the next, coming to its end as his finger once again hovered over where he had started.

“Marll, Wothram, you may release me.”

Demon and Golem both obliged and he expected to immediately drop his hand with an unaccustomed newfound weight, but instead found it to be lighter than his original limb.

It took a moment for his soul to crawl into this new addition to his body, but, when it happened, it was an uncomfortable feeling of total numbness that first met him, followed by the sensation of tingling in his new fingers, and then the odd sense of warmth spreading into the frigid limb.

He cautiously attempted to exert direct control over the nine fingers adorning the grafted forearm and rather than finding the addition of four extra fingers impossible to control, he quickly mastered the ability to splay them individually and in separate groups, as well as closing them into something resembling a fist. With two thumbs he also felt far more capable to gripping things, and he was surprised to find that the deer bone was quite a durable material substitute for that of a human.

As he played around with the successful graft in the bobbing candlelight, there suddenly came a knock on the abandoned workshop door. The hazy glass window adorning it showed the silhouette of a tall man.

“Wothram, see to the door will you.”

The Golem wandered over and immediately ripped the door off its hinges, revealing a very surprised olive-tan individual with deep furrows in his brow, dark pouches under his eyes, and ruffled and partially-balding black hair.

“Wothram, set the door down. And, so that you remember for next time, you were meant to open the door, not destroy it.”

The newcomer, to his credit, remained fairly unfazed by the bulky construct daintily trying to reattach the door in his face, but he quickly dodged under the door before it could be slammed into the frame, and came walking towards Jakob.

The light of one of the candles caught on a badge that hung from an expensive chain around his neck and the surprise made Jakob unintentionally release the sensitive trigger in his grafted arm, which in turn released a spike through the Lamprey-like aperture mouth in his palm.

“Oh, my apologies, Ser,” the Gold-Ranker said. “I did not mean to frighten you.”

With another impulse, the spike slowly sunk back into the hollow of the grafted forearm. “You did not, but I am also not expecting visitors. Least of all a Gold-Badge such as yourself.”

The Man looked down at the badge, as though he had forgotten he wore it. Then he chuckled hoarsely, finding it amusing.

“You are Goddarth, aren’t you? Former Magister, by the looks of you.”

Jakob nodded simply.

“I have use of someone of your talents.”

“You will have to find someone else,” Jakob replied. “I am not looking to provide support to other Adventurers.”

“You have me wrong, Ser,” the Man continued with a wave of his hand for emphasis. “I come not in official business. Rather, it is something more personal.”

Jakob shifted his stance, carefully lowering his left arm, such that, if he timed it correctly, he could strike a decisively blow to the man and kill him where he stood. He had yet to utilise the corpus of a Gold-Ranked Adventurer after all, though, from the looks of the man, he was no longer in his prime.

When he did not encourage him to continue, he seemed to decide to change tactic and extended his hand to Jakob.

“I’m Harland,” he said. “And I desperately need an Alchemist for my sickness.”