

In the Land of Wind and Whisper

Prologue

In the Time before King Arthur

In a place far, far away

Lives a world of sword and sorcery, magic and wonder

Behold the Land of Wind and Whisper

X. The Mischief

Tobias and the council are agreed. In return for the Finder, I will be overlord.



iro checked at the edge of the encampment. She pulled the hood of her jet-black cape closer to her face and tread warily forward. The lock grove with its thick brush was just ahead. Selk met her there, emerging from the darkness of the night. He walked boldly as if he did not care that their lives would be forfeit if they were caught.

“You are overdue,” he greeted her.

“The brat Tibbet clung to me these many moments. What news?”

“My servant has returned from Xennovia.”

“Was he seen? Rolt left men there. Some of our people stayed behind.”

“My tools are sure. Rest assured, he slipped in and away like the wind.”

“And?” she asked eagerly.

“Tobias and the council are agreed. In return for the Finder, I will be overlord.”

“And me?”

“My consort—but with ruling powers,” he added stifling her dissent.

“Good, as long as we understand each other.” She turned to leave.

“Does it not trouble that our schemes will lead to Rolt’s death?”

She looked back. Her face was shaded, but Selk could see the harsh grayness in her eyes.

“My heart is not womanly soft. Like many, I seek sway in this land, not love.”

“As do I,” Selk said. “We are allied, but know you this. I act alone. There are other paths that I may take to reach my end, a different course that could cut you dead.”

“As long as you do not lose your head over that blonde one.”

Selk smiled with a sinister sneer that was fearsome in its coldness. “You should know—better than any—that I would never be caught in damsel’s toils.”

“I have my own plans too,” she warned. “If I see my chance, I will take it.”

“You need not tell me this, but your plans best not confound mine.”

“They will not. Unlike you, I am neither careless nor foolhardy.”

“Unlike you, I have no fear of Rolt.”

“I fear no one, but I have no desire to have my body stretched on Bone Hill.”

“Have you been reading the star signs again, Miro? Did you see my end there?”

“I need no signs to know that you barely escaped death when you went before Rolt and his battle guard, accursed of conspiring with the Mala during the late wars.

“You speak of old news, that does not matter. Naught could be proved against me. Are your schemes so well-contrived?” He smiled again—this time, baring his teeth.

Thus, they parted, each knowing there was no such thing as trust betwixt them.

And, from the shadows of the lock grove where they had plotted and planned, someone disguised as another arose from a still crouch and followed them. ■

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