

# The ring of Kerr



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## THE RING ⊕ KERR



He took a draught of beer from his tankard, and then he returned it on the table. A sandglass long he was sitting near a wall of the “The Red Serpent Inn”, he was looking at the entrance door. He was calm, he knew that the most important thing for a hunter was patience, and he was an expert.

“Silver Tim?” the voice surprised him, it was behind him, but how could it be possible? He let himself fall on a knee dropping the chair and getting the knife, then he got up and the knife darted up. He saw the man standing beside him, exactly when he had figured him; he was wrapped in a long travel coat, like their first meet. He stopped the movement of the knife just a little before the blade hit the throat of the man.

He looked at the guy in front of him; who didn't move and was not afraid of him, either. The hunter could feel it, although if he couldn't see his face. For too much time fear has been a loyal friend and he had learned to know it. Too many times in his life he had been surprised by an enemy and each time it had been a question of survival.. He stacks back the knife and he got up the chair. He looked over the room. It was an automatic gesture, and

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he didn't notice it, but he took care of the positions of all other guys...

The cloaked figure sat down in front of him.

"Are you ready?" he asked with the unusual accent that Silver Tim couldn't be able to identify.

"I am, - but where's my money?"

The stranger put one hand in the cloak and took out a bag of leather and pushed it on the table.

"One half of it now and the other half when the job is done, as we agreed"

Silver weighed the bag, he opened it, and he took out a crown, he let it fall back into the bag, and closed it. And then he put it in his knapsack which he dropped down near the table.

"I'm ready"

"Ok, let's go". The stranger stood up and went out of the door. Silver Tim followed the stranger asking himself how this man had managed to get behind his back without seeing him; there haven't been any other doors.

They hit the road. A boy had in hand the line of two horses, two beautiful animals. The man hadn't cared about money at all. But Silver Tim had already known this at their very first meeting. He didn't try to press the price, although his demand was high. But in his profession Silver Tim knew that he always risked a lot. He wasn't a simple mercenary, people wanted him when the mission was especially dangerous, or when somebody was 'troublesome'.

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The killer took the lines and jumped in the saddle. The stranger put down five shields for the boy and he turned around the horse.

They rode down the street that went out of the village, in direction of the sea, to the cliff of the Elfiros.

They trotted out of the little village, vanished in the night. Two moons were high at the nocturnal sky, and the white Tewaki was at the high of its splendour. The scene was clearly visible and they hadn't many risks. Silver Tim didn't understand why the stranger wanted his protection, but in his job he had learned not to ask too many questions, because this could be dangerous.

They rode slowly beside each other. The road follows the coast line to the north, and the shining of the moons reflected in thousand little lights on the waves.

Silver Tim's eyes fixed all the shades, under his cloak his hand clenched a little crossbow with two darts. After half a sandglass of trotting they could see their aim: the cliff of Elfiros.

The stony steep descent was illuminated by the two moons, the foaming sea hit the rocks which indented the water near the coast, creating a danger zone for those boats which incautiously approached the coast.

As it happened one night ten years ago, when a violent tempest threw an unusual boat on the rocks and wrecked it. The morning after the fishermen of the village nearby found the rest of the vessel. On the beach and on the reefs, there were found many corpses. Corpses of elves. Only one half of the vessel was still in sight captured in

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the rocks, on the stern there was the name of the ship written in silver letters, from this event the rocks got their name: 'The Cliff of the Elfiros'.

"Do you know the story of Elfiros?" the stranger asked Silver Tim

"I only know that there was a shipwreck ten years ago. The fishermen thought that there had been a treasure; but now they think it's guarded by spirits of elves who died that night."

"Keep your weapons ready, they will be useful over there"

That statement had the effect of making creep the skin of the killer that sudden repress that sense of uneasiness, and his hand strongly clenched the little crossbow.

The two horses started the descent to the little beach near the cliff. The animals were bound to a tree, the stranger took two torches from his packsaddles, the killer tied a rope on his belt. Then they set going in direction of the rock made shining by the water.

The shape of the ship was designed against the illuminated sky and its nude masts seemed to be the skeleton of a giant who had died a long time ago.

Approaching the cliff a soft wind blew on the sea and they could hear a frightening howling.

The killer raised for a moment his crossbow listening to the lament, then he relaxed. His companion didn't seem to be impressed. When they were near the cliff they stopped. The stranger looked at the rocks, he seemed to

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look for something, but in spite of the light of the moons they couldn't see anything at all.

"Follow me". The stranger jumped on a rock, and then jumping from one rock to another he left the beach directly moving to the wall of rocks. The killer followed him, and he was still surprised by the agility of his companion.

A sudden frightening noise impressed Silver Tim: an enormous snake emerged out of the water in front of his protégé. Quickly he raised the crossbow and fired up the two darts. Both hit their aim. The snake creaked in its pain and its head injured by the darts waved up and down. The murderer had drawn his sword, but the snake had disappeared. Perplexed Silver Tim looked around, doubting. There wasn't a trace of the beast. He approached his companion.

"What happened?"

"I don't know" the other responded after a moment of silence. "Tag along".

The way on the rocks was less smooth now and they had to grip also with their hands for not to fall into the water.

At last they reached the foot of the cliff where big rocks were fallen down from the high of the cliff had formed a type of disconnected platform. They went on cautiously, it seemed that the stranger searched something, then he moved straight to the stone wall. Only then Silver Tim had seen a little crack that opened like a wound in the side of the hill.

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“We have to go in, be prepared” without looking at the killer, the stranger took a tinder-box from an inner pocket of the cloak and he lit the torch. The light rebounded smoothly over the rocks.

Nervous shades were dancing over the rocks while the two ones entered the cave. The killer went in front of his protégé his right hand held closely the sword, with the left one clenched a knife. First the cave seemed to be narrow. After they had made some steps inside the cave grew wider as they could imagine. The water of the sea had formed an underground inlet and a small narrow passage followed it.

The murderer stopped and made sign to the stranger to stand silently. They looked around frightened. Then the guys heard a rustling noise, the stranger raised the torch over his head and they looked up. It seemed as if the ceiling of the cave was falling down. Dozens of giants bats had left the cave disturbed by the light. The killer and the stranger tried to avoid the animal flying around madly. His sword stabbed hitting those who came too near, and with the knife he made the same. After some moments the animals left, flying in the night.

Silver Tim cleaned the two blades at a strip of leather fixed at his leg, he looked around and stood surprised. It seemed that he had killed too many bats. He shook his head. In the fighting chaos he must have killed more bats than he had thought.

“It’s all right?” his companion asked.

“Yes, let’s go ahead”

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They left behind the little subterranean lake and they began to penetrate the cave which was huge. It was softly ascended, the water of the sea didn't reach that inner part, even the humidity was high and the rocks slippery. The stranger leaned against the wall so he couldn't fall. A little azure cloud got up from the moss. With a rough movement he left the wall. He rapidly reached the murderer and took his wrist before he could touch the rocks.

"You shouldn't lean against the wall. The moss is poisonous. The spores can kill a man who breathes them".

Silver Tim looked at the wall covered with moss and nodded. They went on and the killer asked himself again who was that man with the strange accent. A movement stiffened it. Something before them had shifted. Something large. A shadow came near and the light of the torch shows the muzzle of a reptile not even encouraging. The beast hissed his challenge and came nearer. Silver Tim knelt on his knees ready to face his enemy. The tongue of the reptile whipped the air where just a moment before has been the killer. They stood in front controlling each other, that beast and the man. The being moved rapidly trying to bite his adversary. Silver Tim rolled aside to avoid. But the rapidity of the beast was remarkable. It turned around, but its jaws bit again the air. Silver Tim's sword hit the corps of the monster that creaked. The killer removed from the muzzle trying to get out of the jaws of the being, but he didn't expect

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that the tail couldn't be dangerous at all. The hit he got let him fly some steps away. The pain took him the breath. With half-opened eyes he saw that the beast pounced trying to kill him.

He forced himself to ignore the pain, he rolled aside, and when the snout of the animal hit the rock, he sink the sword in the reptile's eye since the guard. The enormous corps became utterly on the ground lifeless.

The killer breathed with difficulty, his flank ached. The being disappeared and his sword fall on the ground. Incredulous he looked around the cave, the monster had disappeared, but the pain remained.

"Is all ok?" he had forgot for a while his protect, and the reason that lead him there.

"Yes, just a moment." Painfully he stood up, leaning to the sword.

He breathed slowly, he relaxed his muscles, then he moved with secure steps.

"Let's go"

The stranger admired the determination of the killer, but he told nothing, he only followed him.

They kept on to penetrate in the cave, the air was cold now, and seemed that the cave passed under the whole region., or at worst under the whole kingdom.

Silver Tim was torn between the rule that he had imposed in himself some years before to ask no question after having accepted a task and the curiosity of those mysterious disappearances. But a new movement in front of him disturbed him from those thoughts.

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An enormous spider was looking at them, two red eyes with no expression impended the monstrous mouth of the beast.

The killer was ready to attack, but the torch flew over his head hitting the monster that screech for the contact with the fire, Silver Tim hurled himself against the spider hitting it with his sword, the blade deeply sank in the body of the monster. The blood floated out plentiful from the wound on the hand of the killer who cried in pain. The stranger quickly rushed and pour out some water on the hand of his protector. The pain slowly vanished, but the hand seemed burned. Silver Tim tore a piece of his cloak and bended up the wound.

“We are near to arrive” the stranger assured. “When we are back at the horses I could medicate your wound better”

“Let’s do it fast then” the killer sheathe the knife and grasped the sword, that lied on the floor, with the left hand, the body of the spider was no track. The stranger switched on the second torch with the flame of the dying one.

They followed to penetrate the cave, the walls of the cave was less wet and the air more dry, the dampness of sea didn’t reach that cave and breathing was more easy.

Two fellows stopped themselves hearing a rhythmical noise that approached, it seemed to be steps. What other thing were waiting for them?

Bones without meat entered in the light of the torch. An evil light shone in those empty orbit, swords warned out

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by the rust and the time shined menacing in the skeleton hands, and rusted shields with unknown symbols defended that bones.

The killer sighed, with a rush that made hurt his flank he run against the undeads that faced them. The swords clashed with a shrill sound, the only other sound was the painful breath of Silver Tim who avoided and feinted. With his sword the killer hit continuously his challenger. At the end a skeleton hit the flank of the murderer who fell down, the undead raised victoriously the sword to end the life of the man..

But the skeleton arm was hit by a sword that darting in the dark hacking it..

With the foggy glimpse from the pain Silver Tim looked at the stranger grasping a sword beating the bones of the only two enemies left. He looked with curiosity at the shape of that sword that was unusual for him, and admired the agility of the stranger and the elegance of his movements.

When the last skeleton was slashed the stranger helped the killer to get up.

“I think you better should leave me here alone, I can’t help you anymore”, Silver Tim said

But it seemed that the other one didn’t listen to him “We are near to arrive and you have gained the right to know.”

- Know? But know what? – The foggy mind of the killer was hardly able to keep hold to reality.

They started again to walk, slowly. After a few steps Silver Tim accounted himself that the cave was larger.

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The stranger watched around and sighed. Then he helped the murderer to sit down.

“Wait here, now we expect the most difficult thing.”

Silver Tim saw the cape of his companion move while the torch illuminated the wide cave. Then the hand hurled it in ahead. The flame still burned when the torch touched the ground, and illuminated one figure seated on the cliff. Rich it was dressed, but its meat was shallows, the eyes were fixed, deprive of expression, beside it, on the cliff a small light shone, but Silver Tim did not succeed to see what provoked it. He saw the figure of the undead master to raise from its cliff. It was frightful, the teeth by now discoveries made that a malignant smile was impressed on that face that had defied the death.

A skeletal arm was raised against the stranger. Unreal words were diffused through the cave. A strong wind like a hurricane raised up.

For a long moment the killer saw nothing, blinded from the earth raised from the fury of the wind, then all was calm. Some plants were raised from the land to build up a wall to protect the stranger, but its cape had been moved from the wind and Silver Tim could finally see his face.

The hair fell back long onto the shoulders, two pointed ears were well in sight and the eyes were overhang from arched eyebrow towards the high.

“That I am burned from the fire of Lemanghan” whispered Silver Tim “One elf.”

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The wall of plants vanished, and the elf it began to recite incomprehensible words. Plants raised from the land trying to wrap the undead, but their coils seemed to tighten the air. The figure of the enemy disappeared in order to reappear a little after. New words and the ice covered the pavement of the cave, but the elf had disappeared. His adversary looked for him with the look lacking of expression, without warning the cliff behind of him moved, and the figure of the elf detached from the cave attacking with the sword its adversary. But the undead master succeeded to defend himself avoiding the lunge of the elf.

It succeeded in gain the distance and newly the magical words filled up the air, the wind was raised again, but the killer saw to rise a new wall of plants, under the scream of the wind he heard one new invocation, then plants raise up from the land and came down from the ceiling of the cove imprisoning the undead. All it was silent in a moment. The plants were dissolved and the elf collapsed grasping to the ground.

"Hey all good " asked the killer

The elf made a signal with the hand, then he got up. He approached the point where before it seated its adversary and still lighted a tenuous light. With the hand he collected the object, e he observed for a long time, like kidnapped, it seemed that he watched the empty one.

Then collected himself, and he approached the killer, gave him the hand in order to help to raise himself.

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When he stood up he fixed the elf in his eyes, they were greens like a meadow in spring after a thunderstorm.

"Who are you?" he asked

"Albenter Asgstar of the elves of Ath Lhan"

"you are a wizard" it was not a question, the stranger agreed "Why didn't you help me before" he asked with curiosity, It was no anger in his voice.

"I have used all the energy in the battle against the wizard, I could not waste it before, or I would have lost."

Silver Tim Agreed. "Why have we come here?"

"For this one" the elfo showed a ring at the assassin

"It's important?"

"Yes its the ring of Kerr, a magic ring able to donate visions of the future, but now we must exit, you could return to find the treasures that the ship transported, without danger."

Slowly the two exited from the cove and returned on the beach.

They were approaching at the horses and Silver Tim panting asked "What has shown you the ring" asked remembering the moment in which the elf has remained stop after to have collected the ring.

The face of Albenter became serious "ominous events that I will try to prevent."

"the future can be changed" asked curious the assassin.

"Each event ch'ange the future, the ring showed me the most probably."

"What it has in store for us "

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The elfo remained absorbed in its thoughts, then jolt the head "You must be ready, a large evil wake up from the past if we will fail in contrasting it."

The two spoke for long time and the elf cured the wounds of his companion, then knit the debit that he had with the man.

From that day they did not look again, the wizard returned to the islands of the elves and he did not have more news from Silver Tim.