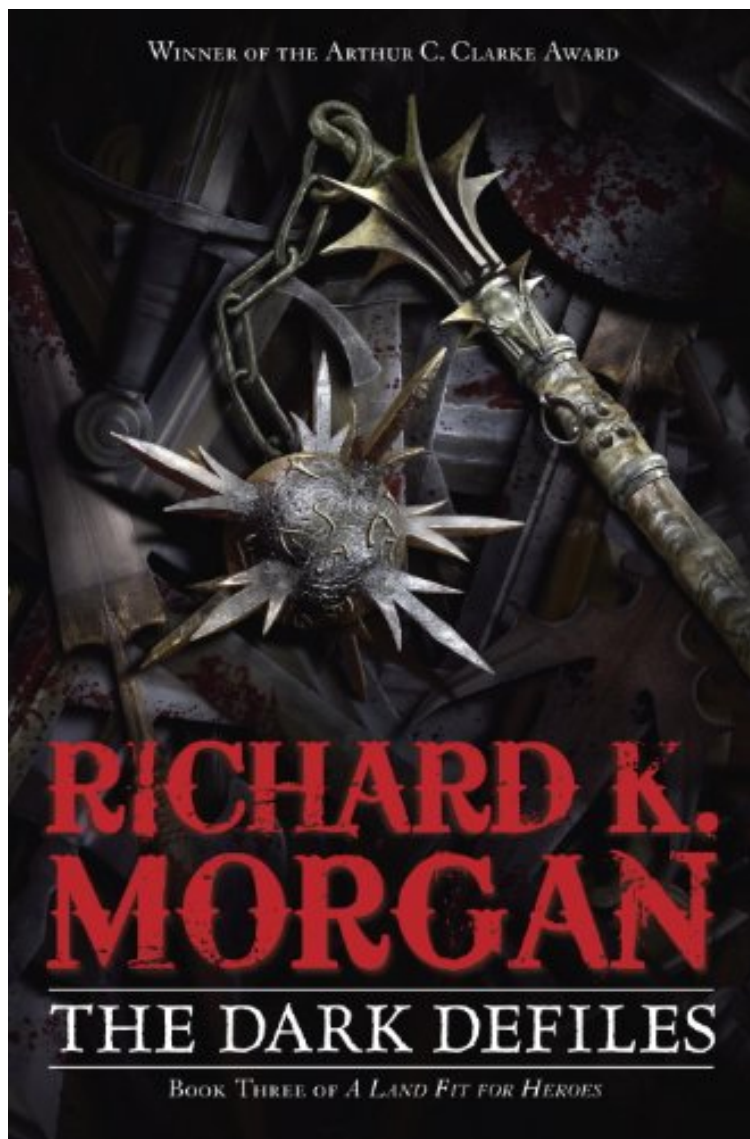


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The Dark Defiles (A Land Fit for Heroes Series Book 3) (English Edition)



Par Richard K. Morgan
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurJoe Abercrombies Best Served Cold meets George R. R. Martins A Game of Thrones in the final novel in Richard K. Morgans epic A Land Fit for Heroes trilogy, which burst onto the fantasy scene with The Steel Remains and The Cold Commands.Ringil Eskiath, a reluctant hero viewed as a corrupt degenerate by the very people who demand his help, has traveled far in search of the Illwrack Changeling, a deathless human sorcerer-warrior raised by the bloodthirsty Aldrain, former rulers of the world. Separated from his companionsEgar the Dragonbane and ArchethRingil risks his soul to master a deadly magic that

alone can challenge the might of the Changeling. While Archeth and the Dragonbane embark on a trail of blood and tears that ends up exposing long-buried secrets, Ringil finds himself tested as never before, with his life and all existence hanging in the balance. Praise for *The Dark Defiles* A finale that displays all the purposefully hard edges and grim magnificence that made the first two volumes stand out. Kirkus's Morgan brings his mammoth *A Land Fit for Heroes* fantasy trilogy to a rousing conclusion. . . . Expect surprises and suspense, along with the usual derring-do and entertaining characters. Booklist Praise for Richard K. Morgan and his acclaimed series, *A Land Fit for Heroes* Bold, brutal, and making no compromises Richard K.

Morgan doesn't so much twist the clichés of fantasy as take an axe to them. Then set fire to them. Joe Abercrombie Morgan has taken traditional sword and sorcery tropes and given them a hard, contemporary kick. The antithesis of the cosy fairytale, this one is for big boys. *The Times* (London) A crisp stylist who demonstrates equal facility with action scenes and angst. *The New York Times* Book A full-immersion experience, uncompromising and bleakly magnificent. Kirkus's From the Trade Paperback edition. Extrait Chapter 1 Well, that's that, I suppose. Ringil Eskiath weighed the desiccated human jawbone glumly in the palm of his hand. He crouched on the edge of the opened grave, fighting off a vague urge to jump down into it. Looks cozy down there. Out of the wind, dark and warm ... He rubbed at his unshaven chin instead. Three days of stubble, rasping on calloused fingers, itching on hollow cheeks. His cloak, puddled about him where he crouched, was soiled at the border and soaking up water from the rain-drenched grass. The shoulder of his sword arm nagged from the unrelenting damp. He shut out the ache and brooded on what lay below him in the grave. They'd come a long way for this. There wasn't much shards of wood that might once have formed a casket, a few long strips of leather, cured stiff and crumbling. A mess of small bone fragments, like the leavings of some overenthusiastic soothsayer on the scry ... Gil sighed and levered himself back to his feet. Tossed the jawbone back in with the rest. Fucking waste of five months. My lord? Shahn, the marine sergeant, who'd climbed back out of the grave and now waited close by the mounds of earth his men had dug out. Behind him, the work party stood around, soil- and sweat-streaked, entrenching tools in hand, scowling against the weather. Whoever dug this plot all those centuries ago, they'd chosen a spot close to the cliffs, and right now there was a blustery wind coming in off the ocean, laced with fistfuls of sleet and the promise of another storm. The three Hironish guides they'd hired back in Ornley already had their hoods up they stood farther from the grave, watching the sky and conversing in low tones. Ringil brushed the traces of dirt off his hands. Were all done here, he announced loudly. If this is the Illwrack Changeling, the worms sorted him out for us awhile back. Stow tools, let's get back to the boats. A tremor of hesitation hands working at tool handles, feet shifting. The sergeant cleared his throat. Gestured halfheartedly at the soft-mounded earth beside the grave. Sire, should we not ... ? Fill that in? Ringil grinned harshly. Listen, if those bones stand up and follow us down to the beach, I'll be very surprised. But you know what if they do, I'll deal with it. His words carved out their own patch of quiet in the rising wind. Among the men, a touching of talismans. Some muttering. Ringil cut them a surreptitious glance, counting faces without seeming to. A couple of those he saw had been around when he took down the kraken, but most were on the other ships at the time; or they were aboard *Dragons Demise* but in their bunks. It had been a filthy night anyway rain and howling wind, bandlight muffled up in thick, scudding cloud, and the encounter was over almost as soon as it began. All but a handful missed the action. They had reports from their comrades, of course, but Ringil couldn't blame them for doubting it. Killing a kraken, at the height and heart of an ocean storm by night yeah, right. It was a stock scene out of myth, a lantern-light story to frighten the cabin boy with. It was a fucking tale. It was five weeks now, and no one was calling him *Krakenbane* that he'd noticed. He supposed it was for the best. He'd held enough commands in the past to know how it went. Best not to disabuse your men of their tight-held notions, whatever those might be. That went in equal measure for those who doubted him and those who told tales of his prowess. The actual truth would probably scare both parties out of their wits, and that, right here and now, was going to be counterproductive. They were twitchy enough as it was. He faced them. Put one booted foot on the forlorn, shin-high chunk of mossed-over granite that served the grave as marker. He pitched his voice for them all to hear pearls of dark wisdom from the swordsman sorcerer in your midst. All right, people, listen up. Anyone wants to sprinkle salt, go right ahead, get it done. But if we stay here to fill this hole in, we're going to get drenched. He nodded westward, out to sea. It was not long past noon, but the sour afternoon light was already closing down. Clouds raced in from the north, boiling up like ink poured in a glass of water. Overhead, the sky was turning the black of a hanged man's face. Yeah be calling that an omen before you know it. His mood didn't improve much on the way back to the boats. He took point on the meandering sheep track that brought them down off the cliffs.

Set a punishing pace over the yielding, peaty ground. No one made the mistake of trying to stay abreast or talk to him. By way of contrast, there was raucous good cheer at his back. The marines had loosened up with the permission to lay wards. Now they tramped boisterously along behind him, good-natured bickering and jeering in the ranks. It was as if they'd poured out their misgivings with the salt from their tooled leather bags, left it all behind them in the tiny white traceries they'd made. Which, Ringil supposed, they had, and wasn't that the whole point of religion anyway? But he was honest enough to recognize his own released tension as well. Because, despite all the other pointless, empty graves, despite his own increasingly solid conviction that they were wasting their time, he, too, had gone up to those cliffs expecting a fight. Wanting a fight. Little vestiges of the feeling still quivered at the nape of his neck and in his hands. Enough to know it had been there, even if he hadn't spotted it at the time. Last resting place of the Illwrack Changeling. Again. This being the ninth last resting place to date. The ninth grave of the legendary Dark King they'd dug up, only to find the detritus of common mortality beneath. Has to be an easier way to do this shit. Really, though, there wasn't, and he knew it. They were all strangers here, himself included. Oh, he'd read about the Hironish isles in his father's library as a boy, learned the arid almanac facts from his tutors. And growing up in Trelayne he'd known a handful of people who'd spent time there in exile. But this was not knowledge with practical application, and anyway it was decades out of date. Fluent Naomic aside, he had no useful advantage over his fellow expedition members. Meanwhile, Anasharal the Helmsman, full of ancient unhuman knowing when they planned the expedition back in Yhelteth last year, was now proving remarkably cagey about specifics. The Kiriath demon was either unwilling or unable to point them with any clarity to the Changelings grave, and instead suggested somewhat haughtily that they do the legwork themselves and inquire of the locals. I fell from on high for your benefit, went the habitual gist of the lecture. Is it my fault that I no longer have the vision I gave up in order to bring my message to you? I have steered you to journey's end. Let human tongues do the rest. But the Hironish islanders were a notoriously closed-mouth bunch even Gils dull-as-dishwater tutors had mentioned that. Historically, they'd been known to harbor popular pirates and tax evaders despite anything the Leagues heavy-handed customs officers could do about it. To lie with impassive calm in the face of threats, to spit with contempt at drawn steel, and to die under torture rather than give up a fellow islander. So they certainly weren't about to spill the secrets of settled generations to some bunch of poncey imperials who showed up from the alien south and started asking oh, hey, we hear there's this dark lord out of legend buried around here somewhere. Any chance you could take us to him? Not just like that, anyway. It took a week of careful diplomacy in and out of the taverns in Ornley and then out to the hamlets and crofts beyond, just to find a handful of locals who would talk to them. It took soft words and coin and endless rounds of drinks. And even then, what these men had to say was sparse and contradictory: the Illwrack Changeling, hmm, yes, that'd be the one from the dwenda legend. But he was never buried up here, the dwenda took him away in a shining longship, to where the band meets the ocean ... crucified him on Sirk beach for a betrayer, was what I heard, facing the setting sun as he died. His followers took him down three days later and buried him. It's that grave up behind the old whalers temple. the Illwrack Betrayer was brought to the Last Isle, to the Chains Last Link, just as the legends say. But the isle only manifests to mortal eyes at spring solstice, and even then, only with much purifying prayer. To land there would require an act of great piety. You should ask at the monastery on Glin cliffs, perhaps they can make offerings for you when you return next year. Yeah, that's right jeers from farther down the tavern bar you should ask his brother out at Glin. Never known him turn down a request for intercession if it came weighted with enough coin ... You know, I've had about enough out of you whelps. My brother's a righteous man, not like some worthless bastard sons I could. They'd had to break that one up with fists. Start all over again. the grave you seek is on a promontory of the Grey Gull peninsula, no more than a day's march north of here. On approach, Grey Gull may seem a separate island, but do not be deceived. Certain currents cause the inlets to fill enough at certain times to make it so but you can always cross, at worst you might have to wade waist deep. And most of the time, you won't even get your boots wet. Hagh! a graybeard fishing skipper hawks and spits something unpleasantly yellow onto the taverns sawdust floor, rather close to Ringil's boot not going to find that grave this side of hell! That's where the Aldrain demons took that one screaming to hell! No, no, my lords, forgive him, this is just fisherfolk superstition. The last human son of Illwrack is buried at the compass crossroads, on a rise just south of here. Some say the hill itself is the Changelings barrow. the truth, my lords, is that the dwenda hero was laid to rest in the stone circle at Selkin, where his retainers ... So forth. It was a lot of digging. But in the absence of the imperial expeditions other main prize the legendary floating city of An-Kirilnar, which they also couldn't seem to find right now there really wasn't much else to do but tramp out

to site after site and dig until disappointed. Disappointment is a slow poison. Initially, and for some of the closer sites, practically every figure of note on the expedition tagged along. There was still a palpable air of journeys end hanging over them all at that point a sense that after all that planning, all those sea miles covered, this was it. And whatever it was, no one wanted to miss it. True above all for Mahmal Shanta she went out of sheer academic curiosity and at the cost of some substantial personal discomfort. Really too old for a voyage into such cold climes anyway, Shanta was still getting over flu and had to be carried on a covered litter by six servants, which was awkward over rough ground and slowed everybody else down. Gil rolled his eyes at Archeth, but in the end what were you going to do? The naval engineer was a primary sponsor of the expedition; his family's shipyards had built two of the three vessels they sailed in and reconditioned the third, and even in illness he held onto a stubborn and canny command of the flagship *Pride of Yhelteth*. If anyone had earned the right, it was Shanta. Archeth's reasons for riding along were twofold, and a little more pragmatic. She went because she was overall expedition leader and it was expected of her. But more than that, she badly needed something to take her mind off the lack of any Kiriath architecture standing above the waves offshore. Not finding An-Kirilnar had hit her hard. Marine commander Senger Hald went ostensibly to supervise those of his men detailed to the search, but really to put an unquestionable marine boot on the proceedings. And Noyal Rakan went beside him, to show the Throne Eternal flag and remind everyone who was supposed to be in charge. The two men were coolly amicable, but the interservice rivalry was never far beneath the surface, in them or in the men they commanded. Lal Nyanar, captain of *Dragons Demise* mostly on account of Shab Nyanar's substantial investment in the expedition, went along even when the prospecting was done overland, apparently out of some belief that he was representing his absent father's interests in the quest. Gil didn't really begrudge him; Nyanar wasn't much of a sea captain the sinecure commands his father had secured for him back in Yhelteth were largely ceremonial or involved river vessels but he did at least know how to follow orders. Out of sight of his ship, he deferred to the expedition leaders and kept his head down. The same could not be said of the others. Of the expedition's other investors who'd actually made the trip north, Klarn Shendanak stuck close to the action because he didn't trust Empire men any further than you could throw one, and that included Archeth Indamaninarmal, jet-skinned half-human imperial cypher that she was. Menith Tand followed suit and stuck close to Shendanak because he harbored a standard Empire nobleman's distaste for the Majaks rough-and-ready immigrant manners and would not be one-upped. And Yilmar Kaptal went along because he mistrusted both Shendanak and Tand in about equal measure. The three of them didn't quite spit at each other outright, but having them at your back was like leading a procession of alley cats. Shendanak never went anywhere without an eight-strong honor guard of thuggish-looking second cousins fresh down from the steppes, which in turn meant that Tand brought along a handful of his own mercenary crew to balance the equation, and Kaptal flat-out demanded that Rakan muster a squad of Throne Eternal just in case ... Egar usually tagged along at Gil's shoulder just to see if there'd be any kind of fight. *Revue de presse* The Dark Defiles is best of the series. Morgan built a fascinating world, dirt and all, and populated it with heroes that were also real people. Morgan dissects the idea of hero and looks at it from every angle. Our three protagonists aren't anti-heroes they are just flawed. While they deal with their flaws they realize that in the end heroes don't get to live happily ever after.

(Buzzy Mag)