

**M.E.T.A.**  
**FORCE**  
**ORIGINS**



**LORD**  
**FOULWIND**

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ORIGINS

Lord Foulwind  
Free Preview

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Three ghastly totem poles stood watch over the ritual chamber. Their beaks, fangs, and eyes were freshly painted with runic symbols and unholy prayers. Wild shadows danced from the flicking orange glow in the fire pit as Lord Foulwind, humpbacked and twitching grotesquely, added a mummified bat wing to his burbling vat.

Redfang crouched near the wall hugging his knees. The warty little goblin watched quietly and noticed how the high lord's attention never strayed far from the centerpiece of all his effort—the Key of Koth Rak Knarr.

According to legend, the ancient book was written with star dust and bound in void matter. It contained a long and powerful incantation that filled every page between its alien covers. When prepared, the spell opened a portal to a demon world. The king had been obsessed with it for as long as Redfang could remember.

As Lord Foulwind counted out nine parts of phantom flowers and added them to the vat of roiling liquid, he noticed his hands trembling. He paused, leaning on the table, and drew a deep, rasping breath. His thoughts raced, his blood pounded in his ears. A lifetime of work had come to this moment; a lifetime of searching, studying, and preparing. A lifetime! But now, at last, the work was complete.

Foulwind straightened and turned.

Redfang groveled. "What now, High Lord?"

Foulwind's eyes, like pits of darkness set deep in his misshapen head, scanned the scene. The sigil carved into the floor was exact. The totemic guardians were enchanted with every ward and abjuration he knew, just in case anything went wrong. The formula in the vat was freshly prepared and at maximum potency. After a dozen sacrifices and long hours spent chanting and weaving the mystical energies into a seething torrent of arcane power, he could feel the throbbing energy in the room crackling just beyond the reach of his five senses. Everything seemed to be ready.

Foulwind pointed a bent, yellow talon and croaked, "Light the soul candles."

Redfang took a small stick from the fire pit, carried it to the candles gathered in the center of the floor, and lit each one.

"Now get out of the way!" The king was already slipping into a trance, chanting and weaving his hands. It took a few minutes of precise repetition to coax the magic and weave it into the necessary shape and texture. After a short time spent stoking the arcane forces and nurturing them into a churning hotspot, he recited the final incantation.

Redfang, sitting quietly near the burbling kettle, knew this was his cue. He ladled out a measure of the greenish liquid and poured it into the lines of the alien sigil carved into the floor. As the liquid filled the rune-shaped crevasse, the magical energies were released.

There was a flash, an unnerving rending sound, and a rush of wind as a purplish disc of light appeared over the sigil, opaque and inscrutable.

The great king slumped with a groan of exertion.

"I-i-is that the gateway?" Redfang's voice trembled.

Foulwind's toothy maw widened in a fiendish grin. "Yes."

"T-t-to the *demon world*?"

The king's black eyes flashed with lust. "Yes."

Redfang's eyes ran to the exit.

To Be Continued...

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