



Midar's Triumph

by Alex Murrin

He barely restrained a chuckle as he pulled the superheated molten metal out of the kiln with large tongs held in his gloved hands. The orange liquid was viscous, pourable but resistant. He focused his mind on thoughts of heat, of the volcano his humble quarters looked towards, and of the powerful desert sun. The metal glowed white hot. He poured it in a glowing stream into a mold.

The mold was simple, merely a square with raised circles above which the metal would not flow, allowing room for screws after its production. As the mold filled, his mind was full of images: of strength, fortification, protection. He thought passionately of unbreakable bindings, of restraint and containment, and of years of service, unfailing and continuous, with no fear of fail or need of repair. He rotated the mold slightly, filling every crack. Holding it still for a minute, he thought of slowly cooling summer evenings and cool and windy fall days. The metal turned orange, than hardened into a dull red color.

A little squeak, the remains of a giggle, escaped his lips as he overturned the mold, allowing the completed hinge to drop into the bucket. He rolled back and forth on the balls of his feet, avoiding the steam issuing from the water bucket.

He looked up and towards the big gate of the fortified city. It was beautiful, with huge bands of metal containing tree sized strips of wood, fastened in place with nails longer than a man's forearm. Huge hinges with pins that measured six foot seven inches attached both leaves of the gate to the fortification walls. His height exactly, he remembered, pulling off his heat resistant gloves to expose his leathery skin and palms covered in callouses.

The craftsmen in Mogadur were renowned for their skill in all areas. Here, outside the city itself but inside the protective walls, the metalworkers hammered and heated, their kilns and open fires blackening nearby stone and wooden buildings. Many shared their fires with glassmakers. In the city, potters, woodworkers, weavers, masons and leatherworkers kept themselves to themselves, away from the heat and power of the forge and anvil, teaching their students and maintaining the University's standards.

Midar, son of Morti, was a teacher of household metallurgy in the Kotar University. Much mocked for his expertise and specialty, he was nonetheless renowned for his skills in construction of door hinges, water pipes and nails. Armorers and weapons masters may have





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laughed once, but no one laughed now.

As he moved through the camp towards the gates, the thudding began again. A respectful silence surrounded him, broken only by the constant pounding and showers of dust from the ramparts. His pet project over the last few years had been to repair the long unused gates, rebuilding them from the ground up. It had taken him 4 years, but finally, less than four months ago, he had completed them.

He stood at bottom of the gates, looking up and inspecting them for any wear. Here, the pounding was so loud it made the ground quiver. He rested his calloused hand on the gate and felt it quiver ever so slightly with each blow.

The barely contained chuckle became a laugh, and his laugh became a guffaw, and then a roar. He couldn't help but laugh at the irony. No one would tease him about his choice of work again. His pet project had saved them all from torture and death. For two months the people of the corrupt trade city of Mulcar had been knocking on Midar's gate with a battering ram - and his gate had held!



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