

ONCE ITS BEGUN

CHAPTER ONE

Written by

The Gillingham Brothers

EXT. DESERT - SHANTY BAR - DAY

A Juke box fires up-

HARTLY SITS AT THE BAR IN WHAT MAKES FOR A SALON IN THIS DRY AND DESPERATE PART OF THE WORLD. HE SIPES AT A GLASS OF DARK BROWN MOONSHINE. NO ICE OF COURSE, NOT OUT HERE.

THE SALOON IS NOTHING MORE THAN TWO WALLS AND A RUSTED TIN ROOF OVER A FEW BENCHES.

A COUPLE OF PATRONS PLAY BACKGAMMON - OTHERS SHOT POOL AT A BROKEN, UNEVEN TABLE.

HARLTY
(hearing a gang arrive on
horse back)
Finally.

THE ONCE PRETTY BAR MAID AND PROUD PROPRIETOR OF THIS FINE ESTABLISHMENT LEANS OVER, MAKING THE MOST OF HER AMPLE BUT AGEING CLEAVAGE.

BAR-MAID
Anything else for you city
boy...anything at all? You get me?

HARLTY
Maybe after. If it do ya.

BAR-MAID
After what?...

HARTLY MOVES OVER TO MAKE ANOTHER SELECTION ON THE ANCIENT MUSIC MACHINE

BAR-MAID (CONT'D)
After what city boy?

SEVEN MEN - A THANKFULLY SMALL BAND OF 'DROVERS' - MAKE THEIR WAY INTO THE SALOON, ONE OR TWO STOPPING TO ADMIRE THE EXOTIC MOTORCYCLE PARKED OUT FRONT-

DROVER
Hey King, that your new 'two' is
it?

The self titled KING nods as he caresses the machine.

KING
I reckon it is.

DROVER
Ooooh, it's SICK fam, ya get me?

KING
 (Shouting into the room)
 Who parked my new Two-engine out
 here and where the fuck a'its keys.

This brings a round of laughter from King's men.

SENSING TROUBLE, THE BAR'S OTHER PATRONS DECIDE NOW MIGHT BE A GOOD
 TIME TO TAKE THEIR LEAVE.

HARTLY TURNS HIS HEAD, STILL LEANING CASUALLY AGAINST THE MUSIC
 MACHINE.

KING (CONT'D)
 (walking in)
 AHHHHH a city boy in our midst, out
 adventurin' from the Grey is it? I
 should'a known from the crap that's
 in my ears right now.

HARTLY
 Didn't mean no 'fense pal. It'll be
 done shortly... You boys feel free
 to make the next selection.

KING
 I made my selection already. That
 fancy Two' out there.

BAR-MAID
 Easy King... Ain't your Two nor
 your yard. This hole is my manor,
 you get me? So come on and have a
 drink,
 (Off Hartly)
 N'let the man be on his way.

-YOU BEST GET THE FUCK OUTTA HERE STRANGER...

KING
 Who the fucks talkin' to you bitch?
 (Grabbing his crotch)
 You be gettin' a rough ride when me
 'n city boy here a'done.

HARTLY
 S'ok. I don't mean to start no
 trouble in here... Not when there's
 so much space outside.

King narrows his eyes, a slight smile puckering his cracked
 lips.

KING
 Is it? True say...
 (Glancing at the bar maid)
 I'd not want to get blood all over
 MY floor.

HARTLY CALMLY REMOVES HIS JACKET, EXPOSING HIS STRAPPED .22 AND THE
 IDIOT'S SMILE ACTUALLY WIDENS!

DROVER
 Look at his gun! He's a Sahn King,
 maybe we should...

KING
 Shut your flappin' Pussy'ole

HARTLY
 (Off his gun)
 Sweet piece eh? You seen another
 like it?

KING
 Few enough to know that it don't
 shoot peas.

Hartly barks a laugh.

HARTLY
 True dat, it don't. Seen another in
 the last few moons?

KING
 Enough fucking questions. You may
 be packing iron but we all be
 swinging steel.

KING REACHES OVER HIS SHOULDER, UNSHEATHING A CRUDELY MADE
 SWORD...

TAKING THEIR CUE, THE REST OF THE GANG PULL OUT THEIR OWN EQUALLY
 UGLY WEAPONS.

HARTLY
 (Still cool)
 You feelin' to take my head is it?
 Think that'a do the job.

KING
 Aye, well enough.

HARTLY
 Done that job before has it? You
 reckon you up to task a' taking a
 Blud?

FOR A SPLIT SECOND KING HESITATES, THEN STEPS FORWARD, BLADE FIRST.

HARTLY (CONT'D)

(Un-flinching)

Easy sword swinger. I'd not lose my head jus' yet. I got use fr'it still.

KING

Shame that ain't it. Coz we done talkin.'

HARTLY

Guess we'll see then.

ITS BEGUN

NOW THAT WAS A COOL PLACE TO START, BUT I THINK WE'VE GOT TO GO BACK A BIT TO GET SOME PERSPECTIVE-

INT. LARGE INDUSTRIAL SPACE - DAY (**ONE YEAR AGO**)

-ABOUT A YEAR AGO IN THE GREY, ONE OF THE LAST STANDING CITIES OF THE GREAT, FALLEN EMPIRES,

HOUSE OF THE BLUD. THOSE OF THE CRACKED PALM -

IN THE WORN AND BROKEN BUILDING THAT HAD LONG FORGOTTEN ITS ORIGINAL PURPOSE, CROUCHED HARTLY, GUNLESS, SHIRTLESS AND BOOTLESS, LOW ON ONE KNEE-

HE LOOKS UP TO "OL'BLUD" WHO STANDS IN-FRONT.

-CROUCHED BESIDE HIM IS ONE HART WOULD CONSIDER A BROTHER- RAISED TOGETHER IN THE HOUSE OF THE BLUD.

OL'BLUD SPEAKS OUT TO THE SMALL CROWD THAT STANDS IN A CIRCLE AROUND THEM.

OL'BLUD

Today Ashen Thermenta will be raised from Childe to Sahn of the Blud, to claim his fathers name. In this Rite, as in life, to win is not the goal, it matters only that there is no surrender. You will fight...

HARTLY/ASH

...until our knuckles bleed and our palms are cracked.

The onlookers bark a clipped CHEER as Ol'Blud steps aside.

CUSTOM DICTATES THAT THE COMBATANTS STAND AND FACE BEFORE THEY BEGIN...

-BUT ASH WAS NEVER ONE TO STAND ON CEREMONY.

STILL KNEELING, HE THREW A HEAVY RIGHT HOOK.

HARTLY DODGED, JUST... AS A LEFT PILE-DROVE THE SPOT. LEAVING A BLOODY FIST PRINT.

STILL LOW, SWUNG A KICK DESIGNED TO TAKE HIS OPPONENTS HEAD OFF.

ASH MANAGED A TURN AS THE FOOT SLAPPED THE SIDE OF HIS TRUNK LIKE TORSO.

ASH GLANCED AT HIS BLOODY LEFT KNUCKLE AND SMILED.

ASH
Didn't take long...

THERMENTA
(From the crowd)
It's begun!

Another cheer goes up

ELBOW.

FIST.

SHOULDER.

SWEEP.

ASH WENT DOWN, PULLING HART WITH HIM.

THEY PULLED APART, BUT THEY MUST FIGHT ON - NO SURRENDER.

40 SECONDS IN

ASH CHARGED

THERMENTA (CONT'D)
That's it son, HIT HIM!

SPURRED ON BY HIS FATHERS CALL, ASH SWUNG HIS FIST IN HIGH...

HARTLY SLIPPED INSIDE.

HIS UPPERCUT RATTLING THE BIG MAN.

STILL REELING, ASH SWUNG WILDLY,

CONNECTING- NOT FULLY, BUT ENOUGH TO BRING A STREAM OF WATER TO HART'S EYES AND A TRICKLE OF BLOOD FROM HIS NOSTRIL.

1 MINUTE 7 SECONDS-

THINGS WOULD SOON GO ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.

HARTLY, LANDED A BLOW RIGHT IN ASH'S GRILL.

BLOOD RAN DOWN HART'S FOREARM, DRIPPING FROM HIS ELBOW.

ASH SPAT A MOUTHFUL OF CLARET, THEN-

TURNED, LEADING WITH A HUGE BACK.

HART SPAN WITH THE APPARENT FORCE, ACCELERATED HIS TWIST, LIFTING HIS FOOT HIGH TO SLAM INTO ASH'S TEMPLE BUT...

HESITATED...

ASH SEIZED THE SLOWING FOOT, USING THE MAN'S MOMENTUM TO LIFT HIM UP OFF THE GROUND, BRINGING HIM CRASHING TO THE CONCRETE FLOOR.

1 MINUTE 58.

OL'BLUD

IT'S DONE.

THE CROWD ROARS

THERMENTA

(shouting above the din)

A solid fight... you get me.

INT. THE HOUSE OF THE BLOOD - LATER

A SHORT TIME LATER, STILL BLOODY AND BRUISED, ASH KNELT UNCOMFORTABLY AT THE FEET OF HIS FATHER TO RECEIVE THE BLESSING THAT OFFICIALLY ELEVATED HIM FROM CHILDE TO SAHN.

OL'BLUD

Now pass back to your father the childe's piece he gave when you turned teen...

(Ash offers up his old .22 semi)

an' receive the shooter that marks you full Sahn of the Blud.

FOLLOWING RITUAL, HE HANDED HIS FATHER THE .22 SEMI AUTO THAT HAS BEEN HIS CHARGE SINCE ADOLESCENCE. IN RETURN HE RECEIVED THE MASSIVE .50, HIGH CAL 6 SHOOTER CARRIED BY HIS KIN..

AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM - BEHIND THE CHEERING SAHNS AND TRUE BLUDS OF OLD, HARTLY BROODED, IDLY HANDLING HIS OWN .22 SEMI. I THINK HE WAS PLEASED FOR HIS FRIEND, JUST DESPERATE TO BE STANDING BY HIS SIDE. DESPERATE TO BE RAISED HIMSELF.

INT. OL'BLUD'S QUATERS - LATE NIGHT

OL'BLUD STOOD BEFORE A ROARING FIRE IN HIS PRIVATE "LIBRARY". LIKE THE REST OF THIS BUILDING - THE REST OF THE WORLD - THIS ROOM HAD LONG FORGOTTEN WHAT IT WAS... TO BECOME WHAT IT IS.

OL'BLUD POURS SOME KIND OF DARK BROWN LIQUOR AND SLOWLY TAKES A SIP WITH A DEEP APPRECIATION.

KNOCK at the door-

OL'BLUD

Come in childe Hartly, I called'ja here, no need f'ceremony now.

Hartly enters but stands silent, staring silently into the fire. Ol'Blud pours another glass and raises it to Hartly.

OL'BLUD (CONT'D)

Would'ja have one un join me fam'?

HARTLY

You sayin' drink? Still a Childe and allowed to sip that meant for a man?

OL'BLUD

Easy Hart'. I know it were hard for you today. Seein' your bredg' stand, an' take the big gun...

HARTLY

You sayin' I ain't earned my own? Is it?

OL'BLUD

You know I ain't. The decision to raise you is yours, you know what you have to do - Accept another as kin, so's he ken say the words.

HARTLY

I'll be raised by my own if it please ya. Or d'ya recon that he ain't comin' back.

OL'BLUD
I never said it... But it bares
thinkin.'

HARTLY
Nah Blud it don't *bare thinkin'*...
Let me go out and fetch 'im back.

OL'BLUD
And would'ja stay out, take up the
post and let 'im return 'lone?

Hart says nothing but his teeth grit tight.

OL'BLUD (CONT'D)
(a pause- a breath- a sip)
Thermenta come to me, said he'd go
out find your Da'. Relieve him
o'tha task he's done all these
years an' set t'watchin' The Charge
he-self. I'm feelin' t'say aye an'
let him go.

HARTLY
(Bitterness creeping in)
...which Thermenta?

OL'BLUD
(Not rising to his tone)
Old Sahn you get me? He'll take
after the trail to the south, if
one should linger still.

HARTLY
Custom's fixed so's none knows
where'bouts the charge roams 'sept
him that guards it. You've faith
that Thermenta will be able t'find
him?

OL'BLUD
If he's to be found, aye. May take
'im a time, a full turn even...
Believe Blud, none so good a
tracker as your Da' but Sahn
Thermenta's had plenty of time in
the field.

HARTLY
I'm better. True say? 'Least let me
journey along...

OL'BLUD

Even if he'd allow it I could not.
Y'still hold the small gun Hartly.

(He pauses to let this
fact sink in.)

Thermenta will trail 'lone, easier
for him to get in and your Da' to
get out... I'll have him gone in a
day or so.

(Beat)

Would that we could spare more. One
man to guard The Charge!.. It's
bare jokes. But what can we do, our
numbers are slight these days and
we got nuff problems with the
civs'.

HARTLY

Is it? Reckon?

OL'BLUD

What you sayin Blud?

HARTLY

Sayin could be 'at you's the prob.
Pr'aps Ol'Blud's too old for the
job.

CRACK - Hartly is floored by a lightning fast jab from the
'Old Man'.

OL'BLUD

Not too old to be put you on your
ass when called. Remember your
place Childe.

(Softening, slightly)

Its been tough for you Hart... But
"No surrender-Duty is all" You get
me?

Hartly dabs gently at his lip.

HARTLY

Get you good Fam.' Don't mean I
always like it.

(With a smile)

Truth Blud, you still hit like a
startled buck! I'll feel this for
days!

OL'BLUD

(Also smiling)

Is it now? Well lucky I used my
left not my right.

EXT. DESERT - OIL WELL - DUSK (PRESENT)

BACK IN THE NOW...

BACK LIT BY THE BLAZE OF THE SETTING SUN, STARK AGAINST THE DESOLATE WASTE, STAND A DOZEN RUSTY OIL DERRICKS. DESPITE THEIR DILAPIDATED APPEARANCE ONE OR TWO REFUSE TO QUIT THEIR PERPETUAL, SCREECHING WORK.

BESIDE THE SAND STREWN 'ROAD' CLOSEST THE NEAREST WORKING WELL STANDS A MAKESHIFT GAS STATION - ONE PUMP AND A SHED.

THE MONOTONY OF THE SQUEALING DERRICKS IS GRADUALLY DROWNED AS THE HIGH PITCHED SCREAM OF A SPORTS TUNED 1000CC MOTORCYCLE CRESTS ON THE HORIZON.

A MAN IN DUNGAREES, MORE OIL THAN DENIM, COMES OUT OF THE SHED AS THE BIKE PULLS UP.

HE GAPES OPENLY AS HARTLY PARKS THE STRIKING PITCH BLACK RACING PEDIGREED MACHINE.

CLERK

Ho there stranger...
What kinda fancy two-engines' that?

HARTLY

Its old. From Japan...
(Off the clerk's blank
expression)
Proper far off.

CLERK

Well she's a beaut wherever she's
from. Not too many machines left in
the world the like of that, I say
true.

HARTLY

My sweetheart, mostly rebuilt her
myself, o'parts scrounged up in
'The Grey' you get me?

CLERK

(With a knowing nod)
The Grey. Get you very well.
(He continues absently)
(MORE)

CLERK (CONT'D)

That's some journeyin' you done
t'get to here. Not many'd make that
trip a'foot in less'n a half turn I
recon. Course, that Two'd speed you
up some...

HART KICKS HIS STAND AND STEPS OFF THE 'TWO ENGINE', EXPOSING HIS .22
AS HE DOES-

CLERK (CONT'D)

(Emabarrased by his
witting)

Ahh an now I see you's carryin' a
shooter... forgive me Sahn, Blud of
old. I shoulda know better...

HARTLY

I'm not what you think, so keep
your ease. Call me Childe if ye
must but I'd rather you not.

CLERK

Aye. But Blud to be sure. I'd call
you that if ye will.

HARTLY

Blud'll do fine.

CLERK

Then wot can I do ya Blud?

HARTLY

Fill up the two'... An' some
directions if ya 'ken

CLERK

Where you goin'?

HARTLY

I were hoping you could tell me.

THE CLERK LOOKS PUZZLED AS HE WALKS OVER TO HART'S 'TWO' CARRYING
AN OLD WATERING-CAN FILLED WITH GAS.

HARTLY TAKES OUT HIS TOBACCO TIN AND STARTS TO SLOWLY ROLL A SMOKE.

HARTLY (CONT'D)

You seen another round here recent?
One you might called Sahn?

CLERK

I seen none a'The Blud many years
since... Though rumors go. They say
one lives in yon hills.

(MORE)

CLERK (CONT'D)
'Bout 200 miles t'south. But with
my own eyes... I can't say for
true.

Hartly fixes the Clerk a level stare.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Now that I think on it, there was
one, some time back. Could've been
Blud. Rode in-a open top Merk-E-
Dez. Rolled through more'n a year
past. Asked the same questions as
you.

HARTLY
Is it?

CLERK
It is, and I warned him as I'll
warn you now. No man trailing
lone'll be safe in the 'Drovers'
Manner.

Hartly squints nonchalantly into the distance.

CLERK (CONT'D)
And he seemed 'bout as worried as
you do now. Rolled back through a
time later.

HARTLY
Aye, I know the motor, and the man.
Did any news follow his passage?

CLERK
None to speak of, what you after
blud?

HARTLY
If you knew it you wouldn't have to
ask.

Hart finishes rolling his cigarette, one for the clerk too.
He holds it out to the man-

HARTLY
You want a smoke?

CLERK
Aye, with thanks, but down here a
ways if it do ya.

THE GREASE MONKEY NODS TOWARDS THE RUSTING TOWER THAT STANDS
BESIDE THE SHED-

THE OLD REFINERY, AGAINST ALL ODDS, STILL 'WORKS' BUT THICK CRUDE
OOZES FROM EVERY RIVET HOLE AND GAS WARPS THE AIR AS IT LEAKS FROM
THE TOP OF THE INFERNAL THING.

Hart nods and moves away some before-

HARTLY

(Lighting up the smokes)
This Sahn, 'at lives in yon hills.
I'd hear more if it please ya.

CLERK

Soz blud but I told all. There've
been rumors of your kin in these
parts for two generations at least.

HARTLY

There's older blood out here than
mine. You get me?

CLERK

Aye, true dat. Some'in keepin' the
Drovers interest. Some'in they want
for they-selves.

Hartly nods knowingly - *THE CHARGE...*

HARTLY

You ever been further along?
Scouted for y'self?

CLERK

S'just desert. Then mountains.
Nutin' to see. Like I say, it's
Drover's manor and I'd not die for
a look.

HARTLY

S'pose that's the difference 'tween
you n'me fam'. Not sayin' I'm
better off for it mind.

CLERK

The world as it is Sahn... We
should all do as you. Live and die
for the good and fuck everything in-
between.

Hartly nods approval.

HARTLY
Yon "drovers". Where d'they cotch?

CLERK
Why? What you thinkin' 'bout doin'
young blud?

Waiting a beat before he replies-

HARTLY
Gettin' me a drink...

EXT. THE GREY - DESERTED CITY STREET/GUN RANGE - NIGHT (ONE MONTH AGO)

ABOUT A MONTH EARLIER, BACK IN THE GREY...

TWO GUNS FIRE IN A DEADLY AND EFFICIENT RHYTHM.

BRAP BRAP - KA POW - BRAP BRAP - KA POW

Hartly stands beside Ash, his faster semi' letting off two shots for every one from the big .50.

TARGET PRACTICE. HART WAS LETTING THEM OFF QUICKER BUT THE DISINTEGRATING TRASH THAT THEY USED FOR TARGETS LEFT NO DOUBT AS TO WHICH WEAPON WAS CAUSING MORE DAMAGE. NEITHER MISSED A SHOT.

Hart's clip was empty first.

HARTLY
I'm out.

IN A MOTION, FLUID AS A CLEAR STREAM, HIS GUN WAS RE-LOADED AND BACK IN IT'S HOLSTER.

ASH LET OFF HIS LAST ROUND THEN RE-LOADED, METHODICALLY.

HE WENT TO RE-HOLSTER BUT INSTEAD LOOKED AROUND, SAW NO-ONE AND RAISED THE REVOLVER HANDLE FIRST TO HARTLY.

ASH
Gwan fam', 'ave a shot. You deserve
it.

Hart reaches out but stops himself, shaking his head.

HARTLY
Nah, it aint right...

ASH
Waitin' for your own?

HARTLY
You get me?

ASH
Aye.

HARTLY
Should it ever come that is.

They start towards the 'Targets' to inspect their marks.

ASH
You been patient Hart, real
patient. You should've been raised
'fore me, ain't it. Wot the fuck we
got your Da' doin out there?

Anger flares in Hartly. He grabs the surprised Ash, slamming
him into a crumbling wall.

ASH (CONT'D)
What the fu...

HARTLY
He doin' *THE* job, protecting The
Charge. You get me blud!?

ASH
Easy pal, get ya good. I'm jus'
sayin'. It don't make no sense.
Does it tho? Risk a Sahn to protect
The Charge what roams free. What's
the use?

Hartly loosens his grip, calming himself.

HARTLY
I guess that ain't the way my old
man sees it. Nor *THE* old man. I
reckon there's reason, s'pose we
just ain't been round long enough
t'see it.

ASH
(More to himself than in
reply)
Or they been round too long to see
it any other way.

They start towards the 'Targets' again when-

ASH (CONT'D)

Oh Hart...

WHAM - Ash floors Hartly with a massive right hook.

ASH (CONT'D)

We been friends a long time Hart,
but don't you ever disrespect me
like that again. I'm a Sahn now.
You get me?

(Glancing back to the
wall)

If a civ 'ad seen that I'd 'ave no
choice.

He pulls and cocks his Iron to make the point...

HARTLY

(From the ground)

Cry pardon Sahn. I'll make you
right n'all

ASH

(re-holstering his gun)

Okay then.

-GLAD WE FINALLY GOT THAT STRAIGHT.

Ash smiles as he helps Hart to his feet, throwing his arm affectionately around the smaller man's shoulder as the sound of an approaching engine draws their attention.

ASH (CONT'D)

(excitedly)

Whats this now..?

At the end of road; Sahn Thermenta blows past in his sand covered Mercedes. Hartly's father is not with him.

ASH (CONT'D)

That's my da's motor Hart, come'on!

Ash excitedly gives chase but Hartly hesitates.

HARTLY

(To himself)

So many months past an' he comes
back... Alone.

EXT. THE HOUSE OF THE BLUD - A MINUTE LATER

The two young men sprint past the now parked Merc. into-

INT. THE HOUSE OF THE BLUD - ENTRANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

HARTLY
Get outta my way... Outta my WAY!

THERE HE STOOD, CENTRAL AMONGST A GATHERING OF SAHNS, IN THE ENTRANCE HALL OF THE MAIN HOUSE OF THE BLUD.

DIRTY, TRAVEL WORN AND SPLATTERED WITH DARK SPOTS OF OLD CRUSTED BLOOD, THERMENTA, ASH'S FATHER LOOKED GRIM.

HE HELD A BOX...

Hartly pushes through the gathering men to stand beside Ol'Blud facing Thermenta.

BEAT-

HARTLY
Whose life stains ya Sahn? Not your own?

BEAT-

OL'BLUD
Speak Sahn Thermenta.

THERMENTA
(Not looking at Hartly)
Forgive me Ol'Blud...

BEAT-

OL'BLUD
Tell it true.

THERMENTA
It were a trap. I fell fr'it just as he did before...

HARTLY
Whose Blood Sahn. Tell me.

BEAT-

THERMENTA
(looking to the box in)
This is all I could...

OL'BLUD
The box then... give it here.

Ol'Blud opens the box,

Nods sadly-

OL'BLUD (CONT'D)
So it's true.

-AS I FEARED...

BEAT-

Hart steps forward to confirm what he already knows.

HARTLY
(clinging to hope)
Whos blood. Tell me...

He cuts off as he sees-

A preyer dusts across Ol'Blud's lips.

BEAT-

HARTLY
(Quietly)
Who did this? Tell me true Sahn.

Thermenta, displeased at the insolence of the CHILDE, looks to Ol'Blud who nods.

THERMENTA
(Through gritted teeth)
I know this is hard for you but
remember your place...

OL'BLUD
(loosing patience)
TELL IT!

THERMENTA
(Off Ol'Blud)
Like I said, it were an ambush.
After so long, Drovers must'a tired
o'bein picked apart by a Sahn.
Decided they wanted what he
protected... Decided they wanted
him dead in the process.

Hartly takes every word like a slap to the face.

HARTLY
(Louder)
If you say true Sahn, then how is
it that you end comin' back? Did
you not fall into yon same trap?

THERMENTA

(Off Ol'Blud)

IF I say true? What allegations are these. Ol'Blud if...

OL'BLUD

Answer Childe Hartly's question Sahn. It's his father's head that you hold before us.

THERMENTA

(Defensively, Still off Ol'Blud)

Well, I snatched it up on my retreat, it were all I could do at such a time. They came in numbers. The world has grown sick, ain't no respect left out there for our Kin. I tried all I could... There was no use in me dyin' out there as well.

HARTLY

(LOUDER)

IS IT? My father, the best amongst us, survivor of years in the field. HE fell while YOU survived? This cunning trap? This... ambush by the *Drovers*? *SAY TRUE SAHN?*

THERMENTA

(Finally facing Hartly)

I won't suffer questions such as these from a Childe.

OL'BLUD

You'll suffer 'em from me tho I reckon.

THERMENTA

I knew him long and loved him more. You get me Blud?.. Pr'haps the years out there on his loan'... It made him slow... He should have seen a trap like this forming.

HARTLY

(Exploding)

YOU DARE! My fathers life crusted on your shirt still and you question his name? Call it true one more time and we'll 'ave it outside right now, an' only one'll be comin' back in, YOU GET ME BLUD!

THERMENTA

Watch'a'self CHILDE. I don't wanna see another of our kin needless lost. Your Da' died for nought - Protecting The Charge, the last we know, out in the dust! The power we spent generations 'tecting, not full knowin' what for or why. We should'a brung it back long ago. Should 'ave it here for our own. To use as we see fit. To better this crumbling shit hole we call a world.

OL'BLUD

Now you watch *YOUR* self Sahn. I won't have an open, mutinous affront to our laws in the entry way of our order.

The command in Ol'Blud's voice calms the escalating situation instantly.

OL'BLUD (CONT'D)

Nor will I have argument over the head of one that we all loved dear, a fallen Sahn of the Blud. This is my first glimpse of him in many years and a dark one it is, I WILL NOT have it darkened further. Show some RESPECT.

THERMENTA

True say Blud. True say. Accept my outburst as grief but you get me good. The Charge is in danger now... The Drovers. Let me an' the boys ride out in force an' bring it back. Drag it back if need be. We'll take THE Big Gun, clear the world of the drovers that brought our loved Sahn to his end.

OL'BLUD

Do they have it then? The Charge is taken?

BEAT.

THERMENTA

I believe not. My old friend were clever 'nuff to have it hid' well.

OL'BLUD

Then we have time enough I think.
The Charge'll 'ave to look after it
self a short while. I trust our
fallen to have left it right.

HARTLY

Talk it as you will but get ME
good. I say tis all naught but bull
shit.

(Off Thermenta)

You get me... *Sahn Thermenta?*

Turning away from his fathers 'remains' he shoves through the
small crowd of gathered warriors, straight past-

ASH

Hartly...

OL'BLUD

Let him go. He'll be 'right. We've
got taking to do and plans to make.

EXT. THE DESERT/INT. A SHANTY BAR - DUSK (PRESENT)

The Juke box starts up...

KING

(Shouting into the room)

Who parked my new Two-engine out
here and where the fuck a'its keys.

BAR-MAID

Easy king. Ain't your two nor your
yard. Now, this hole is my manor,
so c'mon have a drink and let the
man be on his way!

KING

Who the fucks talking to you bitch.
youll be getting a rough ride when
me and the city boy here are done.

DROVER

Look at his gun! He's a Sahn King,
maybe we should...

KING

Shut your flappin' Pussy'ole

HARTLY
 (Off his gun)
 Sweet piece eh? You seen another
 like it?

KING
 Few enough to know that it don't
 shoot peas.

Hartly barks a laugh.

HARTLY
 True dat, it don't. Seen another in
 the last few moons?

KING
 Enough fucking questions. You may
 be packing iron but we all be
 swinging steel.

HARTLY
 (Still cool)
 You feelin' to take my head is it?
 Think that'a do the job.

KING
 Aye, well enough.

HARTLY
 Done that job before has it? You
 reckon you up to task a' taking a
 Blud?

KING
 We done talkin.'

HARTLY
 Guess we'll see then...

KING LUNGES FORWARD. HART REACTS...

KICKING OUT AT KING'S SWORD ARM HE KNOCKS THE BLADE LOOSE-

THEN SNATCHING THE CUTTER OUT OF THE AIR, BRINGS IT DOWN.

HARD.

THE SHARPENED EDGE CLEAVES EASILY THROUGH-

- SHIRT

- FLESH

- BONE

KING
(cry's out)
ARGH!

KING'S FOREARM DROPS WITH A SPRAY OF BLOOD.

IT'S BEGUN.

15 SECONDS IN. 6 DROVERS LEFT.

HARTLY IS FORCED BACK TO THE BAR BY THE SIX SWINGING SHANKS.

HE ROLLS ASIDE AS-

A HEAVY BLADE JAMS THREE INCHES INTO THE HARD WOODEN TOP.

BAR-MAID
Ahhh fuck, not my bar, I just
polished that...

HARTLY
(Breathless)
Sorry sweetheart. We'll take it
outside shall we?

ANOTHER SWING COMES.

HART DUCKS.

COUNTERS - BLADE OPENING A GUT.

RED MESS SPILLS TO THE FLOOR.

40 SECONDS IN. 5 DROVERS LEFT.

HARTLY IS UP, DIVES ACROSS THE POOL TABLE-

SWINGING A FOOT HE CRACKS A MANS JAW, KNOCKS HIM OUT CLEAN.

45 SECONDS IN. 4 DROVERS LEFT.

DUCKING A BLADE THAT ACTUALLY SKINS HIS SHOULDER, HART ROLLS OUT
OF THE BAR AND INTO THE DUST.

THE REMAINING MEN CHARGE OUT AFTER HIM.

HARTLY PULLS HIS GUN AND THEY STOP.

HARTLY (CONT'D)
I'll not kill ya if you walk away
now.

DROVER

Bull shit, you'll put a bullet in
each'a us soon as we turn away.

HARTLY

I think we all know I don't need
this to kill Drovers.

TO PROVE THE POINT HE SLINGS THE .22 OFF BEHIND HIM INTO THE
SURROUNDING DARKNESS.

AS GUN HITS DIRT THEY COME FOR HIM.

HART FAKES A CHOP AT THE LEAD RUNNER.

THE DROVER DUCKS AND HART USES HIS FREE FIST TO BREAK THE MANS
NOSE, KNOCKING HIM TO THE GROUND.

86 SECONDS IN. 3 DROVERS LEFT.

THE NEXT MAN ATTACKS WITH SOME SKILL AND UNLEASHES A FEW SWINGS.

METAL CLANGS AS THEY EXCHANGE BLOWS.

SPARKS FLICKING INTO THE DARKNESS.

HARTLY CHANGES TACTICS-

THE DROVER NEVER SEES THE KICK THAT BUCKLES HIS KNEE IN THE WRONG
DIRECTION.

HE COLLAPSES SCREAMING.

1 MINUTE 45 IN. 2 DROVERS LEFT.

MUSCLES BURNING WITH LACTIC ACID, HARTLY NEEDS THIS TO END SOON.

HE SPINS FORWARD, HEEL OF HIS RIGHT BOOT SHATTERING THE SECOND TO
LAST MAN'S JAW.

1 52 SECONDS IN. 1 DROVER LEFT...

-BUT WHERE THE FUCK HAS HE GONE?

FROM BEHIND, HART HEARS A CRACK, LIKE A TWIG BREAKING.

HARLTY

(maybe this was a bad idea-
breathing hard)

Fuck...

HE WHIRLS.

BUT THE MAN, MACHETE IN HAND, STANDS FROZEN, DAZED.

ANOTHER SNAP... HE DROPS.

2 MINUTES 15 IN. IT'S DONE.

HARTLY LOOKS OUT INTO THE DARKNESS, SEES NOTHING BUT HEARS-

VOICE

(Singing, from the black)
All of Kings horses and all of
Kings men, Couldn't put Humpty
together again.

RAISING A HAND AGAINST THE LIGHT OF THE SALOON, HE SPIES THE
SILHOUETTE OF A MAN WALKING TOWARDS HIM, STILL WHIRLING THE
SLINGSHOT HE USED TO TAKE OUT THE DROVER.

HE TOSSES HARTLY HIS DISCARDED PISTOL.

KAI

Oy oy. How goes it? Sahn of old,
blood a'the Blud. Think you dropped
your piece

HARLTLY

Thanks

KAI

You're a tough one. Yes you are pal
indeed. Prob'ly did'n want my help
nor need it, but I thought to lend
a hand anyhow.

HARTLY

And much appreciated, so it is.

The sound of a breaking glass drifts across from the saloon.

King emerges, clutching weakly at his new stump.

KAI

Looky 'ere. The King approaches.
But where oh... Where is his court?

(Off the King)

Your majesty. Could I lend a hand?
For you seem to 'ave misplaced
one'a your own.

(Off Hartly)

Don't mind my lordship, he's
'armless, wouldn' hurt a fly.

King, in obvious shock makes a pathetic attempt to mount his
horse.

KAI (CONT'D)

It's alright my liege, you hang about, I think we'll take our leave if that suits. Lucky for you not all o'these a'dead, may be one 'ats willin' to dip that stump in fire and wrap it up for ya.

(Off Hartly's .22)

Unless you were wantin' to...

He imitates the sound of a gun cocking and firing.

HARTLY

This one's not worth the lead. I thought it at my first look but had to be sure. Now I am.

(Calling to king)

But if I see you again, I will put you down. I got business that you'll stay out of. You'd be wise to leave be and travel no further south. You get me?

Hartly spits as he walks to his bike

HARTLY

(Back to Kai)

Time to be heading out.

He kicks the motor to life, the roar of the engine echoing across the plains.

KAI

(Raising his voice above the din- excited by the prospect)

Don't suppose you could gis a ride could ya?

HARTLY

Get on, for your troubles.

KAI

No trouble. I hate that fuckin' prick.

As Kai swings into the saddle-

HARTLY

That rhyme you was singin'. Where'd you hear it?

KAI

It were jus' some'in my Da used'a chirp when I was a littlen. Oddly fittin' though eh, so I thought I'd call it out. Why ya arksin'?

The engine rips the still night as Hartly revs up his two'.

KAI (CONT'D)

I heard it before. When I were a boy... No matter.

(Looking at the road)

Wait, which way you headin'?

HARTLY

I got a pal waitin' a few miles on... T'south, if it does ya?

KAI

Aye, true say, it do.

Hart guns the throttle and they tear off into the-

BLACK

END OF CHAPTER ONE.