
A Collection of Hring Stories

Charles Barnitz

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This one's for James Powell

and Anne McFadgen

CONTENTS

The Peace Weaver_____ The Peace Weaver 1

The Bean Spoon_____48

Village Geometry_____93

Changeling_____149

The Swift Flight of a Sparrow_____196

But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for The Peace Weaver wound, stripe for stripe.

Exodus 21:23-25

Stanigford and Totmerden

776 AD

S

entwine and Creda, sitting together at the table, stopped talking when I walked into the room, and Creda The Peace Weaver gestured The Peace Weaver for me to take a seat at the bench. Rædnoth was standing against the wall with his arms crossed looking up into The Peace Weaver the network of The Peace Weaver beams and trusses that supported the roof and the soot-darkened thatch twenty feet overhead. I hesitated, taking in the tableaux, sensing that I wasn't going to like whatever was happening, and then walked over to the table The Peace Weaver and sat down.

When I'd been a novice at the minster in Eoforwic I'd been called to the novice master's rooms often enough to recognize the lay of this particular bit of land, but I was puzzled because I knew I hadn't done anything wrong or Sentwine would have mentioned it on the spot—surprise meetings with unknown agendas weren't his style. I'd The Peace Weaver been working for him less than a year, but I knew that much. If he saw a problem he took care of it and moved on, he didn't skulk about.

There was a leather portfolio on the table, fastened by a bit of leather thong twisted around a

bone button, and although it wasn't so thick as to give immediate alarm, I knew that whatever was in it was the subject of the meeting.

"How have you been doing, Hring?" Creda asked.

Now I was getting concerned. Creda had been my first master in law, teaching me the essentials about the *dóms* of Elmet as well as Offa's *dóms*, which held precedence over Greater Mercia. I'd The Peace Weaver trained under him for two winters before he promoted me to assist Sentwine in the *gemót* courts. In those two winters I don't remember him ever asking me how I was doing. Not that he was a The Peace Weaver cold or distant man, but he was a man who remained focused The Peace Weaver on the task at hand, which mostly did not include monitoring the health and wellbeing of his The Peace Weaver subordinates.

"Is there some unpleasantness in my future?" I asked.

Sentwine smiled and looked at Creda. "I told you," he said.

"Told him what?"

"That you would see immediately that—"

"You're in the shite," Rædnoth finished the thought, still looking up into the rafters.

"That you are about to expand your legal education," Sentwine emended with a frown.

I interpreted this exchange to mean that whatever shite I was in Rædnoth was in it too, and that the *geréfa* believed his legal education was already sufficiently broad that The Peace Weaver he needed no experience like the one to come.

Creda pushed the portfolio across the boards toward me.

"What do you know about the feud between the kindreds of Andhere, who lives in the Stanigford hundred, over close to Hathfield land, and Merewald, who lives in the Totmerden hundred?"

I looked The Peace Weaver at the portfolio and then back The Peace Weaver The Peace Weaver to Creda.

"Only that it exists. Wasn't there a killing a winter ago that never came before the *gemót* because it was part of the feud?"

Elmet is divided into six administrative districts, called hundreds. By law, every hundred meets for The Peace Weaver a monthly *gemót* court to transact civil and legal business. There are two advocates in Elmet, each with jurisdiction over three of the six hundreds. Because Andhere and Merewald didn't live in Sentwine's jurisdiction, their lethal squabbles weren't my concern. Although I suspected that had changed.

The Peace Weaver

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