**Death by 1000 cuts – Mind Delving into Audun**

The delvers start their ritual as normal, trying to peel back the layers of Audun’s mind. Suddenly they feel as if they are being assailed by a sandstorm, entirely blinded and searching for the fractured memories within Audun. Suddenly they feel themselves start to fracture, as they watch – starting at their fingertips, as they seem to turn to sand themselves and start to be blown away. Suddenly they come to, not observing, but living out the memories…

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
Audun feels his body tighten and his mind fogs over. He is surrounded by the enemy. They are everywhere. He knows the only way to destroy them is to be everywhere at once. Slipping into the shadows, he knows they are preparing to strike out. Look for the weaknesses. They want to mend wounds - battle does not give second chances. What he knows is every death, he loses more of his memories. Slipping away is not an option. It’s him or them. He chooses them.  
  
As he turns, he is hit once and again by a dervish and struck with a bomb. Pain courses through his body, but his focused Mind closes wounds as he jumps out of the way of one blow, then another, the force stunning those nearby. A coated blade sinks into his side, and he starts to slumber. Suddenly, he is awoken by a regally dressed squirrel hiwani. His mind is still a fog. It is a war of attrition, and the old ways are called upon. He moves with celerity and appears in front of Cyl. There is an attempt to reach into his mind. NO! He swings again and again, seeing red spurt onto a field of blue.   
  
They eventually overwhelm and pain wracks throughout his body once more. a SURGE OF ADRENALINE pushes him upwards and there is nothing left but rage. I won’t let you take them! There are so, so few left.   
  
It wasn’t long until there was nothing but blackness. The next second, he was coming to in the guild hall, surrounded by his Masters, tending to his wounds.  
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
Rashad is seen, sitting at a large wooden desk,  a map extending across the middle. He rubs his head in frustration. ‘I’ve tried everything, Audun. I’ve tried ordering you free, I’ve tried ordering you to act of your own accord, I’ve tried reaching out to my friends at the Diahonsha and those are the Guild of Wind and Flame. Alas, Nothing binds.’  
  
‘This one understands, Master. Perhaps my condition is not a problem that can be solved. Perhaps... this one deserves this fate’  
  
Rashad looked displeased. ‘No one deserves your fate, Audun. And from what I can tell, you are bound to the very bedrock that keeps this city in the air, in this existence. I don’t know how to decouple one from the other however, and however this magic came to bind, it is far deeper than I even care to imagine. I intend to keep trying, but at least the orders I have given you have at least given you limited autonomy. I fear that’s the best I can do at this juncture. But it’s important we not give up hope. I’ll keep trying.’  
  
Audun nods. Kindness was a mercy rarely given to him. ‘This one appreciates everything you have done, Master Rashad. I do not forget the kindnesses shown to this one’  
  
In his mind, Audun feels the immense weights of his oath, but Rashad and others were trying. That was far more than anyone else had ever done.   
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
Audun knew he had to protect them but there was nothing that he could do to harm the Flamelord. Audun jumps in front of a swing and is dropped to the ground in a single hit. A hand touches his shoulder, and he regains consciousness, his body not reclaimed by the sands yet. This was his eternal enemy, and there was nothing that could be done other than distract so that Master Orcus would have a chance. Other guildmates wove Magics into a ritual, but all Orcus could do was move and stay away the best he could until the time was right.  
  
Fear. Audun felt real and true fear, not just for himself, but for the rest of the guild.   
  
Suddenly, the Flamelord was gone. All guildmates including Orcus remained. Audun drops to his knees, thinking that it would indeed be done, but the weight remained, binding him with unseen fetters. Guildmates told him he was now free. Audun still on his knees told them ‘my path remains, Masters, even with the Flamelord gone. My oath was sworn on the Shrines…’   
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
Audun and his fellow Tarikhan approach the adventurers at a great shrine in the desert. As they conclude a ritual binding them with the spirit within, a few Tarikhan walk forward. In ancient Oranti they state ‘you have now taken control of the desert shrines, and we are now bound to your cause’

Audun thinks and considers… what will these new masters bring? Will they be kind? What even is kindness? Will they understand? Will he continue to be a weapon, or will he be able to be something more?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
They are trying to go near what we have been ordered to guard. We have to stop them from getting too close!  
\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
An Efreet Vizier stands before a variety of high caste humans. All the humans have clearly having completed a recent round of mourning, all in front of a desert tomb. The entrance is adorned in bright paints, symbolizing and marking the resting place of the desert Lord.

The humans confer amongst themselves. Each walks to the entrance to the tomb, kneel, and state ‘We are meant to be your blades, for the remainder of time’.

The Vizier finally states ‘I can make this so. But due to the spirit no longer being tied tightly to the body, and the way a body does not last, you must instead choose something else to be bound to. When you have considered this, walk forward one by one, and say the words and cut yourself upon my blade’.

The blades of the king in quiet contemplation and began approaching the Efreet.

Aladhi Kan Sadiquan stepped forward, thinking that by the laws of the land, the rights of conquer would carry forward even in death. The desert lord controlled all of the sea of sands, and his rule was absolute. Without an heir to pass it to, it would be his for all time.

‘I bind myself to the desert shrines that stand within the desert. He has conquered them and held them within his domain. As such, my blades will be bound to whomever holds them, from now and for all time’

His had reaches out and grazes against the blade, and he watches as the blood dripping from his wound changes before his eyes to sand.

As soon as all the assembled blades swore their various oaths, to the tomb, to the oasis, to a variety of things found only within Hakad’s purview did the Efreet finally speak.

‘It is with a heavy heart that I inform you… your words are binding, but they have been short-sighted. To hold something is always temporal, but your oaths, they are forever. The King is dead. You… are not. Instead, your bindings will fall to whoever controls what was sworn on. For now, that means you are mine, and as such, we will now have our revenge’

Aladhi was no more. A great sadness washed over him; the betrayal immediately observed. He moved to strike at the Efreet Vizier, he formed and raised his blade… but it was held in place by an invisible hand.

‘… and oh what chaos we will do’