

I woke up late this morning; it's 8:00. I should be at school right now, but I took the day off to go to the beach. Mom isn't home; she must have left a few minutes ago. The kitchen has bagged food on the table, the dishwasher is open, some of the clean dishes are gone, the window curtains have been half open, coffee is dripping down onto the carpet, clothes are laid over the chairs, wrinkly and crumpled, and the faint scent of perfume lingers in the air. I guess Mom woke up late today. I guess I'll have to clean this all up.

That was nice; now the kitchen's cleaner and more tidy. If only I had the same desire to clean my room as I have for every other room. Whatever, I'm wasting time; let me check my bag. Towel, check, sunscreen, check, sunglasses, check, sundress, check, hat, check, sandals, check, umbrella, check, house keys, check, grimoire, check. Ok, I have everything; time to change and lock the house.

The sun's right overhead, the beach looks so small all the way from here, the few people there look like little ants just wandering around...no use in looking, I'll be there soon.

The walk to the beach is always nice; cars casually cruising along the road, the soft blowing wind in the air, the clear sky, the walk and talk people dotting the sidewalk—that's what a usual walk to the beach is like; though today it's just me on the sidewalk, there's only a few cars on the road today too, but every single one of them turns away from the beach and into the city. The sky's still clear.

Yeah, the beach is really empty, aside from a few food vendors and an old guy walking along the shoreline...perfect. I'll walk the shore too until I get the cove, I need the silence for the summoning. The water's warm on my feet, it's an odd feeling having an occasional in and out feeling of warm feet, the wet sand feels funny to step on too, it kinda tickles. My hat and sundress are fluttering a bit in the wind, I'm getting closer to it.

Here it is, the cove, the entrance illuminated by spare rays of sunlight that only illuminate so much of the entrance, a few more steps in and...nothing, every step I take bounces off the top of the cove, making a shallow series of echoes, and I can still smell the sea. As I thought, this place is perfect for the ritual.

Plant the umbrella in the sand, lay the towel under it, and pour the entire bottle of sunscreen onto the towel, time to draw the circle of summoning.

We start with a large circle, our basis, a metaphysical cord connecting the ritual to the plain of Earth; inside our founding circle, we draw a smaller circle, our concept, a drawing of what we wish to connect with; then we draw our final, smaller circle, our purpose; divide this circle into four quadrants; and draw a pattern of esoteric words and symbols; it should resemble a silent chant, calling out for the one who's summoned. Finally, sit in the middle of the circle and place the grimoire in your lap.

I'm jealous of the sorcerers of the past. From what I've been told, their rituals were grand and awe-inspiring, going on quests to gather ingredients to alchemize into a serum worthy of being a summoning circle, serums that were the colors of little shining stars and that smelled like pure bliss. Sitting on a circle of sticky sunscreen, its chemical smell wafting everywhere, is the furthest thing from what I think of when I hear the words 'summoning circle' or 'sorcerer', but we must compromise, intention over form.

Regardless, the incantation must begin. I open my grimoire and flip the very back to the blank pages. I pull out my house key and slip the small, cold piece of metal under one of my fingernails. A few drops of crimson red fall onto the paper. I repaint the summoning circle on the page, then stamp the freshly drawn circle onto my palm. The outer circle is connected to the Earth; the inner circle is connected to Mars; the final circle is the chant, a prayer; I am the circle; I am the gate. A small candle-sized flame appears in my hand.

"Mars, I seek an audience with you, I hold my heart's ambition in my hand, I offer it to you, I beg for your wisdom, passion, and fervor."

The summoning circle under me slowly bursts into flames, the fire beings to crawl up my skin, coating my body in heat, it's all in-gulping, setting my entire body ablaze; tendrils of flames begin to form from my body, extending and floating in the air until they connect with the cove. The tendrils, quick and airy, begin to revolve around me in every direction. Everything is hot, everything is burning, everything hurts, it all hurts, I am the fire. I repeat the chant.

I can't see it but I can feel it, a gargantuan, jagged, evermoving place, with roaring sounds and smells, with screeching walls and agonizing air, The sky is black, the ground is stabbing me, I'm in a gorget of pain, I repeat the chant.

Mars, Mars, Mars, clashing symbols, severed songs are shouted at me from every angle, by a thousand corpses, charred and skeletal, they shout its name at me, I repeat the chant.

"Mars, I seek an audience with you, I hold my heart's ambition in my hand, I offer it to you, I beg for your wisdom, passion, and fervor." I open my eyes.

I stand in darkness, looking at my body, my skin broken open, my eyes crusted together, with the fire raging. My body speaks:

"How do you feel?"

“Calm.”