

SCRIPTED EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL
“OUTLANDS: THE ICEN THRONE”
BY ISAIAH EVERIN

This is a scene from late into the plot of a fantasy novel series, here in scripted form. The series takes place on the world of Tempest, a planet that exists parallel to Earth and is host to the mineral called Osmæon. This substance fosters what we would think of as “magic,” though it follows many strict rules. The plot centers on a pilgrimage taken by the daughter of the human Emperor and her party of protectors and friends. In this scene, her companion Dolph, a young man from Earth, is awoken in the middle of the night...

A young man, DOLPH, sleeps on rough, canvas bedding in a small hut. There is no one else in the room. His weapon, a short sword, rests just five feet away. He sleeps soundly, months of travel worn into his muscles and skin.

A shadow slowly slithers over him. In moments, there is a tall and strangely lanky figure standing above Dolph’s sleeping form—the man grips a long iron knife in a hand that only has three fingers and a thumb. He is a SADENUGAI, a humanoid species of the desert. He grabs Dolph’s shoulder and shakes him.

STRANGE FIGURE: Wake, Pat-ah.¹

DOLPH: (Snorts) Uh...what? Who’s...

Two fingers flit over Dolph’s mouth. Dolph recognizes the man as ALAT, and he is calm for a moment...until he notices Alat’s blade.

ALAT: Quiet now little scrilla,² or the cutting starts.

DOLPH: (Whispers) What...do you want?

ALAT: You’re from Outworld. I can see its spirit follow you.

DOLPH: Yeah, so what?³

ALAT: So you will take me to there, Pat-ah. Only ones from Outworld can travel back to Outworld. You bring me with you: out of Outland, into Outworld. This is a fit path for me.

DOLPH: I can’t do that.

¹ Pat-ah: foreigner.

² Scrilla: child, young one.

³ Dolph knows that many on the world of Tempest can recognize him as being from Earth, a place the locals call Outworld (just as this continent is called Outland due to its strangeness in the eyes of the Empire of Man). All humans originally came from Outworld, but rarely is travel between Tempest and Earth possible anymore.

ALAT: You will do that, or you will be dead.

DOLPH: Don't you think I've tried? (*Louder*) I'm *stuck* here.

Alat instantly has the knife at Dolph's throat.

ALAT: Quietly! Don't try to make the sand sound like water. You *can* go back, and you will bring me to there. I am tired of these lands and the Red Sandsea, of leading Brothers over it. We will see new magics. We will go *now*. If you try to wake anyone, I will spill you. This is not your world, and so your spirit will wander and fade, not even the wind will feel you.

Alat grabs Dolph's wrist and pulls him up onto his feet. He then skillfully ties the young man's arms behind his back and pushes him out the door, grabbing his rucksack on the way out.

Outside, the sky is bright with stars and carries a hint of indigo that is missing from our black Earth nights. A desert of red sand surrounds the small village of huts, and mountains lie far in the distance. There is no moon up tonight, and no one else is awake. In the empty stretch of desert, there is little to be on guard from.

Alat leads Dolph to a small herd of animals. They appear to be horse-sized fish with tiny limbs holding them just a foot above the ground. On their backs are leathery wings with sparse feathers. These are SKYTROUT. Alat shoves Dolph towards one that is wearing a saddle.

ALAT: Get on the trout.

DOLPH: It can't carry both of us.

ALAT: Pat-ah, what do you know of the Red Sandsea? It knows as much of you as you of it. Staka-ah is the strongest trout, for she is *mine*, and I am the strongest Brother. Get on.

Dolph does as the Sadenugai demands and manages his way onto the back of the saddle despite his bound arms. Alat climbs on in front of him and spurs Staka-ah to alertness, softly clucking her out of the corral.

In minutes, they are gliding several feet over the sand. The skytrout cannot fly high, but it can fly fast—aided, as Dolph knows, by the lower gravity of Tempest as well as the Osmæic saddle attached to its back. Staka-Ah is racing over the desert in no time. Cacti flit past them along with a few nocturnal creatures. Nothing interrupts them as they make their way toward a high sand dune. When they clear the other side, Dolph peeks over Alat's shoulder to see a rocky fissure just ahead. Alat steers Staka-ah into the canyon that it forms.

They arrive outside of a cave of red stone. The walls of the fissure are now at least fifty feet above them. Dolph was not aware that such structures existed in the desert, and despite the situation, he observes the new environment in awe.

Alat jumps off of the trout and draws his knife again, shoving Dolph off of Stakah rudely. The young man falls onto the sand, and then stands up with reluctance.

DOLPH: Where the hell are we?

ALAT: You will see little scrilla.

Alat shoves Dolph towards the gap in the rock wall and into the cave. As Dolph leads the way, his captor pulls something like a torch from out of his belt. He shakes it vigorously to cause it to emit a bright green glow.

They squeeze out of a tight crack in the stone to find themselves in a small chamber. In the center of the chamber is a large bronze archway with glyphs smelt into its surface. Metal rods connect it to the walls and ceiling of the chamber—at these connecting points are metal and stone plates containing minute mechanics of unknown origin or purpose.

Dolph looks at this device without surprise as Alat sticks his torch into the wall.

DOLPH: Oh, it's one of *those*. (Sighs) I've already tried to use these, it doesn't work. I can't go back to Earth, why the hell do you think I can?

ALAT: You are an endless falsehood. When you evaporate by the sun, I see what is left. I know this path to Outworld is fit for us. I have seen others go through here, and no Brother knows I have seen this thing.

DOLPH: You're *not listening*. It. Doesn't. Work.

ALAT: Your lips will cease moving or I will cut them off. Put your hand here and open the door.

Alat gestures at a metal plate with his blade and then quickly cuts the ropes from Dolph's arms with a single swipe. Dolph rolls his eyes, expecting nothing to come of this. He hopes Alat won't blame him for his failure and start all of the nasty cutting he keeps promising. Without any hesitation, he puts his hand on the plate.

The response is instantaneous. A churning sound can be heard emanating from the entire cavern. The space within the archway quickly begins to vibrate and glow. Dolph is too shocked to move.

The glowing air soon manifests into something that is between a cloud of smoke and a window. Another space can be seen, it billows curiously just within the confines of the archway. That space is a desert—much unlike the one outside, for

its sands are golden brown like those of Earth. The sky is the familiar black that Dolph knows. It appears that one could simply walk through and be there.

Alat shouts with excitement and waves his blade around.

ALAT: Yes! It is the Outworld! I can smell the winds of change. I will be a new Osmægai,⁴ I will be like air and travel a world no one has seen. Alat tak'a setugau Osmæ—

Alat's voice is cut short with a heavy thud. There is quite suddenly the tip of a sword emerging from his chest. Amber blood bubbles from the Sadenugai's mouth as he collapses to the floor. In one solid motion, a man in a black coat removes his sword from the captor's back.

Dolph's expression of surprise turns to relief as he recognizes his uncle, ARON, and the familiar katana he carries. He's not sure why his uncle has appeared so suddenly, but the man's help was, unusually, perfectly timed.

The billowing portal grabs Dolph's attention again. He looks into it longingly, almost instantly forgetting the events that have just occurred.

Aron wipes his blade of the honey-like blood that coats it.

ARON: Do you want to go through? I think that's the Sahara desert right there, but you could probably find people. You wouldn't ever be able to come back, but it's been years since you were home. We would...understand.

Dolph's brow becomes heavy with contemplation and he chews the inside of his mouth. He doesn't acknowledge Aron.

ARON: Dolph, look at me.

With reluctance, Dolph turns.

ARON: We *would* understand. This is your choice, no one else's.

DOLPH: No...this might be the only chance I'll have, but...

He looks back at the portal.

DOLPH: This is home now. With you...with Phaorah...and the others.

Dolph shrugs his shoulders and walks away from the plate that activated the portal.

DOLPH: How is this thing working, anyways?

⁴ Osmægai: the Sadenugai are a sub-species of this species, a humanoid race that is tall, thin, and has only four digits on its hands and feet. They physically adapt to whatever environment they live in.

ARON: It might be the only one left that hasn't been broken. The Empire destroyed every sort of trans-Earth portal in the Hundred Kingdoms, but the Outlands are not quite as well traveled, especially the desert regions...and now the Empire has no foot here.

DOLPH: Who put it here, though?

ARON: The world is old, humans have lived on it for centuries. Some of them, though, longed to go back to Earth. Wait outside—I'm going to turn it off so that no one can cause any trouble.

DOLPH: What about Alat? Did you need to...*do that*.

ARON: If I hadn't, this would not have ended. He wanted to cross over badly enough that he was willing to kill for it. If he had made it over...There is a reason the portals have all been closed. The last humans to crusade across the boundary brought destruction with them, and they had nothing like the modern technology your world has now.

Dolph nods, but is still upset. No matter how many times he sees death, most often in protection of some cause that is at odds with another, he doesn't get used to it.

ARON: We may have to ditch the other Sadenugai, though. I don't know how we'll explain this. Go on, I'll be out in a minute.

Aron waves a hand toward the crack in the wall that leads outside. Dolph leaves.

Examining the structures around the archway, Aron scratches his chin. After a few moments of contemplation, he touches the metal plate that activated the portal. For a moment, nothing happens, but Aron squeezes his eyes tight and mutters. The cloudy portal flickers and shudders until it finally fades away.

Aron looks towards the cave exit—it is empty. He walks behind the archway and fiddles with something. After his explorations produce a loud CRACK, he emerges with an intricately designed cylinder in hand. Without hesitation or expression, he pockets this.

Whistling to himself nonchalantly, he hunches over and picks up the body of Alat, then carries it out of the cave, taking the green torch with him.