

# THE LEGEND OF THE RING

## Vol. II

by Udrea Alina

This is dedicated to my beautiful daughter. I hope that when she grows up, she will enjoy reading it. I also hope that whoever reads this will enjoy it as much as did writing it.

Enjoy 😊

# Chapter 1

Igor was riding his stallion at full speed towards his goal: the magic ring which would ensure his victory over his brother's army and which would help him rule the kingdom. He was whipping his stallion from time to time to remind him that he had no time to waste.

The wind was blowing so hard that it was bending the trees till almost breaking point but Igor didn't care. He had to have that ring, he had to take over the kingdom. His brother's ruler ship would soon come to an end and his time to shine would come. Everybody would obey him and only him! But where was that darn raven again? Margo had better not be playing with him or she would be sorry. She promised her raven would show him the way to the ring but it vanished into thin air again.

The weather turned stormy and as the raven was nowhere in sight, Igor finally decided to stop his gallop and find some shelter for the rest of the evening and for the night. The heavy clouds were chasing each other on the already dark sky.

By the way the sky looked, he had no choice. But it wasn't like the ring would disappear again now that he knew of it. The trip shouldn't take him more than a week. What was one more week in comparison with all those years he had already waited? Nothing! Just a grain of sand in the hourglass.

He was riding his horse on a winding never-ending path through the woods. The silence that surrounded him was like a heavy burden, it was almost freaking him out. Some distant bird was chirping happily a joyful song. Nature was indifferent to his worries, his dreams, him...

The rain started to pour as soon as the wind stopped. Now he was soaking wet and still no place for shelter in sight. His stallion was also showing signs of tiredness and restlessness. The rain was so strong that it was almost lashing his face, making it impossible to see anything in front of him. He was blaming everything on Margo, although she had nothing to do with the bad weather in fact and he knew it. But he needed someone to put the blame on and as there was nobody else there and as she was the first person that popped into his mind, he decided to blame it on her! He could almost see her yellow teeth or rather fangs coming out from her grinning face. He didn't know why but he felt he could slap that ugly face right now. Then he got a bit scared as it crossed his mind that the old hag might be able to read his mind and decided to think of something different instead. Like finding a damned shelter!

The trees were looking so menacingly in the dim evening light that they appeared to be alive and have a will of their own. Which was pretty strange especially as the wind had ceased blowing. Maybe it was just his wild imagination playing tricks on him. Then suddenly Igor burst into loud laughter. He was laughing at himself for his moment of weakness, for having let himself be scared by some trees, even if for less than a moment...

Igor was now laughing full heartedly as if to show the spooky trees that he was not afraid and that he had everything under control. Then all of a sudden something bumped his head from above and he lost all that courage. He clenched his teeth and put his trembling hands on his sword but the sword had somehow gained weight that he couldn't lift it anymore. And there was that something that had hit him still on his head. He finally let out a cry of terror and as he wasn't able to pull the sword from its sheath, he just ran his hands through his hair to see what it was. Then his hands touched it: the bloody raven, Margo's raven.

“Son of a ...! If I didn't need you to show me the way to that wench, I would pluck all your feathers for disappearing like that and for giving me a fright! But have no fear, when it is all over, I can still have you for dinner, you stupid bird!”

But then the raven, as if in answer to his threats, pecked his head and then flew away again, leaving him alone in the scary forest once again.

“Good! Just go away, who needs you anyway!?” Igor yelled after it with anger and frustration in his voice. Then his stallion stopped suddenly and as he was still looking after the raven and wasn't paying attention to the horse, Igor flew from the slippery saddle right in a large puddle of mud, face first. Now he was really mad. Not only was he wet from the pouring rain, but now he was dirty too. He got up from the dirty puddle and was about to lash his horse when he stopped with his whip in his hands just before throwing the blow. There was a small entrance through the rocks! Shelter!

After mumbling to himself for his misfortunes, he tied his horse to the nearest tree and decided to explore the cave. He had his sword by his side if there were wolves inside or anything else. That would be his shelter for the night, no matter what beast might be in. But, then again, maybe it was empty. He took a few steps closer to the entrance and listened carefully for any noise coming from inside. As he couldn't hear anything, he decided to enter. First he lit a torch he was carrying in his bag and then he slowly entered the dark cave.

## Chapter 2

Angela was still wondering how that little piece of metal had such effects on her, making her feel the way she did. She was pretty brave and sometimes even reckless, but from the moment she put the snake-shaped ring on her finger, everything had taken a different dimension. Her fighting skills were at another level. And she loved it. But she wanted to be that good even without the ring, so she practiced every day at least a few hours in the forest, close to the hunting cabin. She practiced with an old rusty sword against imaginary foes and she also practiced with her bow, shooting at the small birds on the sky first. Then, as she got better, she started to practice on the beetles she saw on the trees. But as even those proved easy targets for her new skills, she started firing her arrows at flying insects and to her surprise, she never missed. It was as if she had become one with the weapon she had in her hands, no matter what that weapon was.

Angela felt that she had a responsibility now, she felt it wasn't fair to just enjoy her powers. She had to protect those who couldn't protect themselves, and there were plenty who needed help, any help. But she couldn't just roam the streets like that, she needed to protect her identity. So she needed a

costume, something to help her stay safe. But she only had some rags, nothing good enough to make a costume of. Never mind, she thought, she would appeal to another one of her skills, stealing. But it was for a good purpose this time, not just for her benefit. She wanted to protect the helpless but at the same time she wanted to be able to remain under cover. And she knew the perfect place in town to get what she wanted, the shop owned by the greedy and most wealthy man in town, an old local merchant named Caspar Kerdory.

Caspar was old, but he wasn't stupid. He had guards protecting his shop, his merchandise. His goods were of the highest quality, brought from Asia, and he sold them for a high price to the richest ladies of the kingdom. All the respectable ladies in the kingdom bought their dresses from him. He was so renowned that ladies from the neighboring kingdoms also came to buy from him. So his merchandise needed protection and paying the guards was only a small monthly fee that was worth it in comparison to the risk he would take otherwise. This way, he could sleep like a baby at night, knowing that his goods were protected. It was where he got his money from, so it was what mattered most to him.

He had been married a few times, but he had no children. Now, at his old age, he was sorry he had nobody to leave his fortune to when he would be no more. He had been a selfish person all his life and now he realized that probably that was

why all his wives left him. But he was too old and it was too late now.

So Angela decided that his shop was the perfect place to find something nice and useful. She also knew that the place had two or three guards protecting it. But that never stopped her before. So why would it stop her now, especially as she was stronger than ever and she had a higher purpose!? Nope, nothing would stand in her way. Now it wasn't just about stealing some scraps to eat, not anymore. Not since the ring. Now she had to do something more with her life, not just steal to survive. No, now she was going to help others.

She approached the street silently. The street lights were all on already, especially here where the most expensive shops in town were. Caspar's shop was well illuminated and there were three guards patrolling the perimeter. She reckoned he probably sold more than just clothes, probably jewellery too. But she didn't care about that, she just wanted a nice costume, worthy of a heroine. If she was going to help people, then she would be a heroine....she liked how that sounded. But she still had to steal to survive. Well, she was a different kind of a heroine, that was all, she told herself.

She hid in a nook of a building opposite Caspar's shop to observe the guards and try to find a flaw in their patrolling ritual. She stood there and waited. She didn't want to fight them if she could avoid it. Not because she was afraid but because she knew they were only doing their jobs. There was



no point in hurting them if she could avoid it. Because she was sure they would be hurt if engaged in a fight and not her, even if she was alone and they were three. They were no match for her, especially with the ring on. So she stood there and studied their moves and habits.

“Hey, John”, she could hear one of the guards say, “I need to take a dump, can you cover for me?”

“Sure, take your time”, another guard answered and instead of being more attentive to patrol the first guard's spot too, he sat down on a stump of a tree and lit a cigarette as the other was going to his business. The third guard was patrolling the back of the building. So now was Angela's chance, before the first guard returned and while the second was quietly enjoying his cigar. But she had to be fast. He was only a few paces away from the main entrance, which was of course locked. She crept in the shadows with stealth and reached the door. She had to move fast as it was well lit, before the guard finished his cigar. She took out a pick lock and started to pick the lock. She moved it like usual, left and right and so on but then she glanced at the guard as he was smoking. His cigar was almost finished. She panicked and her lock pick got jammed.

“Damn it!”, Angela whispered to herself. “Come on, come on”, she was almost pleading it. Then just as the guard was extinguishing his cigar butt she heard the familiar click of the lock and she was inside. She closed the door behind her and took a look around: she was in heaven...so many pretty dresses.

But she didn't want a dress. She had no use for it. Where would she wear it? In her small dank room at the orphanage? No, she needed something different. Something nice but at the same time to be able to move in it and fight in it. She looked everywhere but all she could see were dresses...all sizes, shapes and colors. Until she thought she would puke. She saw enough dresses to last her a lifetime. Then, disappointed, she sat on a stool in a corner of the shop.

“All this effort for nothing!”, she told herself and looked up as if to ask the heavens why she was so unlucky. Then she saw a small trap door in the ceiling and decided to check it out. She put the stool right under it and climbed it. She tried to push it open but, guess what, it was locked.

“Go figure!”, she whispered in a low voice. She took her lock pick again and started doing her magic until she could hear the familiar click. Then she opened it and was up in the attic. She fumbled in the dark and then she remembered she had a match in her pocket. She struck the match hoping to find a candle. As the match was already dying she took a quick glance and there it was, a candle. She lit it and looked around. There were spider webs everywhere and nothing valuable drew her attention. Then she saw a trunk on the right side of the attic. It looked old and was covered in dust, like everything else in the attic. And of course, it was locked. But the lock was old and she only had to hit it with her foot to break it.

“What do we have here? Could good old Caspar have locked anything of use here and forgot about it?” Angela was thinking as she opened the trunk. She brought the candle closer to inspect the inside of the trunk. A few spiders crawled out in a hurry. They were as black as the darkness surrounding her. But there was something inside, something just as black. She touched it to see what it was. It felt like a leather material. She took it out to inspect it better.

“Wooooow!”, was all she could say. She dropped the rags she was wearing and put it on. It matched her perfectly, thin black leather trousers and a leather vest. It was awesome! She also found an opening in the roof and decided to exit the building that way than the way she had come and she was gone.

## Chapter 3

Daniel was tired of the boring life at the castle among his servants and wanted to enjoy a day on his own in town. No servants around, no luxury, not even George or Adrian. He just

wanted to spend a normal day among his people but as one of them, not as their prince. That way he could find out what the people of Green Valley really thought of him and his parents. He wasn't interested in what people told him when they knew who they were talking to because most of them were flattering him on purpose and he didn't like that. He wanted to know what they really thought of him and what better way than disguising himself as a commoner and spending an ordinary day at the pub amongst his people.

So Daniel had to sneak out of the castle in order to have that or his loyal squires, George and Adrian, wouldn't allow that. They were responsible for the Prince's well being, payed by the king himself to protect Daniel, the only heir to the throne. But sometimes he needed some time alone, to act goofy if he felt like it, to act natural, without worrying about etiquette and about what others would think of him if he did this or that. Just be himself from time to time and enjoy life as it came.

Adrian was younger and easier to be put off of his trail but George was a sly fox and couldn't be fooled that easily. But he had done it before, he would do it this time too. He would just give them some important mission and so he could get rid of them for the rest of the day. As for his parents, he would just tell them that he was indisposed and wanted to spend the day in his room.

So Daniel sent the two to bring him news from the border of the kingdom. They were to meet the scouts positioned near the border and come back with news. This, Daniel reckoned, would take them at least two or three days including the time needed to get back. Which was just perfect.

After giving them assurances that their mission was of the utmost importance to the kingdom and that he wouldn't get in any trouble till their return, George and Adrian finally climbed their horses and were off. Then Daniel got rid of his fancy clothes and jewels and put on some rags, messed his hair, put on an old pair of boots and took an ordinary sword for protection. He couldn't take his favorite sword as it was fancy and expensive and had his family's crest on it and people would recognize him. Then he was off. Not alone, though. He took Princess, his golden retriever, with him. Princess would also protect him if need be.

It was early in the morning when he left the castle as he wanted to enjoy a full day on his own. George and Adrian had just left and Daniel was already on his way to town, Princess on his tail. He was whistling a song as he went and enjoying nature. The walk from the castle to the outskirts of the town where the pub was would take him at least an hour and a half without his horse but he didn't mind it. Walking on foot was healthy and Princess also enjoyed it as she didn't have to run after the horse to catch up. Everything was just perfect. He would soon enjoy a cold pint of beer and chat with the

common people of Green Valley, his people. He had his purse of gold strapped to his belt as he needed to pay for the booze. The gold inside was jiggling from side to side as he walked, making a faint sound in the otherwise complete silence.

When he was half way to town he had to cross a small forest and then he would get to open field again. The forest gave him the chills as it could be dangerous. He had heard rumors of thieves attacking people there and robbing them of their goods. He had Princess by his side and his sword. It wasn't his best sword, but it was sharp enough to do what it was meant to do if it came to that. He stopped whistling and started paying more attention to the road, at least until he was out of the woods. Princess was a bit agitated, too, or at least that is what he thought.

“What is it, Princess?”, he said and petted the dog. Princess calmed down a bit and started wagging her tail happily at her master's soft touch.

“Grrr.....” and Princess was on alert. Something was wrong. Daniel took out his sword and leaned against a tree for more protection. But he couldn't see anyone. Princess, though, was still snarling at something or someone so he decided to wait a bit and see what it was. Then suddenly Princess rushed into the bushes and left him all alone.

“Now! Attack!”, Daniel heard a male voice ordering nearby. Hardly had he heard that when some youngsters, just a few years younger than himself, rushed at him, knives and blades in

their hands. He started fighting them off but they were five and he was alone. He managed to injure the plump one of them who screamed with pain and retreated from the fight.

“Are you all right, Greg!?” he heard someone say.

“I’ll live” came the answer from the fat one of the boys and Daniel was wondering why he even tried to fight as it was obvious he was not fit for that. The remaining four jumped him all at once and he was trying to fend them off, slashing right and left but he grew tired while they were still fighting...

“What do you want? I just have a few coins for a beer, nothing else worth stealing...”, Daniel tried to make them leave him alone. He couldn’t tell them he was the Prince. Then they would kidnap him for a ransom. Which meant his father whom he loved and respected would find out of his foolishness. And this meant something else: he would never be able to pull something like this again as he would be supervised more carefully by his father's men. And he needed days on his own from time to time. So he had to get out of this jam on his own, somehow...

“We’ll be the judge of that!”, came the harsh answer from the one who seemed to be their leader.

“Surrender, and we might let you live...”, another one said and the others grinned while they kept fighting him.

Then, out of nowhere, someone shot an arrow, pinning one of the four remaining boys to a tree as the arrow went through

his right arm and stuck in the tree. A yell of pain swept the forest as the skinniest of the gang got pinned to the tree.

“What’s going on? Chris, who did that?” asked their leader again with obvious concern in his voice.

“Argh...I don't know, chief....someone fired an arrow from behind those trees.” Then he started trying to get loose and grabbed the arrow with his other hand. He tried to snatch it but he couldn't as he was bleeding hard and he wasn't strong enough to release himself with just one hand.

Daniel was also wandering what was going on when he saw a black figure approaching from behind the trees. There were only three more boys now as one was pinned to the tree and one he had injured earlier and was still sitting on a rock trying to recover.

As the figure got closer, they all saw it was a woman. She was clad in black leather and had a black hood on her head so they couldn't make out who it was. But she had a bow strapped on her back and a shiny sword in her hands. And by the looks of it, she was more than ready to use it.

“Clark, who is this? You said he was an easy prey!”, one of the boys addressed the leader, panicked.

“Shut up, Dave! Boys, get her!”, Clark ordered his gang.

“What about the peasant?” asked Nick, the most decent of Clark's gang of brawlers from the orphanage. “We should have



stuck to small burglaries when no one was home... We shouldn't have attacked him or anyone as a matter of fact.”

“Shut up, you nincompoop! Grab your sword and kill her! And then him!”, said Clark pointing first to Angela, as she was of course the mysterious figure, and then to Daniel.

“Sorry, this is not who I am. I am not killing anyone. I helped you steal but I won't kill anyone for you! And I won't let you do that, either!”. Then Nick looked at the others and went on: “you are better than this, stealing to survive is one thing, but killing is quite another!”

“You will be next, fool, once I finish with these two!”, growled Clark through his gritted teeth. “Get them, boys!”

Nick went next to Daniel and they stood back to back to protect each other. Meanwhile Greg recovered from the blow and was attacking them while Clark and Dave rushed towards Angela, although nobody knew it was her as she was well disguised.

Angela was now dueling the two. They were good, but she was better. And she had the ring on, so they were no match for her. She hit Dave's blade so hard that his blade flew up in the air and then fell a few feet away. But he still had a knife in his hands and was trying to cut her while Clark was still handling his sword pretty well. He almost touched her right shoulder with the tip of his blade when she ducked the blow and with a really swift move she cut his palm and made him drop his

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