

Chapter One

They're coming, and there are so many of them. Keira is standing at the top of the tall grassy Tor, and she can see them for miles and miles. They're trampling the thick green grass and knocking down trees as they force their way through the wooded narrows and out along the green rolling hills towards Glastonbury and the abbey. She's the fastest and the slightest; that's why she was sent to watch. The sun glistens off the soldiers' armor, tricking her into thinking that they were sent by God himself. It's a mesmerizing sight that enraptures her and locks her in place. Her legs finally release and she turns quickly, smacking straight into one of the sacred Thornberry trees. A piece of the tree rips into her arm, and blood runs down the sleeve of her dress as she dashes for the abbey.

On her frantic return, Keira runs into her friend Robert.

"You must flee, the King's army is coming!" she cries, with fire in her eyes.

"Our time has come, as it has to Winchester and Cleeve!" Robert exclaims as he throws his hands over his mouth.

"Yes, sweet Robert. Take shelter."

"But Keira, first there is something I must tell you," he says, grabbing her arms and staring fiercely into her eyes.

"No, Robert. There is no time. I cannot delay my return to the abbey! The others need to be warned." Keira pushes Robert aside and continues on. He tries following her, but he is no match for her speed.

"It's the King's army!" Keira calls as she races through the abbey gates. Her blond hair trails behind her as she flies through the grounds screaming to anyone who will listen. "There are knights on horseback everywhere! They're coming! They're coming so fast!" She screams until she begins to choke and her voice gives way.

A vision overcomes her and stops her in her place beside the herb garden. In it she can see the abbey burning and crumbling around her. Death is everywhere. Rosemary, her pet lamb wails for her before it is brutally slaughtered - its innards yanked out and left steaming on the grass. These men are doing it - they're like goblins. *Goblins!* she cries before collapsing into the sage.

She comes to amidst the sound of the knights as they crash through the abbey walls. Monks are scattering like

flies; nursing maids and their babes can be heard wailing in the orphanage. Keira frantically races into the kitchen, only to find the staff still working as though nothing has happened. Keira yells desperately at them to flee, but her voice is hoarse and empty. There is nothing more that she can do.

She hurries from the kitchen towards the sanctuary of the Lady Chapel. Instinctively she pulls out her necklace. As she gazes deep into the stone, she invokes a prayer - *Good Mother Earth, Goddess over all. I pray you watch and protect me. Save me from the fall.* Amazement and fear overcome her - she does not know how she knew that prayer.

The smell of burning flesh now fills the air and permeates every pore of her body. Even the chapel is not safe. Fire is creeping up the abbey walls - eating at the wood. She remembers a nursemaid once telling her how everything fights to live - even fire.

She crouches as body limbs fly past her. Out of the corner of her eye, she sees one of the knights on horseback cantering up beside her. She tries to pull back into the shadows of the chapel, but he has already spotted her and is lifting her by the scruff of her dress and hoisting her onto his steed. She now sits between him and the horse's head. He is covered in full armor and she can't even see the color of his eyes. She is terrified more than she has ever been in her life, and her muscles have locked in place. Her clutch is so strong that the pendant on her necklace is embedding its outline into her palm. She knows what knights do to women like her. She is now his war prize. He will have his way with her, and then she will be killed. She recoils as he pulls her closer.

"Hold on tight!"

"Let me go!" she cries, trying to wiggle free, but his grip is too tight.

"As long as you have the necklace, the goddess will protect us."

Keira panics. No one is ever supposed to see her necklace. The head monk, Father Stuart, once told her that she would turn into a witch if anyone outside of the abbey ever laid eyes on it. She scans herself internally to see if she feels like a witch. While she does this, the knight tells her his name is Lancelot.

"I demand to know where you are taking me!"

"Away," is all he says.

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"Thank you, Keira." A voice from somewhere far off whispered, "It's time for Stacy to wake up," and with that, Stacy's eyes slowly opened, taking in Therese. Therese's silver hair shone under the soft glow of the table lamp by her desk. Her eyes were wide and inviting, a comforting hue of blue which reminded Stacy of her grandmother. Therese's velvet crimson dress fit snugly around her buxom chest and flowed effortlessly as it scraped the floor. Therese emanated love, but in Stacy's confused state she wasn't sure if she should have been so easy to trust.

"Holy shit!" Stacy exclaimed, rubbing her eyes and pulling herself up to a seated position on the soft, thickly padded couch. She looked down at her body to see if she made it back in one piece. She was still wearing her jeans and navy sweater and her grandmother's diamond engagement ring was still on her finger. Her watch read 4:00. She had arrived at Therese's at three.

"I told you this could be a very powerful experience," Therese explained as she leaned forward, reaching to take Stacy's hand in her own. Stacy was hesitant to offer it, but the need to feel comforted overtook her restraint. Therese's soft hands wrapped around her own as Stacy studied the silver rings that adorned each of the older lady's fingers.

"I guess you didn't warn me enough!" Stacy stood too quickly, causing her stomach to lose control. "Oh crap!" she gasped as she tore across Therese's office, past her antique walnut desk, past the bookcases and the Norfolk pine in the corner, and dove into the side bathroom - throwing up directly into Therese's shiny pedestal sink.

Stacy wiped her mouth clean and stared at herself in the mirror - cliché or not, she knew she was as white as a ghost. She wished her hair were long enough to pull into a ponytail, she thought, as she wiped her face down with wet water and pushed the stray locks away from her face with her wet hands. Her eyes were bloodshot, washing out the vibrant green that was usually her most complimented feature. Through the reflection in the bathroom mirror, she could see Therese perfectly poised on her chair, looking tenderly at Stacy. Stacy wondered if Therese's other clients reacted like this the first time. Did they all have as intense of an experience? Everything in Keira's world was so alive, so much more real than any dream she had ever had. Stacy studied her reflection in the mirror to see if she could see Keira in herself. She just saw a scared thirty-year-old who had no clue what to do with her life.

Finding Lancelot
By Tamara Palmer

"Most sessions aren't this intense. I've done a lot of past-life regressions. I have to say I was truly blown away by your level of recall," Therese continued, seeming to read Stacy's mind. Stacy slowly made her way back to the couch. Her legs felt numb and tingly. She worried that maybe she should have done more research before attempting such an experience. Roxie was right; she didn't know what she was getting herself into. It was like her to be naïve and overly trusting, Roxie was always the skeptic who kept her in check. Stacy had a nagging feeling that she had damaged her body in a way she had never thought possible.

"Here," Therese offered her a bottled water. "We can do a lot together," she continued as Stacy articulated her spine back down along the couch, releasing all of her muscles. Beads of sweat covered her forehead. She was exhausted but also oddly exhilarated. Her mind raced with questions. Who was Keira? Was the abbey real? Does it still exist? Who was this knight, and where was he taking her? Was this truly her life once upon a time? Stacy sat dumbfounded. In the short amount of time she had spent in Keira's world, Keira had experienced more trauma than anything Stacy had in her entire life. Stacy's questions boiled down to one important one and she asked it of Therese.

"How much did you say a ten-session pack is?" Therese just smiled and reached for her appointment calendar.