

The image is a promotional poster for a story. On the left, a warrior with long, dark, matted hair and a beard is shown from the chest up. He is wearing a dark, heavy, fur-lined cloak and has a large, broadsword or cut-throat sword tucked under his left arm. He is looking towards the right. The background is a vast, detailed medieval city built on a hillside, with a river or canal winding through it. The sun is setting behind the city, creating a golden glow over the scene. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds. The overall tone is epic and somber.

THE IRONBOUND

A SWORD & SORCERY TALE

THE IRONBOUND

A Sword & Sorcery Tale

∞

KIN

Inferno Books™

Copyright © 2026 Kin

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations used in reviews or scholarly works. This is a work of fiction; all names, characters, places, and events are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously, and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Published by **Inferno Originals™**

An imprint of **Inferno Books™**

www.InfernoBooks.com

Title: *The Ironbound: A Sword & Sorcery Tale*

Author: Kin

First Edition — JUNE 2026

Enter the Inferno. Follow the flame.

*They say Kaldor could have
broken the irons long ago.*

Yet he never did.

*Now he wanders the realm as a sellsword,
owing allegiance to no king and
bowing to no master.*



CHAPTER ONE

The Merchant's Bargain

THE Ravenport docks stank of salt, tar, and rotting fish. Kaldor sat alone on a weathered piling overlooking the harbor.

The morning tide had come in hard during the night.

Grey waves slapped against the wharves below while gulls wheeled overhead, screaming at one another as fishermen unloaded their catch.

He ignored them.

A silver coin spun slowly across the backs of his fingers. The trick had once impressed tavern girls.

Now it merely passed the time.

The harbor was quieter than it should have been.

Fishing boats still came and went beneath the city walls, but there were fewer of them than there should have been at this time of year.

Many of the berths stood empty.

Others held vessels that looked as though they had not left the docks in weeks.

Men gathered along the waterfront in small groups, watching the work rather than taking part in it.

Their clothes hung loose. Their faces carried the drawn look of men who had missed too many meals and expected to miss more before the season was done.

A pair of dockworkers argued over a basket of fish no larger than a man's shield.

Neither looked pleased by the bargain.

Kaldor caught the coin and slipped it back into his pouch.

His purse felt light.

That fact concerned him more than the state of the harbor.

Three weeks had passed since his last worthwhile contract. The jobs that remained were poor ones.

Guarding drunkards. Collecting debts. Settling petty feuds between merchants who preferred to hire swords rather than solve their own problems.

The pay was rarely worth the trouble.

A shadow fell across him.

"You are Kaldor?"

The voice belonged to a merchant.

The man stood well dressed despite the grime of the docks. Rings gleamed on his fingers. A gold chain disappeared beneath the folds of an expensive cloak trimmed with dark fur despite the mild weather.

He looked prosperous.

Far too prosperous for a city that seemed to be growing poorer by the day.

"I was told you were available."

"I am."

"Good."

There was no hesitation in the man's voice. No uncertainty. He spoke with the easy confidence of someone accustomed to giving orders and seeing them obeyed.

"I require an escort."

Kaldor studied him for a moment.

"What is it this time?"

The merchant spread his hands.

"Grain."

Kaldor's gaze drifted past him.

Six heavy wagons stood on the upper quay overlooking the harbor. Each sat beneath a canvas cover stretched tightly across a wooden frame.

Carters moved among them while oxen stamped impatiently against the stone.

Even from here he could feel eyes upon the wagons.

Men watched them from doorways and alley mouths. A woman carrying a basket had stopped to stare.

Two children lingered beside a warehouse, their attention fixed entirely on the grain convoy.

The merchant followed his gaze and smiled.

"The grain is bound for the frontier settlements."

Kaldor shrugged.

A job was a job.

"What do you need from me?"

"To make sure it arrives."

The merchant spoke as though the matter were already settled.

Kaldor folded his arms.

"The roads are dangerous?"

"The roads are roads."

The merchant gave a dismissive wave.

"There are always bandits somewhere. Raiders. Desperate men looking for easy coin. Nothing new."

The merchant adjusted one of his rings and glanced toward the wagons.

"The shipment is valuable. Delays are expensive."

Kaldor looked toward the convoy again.

Six wagons of grain represented a small fortune. Enough to keep many tables full through winter — enough to tempt any outlaw foolish enough to attack a guarded caravan.

"What is the pay?"

The merchant named a figure.

Kaldor raised an eyebrow.

It was generous coin for three days on the road.

The merchant noticed.

"You have a reputation, Kaldor. I'd rather pay one capable swordsman than bury three cheap guards."

For the first time, Kaldor smiled.

Only slightly.

"Half in advance. The rest upon delivery," the merchant said as he produced a leather purse and tossed it across.

Kaldor caught it one-handed.

The weight felt right.

He slipped the purse beneath his cloak and rose from the piling.

The harbor wind tugged at the dark fabric hanging from his shoulders. Beyond the waterfront, the towers and rooftops of Avelone rose above the city walls, pale beneath the morning sky.

The merchant extended a hand.

Kaldor glanced at it.

Then he reached past him and lifted his sword from where it rested against the piling.

"When do we leave?"

The merchant hesitated only briefly before his smile returned.

"Now."

Together they climbed the stone steps toward the waiting wagons.

Behind them the harbor continued its slow struggle against hunger and decline.

Ahead lay the long road into the borderlands.

And somewhere beyond the horizon, trouble was already waiting.

THE caravan left Ravenport as the morning finally began to lift.

The low cloud was beginning to break apart above the harbor, allowing shafts of sunlight through and revealing thin patches of blue.

By midday the sea lay far behind them, and the smell of salt gave way to open fields as the road wound north through the countryside beyond Avelone's walls.

The merchant rode at the head of the convoy upon a white stallion, far better bred than the mounts of his guards. Kaldor followed upon a sturdy bay gelding from the merchant's stables.

The merchant seemed entirely at ease upon the road, often humming to himself as he rode and occasionally breaking into conversation whenever the silence became too great for his liking.

Kaldor quickly learned that he enjoyed speaking about himself—

His warehouses.

His grain contracts.

His investments.

His importance within the city.

By the second day he had recounted the same stories often enough that even his own guards seemed weary of hearing them.

"...and when Lord Varuss saw the accounts he nearly choked on his wine," the merchant declared around the evening fire. "Three hundred silver crowns in a single season. Three hundred."

One of the guards nodded politely.

Another stared into the flames.

The merchant failed to notice either reaction.

Kaldor sat apart from the others with his back against a fallen log, sharpening his sword with slow, practiced strokes.

The merchant glanced toward him.

"You have little to say for yourself."

"I've noticed."

A few of the guards smiled into their cups.

The merchant frowned briefly before returning his attention to the fire.

The road carried them steadily northward.

The farther they traveled from Avelone, the less sense the city's hunger seemed to make.

The fields appeared healthy enough.

Wheat swayed beneath the summer sun. Sheep grazed behind dry-stone walls. Farmers worked the land as they always had, repairing fences, tending crops, and moving livestock between pastures.

There was no sign of drought.

No sign of blight.

No sign of a countryside struggling to feed itself.

Yet something had changed all the same.

More than once Kaldor noticed farmers watching the grain wagons pass with expressions he could not quite place.

Few offered a greeting.

Fewer still smiled.

The merchant appeared not to notice.

Or perhaps he simply chose not to.

The road had grown quieter with every passing mile. Villages stood farther apart now, separated by long stretches of grazing land and open fields.

The third evening found them camped beside a narrow stream beneath a stand of wind-bent trees.

The guards watered the horses while the oxen were unharnessed and allowed to graze nearby.

A small fire crackled between a ring of stones as darkness gathered across the countryside.

The merchant sat near the flames with a cup of watered wine in hand. "You should see my warehouses in Ravenport," he said.

"Row upon row of them. Grain, wool, timber, wine. Enough stock to supply half the city."

One of the guards spat into the grass.

The merchant continued regardless.

"When I purchased my first warehouse, everyone told me I was a fool. Now I own seven."

"Seven?" asked one of the younger men.

A few of the guards exchanged glances.

He either failed to notice or chose to ignore them.

The merchant smiled.

"Next year I may build another."

Kaldor glanced across the fire.

"You need more?"

"Of course."

The answer came without hesitation.

"The clever man does not grow grain. He controls where it goes."

For a moment no one spoke.

The merchant sipped his wine and stared into the flames, evidently pleased with himself.

Kaldor nodded once.

The merchant's cloak probably cost more than some villages earned in a season. The silver rings upon his fingers were thick enough to buy a farmer's herd.

Seven warehouses suddenly seemed entirely believable.

Beyond the circle of firelight the darkness deepened. The wind shifted.

Somewhere in the distance a dog barked.

Then another.

The sound carried strangely across the night before fading altogether.

No one spoke for a while.

The merchant eventually retired to his bedroll beneath one of the wagons. The guards settled in pairs around the camp.

Kaldor remained awake a little longer.

The fire had burned low by then.

Across the road the land rolled away into darkness, broken only by scattered trees and distant hills silhouetted against the night sky.

Tomorrow they would reach the borderlands.

Kaldor fed another branch into the embers and watched the sparks climb into the darkness.

Somewhere ahead waited the frontier settlements;
And if fortune held, the remainder of his payment.

He closed his eyes.

THE following afternoon the road wound through a narrow defile between two rocky ridges.

The sun was high.

The oxen moved slowly beneath the weight of the grain wagons, their broad backs dark with sweat. Dust hung in the air behind the convoy and settled across men, animals, and canvas alike.

Kaldor rode near the rear of the line.

The road had narrowed steadily throughout the morning. Low hills had given way to broken stone and scrub-covered ridges that pressed closer to either side of the track.

There was little shade and less water. Only rock, dust, and the occasional thorn bush clinging stubbornly to the earth.

Ahead, the merchant rode beside the lead wagon.

He appeared to be speaking again.

No one seemed particularly interested.

A sharp crack echoed between the ridges.

An arrow struck the lead driver through the throat.

The man toppled backward from his seat with a thud.

For a heartbeat no one moved.

Then another arrow slammed into the side of a wagon.

"Ambush!" someone shouted.

The defile erupted.

Men appeared along both ridges at once, rising from behind rocks and scrub. Arrows hissed downward into the convoy.

One of the guards screamed and fell beneath his horse.

Another arrow struck an ox.

The beast bellowed in pain and lurched sideways against its harness, dragging the wagon behind it.

Kaldor was already moving.

He swung from the saddle as another volley swept down from above. Arrows rattled against wood and stone. One punched through the brim of a guard's helmet and buried itself in the dirt beyond.

The attackers began descending the slopes.

There were perhaps twenty of them.

Too many for common bandits.

They moved with purpose.

Not charging wildly nor shouting for plunder.

They had come for something.

Steel hissed from its scabbard.

Kaldor met the first attacker beside the third wagon.

The man wore a leather cuirass darkened by sweat and carried a round shield painted black. He rushed forward with a spear leveled at Kaldor's chest.

Kaldor stepped aside.

The spear passed harmlessly by.
His sword came down in the same motion, shearing
through shoulder and collarbone.
Blood sprayed dark across the dust.
The man collapsed.
A second attacker took his place immediately.
This one carried an axe.
Kaldor caught the blow upon his blade and drove his
shoulder forward.
The raider staggered.
Kaldor followed through with the strike.
His blade cut across the man's neck.
The raider collapsed without another sound.
The fight ended there.
Around him the convoy had dissolved into chaos.
The guards attempted to form a line around the
wagons, but the narrow road worked against them.
Men and animals crowded together. Oxen bellowed.
Horses reared. Dust filled the air.
The attackers pushed directly toward the merchant.
Not the grain.
Not the wagons.
The merchant.
Kaldor saw it then.

Three of the raiders had reached him.

The merchant's horse reared wildly beneath him as one seized the reins.

Another dragged him from the saddle.

The merchant hit the ground hard.

"What are you doing?" he shouted. "Do you know who I am?"

One of the attackers answered by striking him across the face.

The merchant fell silent.

Kaldor started toward them.

Two men moved to intercept him.

One died quickly.

The other lasted longer.

His shield caught Kaldor's first strike. His sword caught the second. Then Kaldor stepped inside the man's guard and drove his pommel into his face.

Bone cracked.

The raider crumpled.

By the time Kaldor looked up again, the merchant was gone.

The attackers were already withdrawing.

A horn sounded somewhere along the ridge.

One long tone that echoed through the defile.

The effect was immediate.

The surviving raiders disengaged and began retreating up the slopes with the same discipline they had shown in the attack.

Several dragged wounded companions with them. Others covered the withdrawal with bows.

One final flurry of arrows from the ridgeline forced the guards back from the wagons.

Then they were gone.

The entire attack had lasted only minutes.

Silence settled slowly over the convoy.

An injured ox groaned somewhere near the front of the line.

A horse limped in circles beside the road, trailing a broken rein.

Dust drifted through shafts of sunlight.

Kaldor lowered his sword.

Around him the survivors stared after the attackers.

No one pursued.

The merchant's white stallion stood alone near the center of the road, bright against the dust and bloodshed surrounding it.

One of the guards approached cautiously and laid a hand upon its flank. The others stood staring after the attackers in stunned silence.

Kaldor wiped his blade clean and slid it back into its scabbard. Then he walked to the place where the merchant had fallen.

The signs were plain enough.

Scuff marks.

Boot prints.

A small smear of blood in the dust.

And the unmistakable trail left by men moving quickly toward the hills.

He studied the tracks for a moment.

The wagons remained.

The grain and supplies remained.

Only the merchant was missing.

Kaldor looked toward the ridges where the attackers had vanished.

This had never been about robbery.

One of the surviving guards approached him.

"What do we do now?"

Kaldor did not immediately answer. His eyes remained upon the tracks leading into the hills.

The trail was obvious.

The attackers had not expected pursuit.

Or perhaps they simply did not care.

Kaldor turned toward his horse.

"And the grain?" asked another guard.

"Take it where it was meant to go."

The men exchanged uncertain glances.

"What about the merchant?"

Kaldor swung into the saddle.

"I'll find him."

No one argued.

They had already seen enough of the man to know the decision had been made.

Kaldor gathered the reins and guided his horse toward the mouth of the ravine.

Then he dug in his heels.

"Ha!"

The horse surged forward.

Within moments both rider and mount had disappeared among the rocky hills.

THE trail proved easy enough to follow.

Boot prints.

Broken branches.

The occasional splash of blood upon stone.

By sunset he had crossed the hills and reached open country once more.

The tracks turned south.

Kaldor frowned.

Every sign pointed back toward the city he had left three days earlier.

The borderlands lay behind him now.

He followed the trail through the fading light.

By the time darkness settled across the countryside, the tracks had become difficult to follow.

Kaldor eventually reined in beside a small stand of trees overlooking a narrow stream.

It would do.

He gathered a few fallen branches and soon had a modest fire crackling beneath the stars.

His horse grazed nearby while he sat upon a flat stone with a strip of dried meat in one hand and a waterskin in the other.

The night was quiet.

Too quiet.

Only the occasional call of an owl disturbed the darkness beyond the firelight.

Kaldor chewed thoughtfully.

The attack troubled him.

Not because it had happened.

Bandits, raiders, and hired blades were as common as crows upon a battlefield.

No.

What troubled him was the merchant.

The grain had been ignored.

The wagons had been ignored.

Even the coin had been ignored.

The attackers had wanted only one thing.

The merchant.

He finished the last bite and took a sip of water, then replaced the stopper and placed it beside him.

Perhaps he owed someone money.

Perhaps he had crossed the wrong lord.

Perhaps he had simply made more enemies than friends.

Whatever the reason, men had been willing to kill for him.

That alone made him worth finding.

The fire burned low.

Kaldor wrapped himself in his cloak and settled against the trunk of a tree.

Above him the stars shone cold and distant.

Within moments, sleep claimed him.

THE next morning the distant walls of Avelone rose upon the horizon.

Kaldor broke camp shortly after dawn and resumed the trail south. The countryside rolled gently beneath a pale morning sky, fields and grazing land stretching away on either side of the road.

As the hours passed, he began encountering more travelers than he had seen in days. Farmers drove empty carts toward the city. Peddlers and laborers walked in small groups along the roadside. Few spoke. Most kept their eyes lowered and their pace hurried.

More than once Kaldor noticed wagons returning from Avelone carrying little or nothing at all.

By midday he reached the outer roads.

At first glance the city appeared unchanged.

Then he began noticing carts abandoned, and beggars huddled beside the road.

Children watched travelers pass with hollow eyes.

Kaldor followed the trail as it wound toward the city gates which loomed ahead, high stone walls crowned with watchtowers beneath a sky of gathering cloud.

Yet every glance hinted at trouble, and somewhere beyond the crowded streets and stone walls, the trail of the merchant's kidnappers continued deeper into the city.

CHAPTER TWO

Shadows over Avelone

Kaldor guided his horse along the cobbled outer road as travelers shuffled beneath the gaze of the guards.

The men looked bored until someone slowed the line.

Then the shouting began.

A bent old man carrying a sack over one shoulder was shoved aside when he faltered. A woman arguing with a guard was met with the butt of a spear against her cart.

No one protested. Most simply lowered their heads and kept walking.

The streets widened as he passed beneath the gates.

Smoke rose from chimneys, thin and gray, carrying a faint tang of burnt wood and overcooked porridge.

Avelone felt different now.

Not because the city had changed, but because he was seeing it more clearly than before.

He had noticed signs of hardship in Ravenport—the empty berths, the silent docks, the arguments over baskets of fish—but the city's heart revealed it plainly now. The harbor had concealed the rot beneath its noise and activity.

Here, in the center of Avelone, there was nowhere left for it to hide.

Abandoned carts lined the roads. Beggars huddled beside wells and market stalls, their hands stretched out for scraps. Men argued over the smallest portions of food while children watched from shadowed doorways with pale faces and hollow eyes.

One woman sat beneath a low tree clutching an empty basket to her chest. She did not look up as he rode past.

Guards leaned from walls and balconies, jeering at those who lingered too long. Merchants counted coins in hurried secrecy, casting wary glances toward the road.

Kaldor watched it all.

The hardship was obvious. The fear beneath it was harder to name.

Something about the city felt wrong.

The market noises grew louder as he neared the central plaza.

"Apples!" "Carrots!"

"Fresh bread!"

Merchants shouted over one another while townsfolk moved hurriedly between the stalls.

A pottery peddler noticed him and called out.

"Looking for something, stranger?"

"Information."

The man grinned faintly and set down a clay cup.

"Information is worth what you pay for it. Or perhaps more than you know." He leaned closer. "Some things are best left to wanderers who mind their own roads."

Kaldor gave nothing away.

The peddler returned to shouting at passing customers.

Moving deeper into the market, Kaldor stopped beside a bread stall where only a handful of dark loaves remained.

"Have you seen a merchant from Ravenport?" he asked quietly. "A man traveling with wagons of grain?"

The stall owner shook his head.

"I don't know him. I don't know anything."

His eyes flicked briefly toward the rooftops.

"Better not to ask questions."

Kaldor let it pass.

No one wanted to speak openly.

He noticed the way mothers hurried their children along narrow alleys, the way a butcher kept his head down, and the way a few guards watched him a moment longer than necessary.

The city was watching.

A tavern appeared ahead, a low building with a darkened doorway and the smell of spiced ale drifting into the street.

The sign above the entrance read:

The Drake's Inn.

Kaldor dismounted and looped the reins around a post outside before stepping into the warmth and dim torchlight within.

The room was nearly silent apart from the scrape of a chair and the low mutter of a man counting coins near the bar.

He asked casually about unusual arrivals, caravans from Ravenport, and disturbances along the roads.

The barkeep shook his head.

"Nothing worth noting. Best keep your nose to yourself if you value it."

Kaldor ordered an ale and took a seat near the back.

As he drank, his eyes swept the room.

No one approached.

Yet attention lingered.

A hooded figure watched him from a shadowed corner near the rear wall.

The attention was deliberate. Not idle curiosity. The meaning was plain. Someone in this city knew more than they were saying.

Kaldor's hand drifted briefly toward his sword.

He finished the last of his ale and waited.

After a moment, the figure emerged from the shadows. "You should stop looking for trouble."

Kaldor's eyes narrowed.

"Why?"

"Because the wrong people are starting to notice."

Kaldor inclined his head. The hunt, it seemed, had found him as well.

"Follow me," said the figure, heading for the back entrance. He paused briefly. "Leave the horse. It will still be here when we're finished."

Kaldor followed, eyes scanning the shadows.

The alley was tight, winding between buildings of blackened stone.

Doors were shuttered, windows barred, and the faint smell of smoke and cooking drifted through cracks overhead.

The cobbles were uneven, slick with runoff from the morning rains. Somewhere a cat hissed and vanished into a pile of crates.

The man moved quickly but without urgency, pausing only at corners, listening, then continuing.

Kaldor followed his lead, silent, alert.

Occasionally the distant clatter of a cart on a wider street reminded him that the city above continued unaware—or willfully blind—to their passage.

Finally, they reached a nondescript doorway, nearly hidden by a pile of discarded timber.

The man knocked three times, paused, and then pressed a hand to the door. It swung inward with a creak.

Inside, the air was cool and smelled of damp stone and old wood.

Torchlight flickered along the walls. A stair descended into darkness, each step echoing faintly.

The stair curved, then leveled, opening into a long, narrow corridor carved beneath the city.

The walls were rough but solid, with small alcoves where barrels and crates had been stacked.

At the far end, a larger doorway led to a vaulted chamber. The smell of smoke and cooking drifted faintly from within.

The man lifted his hood back and glanced at Kaldor. "Wait here."

Kaldor leaned against the wall. His hand hovered near his sword, but he did not move. The sound of water dripping somewhere deeper in the stone corridor punctuated the quiet.

After a few moments the door opened.

A figure stepped forward, framed in torchlight. She wore a simple tunic and a dark cloak, her presence filling the doorway.

“You’ve followed well,” she said, her voice carrying authority tempered by years in hiding. She studied Kaldor with an unflinching gaze.

“This is Kareth,” she added, gesturing to the man at her side as she moved further into the chamber. Kareth gave a brief nod and motioned for Kaldor to go ahead.

The space opened into a larger room beneath the city, lit by several low-hanging torches, revealing her dark hair streaked with gray, and eyes that had seen far more than any man should endure.

Their footfalls were muffled on the packed dirt floor.

They came to another chamber. Maps were spread across the table, annotated with routes, safe houses, and watchpoints throughout Avelone.

Small stacks of ledgers and old records lay to one side, tracking months of movement through the city—evidence of a careful, patient strategy in motion.

Kaldor’s eyes lingered on the documents.

“The man you’re searching for is not why you’re here,” she said, her tone measured.

Kaldor inclined his head. He did not speak.

“The city is in worse shape than you may have realized,” she went on.

“Hunger, unrest, fear. These are the signs you noticed above. The grain stores are empty where the common people need them most.

The King and his men have tightened control over every shipment, every coin, every warehouse.”

Her glance flicked to Kareth, then back to Kaldor.

“The merchant you chased is tied up in it, yes, but the city’s rot goes deeper.”

Then she moved to stand at the head of the table and met his eyes directly, voice firm. “I am Queen Elyra.”

She continued, gesturing toward a section of the table. “The men who took him—those who ambushed your caravan—are connected to the networks the King relies upon.”

Kaldor stepped closer to the table. He did not ask questions yet, only scanned the maps, noting the central districts marked with careful symbols.

“I do not know their motivations fully. They may be acting out of revenge, profit, or simple loyalty.”

She leaned closer. “What I do know is that the merchant’s capture does not concern me. It is your skills that matter here.”

Kaldor’s lips pressed into a thin line.

The Queen walked past a shelf lined with candles. “Every day the city suffers. Every day the King grows bolder.”

She held his gaze, steady and unyielding. “That is why you are here. Not for the merchant.”

Kaldor realized, in that moment, that the danger above was nothing compared to the challenge beneath.

This city, this King, and the quiet fear in the streets had brought him here, and that the hunt was no longer for a rogue band of kidnappers—it was for the city itself.

“What do you need of me?” Kaldor asked, already guessing at the answer.

“You will enter Dunmar,” she said, her voice steady. “The palace fortress is heavily guarded, but there are gaps—alleys, passages, places where shadows swallow a man whole. You must find them and use them.”

She paused, letting the weight of her words settle.

“Once inside, you go to the King’s quarter-chambers. There, you will confront him.”

Her gaze hardened.

“And you will end this.”

The Queen gestured toward Kareth, “You will work with him,” she said, almost casually.

Kareth stepped closer, waiting.

“Do not hesitate. Do not be caught.

The resistance is not strong enough to take the throne by force. The city will only survive if this is done swiftly and cleanly.”

Kaldor did not speak. He only nodded slightly, letting his eyes drift back to the maps. The streets of Avelone stretched out before him.

He studied the alleys leading toward the fortified walls of Dunmar. Every mark and annotation spoke of patience, foresight, and a plan that had been growing in silence for years.

Outside, the distant murmur of the city reached faintly into the stone chamber.

“I will do it,” he said finally, his voice low but certain.

The Queen nodded once. “Then follow Kareth. He knows the safest way through the city. The streets will not forgive the careless.”

Kareth stepped forward and gave Kaldor a brief, almost imperceptible nod. “Keep close.”

Without waiting for a reply, he lifted his hood again to conceal himself, and turned toward a narrow doorway at the far side of the chamber.

He moved swiftly through the shadows, leaving Kaldor to follow at a cautious distance.

THE corridors beneath Avelone twisted and turned, sometimes low enough that Kaldor had to bend forward, sometimes opening into chambers dimly lit by torch sconces.

The air smelled of damp stone and old fires, of candle wax and smoke.

Footfalls echoed off the walls, mingling with the distant murmur of the city above.

Kareth led him through hidden alleys and passages that few would recognize.

Occasionally he paused, listening. Once, a guard's voice echoed faintly from a street above. Kareth pressed Kaldor against the wall and waited until the footsteps passed.

Kareth's movements were quiet, precise, deliberate. Kaldor followed, silently noting each decision, each shortcut, each place where the city's ordinary geography had been altered for secrecy.

They crossed a narrow market lane where only a handful of stalls remained open.

Without breaking stride, Kareth reached into the shadows beneath a fruit seller's awning and plucked two apples from a basket.

He tossed one to Kaldor.

"Here," he said. "You'll need it."

Kaldor caught the apple one-handed.

"I thought we were being discreet."

"We are."

Kareth took a bite from his own apple and kept walking.

After nearly an hour, they emerged into a quieter quarter near the edge of the palace district.

Torches burned along the walls, but the streets were narrow, shadowed, and almost empty.

Kareth stopped and studied Kaldor for a moment.

“This is as far as I go,” he said softly.

“From here, you proceed alone. Dunmar is close, but the closer you get, the sharper the eyes and the quicker the guards.

You must rely on your sword and your judgment. Understand?”

Kaldor nodded. “I understand.”

Kareth pulled the hood tighter over his face, fading into the darkness of a side alley. The torchlight caught the edge of his cloak one last time before it disappeared.

Kaldor remained in the street, letting his eyes adjust to the dim evening light.

He scanned the walls and windows, noting the positions of guards, the narrow side streets, the places where a shadow could conceal a man—or a spear.

The faint smell of smoke and cooking drifted from nearby kitchens. Children laughed in the distance, unaware of the tension gathering around the palace.

He began moving with the cautious rhythm of a hunter threading through unfamiliar ground.

Above, the last light of the sun slipped behind the rooftops.

The city's murmur faded, leaving only the sounds of Kaldor's breath and the faint clatter of a distant cart.

Each step brought him closer to the fortress, closer to the King, and closer to the confrontation that would end the night.



CHAPTER THREE

A Dun of Thieves

Kaldor moved quietly through the gathering darkness. Shadows pooled between the narrow buildings of the palace district while lanterns flickered to life along the streets. Beyond the city, the western sky still held the faint glow of a dying sun.

The district surrounding Dunmar differed from the rest of Avelone. The houses were larger, the streets cleaner, and the guards more numerous.

Their armor gleamed in the torchlight, polished and well maintained, while their cloaks hung free of the patches and repairs common elsewhere in the city.

Yet the same tension lingered beneath the surface.

Perhaps even more so.

Ahead, beyond a maze of courtyards and winding lanes, the fortress rose above the city.

Dunmar.

Its black walls climbed from the surrounding district like a mountain of stone. Towers crowned the battlements and lantern light glimmered behind narrow arrow slits high above.

Kaldor paused beside a low wall and studied the fortress in silence.

A direct approach would be a quick death.

Even from here he could count dozens of guards moving along the walls.

He needed another way.

A voice echoed somewhere nearby.

"Who's there?"

Kaldor froze.

A lone guard stood at the far end of the lane, his torch casting long shadows across the cobbles.

For a moment neither moved.

Then the guard took a step forward— "You."

Kaldor turned and continued walking.

The guard's suspicion sharpened immediately.

"Stop."

Kaldor ignored him.

The scrape of steel followed as the man's hand dropped to his sword. "I said stop!"

Kaldor broke into a run.

The shout came instantly.

"GUARDS!"

Boots hammered against stone behind him.

Kaldor darted into a narrow alley that twisted between two buildings before opening into a small courtyard cluttered with barrels, crates, and lines of drying laundry.

Voices erupted behind him as more guards joined the pursuit. A second guard appeared from the opposite side.

Too close.

The man reached for him.

Kaldor seized a hanging clothesline and swung around the startled guard in one fluid movement. The line snapped taut. The guard stumbled forward.

Kaldor's boot crashed into his chest, sending the man backward into a stack of barrels. Wood burst apart.

Kaldor was already moving.

More shouting echoed through the streets.

Four guards now.

Perhaps more.

He vaulted a low wall and landed in a narrow passage running alongside a canal. Dark water reflected the glow of lanterns hanging above the street while footsteps thundered closer with every passing heartbeat.

A guard emerged ahead.

Another behind.

Trapped.

The first lunged.

Kaldor slipped aside at the last possible moment and caught hold of a heavy timber support beam jutting from the side of a warehouse.

Using his momentum, he swung around it.

The pursuing guard could not stop in time.

Kaldor's feet slammed into the man's chest.

The guard staggered sideways and disappeared into the canal with a tremendous splash.

Angry shouting followed immediately.

Kaldor did not wait to see if the man resurfaced.

He ran.

The palace district had become a maze of lantern light, stone walls, and narrow passages where every turn revealed another obstacle and every corner threatened another patrol.

Twice he avoided groups of guards by slipping through service lanes and shadowed courtyards. Once he flattened himself against a wall while three armed men hurried past scarcely ten paces away.

They knew someone was moving through the palace quarter, and the search was spreading.

Somewhere behind him a horn sounded.

Kaldor crossed another lane and lurched through a half-open doorway.

The room beyond appeared to be a storage hall.

Heavy curtains hung from ceiling beams, dividing the space into smaller chambers.

Voices approached outside.

Fast.

A guard burst through the doorway.

"There!"

The man lunged.

Kaldor stepped inside the attack and drove a fist into the guard's jaw. The man's head snapped sideways.

Before he could recover, Kaldor tore one of the heavy curtains free from its fastening.

The cloth billowed across the room.

A second guard charged through the doorway directly into it.

The curtain wrapped around both men in a tangle of limbs, cloth, and curses.

They crashed heavily to the floor.

Kaldor slipped through a rear exit and vanished back into the night.

The shouting followed him for a time.

Then it grew fainter.

Then fainter still.

Eventually it disappeared altogether.

Silence returned.

Kaldor slowed his pace.

Ahead, the streets opened onto a broad expanse of stone.

He stopped beneath the shadow of an abandoned archway and looked up.

Dunmar towered above him.

The fortress walls rose black against the night sky, their dark expanse broken only by narrow windows, torchlit battlements, and the lanterns burning beside the gates.

For a time Kaldor remained beneath the shadow of the archway, studying the patrols moving along the battlements.

The main entrance was impossible.

Too many guards. Too much open ground.

He circled instead.

An old canal wound along the outer wall before disappearing beneath the fortress itself.

The water moved slowly below, black and silent beneath the torchlight.

A service entrance stood near the canal.

Small.

Unremarkable.

Two guards watched it.

Kaldor waited.

Eventually one of the men wandered toward the corner of the wall while the other remained beside the door, more interested in the darkness beyond the canal than the fortress behind him.

The opportunity lasted only moments.

It was enough.

Kaldor crossed the distance without a sound.

The guard sensed something at the last second and began to turn, but Kaldor's forearm slammed into his throat before he could react.

The man staggered backward, gasping. A fist followed.

He collapsed without a sound.

Kaldor caught him before he struck the ground and dragged the body into the shadows.

The second guard never even managed a shout.

A brief struggle.

A muffled curse.

Then silence.

Moments later Kaldor slipped through the service entrance and into the fortress.

The corridor beyond was narrow and poorly lit.

Torchlight flickered against damp stone walls while distant voices echoed somewhere deeper within the structure.

The passage twisted through storerooms stacked with barrels and sacks before opening onto a service corridor lined with doors.

Somewhere nearby, cooks argued over a meal in the palace cooking hall, the smell of roasting meat drifting through the corridors.

Kaldor followed the sounds.

A kitchen appeared ahead where servants moved between ovens and preparation tables carrying platters and baskets. None paid him any attention. Their eyes remained fixed on their work.

Good.

He crossed quickly and continued upward.

The corridors beyond were wider than those below and noticeably better maintained. Tapestries covered the walls. Iron sconces cast warm pools of light across polished floors.

The King lived well.

His people did not.

A stairwell spiraled upward through the heart of the fortress. Kaldor had climbed nearly two levels before voices drifted down from above.

A patrol.

He stepped back into the shadows.

Four guards descended in conversation.

For a moment it seemed they might pass.

Then one looked directly at him.

"There!"

Steel hissed from scabbards.

The first guard rushed forward and met Kaldor halfway down the stairs. Their blades crashed together in the confined space before Kaldor drove his shoulder into the man's chest.

The guard slammed into the central pillar and lost his footing.

The second man came immediately after.

Too close.

Kaldor caught his sword arm and smashed it against the stone wall. The weapon fell from numb fingers.

A punch followed.

The guard crumpled.

The remaining two hesitated.

Only for a heartbeat.

Then one turned and ran.

"Alarm!"

The cry echoed through the stairwell.

"ALARM!"

Kaldor cursed under his breath and sprinted upward.

So much for stealth.

The fortress seemed to awaken around him. Doors opened. Voices rose. Boots hammered against the stone floors while a horn sounded somewhere deeper within Dunmar.

Then another answered it.

By the time Kaldor burst into an upper corridor, soldiers were already converging from multiple directions.

They saw him immediately.

He turned and ran.

The corridor ended at a balcony overlooking one of the lower halls. Guards appeared behind him while others emerged ahead.

Trapped.

Kaldor's eyes landed on a tall decorative urn standing beside the wall.

He seized it with both hands and hurled it down the passage. The vessel struck the leading guard squarely in the chest.

Clay shattered.

The man crashed backward into his companions, sending the entire line stumbling across the corridor in a storm of broken pottery.

Kaldor did not wait to see more.

A spear thrust narrowly missed his side as he drove forward.

He slapped the weapon aside and sprinted past the confusion.

The balcony narrowed before opening onto another stairwell.

A guard stepped into his path.

Kaldor's boot struck him squarely in the chest.

The man staggered backward over the railing and vanished into the darkness below.

The crash echoed throughout the hall.

More shouting followed.

More horns.

More boots.

Every corridor seemed to produce another squad of soldiers. Kaldor abandoned any hope of remaining unseen.

Now there was only one objective.

Reach the King.

He raced through galleries lined with statues and banners while guards attempted to cut him off at every turn.

Twice he slammed heavy doors behind him and dropped iron bars into place.

Once he overturned a carved table across a corridor, forcing his pursuers to climb over it while he gained precious distance.

The fortress had become a maze of stone, steel, and torchlight.

Every path led upward.

Every fight brought him closer.

A pair of guards attempted to corner him in a narrow passage.

Kaldor extinguished a wall torch with a sweep of his cloak and slipped past in the confusion as darkness swallowed the corridor.

By the time he reached the upper levels, his breathing had grown heavier and a thin line of blood trickled down his forearm where a blade had found him.

The corridors here felt different.

The stonework was finer. The guards fewer. The men who remained carried themselves with a confidence absent from those below.

The King's personal elite soldiers.

Kaldor slowed.

Somewhere beyond these halls lay the royal chambers.

He could feel it.

The pursuit behind him gradually faded. The shouting stopped. The horns fell silent.

One by one the guards withdrew.

The sudden quiet felt wrong.

Deliberate.

Ahead, a broad gallery stretched beneath a vaulted ceiling painted with faded scenes of conquest. Tall windows overlooked the sleeping city while banners hung motionless between burning sconces.

Kaldor stepped into the center of the hall.

No one pursued.

Then a single figure emerged from the far end of the gallery.

The man was broad shouldered and grey-haired, his black armor chased with silver that caught the torchlight as he moved.

A longsword rested loosely in one gauntleted hand.

The other guards stepped aside—making room.

Kaldor stopped.

The veteran's eyes settled upon him.

"You've come a long way to die."

Kaldor drew his sword.

The man nodded once, then raised his blade.

For a heartbeat neither moved.

The fortress seemed to hold its breath around them.

Then the elite guard lunged.

The speed of the attack surprised Kaldor.

For a man of his age and build, he moved with terrifying precision.

The longsword cut through the air in a blur of steel, forcing Kaldor backward before he could properly set his feet.

Their blades collided in a shower of sparks.

The impact jarred his arms as a second strike followed immediately, then a third; the veteran pressed forward relentlessly, driving him farther across the gallery and giving him no opportunity to recover.

There was no wasted movement in the man's attack, no reckless aggression, only the calm confidence of a warrior who had survived a lifetime of duels and expected to survive this one as well.

Every strike carried purpose. Every step forced Kaldor exactly where the veteran wanted him.

A blade opened a shallow cut along Kaldor's shoulder.

Warm blood immediately soaked through his tunic.

The elite guard smiled faintly and attacked again.

Kaldor parried high, but the veteran twisted his sword and drove the pommel into his mouth.

Pain exploded across his face.

He stumbled backward as blood filled his mouth and something hard struck the floor beside him.

A tooth.

The older warrior came on without mercy.

Kaldor barely avoided the next strike.

The blade tearing through his sleeve and opening another cut along his forearm.

The man was trying to wear him down, and with every exchange Kaldor could feel the plan working.

The gallery seemed smaller now, hotter, the clash of steel echoing through the vaulted chamber while blood dripped steadily from his split lip and arms onto the polished floor.

He gave ground.

The veteran advanced confidently, and Kaldor found himself a step behind his every move. The thought angered him more than the pain.

His focus sharpened.

The next strike came low.

Kaldor met it.

The veteran immediately reversed direction and cut high, but this time Kaldor slipped beneath the attack and drove forward. Their shoulders collided hard enough to stagger the older warrior for the first time.

Only a fraction.

Enough.

Kaldor attacked.

Steel flashed between them as he drove the veteran backward across the gallery.

The older man blocked the first strike and the second, but the rhythm of the duel had changed.

No longer retreating, Kaldor pressed forward with increasing violence, forcing the elite guard onto the defensive.

A cut opened along the veteran's cheek.

Another followed across his sword arm.

Blood sprayed dark across the stone.

The man's smile vanished, and whatever formality had existed between them disappeared with it.

They crashed into a table, sending candles and parchment scattering across the floor. A chair splintered beneath the veteran's weight before he recovered and drove an armored elbow into the side of Kaldor's head.

Stars burst across his vision.

Kaldor answered with a punch.

The blow smashed into the man's jaw.

Bone cracked.

Both men staggered apart, breathing hard, bleeding freely, neither willing to yield a single step.

For a moment they simply stared at one another.

The elite guard spat blood onto the floor.

"You fight well."

Kaldor wiped blood from his mouth.

"So do you."

The veteran nodded once.

Then drove in again.

This time Kaldor was ready.

Their blades met, locked, and slid apart. The veteran cut low, but Kaldor stepped inside the strike before the older man could recover.

Too close for a sword.

His shoulder slammed into the elite guard's chest while his blade swept upward in a brutal arc.

Steel bit deep.

The veteran froze.

A look of genuine surprise crossed his face.

Blood spilled from the wound, dark and steady.

The longsword slipped from his fingers.

For a heartbeat he remained standing, as though refusing to believe what had happened.

Then his knees gave way.

The elite guard collapsed heavily onto the stone floor.

Dead.

Silence settled across the gallery.

Only for a moment.

Then the guards moved.

The men who had stood aside during the duel now rushed him with drawn swords and furious shouts.

The first reached him and died screaming as Kaldor's blade flashed through the torchlight.

A second strike drove another backward while a third barely managed to catch the blow before stumbling into his companions.

The formation broke apart immediately.

Kaldor drove straight through them.

Steel clashed. Men shouted.

Someone grabbed his cloak.

He tore free.

Another guard lunged. Kaldor knocked aside his blade and drove a boot into the man's knee, sending him sprawling into two others with a scream.

The corridor beyond opened.

At the corridor's end stood a pair of massive doors. Beyond them: the royal chambers.

Kaldor sprinted. Guards shouted behind him as boots scraped against stone.

He reached the massive doors at the corridor's end and burst them inward with his weight.

He stumbled through, then immediately turned and threw the heavy bolt into place just as the first soldier crashed against the other side.

The impact shook the chamber.

Another followed.

Then another.

The doors held.

For now.

Kaldor stepped back, breathing hard. Blood still ran from his shoulder. Every muscle ached.

Beyond the thick oak doors, the sounds of pursuit gradually faded.

Kaldor raised his eyes.

And finally looked upon the chamber of the Sorcerer-King.

The royal chamber was larger than Kaldor expected.

Rich carpet covered the floor. Even finer tapestries hung from the walls.

Silver candlesticks flickered atop polished tables while shelves lined with books, carved ornaments, and imported curiosities filled the corners of the room.

The scent of spiced wine drifted through the air, mingling with the faint crackle of the hearth.

Luxury.

Excess.

Everything the city outside lacked.

Kaldor's eyes settled upon the man standing beside the fire.

The King wore dark robes embroidered with gold thread, his fingers glittering with rings set with rubies and emeralds.

His beard was neatly trimmed, his posture relaxed, and he appeared more like a wealthy scholar than the ruler of a starving city.

In one hand he held a goblet.

In the other, a half-eaten pear.

The King studied him for a moment before a faint smile touched his lips.

"I expected someone taller."

Kaldor said nothing.

The King's gaze shifted briefly toward the bolted doors. "They'll be through those eventually."

"Then we'd better be quick."

Kaldor's reply came without hesitation.

The smile widened.

"I like you."

Kaldor advanced another step while the King calmly bit into the pear, seemingly unconcerned by the armed man standing in his chambers.

"You've caused quite a disturbance tonight," he said. "Several guards. My champion. A great deal of expensive furniture—I hope it was worth the effort."

Kaldor tightened his grip on the sword.

"The city is starving."

"The city is always starving," the King snorted.

"The poor complain. The wealthy prosper. The seasons change. Such is the way of the world."

Kaldor started toward the King.

The King's eyes followed him.

"You really believe killing me changes anything?"

"No."

Kaldor raised his sword.

"But it's a start."

The King sighed.

"A disappointing answer."

Then he moved.

The goblet struck Kaldor squarely in the face.

Wine splashed across his eyes as he stumbled backward, momentarily blinded.

By the time he cleared his vision, the King had seized a ceremonial sword hanging above the hearth and was already advancing.

Though the King lacked the elite guard's strength and experience, he more than made up for it with speed and cunning.

Twice Kaldor's blade narrowly missed him.

Once the King's ceremonial sword opened a cut along his ribs before he danced away again, smiling as though the entire encounter amused him.

Something felt wrong.

Kaldor realized it too late.

The King's eyes flashed.

The room lurched beneath him as the walls seemed to bend and the torchlight stretched into impossible shapes that crawled across the chamber.

A sharp pain exploded behind his eyes.

The floor shifted beneath his feet. Voices whispered from every direction, rising and overlapping until they became an incomprehensible tide of sound.

The sword slipped from his grasp.

He fell to one knee.

The King laughed.

The sound echoed unnaturally throughout the chamber, multiplying until it seemed to come from every corner of the room at once.

"Did she truly send only one man?"

Kaldor tried to rise.

The chamber refused to remain still.

The King slid the bolt free and the doors burst open.

Guards flooded inside. Hands seized him. Blows struck his shoulders and back.

Ropes tightened around his wrists while the world continued to spin around him.

Through the haze he saw the King approach.

Calm.

Victorious.

"You fought well," he said. "Better than most."

He crouched before Kaldor, studying him with open curiosity.

"That is the tragedy of men like you. Strength. Courage. Determination. You convince yourselves these things matter."

The King smiled.

"But kingdoms are not won by swords. They are won by power."

Kaldor glared at him.

The effort alone felt exhausting.

The King rose and began to pace slowly before the hearth. "You see hunger in the streets and imagine injustice. You see wealth and imagine theft."

He glanced back at Kaldor. "The world is simpler than that. Some men rule. Others serve. Some feast. Others starve."

His gaze drifted toward the window overlooking the city. "And yet they always blame the man wearing the crown."

Doubt began to creep into Kaldor's thoughts.
Not doubt about the King. Doubt about himself.
He had fought through the city.
Through the fortress.
Through the King's champion.
And still he had failed.
The realization settled heavily upon him.
The King turned back.
"Take him below," he said casually.
"Tomorrow I'll have him displayed in the square. The people deserve a reminder of what happens when hope becomes ambition."
CRASH!
Glass exploded across the chamber.
Everyone turned.
A dark figure burst through the window.
Kareth.
The young resistance fighter hit the floor rolling and came up moving. Before anyone could react he slammed into the King, driving him backward into a table and sending books, candles, and wine crashing across the floor.
The guards shouted.
One charged.

Kareth met him halfway.

Steel flashed.

The guard fell.

The King's concentration broke.

Instantly the pressure crushing Kaldor's thoughts vanished. The chamber snapped back into focus as the whispers disappeared and the walls returned to their proper shape.

Reality returned.

Kareth reached him in three quick strides.

A knife appeared in his hand, slicing cleanly through the ties binding his wrists.

The ropes fell away.

"Took you long enough," Kaldor muttered.

Kareth scoffed.

"You're welcome."

Across the room, the King was already scrambling back to his feet, his calm confidence gone.

Kaldor advanced without pause, closing the distance in a few swift strides.

The King stumbled backward, perhaps to beg, perhaps to cast another spell.

Too late—he never got the chance.

Kaldor drove his sword forward with both hands.

Steel punched through robes, flesh, and bone before bursting from the King's back.

The ruler froze.

His eyes widened.

Blood spilled from his mouth.

Dark.

Steady.

Then Kaldor pulled the blade free.

The King collapsed heavily onto the carpet, dead before he struck the floor.

Silence settled across the chamber.

Kaldor looked down at the body.

The signet ring still gleamed upon the ruler's hand.

He knelt, twisted it free, and slipped it into his pouch.

Then he turned away.

Behind him, Kareth lowered his sword over the body of the final guard.

For a long moment neither man spoke.

The chamber remained still save for the crackle of the hearth and the distant sounds of voices rising somewhere beyond the fortress walls.

The city was already beginning to wake to a future neither of them could yet see.

Kareth wiped his blade clean and slid it back into its scabbard.

"It's over."

Kaldor glanced once toward the fallen King.

"Seems that way."

The younger man allowed himself a faint smile.

"The Queen will want to see you."

"No."

Kareth blinked.

"No?"

Kaldor shook his head.

"My work here is done."

For a moment Kareth studied him, as though searching for a different answer.

"You could stay."

Kaldor met his gaze.

The offer was genuine.

A place among the resistance.

A place beside the Queen.

Perhaps even a place in whatever came next.

He thought of the road stretching beyond Avelone's walls. The road always called.

"No."

Kareth nodded slowly.

He seemed disappointed.

But not surprised.

"You saved the city," Kareth said.

Kaldor shook his head.

"You saved me."

Silence settled between them once more.

Then Kaldor stepped forward and, without a word, the two men clasped forearms.

The grip tightened for a long moment before Kareth struck him once upon the shoulder.

A gesture of respect.

Of gratitude.

Of farewell.

A faint smile touched his face.

"Safe travels, then."

Kaldor nodded.

"And keep the Queen alive."

Kareth laughed.

"I'll do my best."

Without another word, Kaldor turned and walked toward the door and left the chamber behind.

The fortress corridors beyond were strangely quiet now. The fighting and shouting had ended—only the distant sounds of celebration drifting up from the streets remained.

Then he slipped from the palace fortress unseen.

By dawn, a lone figure rode along the road far beyond
the city walls.

Avelone lay behind him.

The road ahead stretched into the unknown.

Kaldor never looked back.

THE END

Thank you for reading **The Ironbound**.

If you enjoyed this tale, more adventures of Kaldor the Ironbound are coming soon.

Visit infernobooks.com for news, releases, and updates from the forge.

THE IRONBOUND

Book One of The Ironbound Chronicles

A wandering swordsman.

A city in chains.

A queen in shadows.

When a wealthy merchant hires him to escort a grain caravan into the frontier, the contract seems simple enough. But after a brutal ambush leaves the merchant kidnapped and the wagons abandoned, Kaldor follows the trail back toward the city of Avelone.

There he finds a city with dangerous secrets lurking beneath the shadows. An exiled queen hides among her loyal followers while a Sorcerer-King tightens his grip upon the throne.

Drawn into a struggle that is not his own, and armed only with his sword and the hard lessons of a brutal past, Kaldor soon finds himself at the heart of a conspiracy that reaches the throne itself.

The Ironbound is a classic sword & sorcery adventure of a wandering sellsword, hidden corruption, and steel-forged consequence.

They say Kaldor could have broken the irons long ago.

Yet he never did.

Now he wanders the realm as a sellsword, owing allegiance to no king and bowing to no master.

INFERNO BOOKS™