

The Price of Survival

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The Price of Survival

by [AliaoftheKnife97](#)

Summary

I've been watching Rings of Power recently and have fallen for Halabrand.

Written with day 10 whumptober in mind - whipping

Chapter 1

The whip cracked in the air and landed with a smack on his back. The guard drew it away slowly making sure that the tiny spiked teeth on it went deep in the skin. Halbrand screamed into the leather gag in his mouth. He could hear the whip trailing along the floor and a titter of laughter amongst the men gathered in the hall. He couldn't see any of them. All Halbrand could see was fire; red and orange and yellow and bits of gold dancing before his eyes. The stoked hearth was so close to him, in a way he was fortunate that it didn't blind him. If one could call the position he was in lucky. He was suspended over a vast fire; in another life it was a vast welcoming fire place. His home...his family's home....but that was all gone now.

The hall of his that he had ran through, fought with with his family, had his first kiss in...it was now filled with monsters, men...orcs. There was blood everywhere and the fire, the centre piece of it all, that was what was going to kill him. The dark black borders were just on the corners of his vision. But, the fire, licking flames destroying bits of his clothes, his hair, his face...the heat was painful, raw and not enough to kill him. The acrid smell of burning bodies and whatever poison they had used to make it so huge made him want to be sick.

There were ropes at his ankles and his wrists, the material was so tight that he'd started to bleed. A red, brown puddle was forming on the floor just below him. He was not tied up very high, two feet perhaps. The ropes were attached to a set of pillars that supported the hall and some of the beams at the top. His arms were yanked up hard, just enough to hurt without dislocating his shoulders and his legs were pulled akimbo in a similar fashion. But the fire, that was the issue...it was ironic and twisted. He had spent most of his life around fires; he liked creating things, buildings weapons, armour, sets of jewellery...for anyone...but for Calida especially. No, he couldn't think about her, not her or the girls.

The whip had been an added touch; a joke amongst the soldiers that he could not be burned by fire...so they needed to think of something else. When they had taken him, he had fought....for all their jokes Halbrand was a soldier, well he was a lot of things. But he knew how to fight and broken three of their noses and two arms, he had even knocked one of them unconscious. However, it simply hadn't been enough, he was fodder to them, something to break and play with. He had to be brought low, to be taught the rules that he had refused to follow and...this...this...burning and the whip was what they had come up with. So, they had stripped his top half and cut his stomach "lightly" as a warning, they'd removed his boots to make sue he "really felt the flames".

It caught his flesh and he couldn't stop himself screaming into the gag again. He pulled against the restraints shooting pain into his wrists and his feet. He managed to wrench against the ropes a little bit and got too close to the sparks, they singed his brown hair and he swore in the gag. The lashes continued as the minutes wore on, he could feel a dampness dripping down from his neck, his back and some of his arms, yet more of his blood he presumed. At strike twenty his vision began to blur and go grey, by strike thirty he was no longer awake and although the flames burned the edges of his fingers and his wrists he didn't feel it.

At strike forty, they took his body down to check if he still was breathing. To their surprise and frustration he was very much still alive, his breath was shallow and broken but there.

“Up!!!” one of them screamed

Halbrand’s response was to groan. When they held him up to be inspected, he felt a scaly emaciated hand raise his chin up. He blinked...he couldn’t understand what they were saying, so he spat at them. Then his head fell forward and he passed out.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Written with the prompt "muffled screaming in mind"

Halbrand was wound tight in a ball, the cell he had been deposited in was not big enough for him to put his limbs out fully. Everything hurt too much to move anyway. His back was raw and it still burned although he realised that was probably from a fever now, an infection of some kind rather than from the fire. Although he felt like the fire was still there, all around him consuming him....breathing was hard and he could feel the heat everywhere. His lungs...all his insides...that sound instead of breathing properly...it was...horrible to listen to. It was shameful to admit, but the pain had got to him. He should have been stronger, tougher...he...he wasn't anybody in this place, a plaything for the orcs and the Uruks. He put his hands into his hair, trying to wrap himself even smaller. Partly to make then world disappear and partly because he was aware that he had started to cry and somehow he knew that if he didn't hide it, the orcs would leap on him. He was ashamed that he wept, he wept for his home, his family....this people, but he mostly wept for himself.

He hated himself for not being....kingly...a prince....someone to fight back against the dark. He had just crumbled....he'd been noble, he was trying to save his family, his wife, his children. He'd gone through it all to keep them alive and now...his wife...his daughters...he had no idea if they were even safe...and for what? To make the orcs laugh while his father's hall was desecrated and burned. Halbrand started coughing, the air was filthy down here, his father's dungeons had never exactly been pleasant places but...there was something else. Perhaps the orcs were poisoning him slowly. Was that the faint all of the people? Were they all dead now in the Southlands? Surely not, some...some would have fallen on their swords....some will have sworn fealty to the dark one...and his father? He didn't even know what had happened to him.

His downward spiral was interrupted by a scream, it was muted by stone walls. But a scream none-the-less, it was a woman...he...he couldn't just stand there... he heaved himself up. Thankfully the cell was large enough for him to actually stand in. A spike of agony went through his back, but he kept on his feet. He banged on the iron door, he realised one of his hands had been burned by the fire...so maybe he hadn't be imagining it.

"Guards...guards!!! I...want...I want...to see my wife....hey....I'm...a prince of the Southlands!! I demand an audience with your leader..."

Okay so that wasn't technically true, but...if he could just get the attention away from that woman, that poor screaming soul. A hissing horrible sound came out and the clunk clunk of the guards. But the screaming stopped, a door opened and he could hear crying...but she was alive....

"You willing to talk Southlander? You willing to swear allegiance to Morgoth..."

"I said I would talk to your leader, not you....now take me to him....I want to visit my wife first...."

"Ha...we'll take you to see your wife...hahahaha..."

"Your leader gave me your word that....."

"Don't worry princeling... we'll take you to her..."

The two guards heaved open the vast door and dragged him out. He struggled against them pushing and shoving to make sure...that she whoever she was...she was alive. The hands over his shoulders seem to loosen a little as he got towards the door. She was a serving girl, he didn't even know her name, but she had nice eyes and giggled a lot. She had been crying and there was blood in her black hair. There was another orc there who was cleaning a bloodied club in the background.

On instinct Halbrand surged forward, but too late

The creature took the club and smashed it into the girl's head until there was nothing but blood on the floor.

"No!! No!!!! NO!!!!"

At this point a hood was dragged over his head and a bit put in his mouth. He was pulled away from the mess and chaos still screaming.

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