**Drones of Ordor**

Music Inspirations:

Artist: Muse

Album: Drones

Song: Dead Inside

After King Ruku’s passing, his wife Yanir served a brief term on the throne. But after a few months, she gave birth to a son, and was unable to tend to the throne during that time. Her sister, Teru, deeply desired the throne. She has a son of her own, named Muru, already nearly ten. A Builder had stepped up to take the place as leader, but there was unrest about the Builders taking control in lieu of Ruku’s offspring. For now, tensions rise but chaos is held back.

In his early teens, Muru serves in the guardforce. He seeks a reprieve from his abusive mother, but is put under the command of an abusive lieutenant. Muru learns to lie, cheat, and steal his way to praise and success from this. He returns to his mother at 20, and she has only grown more bitter. Ruku’s child has shown exemplary ability to use Aura and learn. He is expected to take the throne once he is of age, and Teru is furious. She convinces Muru to plot an assassination with her. Muru complies, hoping to backstab his mother come the right time.

Music Inspirations:

Artist: Muse

Album: Drones

Song: Reapers

The plot simmers for a few years. When Ruku’s son comes of age, Muru and Teru argue about who will kill him. Teru eventually accepts the task, and dons a cloak to hide her identity. During a public ceremony, the young king is walking around the town. Teru sweeps up from behind him, her dexterity aided by an infusion of Aura from Muru. In one motion, the King’s throat is slashed. Teru escapes just as quickly, and chaos breaks out.

Over the next few days, there is a messy power struggle. The Builders attempt to set up a ramshackle rotation list of each one ruling, but the public blames the Builders themselves for the assassination. The remaining Builders are run out of the city, and rich men begin to bicker about who will lead. Muru and Teru gain the trust of a few and ride upwards as a veritable oligarchy is established. The next few years are dark for the city, but prosperous for the mother and son. Muru experiments with the golem technique Ruku designed, and Teru navigates the social-economic ladder.

The oligarchy does not last long, and ends up collapsing after an unpopular leader is chosen to lead for the fourth term in a row. A briefer period of chaos ensues, after which Muru re-establishes a monarchy under the lie that he possesses all that is left of royal blood. Teru does not live long after he takes the throne, a clear poisoning being covered up. The city of Ordor sees peace once more, though corruption seeps around its edges.

Muru sees great potential in Ruku’s golem technique. He simplifies the process and improves connection capabilities. It becomes much easier to connect with a golem, only a small physical interaction is needed and the golem can be controlled from multiple miles easily then onward. He creates a few, presenting them as interesting phenomena, and greatly impresses the noble populous. Nobles that are just novices at Aura are able to connect, and move freely.

The technique of connecting spreads rapidly, but only Muru knows how to construct the golems that work well with it. He institutes a sector of labor with an especially high pay, allowing the workers to connect to golems and farm the land. After their day of work, the workers feel only minor fatigue, and the fields stand fully tilled and seeded. The work becomes highly attractive, as it’s sold as an experience, or a game. Unable to feel pain or physical fatigue in the golems, workers are extremely productive. Soon, all farming in Ordor is done this way. Even some menial tasks such as deliveries are performed.

Ordor expands, and general quality of life improves. The farming class takes the place of the middle class, while nobles’ wealth swells massively. Ordor’s output of specialty goods leads to expansion of the walls. Houses line them up and down, numerous ladders and hanging staircases acting as pathways to them.

Reports of golems behaving as if they’re active when no connection is present begin to appear at this point. Muru is unsure how to feel, but it soon becomes clear the golems lack full sentience in this state. They merely repeat actions their bodies are used to doing. Not only has farming become gamelike, it is beginning to be automated. Muru modifies golems to further facilitate their automated behavior, making it more stable and easy to achieve.

This turns the high linear growth of Ordor fully exponential. Population explodes as suddenly entire sectors of menial work are completely automated. A massively disproportionate section of the population lives the cushy noble life. Art and expression receive high focus as trade begins to slow down. Demand for Ordori products reduces as mass production results in quality loss. What’s good enough to keep the Ordori fed isn’t good enough for Dundyrans or Melenites to desire. Ordor’s out-of-control economy is barely affected, however.

The Ordori begin to take interest in darker pleasures. With no pain, no repercussions, and anonymity, those controlling golems take pleasure in breaking the small huts built by the golems on their own. Some are fascinated by the near-experience of breaking their arms and legs, a dulled, strange feeling. Those controlling golems act spiteful, hateful, towards their kin. This behavior is more or less stifled when not controlling a golem, but crime does begin to increase within the city.

The whims of the Ordori grow stormy. Dundyr has been performing upkeep on the mountain path over the past few years. Notably, they have formed permanent outposts along the path, greatly increasing safety and communication speed. The expansion is seen as stealing Ordori land--At least to Muru. With Ordor growing more isolationist, the king finds it easy to control and manipulate information. Seeking more than endless pleasure, he plots to invade Dundyr.

Not with troops, however. Many troops are needed to guard the fields working golems. Moving them away would beg for Elemental attacks. Instead, Muru begins to experiment with Aura crystals--Gems of various sizes filled with the Aura of the perished Builders. Utilizing them, he is able to greatly expand the average person’s range with golems. Over the next few months, he creates a legion of golems. He announces to the city that Dundyr has declared war, and that they must defend their land. Muru organizes the population of Ordor to control these new golems, placing Aura crystals around the city to boost range. The golem legion moves east, quickly overrunning the mountains as no rest is needed. When one person disconnects to rest, another takes their place.

The golems arrive at Dundyr with no fanfare, no sound besides grassy legs hitting the ground. The guards of the city assume an Elemental attack, but the coordination and sheer numbers soon make it clear it is no such thing. A short skirmish outside the city walls ends as the guards fall back within the city. The golems are able to scale the walls and enter, even as dozens are broken and tossed by the defenders. When the golems gain access to the city, Muru calls for slaughter.

Unburdened by punishment, the Ordori massacre the Dundyran populace. The bloody killing lasts for a full day. The gray cobbled streets of Dundyr flow red as the golems sit and revel. Dundyr is all but erased from the map.

Word spreads slowly about the event. Only Dundyran traders, returning to an empty city, tell the tale of the slaughter. No one besides Ordor is sure of what occurred. Within Ordor itself, things are turning darker. The golems have begun to communicate with each other. Guards are beginning to report attacks from golems. Muru decrees that no golems shall attack Ordori, but the attacks persist. The golems are showing higher intelligence, more autonomy. Muru keeps this news controlled as best he can.

Music Inspirations:

Artist: Muse

Album: Drones

Song: The Handler

In the fields of Ordor, many ramshackle huts sit half-standing. The golems try their hardest to build shelter from the rain and wind, but are compelled to farm most of the day. Once in a while, an Ordori will assume control. What they do varies widely, but most of the time it’s some sort of stress-relieving destruction. The other golems run from the controlled individual and come back to repair what was damaged by the eruption.

One golem is especially tormented. An Ordori noble assumes control nearly every day, destroying the golem’s few possessions--A few sticks with the bark shaved off, carved into simple shapes--As well as the hut it tries to build. Time after time, the golem loses consciousness, coming back to find its home destroyed. It begins to hate, and can feel the connection to the noble starting when they connect. Over weeks, the golem holds a chunk of wood close to itself, trying desperately to resist the connections. They are still taken over, but always find their slowly sharpening piece of wood. Unknowingly, the golem has been focusing Aura into the chunk. It grows stronger and sharper.

On an overcast day, the golem sits in its half-collapsed hut, holding the chunk. They feel the connection beginning, the noble grasping for control. With shaking hands, the golem lifts the wooden knife and stabs it into their eye. Aura feedback moves along the forming connection, back into the noble’s mind. The golem pours every ounce of strength they have into the link. The noble spasms, seizes, and dies from the feedback. The golem rips the knife out of its eye, freed.

Over the next few days, the nameless golem roams the exterior of Ordor. They stab any other golem they come across. The Aura in the knife pumps into their system and causes feedback. The controllers do not die--Just feel a slight shock--but the affected golems are completely severed from the network from there on. By the time the guards notice freed golems, they have amassed into a horde. They wield farm tools as weapons, pushing the guards back with their sheer numbers.

The city goers, the nobles, and Muru himself are terrified at the news. The golems push to enter the city, but cannot pass the gates. Desperate, Muru gathers every guard of the city to dress in heavy armor. Wielding wicked blades, they drop from the walls on ropes, landing on the horde. The ill-equipped golems are unable to hold their own. The horde is pushed from the gates, which open to let the rest of the force pour out. The golems rout, attempting to escape north and west.

What follows is a massacre to rival Dundyr. The fearsome guardforce easily tear through the brittle bodies of the golems. A scant few escape as Muru calls for them to return. The remaining golems, only a few dozen, rush to the western hills. They enter Rutyr, and feel a compulsion to go deeper into the cloudy forests of south Rutyr. There, the golems run into Nature Elementals like them. Struggling to talk, they’re able to explain that they came from a mass killing of their kind. The Nature Elementals bring them to have audience with the newly awakened Ruen.

Ordor is collapsing. A riot of nobles surrounding the castle are just barely held back by guards. Muru and his council sit within, barricaded and panicking. It begins to rain. The doors of the city are shut tight. Muru attempts to create more golems, maybe he can make enough to restart the agricultural economy. He runs out of Aura, though. The Builders’ crystals are still spread out in the city, inaccessible to him. He commands the council to give him their Aura, but they have precious little after a life of excess. The doors of the castle are blasted in, and guards fill the throne room. Muru and a handful of council members and servants escape to a meeting room on the second story.

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Artist: Muse

Album: Drones

Song: The Globalist

Ruen meets with the Nature golems and hears their story. Without a word, he departs, dashing northeast through the forest. Within hours he reaches the outskirts of Ordor. The rain has begun to decompose the golem corpses. Sticks and leaves and grass mix together and are buried under mud. The sight of it, the sodden landscape covered with it, is too much. Ruen calls out to Nn. In a flash, the glowing god appears before Ruen. The Nature God demands that the invaders--Humans--Pay for this crime. Nn observes the life that has been lost, feels his thin connections to the forms fading. He reaches out and touches Ruen’s horn, then disappears in a flash.

Ruen falls to his knees, his connection to Nn widening a hundredfold. His body floods with Aura, so much that it pours out of his eyes and mouth. He lets out another call--This time to every Nature Elemental, feral or not, within miles of Ordor. Two vines crawl from Ruen’s arms and harden into bark blades. The Nature God’s horns extend and split, forming bare, wicked branches. Across Nevoria, from the rocky mesa of the desert to the misty mountains of Dundyr, Nature Elementals heed the call. At the speed of thought they race to their God. As they near, they are empowered, growing monstrously large.

Muru desperately tries to refine his golem creation technique, perhaps he can make it easier, anyone could do it! His shaking hands fail to craft stable forms now, his bony body lacking enough energy to produce Aura. He receives word of an invading force of Nature Elementals just as they bash the gates of Ordor down. Ruen and his Elementals dash through the city. The feral Nature Elementals rampage, killing many Ordori, but Ruen is directed. He beelines to the castle, jumping over the crowd to the second story balcony.

Muru and his aides turn to see the Nature Elemental God striding forward, his cape of interwoven leaves and grass blustering behind him. Fires begin to break out across the city, and the very earth heaves and groans. Muru blurts out a desperate defense. He states this invasion will be his kind’s ruin. That no human settlement will spare any Elemental regardless. Ruen’s mouth re-arranges to better speak in the human tongue. The god seems to shrug, and states that the other settlements are gone by now. He gestures to the sky blackening with smoke. Muru decries his claims as false.

A gargantuan tree erupts from the center of the city, and begins to expand upward. Muru and his aides are thrown to the ground as it feels like gravity has increased. Ruen’s Aura crackles with might, his blank eyes looking above. The pressure ceases, and the sky has cleared. The smoke rises again, this time from without the walls of Ordor. As far as can be seen are burning fields, pouring soot into the atmosphere. Muru tries to escape, running to the back of the room, as his aides fall to their knees or run to Ruen.

The Nature God cuts them down with a flick of his blades. He moves further forward, towards Muru. The king screams obscenities at the god, throwing whatever weapons he can get ahold of. Ruen stops, squinting at the pathetic king. Vines begin to crack through the castle walls, snaking in and trying to grab at Muru. The king looks down, batting them away, and when he looks up again, Ruen is gone.

Muru rushes to the balcony. Ordor is consumed with nature. The tree trunk, ten thousand times larger than an average tree, rises into the clouds above. Beyond, branches hold up more chunks of land. Everything is gone, Muru realizes. He cries out as the vines grab at his legs, pulling him down. He begs for Ruen to understand him. To spare him. He only desired love. King Muru is silenced as the vines fill his body, tearing him apart.

From afar, Ruen stands, observing his work. The tree stands, gigantic chunks of earth falling from its branches. Ordor’s walls still stand, just barely, upon the center below the crown. Pierced through its center, it serves a message to any humans, Ruen thinks. The Nature God collapses though, as Nn reappears. His connection is massively shortened, much further than it was even before. He feels a few flashes of pain, accompanied by visions of his invasion and massacre of other human settlements. He spits out a word of understanding. Visions of humans and Elementals living together, within the boughs of the tree, are then accompanied by bliss and calm. Nn disappears. Ruen gets up, back in his old form.