

Blood ties

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The light filtered through the window refracting over the glasses of the dozen of alembics the filled the tables, a spiced smell of herbes filled the air. There was dust everywhere, but Elias did not care, he knowed that it would took too much time to clean everything. He would have to move every ones of his alambics and his bottles, not to mention all the jars with the ingredients.

But Elias was not thinking to that: he was mixing the ingredients for a potion against the sores. After all it was the illness the most diffuse between the farmers that lived close the village, but almost everyday strangers shown up asking for his help. His fame as healer was spreading trought the boundaries of the valley, and the requests for potions and ointments was increasing.

“Master Vergos, Master Vergos” the screaming coming from the street made him lost his concentration, he puts the pipe with the white lily extract on the table and shook his head “What happens now?”

Two kids entered running in the room, but outdoor others were waiting “Master Vergos, please come out, your brother”

He bend his back “Again?”

Was the same from lots of ephitesis¹, occasionally a warrior

1 Ephitesi: the year is divided in 13 ephitesis of 28 days

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came to the village because of the rumors around his brother, and wanted to fight against him.

He walked following the children that goaded him to go faster and he thought that the gifts, so he called the ability whose were given to he and his brother , was causing more troubles than it solves.

“You have to see how big is this one” was saying a kid

“Bigger than the last one” confirmed another kid

“He have a huge sword on his side” added a girl

Elias hoped that kids was exagerating, the last time the fight was really hard, and he had to cure his brother.

When he reached the open space in front of the inn he noticed that the kids weren't exagerating at all, a huge two handed sword was layed against a picket fance, pieces of a plate male was layed on the ground, an fear shaped helm was put on the top of a picket. The owner of this arsenal was standing shirtless looking defiantly and looking down on his brother Andrey.

He stared at his brother with a scolding sight. He was drinking and joking with his drinking pals: his jovial character and the body far to be slim made him appear like a innkeeper mild and gentle.

The face was framed by long black hairs and a thick beard.

“Are you ready?” rubled the stong voice of the warrior, swelling of the muscles he was preparing to the fight.

“He is big, isn't he, master Vergos?” asked a kid

“Yes boy, he is”

His brother noticed him and greeted him with a sign of his hand, then he stepped close his challenger.

“Yes, i'm ready. Who stand last win. No low blows.”

The opponent smiled evilly.

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“When you want” told Andrey

The fist of the warrior hit him straight at the chin making him step back. Andrey spit some blood “Not bad” in turn he hit the warrior that turned his head without being shaken.

It will be hard for Elias. The next fist made almost fall his brother, that hit back without causing serious damages to his opponent.

They delivered again two or three blows before Andrey fell on the ground hit by a heavy fist of the warrior.

He shook his head while everybody held their breath. He stood up massaging his jaws and hit at full strength. The warrior moved slightly. The next fist made Andrey fall again. Three times Andrey stood up and three times his opponent sent him down on the ground. The last hit delivered made him lift from the ground and fall heavily down. For some long time people waited to see him stand up. Nothing.

The warrior smiled evilly “It’s all that you got?” and turned moving toward his armor.

A kid was making faces to the warrior while he was stepping by, suddenly the warrior turned yelling wildly at the kid that ran away crying. Then kept on moving toward the armor.

“You are good fighting against kids” the voice made him stop, he turned and saw his opponent that was raising.

Elias shook his head and voices of surprise and relief shook the audience that was grouped around the open space.

“You had to stay down” told the big warrior going back to Andrey, but when he reached him took a blow to the pit of the stomach that made his legs shaking.

For the first time he fell on his knees.

He stood up and hit with full strength, but his opponent

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immediately stood up. Again the hit that he received made him fall. The surprise was clearly shown on his face.

Elias smiled, he saw the beard of his brother swaying slightly, and no wind was blowing.

He turned and moved back to his laboratory.

“You don't wait the end of the fight master?” asked a kid

“It's already ended” he replied with a smile

That was the gift of his brother, an unrivalized strenght, and when it was released his long black beard seems to be alive.

He had shortly started again to mix his ingredients when the door opened “Hello, lil brother. You have left before the end”

“When i had left everything was already settled, but no one noticed”

Andrey smiled “Do you have something for my bruises?”

“Sit down” Elias wrote a name on the label of the bottle he had just filled and putted it over a shalf.

Then he get closer to his brother and examined him. He had big bruises over both cheeks.

“You are always the same” told putting his hand over his face and closing the eyes.

“Do you have an ointment or something similar?”

Andrey gasped, his face itched everywhere and feeled an hot warm on the cheeks, but his brother didn't let his head go keeping it firmly in his hands.

Andrey wanted to scratch, but he resisted the urge, when in the end his borthter let him go the itch was gone. And the bruises was vanished too.

Andrey touched his own cheeks incredulous, then he smiled

“I will never get used to that”

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That night, after dinner, Elias came back to his laboratory, he had to mince to dust some herbes that elsewhere had lost their curative properties, frustrating all his efforts and time spent in the forrest.

He had shortly started his work when someone knocked his door. He wasn't surprised, the people searched him at the most stranges times, and often for the most silly reasons. He was suprised by the man that entered when he opened the door, it was dressed by a trapper, a man used to live in the forrest.

“It's you the healer?” asked suspicious

“Yes, how can i help you?”

“My brother was wounded by an trap for animals, i need your help”

“Where is he?”

“In the forrest no far from here, but he can't walk”

“I take the required items” he told taking up a big bag with the flat bottom under a table usually used for home visits.

He filled it with all the things he thought necessary for heal the wound, bandages, oinments and creams and also some liquor.

“I am ready” he announced “Make your way”

The men went out in the night, Elias followed him taking his journey stick.

Leaving the village Elias called his companion

“Wait a moment please i have a pebble in a shoe”

“Be quick” the other pressed him

In a short time he off his boot and put it on again. They leaved the village behind entering the forrest. There was no trail going west, so they walked trought the trees, climbing the side of the hill.

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Elias looked at the white Tewaki, it must have passed a sandglass since they had left the village.

“He is still far away?”

“Not much, he is in a hut not far from here”

After a while indeed they reached a small wooden hut and a fire was to burn inside. The smoke rising in the sky was lightened by the moon and a small light filtered from the closed shutters.

“Sono io Garrak” told the man before opening the door.

Stepping in Elias saw a man layed on floor with a charged crossbow close to him. His shirt was filled in blood and this face was pale.

“It isn't a wound made by a trap” there wasn't surprise in his voice, it was just an observation.

The man that searched for him at the village unsheathed his sword “Heal him, or your life will not last till the moonset.” Elias stared long at the two men, then he got through the one with the sword and knelt close to the wounded one. He moved the shirt. A broken arrow was still inside the shoulder of the man. He opened the bag and took a knife. He felt the blade of the sword on his neck.

“Do you want to save your companion or not?”

The blade moved away. He putted the knife over the brace and waited that it became hot. He took the flask with liquor and gave it to the wounded one.

“Drink it will help you feel good. It will hurt when I will remove the arrow”

The man drank three long sips from the flask, Elias got a crock from the bag and opened it. A bitter fragrance stung his nostrils.

He took a stick from the bag, he lightened it and blew to

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extinguish the flame, a green smoke was raising from the stick. He putted it close the noise of the wounded man.

“Smell it, it will help you to overcome the pain” He waited patiently while the wounded one was inhaling the smoke of the stick. Then he took the knife, he putted his hand close the wound enlarging the borders. He clearly saw the arrow. A slight smell of burned meat rose while the knife touched the wound, the man twitched.

“Help me to grip him down” yelled at the other

With the knife he freed the arrow as much as possible, then he grabbed it and start to pull, he felt the meat that teared, but the arrow started to get out. The man had difficult to grip his companion down. Elias tighten his grab on the arrow and with a resolute movement pulled it out. A cry of pain filled the air. Elias took the flask of liquor and spilled some over the wound, a new cry of pain before the man collapsed unconscious.

The healer spreaded the poultice that was inside the crock over the wound and bendaged it.

He observed the arrow, it was a war weapon, the type used from the shire guards.

They had to be two fleeing bandits. He put all the things inside the bags again and he stood up.

“I have made all that i can, if he made it through the night he will be safe”

“If he doesn't you will die as well, Take a seat the night will be long.”

He looked at the sword on the bandit flank and evaluated the possibility of overwhelm him, he discharged the option.

It might as well try to sleep, he took a seat in a corner and falled asleep.

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When he woke up the sun was already high, half of the morning had to be already passed by.

He moved close the wounded one and searched for the beat of life. He was relieved feeling he was still alive. The other man woke up feeling the noises.

“How is he doing?”

“He will survive”

The bandit went close his companion calling for him “Garrak” he called “Garrak wake up”

The other opened his eyes “Hello Brother”

“My job is ended” told Elias getting his bag.

“Where do you think you go?” told the bandit unsheathing his sword

“I have healed your brother, and a lot of peoples needs my help”

“Who guarantee that you will not call the soldiers and you will make us arrested”

“I give you my word”

“We can't trust you....i'm sorry” he added with low voice.

“You see, he is wounded and can't move yet, and if you betray us we will not be able to save ourselves. And i will never abandone him. You understand. He is my brother.”

“So you want to kill me?”

“I'm gratefull for what you did, but i guess i have no choices. You understand?”

He searched for a reason, something to tell him to make him change his mind. He found nothing.

“Yes, I understand.”

“I will make it without pain” promised raising the blade of his

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weapon.

An animal grunt rumbled inside the hut, the structure of wood crackled, wavered and broke. The poles falled over the three mens.

Something grabbed Elias pulling him back, dragging him out safety. Stubbornly the helare did't left his bag.

In an istante he was lifted by two strong arms, he saw the face of his brother in front of him.

“Are you alright?” asked Andrey very worried

“Yes, i guess” he replied still surprised

“Luckily i'm arrived in time”

When he had his foot again on the ground he looked at the hut razed to the ground. Some complaints came from under the poles.

“I heal the wounded people and you wound them, we need to have a serious talk one day”

“Why? It seems a fair distribution of tasks”

Both laughted laoudly and moved heading to the village.

“You have found my journey stick”

“Yes, leaning against the house of the old Zeke”

“I was afraid that you would arrive late”

“Are you kidding? I couldn't be late. You are my own blood.”

Elias smiled and putted one hand over his brother shoulder.

“Do you want to warn the guards?” asked Andrey

“No, it was a matter of blood ties for those two as well”