

The crisp air of the spring sea washed over his face as the ship cut through the water. The sea and the winds were kind to them, and they were making quick progress along the eastern shore of the island because of it.

Leaning over the side, Harry watched the Scottish coast pass them by as the winds pushed them along. Rowena was by his side, deep in contemplation, just as she had been since she woke from the night of the sacrifice. He didn't push her, didn't question her, despite his own desire to find answers.

Jarl Ansbjorn walked from the prow of the ship back to them at the stern. He looked between them almost reverentially before speaking nervously, "We'll be at the Firth of Tay within the hour, and be outside of Dundee shortly after that..." He lingered, waiting for their word.

"Thank you, lord. If that's all?" He dismissed the man and he returned to the prow as quickly as he came.

Nudging Rowena's shoulder with his own, he said, "You know this is your fault." The ship turned as the firth came into view. It wouldn't be long before they had the earth beneath their feet again.

It took her a long moment, but she finally looked at him, her brow furrowed and her dark-blue eyes curious, "What's my fault?"

"Two days now, I've had people coming to me, whether it's the jarls or their men. All of them looking for my opinion or just trying to keep me in the know." They hadn't been distrustful of him before but since the night of the sacrifice, they'd been looking to him for guidance and leadership. It wasn't something that Harry wanted, but with the things that they'd done it felt unavoidable.

He expected to get a chuckle out of her, or at the very least a smile, but she just frowned, "It suits you... leadership, I mean. And these men will be better off if they have one voice to turn to, one person to trust."

There was a part of him that disagreed with that sentiment rather harshly, but only because he could remember what became of the last group of people he tried to lead. *Not this time though, things will be different.* And it wasn't just him this time, it was the pair of them.

"Besides, better their respect than their reverence." Rowena lamented. The people, whether Norse, Dane, or Scot, moved out of her path wherever she walked from the moment she woke the morning of their departure. She didn't care for it, preferring when people paid her little mind. *Though, she was happy that our students treated her no differently beyond a new curiosity.*

“And you still don’t remember any of it?” It was that which worried her more than anything. Rowena remembered nothing from the moment the ox’s blood poured over hand until waking in bed the next morning with Harry worried at her side.

“No, I don’t. I’ve tried to wrack my mind for even a whisper of the memory, but there’s nothing.” It was something that no one who witnessed it would forget until the rigors of time stole it from them, but the person at its center would not. And for Rowena, that was simply unacceptable. She was a woman who prided herself on her knowledge, on her wit, and yet someone or something stole her voice without an ounce of struggle.

“Best not to dwell on it,” Harry wrapped an arm around her shoulder and hugged her to his side, “all you can do is live in the here and now and hope that you find an answer in the future.” It was the same thing he told himself after walking through Death’s Gate.

That finally made her smile, “I suppose you’re right, we’re only days away from battle. It’d be foolish to let anything else distract me from it.” There was an unsaid ‘for now’ at the end, and he knew that this wasn’t something that she could let lie forever. *Eventually, she’ll want to find an answer, and I’ll be sure to help.*

They remained like that, as the waters of the firth rippled around them. It wasn’t long from their entrance into the waterway before they reached the town of Dundee. There were bells from within as they passed, men rousing along the wooden walls that surrounded it, but they had nothing to fear. They passed Dundee by some distance before they made ground on the Dog Bank not far from a small village called Grange. It was half the distance between Dundee and Perth.

They were well practiced in anchoring the ships, and within two hours every fighting man had made his way to shore. The first of them were the Scots, they didn’t have their sealegs and Harry saw more than one of them lose their meals.

A perimeter was set with guards set to the ships by the time the leaders of their army gathered together, “There were few men in Dundee, their defenses looked sparse at best,” Ragnall spoke up first, “There’s little chance they could rouse enough men to attack us here, but our ships will be vulnerable while we’re in the field.” He looked to Harry for his opinion, they all did. *This... is going to take some getting used to.*

These weren’t scared teenagers on the run for their lives looking to him for leadership simply because he’d seen the most horror in life. These were fighting men, men who’d seen battle and bloodshed with people of their own who called them lords, but still they turned to Harry.

“Enough men will remain here to keep them safe should they try anything.” He knew that the ships were nearly as valuable to the Norse and Danes as their men. *And I’ll be sure to leave a bit of magical protection for them as well.*

“We’ve sent out riders.” Thorfinn told him, “Hopefully they’ll find out where Causantain is camping his army, maybe even have an idea of where he intends to fight.”

“They may not be necessary, there’s one of my own already in Perth who should get to us first.” As reluctant as he was for her to return, he had every confidence that Heiddi would arrive with the army before any one of their scouts could return. *I wouldn’t be surprised if she’s already making her way here.*

“Should we march, then?” Gamelin questioned.

“As soon as possible, yes. There’s a risk waiting here by the sea that they might catch us unawares,” Rowena answered him, “That they could drive us back to the ships. It would be best to make camp elsewhere.” The Dog Bank wasn’t completely undefendable, but they certainly wouldn’t have the advantage if they found themselves attacked by Causantain.

Further inland the land turned into green hills, they’d be far better off at the top of one of them. It wouldn’t take a long march, an hour or bit more to reach the ones in the near distance. Nodding his agreement, Harry set them to task, “Gather your men and ready them to move and set about a guard for the ships. We can’t lose them if a retreat is necessary.” He knew that retreat would be disastrous, that it would mean a crushing victory for the church, but he needed to accept that it was a possibility, too.

“We’ll see it done.” Ragnall agreed with no complaint from any of the other lords there. They left him and Rowena behind. The two of them just watching as men made ready for the march ahead.

“It’s hard to believe, isn’t it?” Rowena asked him softly, her eyes taking it all in, “It wasn’t that long ago that I hadn’t even met you... a fortnight ago, I was happy to stay in my little home beside the lake with nothing but you and Aerna for company... And now... now here we are with an army.”

“I know.” But he couldn’t help but think that a victory against the King of Scotland would only be the beginning. There were Christian Kings to the south in England, across the Irish Sea in Ireland, and across the Channel in Europe, and he couldn’t help but wonder if they would let this stand. *Even if they wanted to, the priests in their ear will speak of retribution, and glory, and the death of pagans.*

“It isn’t what I expected for myself. But I can’t say I’m disappointed... we’ve done good, and if this is the cost of saving those children... I’d do it again, whatever end comes of it.” She

grabbed his hand, it was small and soft in his, “And I want you to know how glad I am that you stumbled upon me that day.”

“So, do you trust me now then?” He couldn’t help but tease her.

She rolled her eyes, but she couldn’t hide the beaming smile on her lips. It was more than enough answer for him, “It’s getting there.” The smile fell though as she continued, “I think about how things might’ve been if I hadn’t met you. The Church very nearly captured me with Mairi, and I shudder to think what would’ve become of me.”

That simple thought gave Harry pause. He’d not considered that his actions had effectively kept her out of the clutches of the church, but he knew the history of the founders well enough that there was no mention of Rowena Ravenclaw being held captive. *But then, Hogwarts: A History was more concerned with the founding and the feats that followed. It didn’t discuss their young lives.*

*Perhaps she would’ve escaped without my presence.* Still, there was something that rang hollow about that reasoning in his own head, but he doubted that he’d ever know the whole truth of it. There wasn’t exactly anyone around who could give him the answers when the world and history that he wanted to know was being reshaped around him.

“You would’ve survived.” He assured her, honestly believing it, “You’re too strong not to.” She squeezed his hand tighter as she looked at him with her big, blue eyes.

The moment came to an end as her uncle joined them there, “Come on then, you two. You brought this army together, you ought to be marching with it.” He was right, the army they built was ready to move, ever closer to battle.

They made the march amongst the men, beside her uncle for a time. They came upon no resistance, no sign of the enemy as they made their way further inland, toward Perth. It took just over an hour before they found a suitable hill. It was large with a rather flat surface that let you see out along the Firth of Tay.

Camp was made, tents erected, and fires lit as the day slowly faded into night. Harry found himself nearly in the center of the camp, his tent bigger than he would’ve expected before the events of the sacrifice. The smell of fire roasted meat filled the air as the leaders of their army sat together, waiting.

“There’s been no news from the scouts yet, but it’ll only take time.” Thorfinn reported, “We know he called his men, and there’s only so many places to hide an army.” Harry had little doubt that they’d have the news they were after soon. It would only be a short while before Heiddi heard of their arrival, and as she said, it wasn’t hard to find an army from the sky, even in the dark.

“We should make the battleground a place of our choosing.” Harry commented, even if it was obvious. None of them knew this part of the country as well as their adversaries. Even the men of the highlands rarely left them.

Though, that wasn't true for all of them. Ansbjorn was the oldest of them and had raided in the heart of Scotland in his time more than any of them. And so, he had an idea, “I've raided at Perth before in the time of Causantain's father when I was a younger man. We came in numbers, but nothing so great as this. They hid themselves in Muirward Wood east of the hill where Scone sits, they caught us unaware. Harder to hide this army though.”

“There are a dozen valleys and hills between here and the city,” Ragnall said, “It will be hard to draw them to just one. And there's nothing to stop them from retreating and holing up in one of their cities should the battle go poorly for them.”

“They're looking for open battle, same as us.” Rowena reasoned. Not a man among them questioned her presence at their war counsel, “They're enraged by the attack on their monastery, by the impassioned words of the bishop. They don't intend to hide behind their walls. They intend to crush the heathens.”

“Aye, I'd reckon that's right.” Thorfinn agreed, “And if their anger is a fierce enough thing, they won't think about the place of battle. They'll meet where we choose.”

Humming his understanding, Harry told them, “Once we know where they are, we'll be able to make a decision.” It was then that a pair of highland men came to them with Heiddi standing between them. They didn't mishandle her, but she looked disgruntled at their presence.

“Apologies, lord, but this girl says that she's one of yours, that she has information you'll want to know.” In all fairness to the man, he was only doing his job even if it wasn't necessary. At seeing the young witch, he didn't even catch that the guard had called him 'lord'.

“Of course, let her be.” Heiddi walked around the fire to come to his side, sitting between him and Rowena, “What've you learned?”

“Causantain gathered his army north of Perth, between it and Scone,” she spoke only to them, but every man there was listening to what she had to say, “They know where you landed and mean to march at dawn. The town was rife with news of it.”

*The King is coming to us. All there is to decide is where he'll meet us.* Smiling, Harry told her, “Thank you, you've done well.”

For a second, she hesitated, looking at the other men around her, “There’s something else…”

“What?”

“On my way here, I crossed a hill with a wood all about its foot to the east and west but not to the north or south. It seemed to me a good place for battle.” Ansbjorn and Gamelin both snorted out a laugh at that but silenced as Harry glared at them both, “It’ll be a shorter march for you than them.”

“It sounds as good a place as any,” Harry gave her a grateful smile. He knew how much she wanted to help and he couldn’t be prouder of what she managed, “You’ve done enough though now, get yourself some food and a good night’s rest.” Without a backwards glance at any of the lords, she headed off. Harry couldn’t help but notice that Ragnall followed her departure.

“Are we taking advice on battle from some foolish young girl?” Inan spat when she was gone.

“No, but I’m taking advice from a young woman who put her own life at risk to provide us with information that could be pivotal in the coming battle.” Harry eyes glinted a dangerous green that made the older taoiseach shift uncomfortably in his seat, “We march tomorrow regardless, we make for the hill she described and assess it once we arrive.”

“It seems to me as good a plan as any,” Ragnall agreed, as did the others save for Inan and Rhun. The oldest of the taoiseachs had said very little in their discussions, but he looked displeased. *Though that seems to be a look permanently etched into his face.*

“It would be wise if all of us took your advice, I think.” Thorfinn made to stand, “A full belly and a good rest will serve us well in the battle to come.” That, at least, got the agreement of all the men there and they went their separate ways, each of them to their own tents. It was yet another time that day where he and Rowena were left alone together.

Playing with the raven claw necklace around her neck, Rowena stared into the fire, “It’s funny, but I cannot seem to find my appetite. I simply can’t stop thinking long enough to worry about something as trivial as food.”

“Worrying, not thinking.” He corrected her. He could tell from the line in her brow and the little frown that she wasn’t simply thinking, and he couldn’t blame her.

“I’m going to watch you and my uncle, and all these men go off to battle tomorrow while I’m meant to remain behind and do nothing.” Her frustrations, so carefully concealed, bled into

every word, "I'll be stuck here, waiting for news. How am I supposed to do anything other than worry!"

"Who said that you need to remain behind?" He certainly wouldn't ask it of her, he knew her too well to even consider such a thing.

"I'm a talented witch, Harry, but this will be a battle of blades and blood. I have no place amidst that." Her voice quivered; her fears impossible to hide.

"You're wrong." She quirked an eyebrow in utter consternation. He imagined that wasn't the sort of thing that she'd heard many times in her life. She was the brightest witch of her age, after all, "Do you think that the King will be without his priests, or even the bishop himself? Do you think they won't intervene, even subtly, with their own magic?" He was expected to be on the battlefield, anything less would lose the respect of the warriors that joined them, but Rowena could deal with the priests.

"I hadn't thought of that..." She was blushing and hid her face against his arm.

"You've had a lot on your mind," He consoled her, "and you're allowed not to think of everything."

Rowena giggled, "With all the thoughts running through my head, it's hard to remember that sometimes."

"I'll be sure to remind you more often then." They sat there in a comfortable silence, just staring into the fire for a time.

It was Rowena that finally stood, telling him softly, "We should rest..."

"Yeah," While he knew she was right, just as he'd been when he said it to the others, he was enjoying the moment with her and was reluctant to let it go, "Goodnight."

"Night." His eyes lingered on her as she made her way to her tent. When the flap closed behind her, he sighed before making his way to his own bed.

It wasn't as lavish as a wizarding tent, but it was bigger than he needed and far better than where the average soldier would lay his head. There was a bed with a mattress of sorts and a pile of furs, and candles on a small table that were unneeded. Waving his hand, a small ball of light appeared at the top of the tent and cast light about the space. He stripped out of his shirt and his boots until he was wearing only his trousers.

Laying down on the bed, it was comfortable, and made even better by a quick charm. He stared at the top of the tent, unable to find the comfort of sleep. His only company was his own thoughts, the distant chatter of men, and the chirping of crickets.

It felt like hours that he simply laid there staring as the chatter of the camp dwindled down to nothing. It would be reasonable to think that it was the battle that kept him up, but it wasn't. He thought of Ginny and Luna, Draco and Neville, of the people that he couldn't save that might have entirely different lives centuries from that moment because of what he could do.

And then, he thought of Rowena. Just her. Her beauty, her wit, everything about her that had made it easy to grow close to her, for the affection he knew he had for her to grow. There was a part of him that wanted nothing more than to invite her to his tent, even if just to sleep because he knew that his most restful slumber had come with her by his side.

The tent flap rustled, blowing open as a breeze went through the camp, and he swore he could smell the scent of her. Heather and bluebells. *You're hopeless, Potter.*

"Harry..." He heard his name like a whisper and for a just a second, he didn't just think he was hopeless but maybe mad too. His eyes snapped open, only to find no one was there in the tent with him. But he was wrong, because there she was, appearing in thin air as she ended the spell that kept her hidden.

Rowena wore her necklace, and a white shift. As the light left the material almost transparent, he could safely wager that was all she was wearing. Her long, dark hair hung loose around her shoulders, and it almost shimmered in the light of his spell.

"Row..."

"I couldn't sleep," She told him in a hurry, she looked nervous and shy, and gorgeous all at the same time, "I couldn't stop thinking. I know I do that all the time, but this is different. I wasn't thinking about the battle, or the kids, or the church, or anything else like that. I was just thinking about you..." At his little smile she blushed, "not that I don't do that normally, too! I do it more often than I probably should if anything. You're quite interesting after all, ever since that first day in the forest, it's been hard not to think about you but..."

He let her go on longer than he usually did, but he couldn't help himself. He found it adorable, and even when he knew he had to stop her, he sometime struggled to do it, "Row... take a breath. It's alright."

Listening, she took a deep breath before looking him right in the eye. There was something there, a wanton need that he couldn't pretend he didn't find captivating. Rowena was a woman of conviction, and all the shyness left her at once as she reached for the sleeves of the loose shift. She pushed them down her shoulders for it to pool at her feet.

Harry felt his heart hammering in his chest as he took her in. Her skin was pale, almost lily white and a stark contrast to the midnight black of her hair. Her breasts were just bigger



than a handful and perky with light pink nipples that were already stiff and begging for attention. Her legs were long and willowy, leading up to the soft curve of her hips. There was the hint of lines along her stomach as he could just barely make out her abs, and her ribs. A bush of thick dark hair was just above her tight slit. There was a hint of the rosy pink within, and he could see a glisten of her arousal at the top of her thighs.

The sight of her was enough to take his breath away. Biting her lip, she broke through his stupor with soft words, "Should the worst happen tomorrow... I don't want to leave with any regrets. And I know I would regret not giving myself to you." She took a step closer, standing close enough to touch, she ran one hand through his hair, "I want you... I have for quite a while, now... and I hope you want me, too."

"I do..." His traitorous mouth refused to just leave it at that though, "But what if you don't feel the same way when the battle's done and we're alive to see our victory?" He didn't want her to feel pressure because of the battle to come, he wanted to know that this was entirely her decision and not one made from fear.

His concern brought a smile to her lips, bright and genuine, "I will, trust me... I've thought about it... a lot."

Taking her by the hips, she squealed as he turned her and dropped her on the bed. He fell to his knees between her thighs, pushing them up and apart with his hands on her soft skin. It caused her damp petals to part. Her plump lips were puffy with arousal as she looked down at him with curiosity.

Kissing his way up her thighs, her breath hitched as his breath washed over her warm sex. Then her back arched and she filled her hands with the furs around her as his tongue darted out and he savored her juices. It was clean and sweet, and he moaned as he dug his tongue in deeper.

"Oh gods... that's... oh!" Rowena scratched her one hand through his hair, as her hips bucked up involuntarily. He savored every second of it, doing everything he could to pull those delicious sounds from her body.

One finger joined his probing tongue. *Squelch*. She was so wet for him, her pussy so soft and inviting, but so perfectly tight. He felt the thin barrier of her maidenhood, as he massaged her sensitive walls. A second finger was a stretch, and he felt her walls quiver around him at the feeling.

He found her clit, no bigger than the tip of his pinky, hard and throbbing with pleasure. Pulling it between his lips, her entire body went stiff as she shuddered. His tongue flicked against that oversensitive little bud, and then he made her come completely undone.

His tongue vibrated and slithered against her bud. Her cries of ecstasy were loud enough he was sure that half the camp would've heard if it weren't for a casually cast charm. He wanted those sounds to be for him and him alone. *Others can only wonder.*

Her thighs were tight against his head as she held him there. Her juices dripped sweet and creamy from her little slit as he gave her languid licks as she went through the last of her peak. When control of her body finally became her again, she grabbed him by the hair and pulled him up her body.

Her kiss was demanding, without care for the juices that stained his lips. He was already rock hard, but her enthusiastic willingness had him throbbing in his trousers. When she pulled away, her cheeks and chest were flushed from her climax. Her words came out breathy and awed, "I thought I knew what to expect... but that was far better."

He pecked her cheek as he cupped one of her perfect breasts, "That's only the beginning love." Her dainty hands went to his trousers and she pulled on the string that held them up. They fell to the ground and his length hung heavy between his legs. Her hand wrapped around him, her grip tentative and exploratory.

Pulling away, she got her first good look at him. She didn't seem intimidated, just eager to feel him, to try him. He placed his shaft against her slit, her puffy lips hugging either side of him as he rested it there. His crown sat just below her belly button as Rowena opened her legs just that little bit wider invitation, "Please... I'm ready."

They both watched, utterly enthralled as his dome parted her. Rowena bit her lips as he stretched her before he stopped as he felt her barrier. He looked into her eyes as she gave him a nod, "I told you... I'm ready."

Her eyes watered and she whimpered in pain as he pushed through that thin membrane with a snap of his hips. Resting his hand on her stomach, there was a soft glow and she moaned as the pain was replaced with a pleasant warmth. Her voice was needy as she pleaded with him, "Keep going... I need to feel all of you."

The heat of her was exquisite as his cock *squelched* in her wetness. Her eyes were fixated on the point where they were joined as he buried inch after inch inside of her. When his balls finally rested against the curve of her bum, she rested her hand against her stomach. She pressed down, and they both could feel it.

Her walls tightened around him as she giggled giddily, "I feel so full... so good..." She twisted her hips experimentally and got a sexy little grin on her face as he bit back a moan, "You like that?"

“Row... I love this... every second of it.” He took her hips in his hands and dragged his cock out of her grippy pussy, before pushing back into her with one steady, wonderful thrust, “I’ve wanted this just as much as you.”

Her mouth opened in silent ecstasy before she commanded him, “Sh... show me!”

The tent became a melody of clashing bodies and breathy moans, whispered exultations and cries of passion. They moved against each other with an ease that belied their experience together. It came easy with Rowena as though it were just right.

She came around him, her arousal thick and creamy in a ring around the base of his cock. When she asked him to go harder, he went harder. When she cried out because he found a spot that made her shudder, he made sure to hit again. When she told him with sweat on her brow, and eyes glazed over in pleasure, “Right there!” He did it, until she came again and then again.

And every time it took great effort not to follow her right over the cliff. His cock begged for relief, for him to let go. But he persevered until she wrapped her arms around him and pulled him close with what strength remained to her. Her perfect breasts were squished between them, her nipple hard against his chest, as she whispered in his ear, “Give it to me... please... I can’t take anymore... I’ll lose my mind if you don’t... just please...”

It was the sexiest thing he’d heard in his life, and he growled as he buried himself in her slippery sheath. The last thrust made her cry out as her cunt squeezed him in one last peak. His shaft swelled and bucked inside of her as he exploded, painting the deepest parts of her in pearlescent white. His vision went dark as he experienced the single most poignant euphoria of his life.

“Oh Frejya...” Rowena cried out. It was the last thing he heard before he lost track of all sense of time.

When he finally regained himself, he felt her nails gently scratching against his side. They shared no words as he turned with her in his arms and pulled her close.

They fell into a deep sleep that had eluded them, filled with pleasant dreams.