

DeWitt Wilcox

# A Boon for Baphomet

a fantasy cyberpunk novella

PREVIEW





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A fantasy cyberpunk novella

DeWitt Wilcox

Spiderpig Press  
ATHENS, GEORGIA

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

## A BOON FOR BAPHOMET

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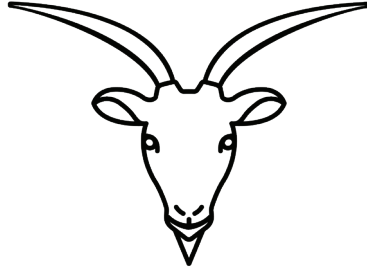
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To the Brotherhood of the Duck,  
whose support, friendship, and inspiration  
made this story possible.

You are enablers  
in the best of ways.



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*“Bringing an English Tutor  
to a Gunfight.”*

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Excerpt: Carter Sinterklas. “Bringing an English Tutor to a Gun Fight: Historicizing *himitsu no itaku*.” In *Inversions of Agency: Essays on Structural Power in the Immanentized World*, edited by Elena Orphanides, 67-89. Copenhagen: Weekly World Elsevier, 2061.

“THIS ‘BROKERED SECRET AGENT’ EMPLOYMENT model had become common among organized crime syndicates that took inspiration from the brutal efficiencies of the Japanese educational services industry, but it was not until the Labor Insurrection of 2018 that zaibatsu started to adapt the itaku model to facilitate industrial crime in the private sector (Nakano, 2025). Once foreign corporations witnessed the market advantages that itaku adoption had given their Japan-based rivals, the concept spread globally, not unlike a novel influenza mutation, as hypercapitalism devoured the political and cultural immune systems of established nation states. Privatized security and corporate law came to dominate these societies in the twenty-first century as neoliberal policies increasingly superseded and eroded their civil legal codes.

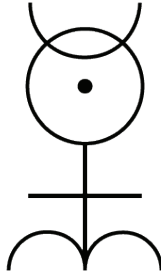
Itaku agents fill two roles in this broader, de-nationalized context. They solve tactical problems (particularly in the areas of human resources, media relations, logistics, and research and development acceleration) more cheaply and faster than lawyers for the megacorps. At the other end of the employer spectrum, they also provide smaller interests and individuals a more personalized alternative to a market-based legal system focused on its bottom line.”

FRIDAY

14 DECEMBER, 2074

7 DAYS UNTIL WINTER SOLSTICE

# CHAPTER 1



WHIT HAD A PUERQUITO HALFWAY to his mouth when the spirit manifested in front of his table at Cafe Jalisco. It stood over two meters tall with a lean build and hovered above the floor, amplifying its height. The radiant anthropomorphic figure had wings that reached in successively broader pairs from its ankles, back, and shoulders. In its left hand it carried a broadsword nearly as tall as itself, held point down. It raised its right hand, palm facing him, with the index and middle fingers pointing up, the other fingers folded under the thumb. The spirit appeared for less than a second in the material plane, but Whit could sense it waiting nearby in the astral.

He recognized it as Azcall, a spirit allied with a mage he knew and respected, albeit warily. Alcime Vannetais was one of a handful of mages west of the Mississippi who had a working knowledge of Enochian, in conversation with angelic spirits as well as versed in its theoretic applications. The others included a planar geographer who worked for Wayfarer in Denver, an elderly bachelor high priest who lived in Salt Lake City, and the head archivist of the

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arcane collections at the Huntington Library far to the south in Los Angeles. And, of course, there was Whit himself.

He glanced around the cafe. At eleven on a mid-December Friday morning, it was mostly empty in the lull between the morning rush and afternoon wave of University of Washington students. Finals week was wrapping up, too, and he'd finished his last appointment tutoring undergrads for the quarter. The few people still there were jacked into the matrix, taking advantage of the quiet and the free hardware acceleration. Whit's own allied spirit, M'pixl-tpff, had wandered off in search of new mortals to eavesdrop on. An inveterate social butterfly with the attention span of a fruit fly, they were not the Holy Guardian Angel that Whit had expected to receive after completing the Abramelin ordeal nearly three years ago, but in the intervening time he had accepted that they were probably the Holy Guardian Angel he deserved.

Whit sighed and put down the *pan dulce*. He slid his mind into the astral plane, where Azcall was waiting for him. He felt the ambient mana vibrate around the spirit's luminous crimson and gold form as they idly beat their six wings back and forth in the pale grey expanse. Ripples of translucent lavender energy swirled and disappeared in the turbulence they created.

*TOATAR. ZIRDO ZONRENSG.* The spirit's greeting vibrated through him as though he stood next to an immense bell. They spoke without moving their mouth, the polyphonies of their voice ringing slightly out of phase in Whit's astral ears like an out-of-tune carillon. *HARKEN, I AM DELIVERED TO YOU WITH A MESSAGE FROM MY MASTER, HE WHO WORKS WONDERS IN THE DEPTHS. PELE*

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*PIADPH. HE WHO IS KNOWN TO YOU.*

“I hear and acknowledge you,” Whit replied in Enochian. “And your master. What’s the message?”

*AN UNSPEAKABLE MESSENGER WILL COME UNTO YOU ANON. GRANT IT AUDIENCE AND HEAR ITS PROPOSITION WITH FAVOR. The spirit paused before continuing, THOUGH IT IS A WORK OF WEAK UNDERSTANDING AND INEPT CRAFT. ADPHAHT.*

“Did Alcime say that last bit, or was that all you?” he asked.

Azcall said nothing, but they grew slightly taller and arched their back.

“ETHARZI.” He raised a hand in acquiescence. “Doesn’t matter. What sort of proposal is this, dare I ask?”

*MY TASK IS FULFILLED. GEIAD LUCIFER. OUR LORD OF LIGHT.* The spirit raised the sword in a salute and disappeared.

“ZORGE to you, too,” Whit muttered as he pulled his mind back into the material plane. He took a bite out of the pig-shaped cookie and waited with resignation for the Ghost of Christmas Past to make its unspeakable entrance.



Fifteen minutes later, a black Song Motors sedan pulled up to the curb in front of the Neo-Mayan coffee shop. Whit watched in his peripheral vision as the driver got out. She opened the limousine’s back door, and out hopped what appeared to be a small satyr. It wobbled on tiny hooves to the cafe entrance. After the satyr—a faun, really—nearly fell over trying to open the door, the driver

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darted in to rescue it. Whit looked at the odd pair astrally. *Ah*. The driver was human, with a weak aura that indicated significant cyberware implantations. The creature had no life force aura of its own. In its void was a definite spirit form, though, but not a powerful one.

The faun wobbled over to Whit's table and climbed up onto the closest empty chair. Despite its lack of physical coordination and labored movement, it was eerily quiet. Whit realized the creature wasn't breathing. Up close, he could tell that the faun was an artificially constructed chimera. The bottom half had come from a goat, while the torso above the hips had come from a dwarf. Possessing a necromantic construct like that violated the SEApLex legal code in at least a dozen ways. To parade one around in public was unthinkably brazen, and he doubted whoever had made it was its current owner. The seams where the two halves joined were swollen and red, and the proportions were wrong. The deceased dwarf looked like he had been a young man when he died, but it had been a small goat, and the result was absurdly top-heavy. It smelled unnatural as well, the too-sweet trace of death undercutting barnyard musk and cedar, with a top note of hyacinth.

Whit could appreciate Azcall's disapprobation.

The faun settled in the chair and stared at him with milky eyes.

He stared back. "Have you come to take me away to Fezziwig's party?"

No response. Whit scanned the cafe and realized none of the other people were reacting to the creature's presence. He pulled a cigarette from the pack of Nat Sherman Naturals in his bag and

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lit it with a spell. Neither the owner stacking plates behind the counter nor any of the patrons took notice of his gross violation of social mores and public health codes. Whit wasn't sure whether they were under a spell, or if he and the faun were shielded from their awareness by an illusion.

He took a drag on the cigarette and blew a smoke ring in the air above him. He looked around the café for a response. Nothing. He glanced into the astral. A bubble now surrounded the creature and was just large enough to include him as well. The room outside its circumference appeared distorted, as though he were looking at shapes refracted through a glass of water. Using the faun's clumsy entrance to mask the nothing-here shield's spellcasting was nicely done, albeit gimmicky. His awareness slid back to the material plane, and he considered the faun that the unknown mage was using as a proxy.

“Useful, if creepy. Now what do—”

The faun opened its mouth in a wide gape, tilted its head back, and inhaled deeply. The mouth did not move as an uneven voice emanated from it, forming words without the aid of the bluish lips or blackened tongue.

“We are aware of your work, as a *himitsu no itaku* and agent of change in the shadows. We wish to hire you to right a wrong.”

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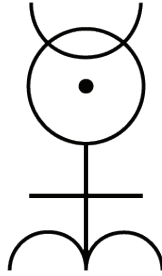
SUNDAY

16 DECEMBER, 2074

5 DAYS UNTIL WINTER SOLSTICE



## CHAPTER 2



“SO, SOUNDS LIKE WE GOT another Johnson with an unnatural love of the dramz,” Sakura 2000 said to him the the next day as she hacked the reserved parking space on a cross street at the east edge of downtown. The spiked bollards retracted into the pavement, and she backed her rally raid-spec, extra-long wheelbase Land Rover into the tight space.

Whit had met her two years ago, on his first job, when they were all pugging itaku gigs independently. They’d found themselves thrown together on a corporate extraction job with another mage, a spirit ranger, and a twitchy hacker, and to everyone’s surprise they worked well as a team. No one got anyone else killed, the job got done, and they all got paid. They had continued their professional relationship as extralegal specialists for hire on over a dozen more gigs since then. The rest of their itaku team had messaged that they were on their way to the rendezvous point where they would regroup before heading to the Johnson appointment. The team’s newest member called himself The Original Itaku, and had replaced their first hacker. He had begged off the evening’s client

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meeting, however, and messaged that afternoon that he had other responsibilities to handle:

**>Sorry, chummers. Hate to let you down, but I can't make a meat node right now. Got some personal drek to defrag, but I can do some tac-pen and overwatch from the back 40.**

Sakura, the team's drone rigger, stepped out of the armored driver's compartment and shut the heavy door with a twirl of gathered skirt and lace crinoline. She slid her hands into the pockets of her princess coat, made from vid cloth that she'd programmed with a loop of fig leaves falling against a powder blue sky. She rocked back on the heels of her patent oxblood Mary Janes to look at the building across the street. "Was picking this place to meet supposed to be ironic or what?"

"You have no idea. It comes with the territory," Whit said as he opened the passenger door. "That was surprisingly subtle for this crowd."

She looked over her shoulder at him, her coat's high collar partially obscuring her features. "It's a little weird that you know them so well."

He made a pained face. "Not really. I wouldn't say I know any of them 'well,' but it's not weird that I know of them. You know what a small world it is for magic types in Seattle." He stepped down from the passenger compartment without bothering to check for oncoming traffic and walked around to the other side of the vehicle, where Sakura had moved to stand on the sidewalk.

She raised a doubting eyebrow at him.

Whit huffed. "Look, every town is a small town when it comes

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to its magical community. Well,” he amended, “maybe not true for places like São Paulo, or Chengdu, obviously, but it’s absolutely the case for Seattle.”

“Okay. But you. You!” She leaned forward and poked him in the chest, the azure ringlets she had tied up into ponytails bouncing. “And Satanists. How does that even work?”

He swatted her finger away, nonplussed. “What do you mean? It’s not like I hang out with them at Friday night potlucks.”

She gave him a level stare. “Hello? Mr. Enochian Mage? Who talks to ‘angels?’ Although I don’t get how Megapixel qualifies as one of those, but whatevs,” she finished under her breath.

Whit gave a hapless shrug in return.

“Shouldn’t you be, like, mortal enemies?”

He threw his head back and laughed. “Their mortal enemies are each other. The only time they aren’t denouncing each other’s sects is when they’re busy jockeying for power within their own. I’m a neutral party as far as they’re concerned.”

“The God stuff doesn’t bother them?”

“What God stuff?” He rummaged through the numerous pockets in his white oilskin parka for cigarettes.

“Okay, this’s been bugging me.” Sakura frowned as she watched him. “But do you, like, even go to church, Mr. I Have a Holy Guardian Angel?”

Whit remembered enduring the interminable Sunday services his childhood housekeeper had taken him to when his father was out of town and blanched at the prospect. “Why would you even ask that? Of course not! Although...” He looked away.

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She smirked. “Yeah?”

He shook his head. “Nothing.”

“Oh, come on! “ She waved a hand in protest. “You do, don’t you?”

“No! Oh, my God. I mean...” He doubled over with renewed laughter and then tried unsuccessfully to catch his breath. Maybe he should think about cutting back on the cigarettes. “Not literally my God, because that’s, at best, a dangerously misguided notion that perpetuates oppressive dialectics, while eliding and obfuscating the obvious cosmic peril that sort of psychic container invites.” He managed to get his breathing under control again. He stood back up, still clutching his sides.

Sakura sniffed. “I have no idea what that means, so I’m going to ignore it.”

“Fair enough. However, to return to your original query: no, but—qualifier—we used to sneak out to events at the Cathedrale Fumanda on weekends when I was in boarding school. I still go to the pontifex’s blessings here once in a while. Does that count?”

She shrugged. “Maybe? What kind of events?” She squinted as if a likely succession of lurid demimonde possibilities were flashing through her head. “Wait, ‘pontifex?’ You mean the Weed Pope?”

“His Holiness Scrog I? Yeah.”

“Yeah.” She shook her head. “Nope. Doesn’t count.”

“Oh, hey!” Whit pointed at a storefront at the end of the street. “There’s a Grindcore. Mind if we stop there first? I could murder a Solstice Spice Latte.”

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“Enochian hipster,” she muttered in resignation as she set the active security protocols on the Rover and followed him down the block.



The rest of the team was waiting for them in front of a shuttered commercial building a couple doors up and across from the meeting site, Eden. The iconic nightclub stood out among the glass high-rises and squat historical edifices that packed the downtown grid down the hill to the waterfront. The building dominated the street, with passivated ferrocete walls sculpted to look like rough natural rock that tapered downward. Thick, fluffy clouds slowly drifted around its base, obscuring the lower floors and creating an overall effect of a floating island unmoored from its earthly bonds.

Bob Barker, DVM, had the collar of his stained duffle coat turned up against the wind. Most of his face was buried under a thick scarf, but what little of the former veterinarian's face did show looked cross and uncomfortable. He was a surly mage in his late thirties who nurtured a hostility to the world so strong that it gave Whit mild nausea when he viewed the other man's aura astrally. Bob's self-sufficiency, boldness with magic, and sense of self-preservation benefited everyone on the team, however, and offset his personality deficits. Mostly.

Billy was standing next to Bob. The spirit ranger waved to Whit and Sakura with his usual good humor as they walked up and showed no sign of minding the chill, despite going shirtless

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# NEXT, BUY THE BOOK

**T**HANKS FOR READING! The bad news is: this is the end of the *A Boon for Baphomet* preview. The good news is: you can pick up where you left off by buying the full book.



The ebook version is [currently available in the Kindle store](#). A [tradeback paper edition](#) is also [available](#), and you can get the Kindle version for \$.99 when you buy the print version, for the best of both worlds. I hope you have as much fun with it as I had writing it!

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DeWitt Wilcox (twitter: @maniraptor) lives in Athens, Georgia, to the befuddlement of everyone, and still hasn't gotten used to the fact that the dirt there looks like it came from Mars.

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