

RROSENHART

THE SIGHT



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ROSENHART

by

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Book I

'The Sight'

“...they are truly wise. Fettered no more by selfish attachments, they are neither elated by good fortune nor depressed by bad. Such are the seers.”

the Bhagavad Gita

CHAPTER 1

He rode alone, a dark rider gone from his post for over five years. It rained all that first day in the high country across the North Sea where the cold winds were blowing down from the northwest when he left Lothian after spending the past year with Master Hutger. His black horse Calidus halted, sensing the rider's wish to stop, as horse and man were one. The dark green cape blew in a great arc, fluttering the furs beneath which kept him warm as he turned back down the trail by which they had come and took another path he had spied earlier leading to a copse in the wildwood. The whistling wind ushered them toward the shelter of oak and pines where they rested for the night.

He was crossing the northern lands of Scotland from east to west. In between were woodlands and heather strewn moors, scattered huts, sheep grazing amid boulders, and singular *menhir* standing stones. Sometimes the massive stones were in a row, sometimes one stood alone, and sometimes they were in a circle *henge*, or felled over haphazardly. He had taken refuge at the occasional inn when he found one, but more often he inquired to stay in a stable or floor with some local farmer scratching out a living in this harsh landscape, for he preferred to share coin with those most in need.

Although it was in the early spring of the year that he was traveling, it seemed that in this country it got colder as the season progressed, not warmer. Crossing south of the wall of Antonine, he continued thus in a southwest fashion until the scent of salt air became stronger and he knew he was where he needed to be, beside the sea. Further on the horseman came to a precipice of high cliffs with the sea below and scattered islands beyond. Squawking birds danced in the wind and waves embraced the coast. To his left he could see a settlement he believed to be Carlisle where he hoped to find lodging. He spent the night in the town then continued the trek southward the next day.

He rode through a wood dense with fallen leaf and pine needle. It was the second day after leaving Carlisle. The man discovered that if he did not travel too close to the sea it was less barren and better was the chance of finding shelter. He followed a forested ridge aside a narrow valley when he saw an opening through fairly open trees with a deer trod worn through it. Instinctively he followed it. The way climbed through high fern and bracken, thorn bushes, and crowds of tree trunks. Overhead, gusts of wind reverberated down through the canopy of alder, blackthorn, pine, and holly until the trail leveled,

widened a bit, and became rocky. The track went on for a spell then narrowed, ending at a grove of pines and large boulders below a crag to his right. Alighting, he tied his mount to one of the long low-hanging pine branches that reached across the trail. Lifting and then ducking beneath, he found on the other side massive moss bound boulders obscured by an overgrowth of hazel and wild laurel. There was an overhang of a boulder that served as a roof, where within its shelter lay old dry bracken placed around a small ring of blackened stones where once a fire had burned. Feeling that the place might be occupied, for a minute or so he waited and listened, but heard only the muted sounds of the forest. It will do, he thought.

He whistled a call then unsaddled Calidus. Placing the saddle on a small boulder he removed his bedding. Searching the night sky, which was turning a dusky cobalt blue, the first star appeared. It was good to see the night so clear after so many days of gray and rain. Whistling again while gathering kindling to start a fire he spoke aloud. "I know you are there." He turned to find the great horned owl perched atop the saddle. Silently the bird had glided home which was wherever the man rested or resided. He held out his arm and the owl slid onto it in a soft rush of feathers. She was beautiful with large eyes and a gentle face surrounded by gold, white, brown, and black feathers.

"Mira," said the knight and touched her beak. She rubbed her head against his hand and made a peculiar vocal 'prrrr' like that of a cat, which always amused him. Calidus snorted, so he went to the horse. "You too my friend," and moved his shoulder into the neck of the beast rubbing his withers. They were companions of long standing, horse, owl, and man, but there was also another. He put the owl back on the saddle, threw down fodder for the horse, then searched above him and whistled.

In a rapid burst a falcon landed on the highest boulder. He could just make out its light coloured feathers in the twilight. The bird's name was Merlinus. He had named him thus because of his powers to survive, for it had been a miracle and also because the bird had an uncanny ability to arrive at his master's destination before he knew himself where he was going. Merlinus was just a hatchling when, as a boy of nine, he had found him struggling among fallen leaves below a great oak tree. At first he had climbed the oak and put it back in its nest but the following day he once again found the baby bird on the ground. He took it upon himself to nurse and raise the falcon and they remained

companions ever since. The falcon's feathers were blue black and silvery white. The proud bird was not as friendly as the owl but he was fiercely loyal. The man did not realize that the falcon had been willing itself to live beyond its years just for him, its master, for they had been together a long time.

The sound of the horse munching on fodder had his ear, and then he heard another sound like that of tinkling glass. Following it to the other side of the boulders he discovered the noise came from beneath a mound of leaves. Clearing away the dank leaves revealed a crisscrossing of small branches neatly placed there by human hands. Removing them, he found a stone basin worn down by water that was filling from a spring and trickling to the ground. Small stones and pebbles were at the bottom of clear water so he cupped his hands and took a drink, finding it fresh and sweet. Then he saw that half buried amongst the pebbles was a copper coin. He looked around him more cautiously; the coin confirming now that this was indeed someone's secret hideaway, for it also meant that whoever it was had placed it there was a man of means who saw fit to honor the gods while affording alms to the wild ones. There were always hill dwellers who kept to the forests and caves wary of folk. He searched the tree lined crag below the ridge but sensed he was alone. Who knew what ancient god long forgotten was still worshiped in the hidden places such as this. He dug in his pocket and dropped a coin into the bowl, then taking a wine flask from his saddle he poured some on the ground in front of the spring as an offering to the god as was commonly done on the continent. "In gratefulness for all living things," was his whispered salutation.

He placed Calidus before the basin to drink then set about lighting a fire. Squatting before the ring of fire stones preparing the kindling, he felt a cool draught like a cold hand come over his shoulder. "What's this?" Using the cool air to guide him, he discovered a cave further inside the roofed shelter. He entered and within a few paces he felt something crunch beneath his foot, but it was too dark to see anything. Backing out, he would wait to search further with a torch in hand. Quickly he made the fire and a torch and returned to the cave.

First he found his own footsteps in the dust that led to a smashed pile of kindling just inside the opening crushed earlier by his own foot. The light exposed a fairly large room where he could stand fully upright. He held the torch high. There was a rugged chair and

a chest in front of a small hearth that had been carved into the rock. Against a side wall was a thick bed of straw on a pallet with a well worn but dusty wool coverlet neatly spread atop of it. A basket near the bed held many scroll books. Along the far wall was a string hung with dried dusty herbs. "A scholars cave," his voice carried upward into the hollow of the cave in a distinct echo.

Eyeing the scrolls he felt that there was more to this place to discover but something held him back from exploring it further. Though he wanted to see what the books were about, he resisted, feeling that the time was not right. Whoever it was that long ago lived here, or maybe lived here still, he wished to respect. Perhaps the god would one day let him return. For now he was grateful to have discovered it, knowing there was a reason that he had come upon this place. If he was meant to return he would be guided back.

The journey to this country had begun because of a long forgotten memory and a prophetic dream he'd had which so disturbed him that he quit his post with the suzerain of the Counts of Blois at Touraine over five years ago. He had set out for a place he knew only through legend that was handed down from his mother and long ago line of Celtic fathers before her who were of the family Turone. It was this string of occurrences that led him to Master Gules and then Lothian where his master, Francis Hutger, dispatched him on the journey he was now taking.

Lying on his side upon the makeshift bed of bracken watching the fire, he brought to mind the memory of what had come to pass. "Ooh ah ooh" chimed Mira, letting him know that all was well. She stood watch from a tree above where he had placed the saddle; a saddle stamped with the mark of the dove, for he had been accepted into a secret brotherhood and this was its symbol. Master Gules, his spiritual guide and teacher, had chosen him to become a Knight of the Turtledove. After years in apprenticeship with him, he was sent to Master Hutger. The knight had reached a time of life when the sum of wisdom that is earned through experiences within the spirals of time becomes a force within a soul that is ready to transform. The gift of clairvoyance was granted him as a young boy, which meant that he was granted the way of initiation. To be initiated meant that one's life was destined for knowing the higher mysteries of existence; when the soul is purified, and the spirit leads the way, and life's experiences reveal truths of wisdom more important than knowledge. It also meant that when the soul and spirit are ennobled

through one's own efforts, something that is possible for every human being, physical aging is delayed; for an ennobled soul is an ageless soul. One truth he had come to know was that men of the past did more with less than men of the present who have more but accomplish less toward what is meaningful. If a man thinks only of what he can achieve alone he blocks all paths to knowledge, for he fails to understand the spirit in all living things and the communion possible with the spiritual world.

He placed the prophecy dream before his soul and recalled that it had begun with the dazzling colours of yellow and blue. It is warm and the sun is shining brightly. There are temples of immense size unheard of on the continent; larger than a cathedral or a lord's castle. There is a woman in the dream who has long dark hair with hues of gold from the sun. She wears a white chemise like shirt with an animal skin around her waist exposing her tan legs and bare feet. She carries a bow and quiver slung over her shoulder. With a knife in one hand and corn stalks cradled in her arm, she walks up a sandy mound above a turquoise sea. The image fades then Mira, his owl, appears rapidly flying low before him, her feathers changing to pure white. Following her he gallops on his horse at full speed to keep pace when lo` there on the horizon is a ship with full sails. He stops in time to keep from falling off a cliff and onto the rocks and tumultuous seas below. Across the cliff is another summit where there is a high granite stone temple and steep stairs leading to the top. He reaches for it and falls over the cliff. While falling he knows he will survive and not die but he will feel the pain and live the waking death that is life. The vision fades, and abruptly he awakens in the grip of grief and sorrow, but also with a sense of having conquered something.

It was a vivid dream and he knew in his heart that he was shown something of importance. He shared it with Master Gules, who was quite pleased, and who identified the vision as indeed one of truth and prophecy that revealed a long awaited piece of a larger puzzle that had been needed for a quest that could now begin. The years of tutoring, together with the sight that he already possessed, earned him esoteric knighthood. After four years Master Gules had bestowed upon him the honor of becoming one of his "chosen" sons, and then instructed him to go to Lothian to find Master Hutger so to further his tutoring. At the end of a year with Master Hutger he was initiated into a fellowship called the Knights of the Turtledove. He was to be received by

five noblemen who had been patiently waiting for their sixth man to join them so to enter upon the long awaited quest of acquiring sacred knowledge and securing it for the future of mankind.

The hiss of the fire brought his thoughts back to the present. The opening outside the cave where he had set the fire offered rest, warmth, and a guardian; the pagan god of the spring. He added another piece of wood to the glowing embers, pulled his cloak close around him, and fell asleep knowing that whatever was to come would be made known by the divine world and destiny.

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