

Leon Filipović

Legends of
Sillwith

The Chosen

**Verba Volant,
Scripta manent**

Leon Filipovi

Legends of Sillwith : The Chosen

Original title

Legende Sillwitha : Odabrani

Copyright © Leon Filipovi 2010

All rights reserved

HRVATSKA AUTORSKA AGENCIJA - Centar za intelektualno vlasništvo d.o.o

Croatian Author Agency – Centre for intellectual property

Prologue

Nightfall. Dead silence.

Wind was blowing through the valley of Almok. Behind one of the hills which were ominously silhouetted against the sky, a dark figure peered out. In the moonlight, the armour of a warrior shone. It would not have been anything unusual; it was possible to meet armoured warriors in the mountains and valleys, besides rivers and roads.

It was a time of warriors.

But this was not an ordinary warrior. Where one would normally expect a human face, stood a fearsome demonic head. The large nose, sharp tusks and curved horns had always struck fear into the hearts of mortals.

The yellow eyes of the demon scoured the countryside for any movement. But everything seemed quiet and he turned his back on the valley.

The arrow that sped through the quiet and dark night pierced the armour with surprising ease and emerged through his front. Without a sound, the warrior-demon collapsed to the damp ground.

Even though this all played out in the silence and dark, his body meeting the ground sent a silent signal through the area:

The battle began.

As though pouring from the ground itself, a great multitude of warriors began to surround their fallen brother-in-arms: Orcs stood by demons, Goblins stood by Orcs and demons stood by the Goblins.

It was clear: an alliance that made hills and valleys, Humans and plants, mages and Elves tremble was forged.

From the forest, on the other side of the valley, Elves and Men began to emerge. In the first row stood the strong warrior-men with large shields and swords. They were clad in bear skins, their dark skirts reached their knees and their pig-skin boots eerily creaked as they

approached the gathering point. Behind them, the Elven archers found shelter. Their white, almost see-through shirts seemed inadequate protection against the cold night and the battle. However, they only wore them out of consideration for the Humans and weren't particularly concerned with making them more palatable for Men's eyes. Their bow strings were taut and ready.

The Kiroshan horsemen, the pride of Sillwith, who were patiently calming their strong and spirited horses, were in charge of keeping the general-kings safe. They were clad in togas from various beasts; from the deer to the bison, from rats to the bears.

At the head of the army stood the kings, brothers-in-arms and loyal friends, Christian, the king of Kiroshan and Nomack, the king of As'silari. Together, they ruled western Sillwith and ensured that truth and justice, fairness and equality prevailed through their kingdoms. They had entered into this unwanted, but inevitable war together.

Their rival, the general of the Orc-demon army, was Kodran. They called him the Mage of Evil or Kodran the Dark. He had been exiled from Adazar, the city of mages, when his black magic threatened to destroy the world in which he lived in. He was full of hatred and a desire for revenge.

By his right side stood another evil mage called Bokani, his loyal helper and a powerful mage, whose black magic transformed the land, ended lives and gave birth to demons. Both were faithful followers of demonic and dark magic.

By Kodran's left side fidgeted Taspor, a lesser demon from another world. He was Kodran's right hand slave and helper.

A thunderous command started the Orcs and demons moving. They charged without hesitation, forcefully and, it seemed, unstopably. The whole valley trembled and hummed.

They did not even make it to half-way down the valley before they were buried under a rain of arrows from which there was no escape or shelter. The dead fell over wounded and the wounded over the dead. But the demons were plenty. Those who fell were quickly replaced by the next wave of warriors.

From the rows of Elves, there rang a cry:

"For freedom! For victory!"

With those words, it was as though a new strength swept through the brave army of Men and Elves. They were soon in the valley and the enemy was trapped between them and the hill.

It was clear this was a battle between Good and Evil, Light and Dark, but at that moment it wasn't clear who was stronger and who had the greater chance of victory. Both sides had strong reasons to win, for the final reckoning would depend on this battle. The Men and Elves did not lack courage and determination. They knew the future of the world depended on them. But how to fight Evil? How to fight against the magic which Bokani used to make them ever weaker, slower and more fatigued? How to fight against something no sword could cut or arrows pierce?

But for one of them, it was as though the evil magic had no effect. With his brave fighting, swift handling of his sword and skilled evasion of attacks, he stood apart from the multitude. He was more than the usual warrior.

He was Elesar, a half-elf, the commander of the Elven army. A thick dark beard hid the noble lines of his face. Gleaming black hair, wet from sweat, reached his shoulders. By the light blue eyes that shined like two stars in the pitch black night, it was clear that Elesar was part Night Elf. The rage which threatened to extinguish their glow was directed towards Kodran and his army.

The noble knight's figure was protected by armour forged by the most skilled Elven blacksmiths. Even covered in Orc and demon blood, it gleamed silver in the moonlight. For such a warrior, only one weapon would do – the sword named Moonsaber, the most powerful and most radiant weapon in all of Sillwith. It had been forged by a Valindorian prince, a blacksmith-artist. Its blinding blue steel made it seem to glow with a blue flame.

Elesar moved through the rows of orc swiftly and skilfully and Moonsaber passed through their bodies and armours without resistance, leaving behind a bloodied trail of his adversaries. All of Bokani's magic rebounded from the half-elf's strength, will and determination as though from an invisible shield. It turned into a whisper, a breath, a bubble. Kodran's tyranny had to be stopped.

The Mage of Darkness was no longer completely certain whether all of his effort would prove worthwhile. The half-elf was disrupting his plans. His strength and determination was unstoppable and it enveloped his warriors, both Man and Elf. Full of blind rage, Koran ran down the valley, eyes flashing, wildly swinging his black double-bladed axe. No one was spared, not even his own subjects who stood in path to Elesar.

Taspor skipped after his master, ever a faithful servant. The little demon had no will to fight, but he had no choice. Tonight would be the pivotal battle.

Bokani, who was a mage before all else, hated warriors and so he stayed at a safe distance from the heart of the battle. He did more damage to the Men and Elves with his spells than if he had taken arms himself.

Clearing a path through his own army with his axe, Kodran came to the middle of the valley. Only a few more demon heads stood in his way between him and Elesar. For Kodran there was no doubt. Everything that stood in his way, he destroyed. He beheaded them and found himself face to face with Elesar.

Not taking their eyes off one another, they simultaneously raised their weapons. The collision of Moonsaber and Kodran's axe created a sound and flash that, for a second, stopped the warriors and time. All eyes turned towards them. They watched the battle between Good and Evil, Light and Dark, justice and injustice, hate and mercy.

Only Bokani did not allow himself to be distracted by their battle. He continued casting his evil magic on whoever dared approach him.

Kings Christian and Nomack knew that Bokani had to be stopped. Strongly, they spurred their horses on and raced towards him. They forced their way through the multitude of demons and Orcs, not stopping until they reached the bottom of the hill upon which Bokani stood.

Taspor, a small winged demon with snake eyes and tongue, quick and agile, intercepted them there. Unnoticed, he approached them from the back and threw Christian from his horse, knocking his sword from his hand. They rolled across the damp ground, hit and threw each other in the air, yelped and shouted and had anyone the time to watch them, it would have been hard to tell who would overcome whom.

Taspor's claws scratched against Christian's firm armour, searching for a weak point. He might have found one, if a carnelian encrusted dagger had not found itself in Christian's hand before that. The dagger flashed and went through Taspor's heart. The quiet squeals of the little demon could hardly be heard over the sounds of the battle.

While their fight was taking place, Nomack had made it to Bokani. A strong and skilled warrior, Nomack was a threat to all. Even Bokani. The mage could not resist him. But his magic was just as strong as Nomack's strength and barely surmountable. It was only a question of which evil spells he would cast.

When six Bokanis appeared before him, Nomack knew strength and courage would not be enough. He would need more cunning and swiftness than ever before.

He entered battle with the first Bokani within the reach of his sword. There was no way to see whether it was the real one or a double. The doubles were just as agile and skilled and only the strike of a sword could show their true nature.

The touch of a blade turned them to ash.

One down. Did that change anything for Nomack? He didn't believe it himself. Bokani's doubles approached from his front, back, left and right. They were everywhere. "I only have a chance with Christian's help," he thought and desperately cried:

"Christian! Christian!"

And Christian appeared at his side. In one hand he still held the dagger he'd pulled out of Taspor's heart that no longer beat. In his other, gleamed a sword.

New strength entered Nomack. He knew he was an excellent swordsman, but he also knew that Christian was better than him. He was proud of him and praised him for it. He had faced many other difficult battles shoulder to shoulder with him. They were one another's sword and shield, support and encouragement. Few could equal them when they were together.

The number of Bokani's doubles began to lessen. Two were left. It was clear that one of them was the real Bokani, even though it was impossible to tell which it was.

Christian's sword caught one and he didn't turn into dust. There was no doubt; it had to be Bokani. Christian thrust his sword into his chest with all his strength. He felt his sword pass through flesh and exhaled with relief. The other Bokani would have no power after the death of the real one.

But the cry he heard was not Bokani's. It was Nomack's voice and from his breast emerged Christian's sword.

Christian's cry melded with Bokani's laughter. Instead of him, the king of Kiroshan had killed his beloved brother-in-arms, his friend Nomack. All of his strength left his body. He collapsed to the ground, lifted Nomack's head in his lap and mutely watched his eyes dim. What had he done? How could he have killed his friend?

From the grief and pain, he forgot about Bokani, who hadn't forgotten about him. With a mighty swing of his staff, he threw the king down to the damp ground.

Dazed by the blow, he reached for his sword, but it was already in Bokani's hand, placed against his throat.

Victoriously grinning, Bokani hissed:

“The mighty king of Kiroshan, struck down by his own sword...”

Waiting for his executor's blow, Christian suddenly felt Nomack's sword beneath his hand. Not wondering why it was no longer in Nomack's hand, but within his reach, he lifted it and buried it in the mage's chest. With another blow, he cut off his head.

That very moment, the mage's body disappeared, leaving only his robe and staff behind; from the severed head, only the skull remained.

Weakened, Christian sat on the damp ground, sobbing. He wanted to curse everything: Kodran, Bokani, the demons and this war. But before he could, a yellow light appeared around him, circled him a few times and disappeared within him. The Kiroshan king fell as though slain, unconscious.

During that time, in the valley, the battle raged on unabated. The swordsmen and horsemen fought against demons, the Elves against the Orcs. However, no battle was as fierce as the one between Elesar and Kodran. Moonsaber and Kodran's axe flashed like lightning, turning night into day.

Their strengths were matched. One moment one attacked, the next the other. They exchanged enviable blows and attacks, the likes of which few mortals could ever imagine.

And the battle would have lasted forever had Elesar not heard Christian's cry and faltered. Kodran took advantage of the moment. He swung his axe and struck Elesar's chest.

Elesar's Elven armour softened the blow, but the force of the axe split it in half and Elesar fell prone before Kodran:

“Did you really think you could defeat me? You aren't equal to me, half-breed!”

He lifted his axe, intending to swing it, when suddenly a leopard appeared before him and sank its claws into his eyes. Kodran's shriek echoed throughout the valley. It was so strong that warriors, from both sides, stopped fighting in order to cover their ears. The animal which had suddenly appeared, ended the battle for him.

The horde of orcs, seeing their master shrieking in pain, turned their backs to their adversaries. A battle without Kodran was not theirs and for Kodran the Dark, it was over. Demons under his influences, freed of the magic, abruptly vanished from the battlefield.

Elves and Men cheered with relief. They knew they hadn't yet won, but luck was on their side this time.

The weary half-elf looked at the animal which had saved his life. A golden pelt, dotted with black spots, deep piercing eyes and sharp teeth invoked both fear and respect. It carefully approached Elesar, laid down beside him and laid its head in his lap. Elesar stroked it and thanked it:

“My thanks, friend! You saved my life. How should I call you? Bravecat perhaps? For great bravery is required to stand up to Kodran!”

His great fatigue made him want to lie on the grass, but something in him didn't let him. The speed at which things had happened had clouded his thoughts for a moment. But now he clearly knew – Christian was in trouble.

Christian woke as if from a dream. He looked about himself. By his side lay his dead friend and Bokani's skull. He was overwhelmed by sorrow, darkness and coldness. So many dead Men and Elves. He never wanted this. What he wanted was impossible. Nomack was no longer by his side.

Reaching the top, Elesar looked upon his friend, who was crying over Nomack. He too was overtaken by sorrow. He knew both of them well and considered them his friends. Without a word, he put his hand on Christian's shoulder. The skull on the robe caught his eye. He knew what that meant. The one who kills a mage takes his power. But he didn't speak or ask Christian. He helped him rise and together they made their way to the army, which, overcome with joy at the victory, was celebrating.

And so ended the five year war, which had brought so much sorrow and misfortune and had taken so many innocent lives that Sillwith would always remember.

End of Prologue