

Of Crown and Tide

"This is dangerous."

Colin nodded, gave a half grin his eyes didn't share, and said, "Yeah, well, that's what is needed, innit?"

Margaret couldn't help but smile at his use of the colloquial. It was something that she felt was endearing, but at the same time showed just how different their upbringings had been. She thought that her father, the owner of a large cast-iron plant in Devon, would likely balk at Colin and his 'low speech.'

The two sat in the attic of the small bookshop in Cornwall they had decided would serve as a safe place to set up, and one where no one would come looking for them. The objective of their mission would be unknown to the citizens below but would affect them, if successful. The information the two of them sought would hopefully turn the tide against the Kaiser and his constant German onslaught.

"So, uh, what is it you...uh...do to...you know..." He trailed off as he made a motion with his hands that looked to Margaret like he was suggesting she was gagging on a piece of food.

"What on earth are you doing?"

He stopped and looked at her, his cheeks a little flushed.

"Sorry, yeah, you know, I uh, was just trying to be, um, polite."

She cocked her head and gave him a knowing smile.

"You were trying to be polite by mimicking me choking on something. I think we need to work on your definition of polite."

The flushing in his cheeks darkened. He started to open his mouth to say something but Margaret interrupted, much to his obvious appreciation.

"If you are referring to the emanations from me while I commune, then there is no great trick. They just appear. I understand there are a great many charlatans and braggarts who attempt to recreate what it is that happens naturally to me by using muslin, silk, or some other such trickery. You will see, if we still must do this, that the effect in reality could not come from a simple trick of the light and some bundled cloth."

Colin sat across a small table from Margaret, his hands fidgeting with a piece of string he had found while cleaning the table. He stood, crossed to the small window in the portico that looked over the busy street below. After a few moments of silence, he said, "Yeah, Margaret. Afraid it is something we must do. Sorry."

He said this, never turning back to see her. She wondered if his awkwardness around her stemmed from the obvious social-class differences, his discomfort with women in general, or that this was going to potentially get them executed. She decided that any would be a viable excuse.

"Colin, I need you to do something for me."

He turned and looked at her, really looked at her, and said, "Anything, Margaret."

"I need you to not be in here. What I'm about to do is a crime against the crown and against the moral authority of the church. You needn't be here. If I find anything of

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value to help our efforts in this war, I'll be sure to pass the information along to you and your cohorts."

She wondered if her words really hurt him as much physically as they appeared to. She would have expected the same reaction if she had picked up her fountain pen and threw it at him, with the blotter, and well to follow.

"I...I...I would...never leave...you..." he managed to get out from a mouth whose jaw seemed to have lost function. He continued to open and close his mouth, staring at her.

"Colin, seriously. It is OK, I...um...Colin? Are you alright?"

She asked because he was still working his jaw, opened and closed, in a steady rhythm, and his eyes, while aimed directly at her, seemed to lose focus.

"Colin?" Margaret asked as she stood from her chair, a steady unease entering her system.

He stood in his spot as if rooted to the floor. His eyes were still aimed at where she had been moments before and his jaw was in constant motion. Opening. Closing. Opening. Closing.

"Colin?" she repeated, taking a tentative step around the table towards him. "You are starting to give me a fright. That's no easy thing for someone like me." She smiled as she said it, hoping the humor of the statement would reach him, though she did not feel humorous herself.

His jaw snapped closed with an audible 'snap' causing her to start. She put a hand on her chest, and the other on the table to steady herself. "Oh, Colin, you gave me such a sta—"

The words were drowned out by the whistle, or roar, she couldn't be sure which, since it seemed to be felt more than heard. The sound emanated from Colin, but his mouth was shut tight. So tight that she could see the muscles in his jaw bunching with effort.

"Colin...?"

Before she could try once more to get any answer from him, she felt the tide turn.

"No...not yet..." she pleaded, her breath coming out in strained exhalation. The tide was something she was familiar with, as she had coined the term originally for her coven, but now was not supposed to be the time. She hadn't initiated it.

The surprise of feeling the tide wash over her made way to panic as the full realization of what she was thinking came forcibly into her mind.

I didn't initiate it.

The thought hung there in her mind, picking up the pace of her heartbeat and giving her lungs even more strain than the tide was bringing.

Colin turned his body to her, not moving his neck, until his eyes met hers. She saw them focus on her. The whistle grew louder as he opened his mouth impossibly wide. She saw fully down into the back of his throat. The whistle was so strong it hurt her ears

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and pressed against her mind. The tide was coming even stronger. Stronger than she even thought possible.

“N-n-n-nnnoooo...” she managed to get out in a plaintive voice as the pressure of the whistle and the tide pressed her back. She felt her feet starting to slide on the wooden boards of the room. Reaching out to the edge of the table for stability, she realized she didn’t have the strength to even grasp the table’s edge, much less keep a grip well enough to remain upright.

Colin continued his open-mouth assault on her as the tide swelled up and slammed against her chest. She flew backwards, feet sliding flat on the floor, the force throwing her against the wall. Her arms, legs, and head were pinned to the wall by the assault. She fervently looked around the room for something, anything, to help her. It was then she noticed that even though she was feeling the effect of something strong enough to rival a cyclone, the room was still. No chair or table overturned, no paper or book from the nearest shelf even ruffled. It was as if she alone stood in the maelstrom.

She told herself to be calm and think. Using as much inner strength as she could find, she shifted her head against the buffeting force to face Colin and yelled his name, loudly.

Everyone in her coven knew that using a spell like the one she just had, would be foolhardy to do within earshot of anyone while alone in the middle of nowhere. She had just done it in the second floor room of a bookshop on a busy street in Cornwall. The chance no one had heard her was only absolute if they were already hard of hearing. The spell amplified her voice to the same level of the horns used by the transatlantic cruise ships when they come into port. A noise heard for miles.

She had just used it to call Colin’s name.

The deafening utterance of his name was enough to shake the table, the floor, the ceiling, and the roof above. It would be certain that many items on the shelves in the store below had shaken and fallen to the floor.

But, Colin seemed unfazed. If anything, his whistle increased.

Margaret was mentally running through the available options she had in her repertoire, realizing that most of the ones she knew were as docile as she was. None were really effective for any form of combat. Even the voice she had just used was intended to be employed underwater to communicate across long distances.

She was about to try a spell to create euphoria and hallucinations of flowers just to see if that would distract him, when Colin collapsed to the ground. She followed suit a moment later as the tide immediately ceased.

They both were on the ground, panting, obviously exerted to the point of exhaustion.

“What...what...happened...?” Colin croaked out in a small, dry voice.

“I’m certain I don’t know,” she answered. “But, I’m of the mind that we are approaching something very dangerous.”

It took a few minutes for them both to regain enough strength and control to stand so they could then fall into the chairs at the table. Colin immediately put his head down on

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the table, bringing his arms up to cover his head. Margaret leaned back into her chair and stared at the ceiling.

“Seriously, Margaret,” Colin asked from his arm cocoon. “What happened?”

“A warning.”

At this, Colin sat up and looked at her.

“A warning? How was that a warning? We were both just trounced by some...*thing* that neither of us could control. It doesn't take a big brain to see they didn't need to warn us.”

She lowered her head to look at him and said with sadness, and a little pity, “Oh, Colin. What you and the others need me to do has me touch a very dark, very old, and very powerful side of our world. This...” she waved a hand around the room as if to illustrate the events that just unfolded, “this was nothing in comparison to their full strength if they so choose to actually ‘trounce’ us, as you say.”

“But,” Colin started then seemed to be at a loss for what to say. He took a moment, eyes dancing furtively back and forth, then said, “But, Margaret, you were chosen because of your skill. We need you to do what you do, to see what needs to be seen. None of us can do it, and right now, the world needs us.”

“Britain needs us,” she corrected.

“Yeah, right, like I said, the world needs us.”

She could see that he wasn't joking or kidding in that last comment. He really believed that so goes the crown, so goes the world. She wondered if that way of thinking was any less dangerous than the forces that had just touched them.

“I don't know, Colin. This was a grave warning.”

“No more grave than the thousands of our boys dying in the mud in France right now. We need to turn the tide on this war and do it soon.”

She glanced around the room, expecting to see some resident of the tide staring back at her from some dark corner. Their cobalt eyes aglow, full of hate, malice, or worse.

Margaret knew their intentions could be worse.

“Alright, but we must take some form of precaution.”

“Like what? Not like there's a lot of supernatural armor lying about.”

With a tut, she said, “Not like that, but with something to help keep the tide from swallowing,” *and killing*, she thought, “us while we make our attempt to communicate with someone from the beyond.”

“How?”

“We need to call in the coven.”

Colin stood up quickly and turned from the table. “No! Out of the question. We can't afford to have anyone notice us, and a whole bunch of women walking up to a small room with a man would bring a lot of attention, right?”

“Please, Colin.” She felt a shudder run over the nape of her neck up to her scalp. “With what just happened, we need to take the risk.”

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He didn't say anything for a few minutes then nodded. "Alright, yeah, fine. It's alright, innit? We'll be just fine up here."

She knew he was not really agreeing but relenting. Her upbringing told her not to mention that distinction.

"So," he said, crossing his arms over his chest. "How do we get 'em here? You call a spell or something?"

With a sigh, she said, "In a way I'm certain you won't like. They will need to come the old fashioned way: in the door and up the stairs."

"You're having a laugh, aren't you?"

"No," she said, shaking her head. "I'm sincerely not. This was supposed to be a quick event today where I helped you gain some insight that will help the war effort, but it has quickly become something far more grave. I don't have any laughs for today."

"How long until they can get here?"

"If you can send someone to the house, they could be here within the next hour. Promise."

His eyebrows went up at this. "An hour? How is that? It took us nearly half past that to get here from your home, right?"

"Yes, but they won't be going to my home. They are at the house. Our other house."

"Fine, whatever. Let's just get on with it," he said quickly, but rubbed at his arms while he spoke. He looked around the room as if what had just happened might show up to do something else.

"I'll write down a note, with the address over it. Here's a shilling." She produced a coin from her bag she had propped beside the table upon entering, along with a fountain pen and notepaper. "I'm certain you could find a young lad out there willing to run their fastest for it."

He took the coin from her outstretched hand. When he did, their fingers lightly brushed and he felt a spark. Not something emotional, but a genuine spark. He recoiled his hand quickly and looked at it, as if expecting a burn or mark to appear where it happened.

"I read that that is what is referred to as 'static discharge' and is perfectly harmless."

He sheepishly looked back to her and said, "Yeah, right, I know...it just surprised me, is all."

She wrote the note on the paper, folded it in quarters, then wrote an address on top. She set it on the table and slid it towards him, removing her hand before he could touch her again. He seemed to relax slightly at the gesture.

"Back in a tick," he said as he walked to the door with the note in hand. As he opened it, they could hear the exclamations and curses of the bookstore owner from down the stairs. Colin looked back sheepishly to Margaret and grimaced. Turning back to the hall he called out, "Mr. Chapman, are you alright? We heard quite the commotion." She didn't hear the reply but knew that Colin's comment to deflect attention from them was

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thin, at best. She hoped to not give Mr. Chapman, or any of the other patrons, a reason to suspect them.

When he exited, she let out a long breath she had been holding in, and the exhaustion she was trying to hide washed over her. She had never felt the tide so strong, so quick, and never had it come without invitation. It had sapped the strength from her very bones. She lay her head on her arm on the table and was unaware how quickly she fell asleep.

She felt something grab her shoulder and she sat up, ready to scream. Thankfully, she saw it was Colin. She hadn't heard him return. He set down his small parcel. Eyeing the parcel, she asked, "Did the message get delivered?"

"Indeed it did," came a voice behind her. She spun to see three women standing on the other side of the doorway, one of them staring intently at her. Any trace of joy at seeing Margaret was nowhere to be found on her. Instead, she showed annoyance and wariness.

"Emelia!" Margaret exclaimed, standing up. "I didn't think that you'd come. I thought maybe just Evie and Sophie might."

"You send a note saying you require a coven to the house and expect me not to appear? How daft," Emelia said, tutting and shaking her head. "Now, give us an invite and we can get this sordid mess dealt with, yes?"

"Oh, yes, of course," Margaret said in a self-admonishing tone. "Emelia, Evie, Sophie...will you please enter?"

"Yes," Emelia said then took a large step over the threshold. Evie and Sophie repeated the "yes" and made a similar large step into the room.

Colin's brow was furrowed at this, and he stepped close to Margaret and spoke in a low tone as the three other women scuttled about the room, looking in every corner and under every item. "What was that about? Mighty formal, innit?"

Margaret shook her head slightly and said in an equally low tone, "No, but it is a formality. One that must be done before they enter a space they will work within. You would not like to know what happens when they don't do this."

He appeared to want to ask more, his interests piqued, but Margaret walked to the table and picked up the parcel he had set upon the table. It was heavy and smelled of the butcher shop, metallic and coppery.

"What is this?" she asked.

"Oh, yeah, that's just me pork for dinner. Stopped on the way so I won't have to do it later, yeah?"

Setting the package down gently, she wiped her hands on the lower folds of her skirt. "Colin, I don't think that was wise."

He looked from the parcel to her and saw that some of the color had drained from her face. She was stepping away from the package, backwards and slowly.

Confusion crossed his features, and before he could ask why, he looked around and

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saw that the three other women in the room had stopped their inspections of the space and were instead staring intently at the wrapped meat on the table. Their eyes were wide, intense, and unblinking. Their breathing was rapid, and each had their mouth open slightly. Colin stared at a bit of saliva in the corner of Evie's mouth. He opened his mouth to ask what was going on, but he didn't get the words out. The three women jumped at the package, grabbing, tearing, rending; all with their hands and teeth. Colin stood dumbfounded as they ripped up the meat, package, and even twine, and shoved large handfuls of the raw meat into their mouths. None seemed to chew, just swallowed. He tore his eyes away from the scene to see Margaret with her back to the wall, head hung low, and a sad, pained look on her face.

"What...?" was all he managed to get out.

The ordeal was over in moments. The three women searched around their feet for any spare pieces that may have dropped during their struggle to eat. Finding the space free of extra morsels, they took handkerchiefs from their waistbands and wiped their hands and faces down. When they finished, they folded the handkerchiefs into small squares and returned them to where they had been stowed.

Emelia looked at Margaret and said, "You shouldn't deny who you are. Especially to the likes of him." She hitched her thumb toward Colin as she said it, as if he weren't in the room and had not just witnessed their massacre of his meal.

"I'm not denying," Margaret said quickly, nearly snapping the answer, but she caught herself. Taking a deep breath before continuing she said, "I am not denying who I am. I will eat when I want to eat. As for *Colin*..." she emphasized his name and gestured to him. "He is a good person whom I don't wish to offend."

Tutting loudly, Emelia turned and grabbed Evie and Sophie's shoulders, leading them to the far side of the table. "Let's just get this over with so you can get back to your human."

"Human?" Colin asked, unsure why someone would use that word when they were a person, too. He shook his head to get out of his shocked stupor. "What in the bloody hell was all that?!" Colin asked, loudly. "You just ate raw pork, wrapper and all, and then said 'human' like you ain't! Someone needs to start giving an explanation!" He started to step forward, toward the table, toward the women.

Crossing to him quickly, Margaret put a hand on his chest, stopping him in his tracks. He looked down to see her palm rested lightly on his chest, but he felt like he was trying to walk through a stone wall. He couldn't move forward, no matter how much he pushed against her.

"No," Margaret said plainly. "No, they don't need to give you an explanation, and I don't, either. Colin, you asked for this help. Now, you must accept whatever form that helps comes in. Do you understand?"

He didn't seem understand how he couldn't push past her delicately outstretched hand, and he didn't appear to hear or acknowledge what she'd said.

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“Cast him out,” Emelia said, the tone of annoyance heavy in her voice.

“I will not,” Margaret replied in an even tone. “He is a part of this now. If you had been here when the tide hit earlier, you would see this. He must be here.”

“Fine, just put a lid on him. Or I’ll shut him up.” Her tone indicated that this wasn’t an idle threat.

“Colin,” she said, keeping her hand in place and her tone even. “If and when this day is over, we might have a conversation about the events that just took place, but for now...” Her voice trailed off as she lowered her head to gaze at the floor. “Now, I need you to sit to the side and let us get this accomplished, yeah?”

“But—” He started to object but was met with a shove from Margaret. He had to steady himself from falling as the push sent him scrambling backwards a few feet.

“Sit, Colin,” she said, indicating the chair along the outer wall. He obliged, however with a cross and confused expression.

Satisfied he was sitting, staying, and more importantly, not speaking, Margaret returned her attention to the three others in the room. They had been methodically setting all manner of items on the table and seemed to finish when she walked over and said, “I’m sorry for the short notice, but this is time sensitive.”

“Pshaw!” Emelia spat and waved the back of her hand at Margaret. “You should have known better than to take on something like this by yourself. You may be powerful, but lest you forget, you are not *all* powerful. You will always need assistance from the coven.”

Not rising to take the bait, Margaret simply inclined her head to the woman and took her seat at the table. She lined up the few items in front of her: a small brass bowl, two crow feather quills, a short-bladed knife, and a few small squares of pale leather.

The other women lined up similar items in front of themselves, save for Emelia who did not have the quills and leather, but instead a small piece of slate.

When they seemed to finish assembling the items, they wordlessly looked from one to the other and gave a small nod in acknowledgement. Colin watched this from his vantage point along the wall and wanted desperately to understand what was going on, but feared opening his mouth. The reaction from Margaret was too much after an already bizarre and frankly terrifying day. He simply resigned himself to observe and hope to the heavens above that this was going to work. And more importantly, that this wasn’t a waste of time for him and the resistance.

The four women seated evenly around the table, in near perfect synchronization, each picked up a short-bladed knife with their right hands while simultaneously presenting a bare arm to the person to their left. In one fluid movement, from four hands, they reached out with their blades and sliced the skin on the offered arm. Then they moved their dripping arms over the small bowls, allowing the bowls to collect as much blood as possible. None seemed in pain or even fazed by the action, though Colin was amazed he himself hadn’t lost his breakfast.

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“Now,” Margaret said and Colin jumped at the noise. She tilted her head and glanced behind her to Colin, giving him a look that in no uncertain terms told him to suppress such reactions in the future. She turned back and continued, “Now, I will ask the question. Stand prepared, my coven, for this tide may come strong.”

The other women gave no verbal acknowledgement, but instead looked at her directly and gave a short, curt nod.

Taking a moment to heave a large breath and long exhalation, Margaret said in a loud, strong voice, “I call into the tide. I call into the roiling deep. I call into the places where there is only power. I call into these places with one question, which we will need to answer. What will stop this war?”

Emelia picked up her slate and dipped a finger in the bowl, which came away glistening crimson. The others picked up their quills, dipped the tip in the bowl, and held the crimson tip above a single piece of leather.

They waited.

“WWwwwwhhhhaaaatttt.....wwwwaaaaarrrrr...?” a voice croaked behind them. As one, the four turned their heads towards the voice, which was coming from Colin. His face was slack, as if he were asleep, but he was out of his chair and facing them. The tips of his shoes were barely maintaining contact with the floor as he hung in the air. His arms hung limp at his side, and his head tilted forward a little. His jaw opened and the croaked voice sounded again.

“I...kkkknnoooooowwwww...ooofffff...nnnnnooooooo...wwwwaaaaarrrrr...”

The four women maintained their positions at the table, writing instruments poised and ready. Emelia looked upset by the sight, her throat bobbing as she swallowed hard. Evie and Sophie shared a look of profound shock, their eyes bulging and their mouths tight lines as they worked to maintain composure. Margaret’s expression was impassive. She said to the figure that looked like Colin, but didn’t seem to be Colin, “There is a war between this country and others. A war that will negatively affect this land for decades. We intend to interdict so that a greater crisis can be avoided.”

Colin’s figure moved forward, floating at the same height so that its shoes scraped along the floor. Margaret intended to say something else, but her words were drowned out by the now familiar roaring whistle she had heard earlier. It seemed to fill every open space in her head and push all other thoughts to the side. She could see the other women’s noses start to drip blood as they trembled slightly. She assumed her own nose had started to bleed.

Colin’s form loomed over the table. He bent forward and held his mouth open impossibly wide. The voice that had been a strained, slow and croaking noise came out in such force that Margaret wondered if she would lose her hearing before they finished.

“I know of no matters of man. I know of no matters of war. You ask the wrong question.”

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Struggling with considerable might, Margaret managed to say, "I ask...as one...who is...charged with...their...safety...by...the...forces of..."

"Silence. You will not mention their names. You will not mention them in my presence."

"But...who...are...you?" Margaret said through gritted teeth. Her eyes could barely stay open through the exertion and the onslaught of the tide and this figure's presence. She tried so hard to keep her eyes open that they welled with tears. Tears that streamed down her cheeks and mingled with the blood from her nose.

Colin righted himself, moved a few feet from the table then began spinning like a top. His limp arms flew outward in the spin and his slack face couldn't contain the spittle from his mouth as it sprayed outward. He spun so fast it was difficult to see his individual form. He was a tall, thin blur of movement.

"I am the one who commands the tide. The roiling deep. The place where there is only power. I command all."

Margaret gasped, "No."

Emelia grunted a quick, "How?"

"I am loosed upon this world. I am loosed upon this time. It will bend to me. It will bend to my command."

"Why? What do you intend?" Margaret used so much energy exerting herself asking this, she nearly collapsed.

"I intend death. A war is my entrance to this design. I will not be contained, ever more."

"Help!" Emelia exclaimed. "We need you!" She then slumped in her chair, dropping her slate to the floor as her arms fell limp at her sides.

"NNNNNnnnnnnnnnoooooooooo!" Colin's form shouted.

Margaret felt the tide stop instantly, yet Colin remained hovering where he had. She then saw the air shimmer around the table and felt the power it used to keep the tide at bay.

"These are my charges," a disembodied voice said. "You will not harm them any more."

"You have no power over me, Brother! You have no shackles on my legs! I will lay waste as far as the eye can see, for a hundred-hundred years."

"Out," the voice said around them. "Out of this form and out of this space."

Colin's mouth opened so wide, Margaret heard the popping in his jaws.

"I know of this war now, Brother. I will become as death to man."

Before more could be said, Colin collapsed into a heap onto the floor. The air stopped its shimmer and the disembodied voice spoke no more. Margaret stood on shaky legs, not bothering to wipe the mess from her face, and rushed to Colin. As she did this, Evie and Sophie went to Emilia and worked to revive her. Margaret raised Colin's head then rested it in her lap, feeling for life from the man.

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“Come on, now, Colin. Don’t go leaving me just yet, alright?”

He didn’t stir as she held and spoke to him, but she could feel his heart beating and his lungs drawing in breath.

“Damn you, Margaret...”

Margaret spun her head around to Emilia who was swatting away the other two and their attempts to check her.

“What?”

Emilia looked her in the eyes and said, “You know who that was. You had to have known he was near. Why did you have us do this?”

She stuttered quickly to say, “I-I-I didn’t, I didn’t know! I’ve never felt anyone like him before. I didn’t recognize the signs!”

A gasp from Sophie was followed by one from Evie as she looked to where Sophie was pointing.

Emelia broke her harsh gaze from Margaret and also looked to where the other two indicated. Sighing, she said, “Margaret, you best look at this.”

Conflicted with curiosity between what had gotten their attention and Colin’s still form before her, she hesitated to move. Evie seemed to sense this and crossed over to where she sat on the floor and said, “I’ll watch him. Go. You need to see this.”

Begrudgingly, Margaret relinquished him to Evie’s outstretched hands and stood, watching Evie gingerly lay his head down on her lap and lightly brush his hair with her fingers.

She crossed to the table, and said to Emelia, “We must alert the other covens that the spirit of the deep is loosed and roaming. We will all need to be prepared.”

Nodding, Emelia said nothing, but instead pointed to the table and gave a short nod to indicate that Margaret should look where she was pointing.

On the table, through the chaos of the tide washing over them, they hadn’t realized that their supplies had upended and scattered about. The bowls were tipped over, their glistening blood contents spilled. The knives were thankfully pointing away from them, seeming to coincide where the quills lay. But what caused Sophie to gasp was what had happened to the small patches of leather. Margaret bent and looked closely at them.

“How...?” she managed to say after a few moments. “But...we didn’t get to write anything...”

“I know,” was all Emelia said. “But it seemed our benefactor who came in and protected us wanted us to know something instead.”

The leather squares on the table were arranged in a single row, side by side. Across them spanned written words—four of them. Written in their blood, by their quills, but not by their hand. The words read: *Save Lusitania. Stop war.*

“What is a Lusitania?” Sophie asked.

“I’m certain I don’t know, but it means something. We need to tell the other covens this, too—”

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Margaret's instructions were lost as a loud snapping noise sounded behind them. Turning, they saw Evie looking at them, from behind her back. Her head was turned at so unnatural of an angle, it took a few moments for the three at the table to recognize what had happened. Especially given the shocked look still on Evie's face.

She started to fall backwards, her face heading for the floor, and the three saw Colin right himself. He gave a sickly large grin, full of teeth that weren't the ones he'd had moments before.

"I have come," Colin said then turned quickly and leapt through the window.

The three stood in shock for a moment before Emelia regained her composure enough to run to the shattered window. Looking out onto the street below, she could see nothing but a bunch of confused and scared people who were asking what had just happened and why glass had fallen on them.

"Go, now," Margaret said.

Emelia turned back, pointed to Sophie and said, "You go to the northern covens and spread word fast. I'll deliver news to the island to the west and hope we can stop this in time."

Without a word to Margaret, the two left the room.

Margaret crossed to the still form of Evie and recited a small incantation. The body made no noise, but began to fall in upon itself. In a few moments, the folding was so intense, the form was no longer human but a small mass of skin and clothes. Another moment passed, and with a final pop, Evie folded into herself for the final time and ceased to be.

Looking upward, Margaret said as she crossed the room to the door, "I hope you are able to keep us protected, benefactor." On her way out, she turned over an oil lamp that was burning on the mantel. It fell, broke, and spewed flaming oil in several directions. Margaret was already outside and down the sidewalk before the first shouts of "fire" could be heard from the crowd below the room.

Margaret watched the large ship from America as it aimed to slide past The Old Head of Kinsdale on the southern Irish coast. It was May 7, 1915, and nearly five months had passed since she had last seen Colin in the room.

She knew she could do nothing about what was to happen, but felt it was her obligation to be there and witness it. She felt responsible. Responsible for loosing the terrible thing from the deep on an unsuspecting world. Responsible for not being able to do anything to stop it. No matter how much she had tried.

Losing Sophie and two of their sister covens had rippled across the tide. Margaret could no longer access it, and their benefactor was nowhere to be found. They felt alone and powerless.

Standing next to her was Emelia, who though not claiming to feel the same level of

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responsibility, wanted to be there in case she could suddenly find herself useful.

They watched the ship inch closer then heard the first of what would be many explosions. They couldn't see the crew or passengers from this distance, but knew they would be in a state of panic. Margaret didn't take her eyes off the event. She watched for the eighteen minutes it took the ship to sink. She continued watching the spot where the ship had been. She wanted this memory to be etched in her mind.

Finally, turning to leave, she caught sight of a familiar figure near the water's edge, some several hundred meters away. She paused and stared, causing Emelia to stop and look where she was looking.

"Is that...?" Emelia asked.

As if in answer, Colin removed his cap and gave a deep bow. Then stood, gave them a short salute, then slowly walked away along the shore.