

Chapter One

It was a beautiful day the sun was warm as it shone down across her face. His handsome face and deep blue eyes were all she could see as she lay down in the grass beside the stream that flowed near the spot where he had first kissed her. It seemed like a lifetime ago. As Katelynn lay there she thought about how they had first met. It was the festival of Mid Summer's Eve.

He was a stranger in her village. Just passing though is what he had told her father. He was on a journey to find a rare plant called thistle mint that grew in the highlands to the north. The healing power of this plant's roots would save his homeland from a sickness. The likes of one, no one of that time had seen before. But most believed it to be a curse from the evil Lord Drasken of that land from where he came.

Katelynn had come into the room as her father and the stranger sat talking. She had noticed him right away not only because he was a stranger, but also his silhouette from the hearth made him seem to have a glow about him. Her father had introduced him as Bryon the son of Stephen Chief of the village of Dunkeld. Katelynn's father Richard being the Chief of their village Glen Roy was with whom Bryon needed to speak. For it was through these lands he must travel to get to the Highlands where the plant grew.

"Please excuse me father," she said, "I came to see if you would like some wine."

"Aye" said Richard, "That might satisfy this thirst." Then he looked towards Bryon and asked "And you Bryon would you care to share in a drink of wine with me?"

Bryon looked up at Katelynn and smiled, "I would be honored sir."

As he started to look away he could not help but stare at the vision of beauty standing before him. Her hair was red as the flames of a roaring fire, her eyes as green as any emerald he had ever seen. Her skin looked so smooth and milky white. He immediately thought how it would feel to touch the softness of her skin and began to feel a stirring in his loins. She could feel his eyes upon her as she turned away to retrieve the flask of wine for them. She did not want Bryon or her father see her blushing. She could feel his eyes still watching her as she walked away.

That night as the people of the Glen Roy gathered around the communal bonfire, Richard spoke to them of things that Bryon had told him. He spoke of the sickness that was in Bryon's homeland of Dunkeld. The villagers began to whisper and grumble amongst themselves. Wondering if the stranger had brought the sickness with him to their village. Father told them how Lord Drasken had come to Bryon's village and demanded they give up their lands and Dunkeld and to swear loyalty to him but when Bryon's father refused. Lord Drasken said Dunkeld would be cursed with a sickness. That the people of Dunkeld would beg for him to take their lands so that he may take away the curse and their sons and daughters might live.

As Richard sat down Bryon stood up and said, "I have asked Richard if I may travel through these lands to get to the highlands where a plant called thistle mint grows that could help my people. I also have asked if I could employ a guide, for I am not familiar with this part of the world and I would pay handsomely for such a guide."

The villagers sat around and talked amongst themselves for a while.

Then Eric a young lad stood and said, "I will guide you to the Highlands for what you seek."

Eric had other reasons for wanting to go on this journey with Bryon. He thought if he did

this then Katelynn's father would know he was worthy to ask for Katelynn to be his wife. For he had loved Katelynn since they were children. Even though he had never let her know his true feelings.

As the festivities begun Bryon began to realize that the people of Glen Roy was a lot different than where he called home. Their customs of celebrating this night for one, but everything was so magical. The storytelling, the songs, the dancing and feasting. He had never seen anything like it before. They celebrated in his lands this day also but not the same as these people of the Northern Lands. It was as if they were part of the magic all around them.

He had heard tell of the people in these lands. That they were born with the magic in them and as he watched he began to wonder if the beautiful daughter of his host had put some magic to use for herself, for he could not quit looking at her and when she danced he felt a stir in his loins again. Katelynn saw he was watching her and began to make her movements more elaborate. She found herself trying to entice the young man to watch her. But they were not the only ones who noticed the way they were looking at each other. Eric noticed as well and he became very enraged.

“How dare this stranger come among them and try to steal the heart of his love,” Eric thought. As Eric watched he knew he would have to fight for Katelynn's love.

The festivities went on till very late. With the children tucked away in bed. And the elders of the village all slowly making their way as well, the younger ones stayed a little while longer to listen to Bryon tell of his homeland and how things are there. To Katelynn it sounded all so beautiful. The women of the courts in their finery and jewels. She could not even imagine what a silk dress was. But she knew it must be beautiful from the way Bryon's eyes lit up when he spoke of them.

That night as Katelynn lay awake on her cot she kept thinking of Bryon. She could not close her eyes without seeing his handsome face and his deep blue eyes. As she drifted off to sleep she was thinking of all the things he had spoke of. And she dreamed of them. But her dreams were not of all the beautiful things he spoke of there was something clouding them. She saw the evil Lord Drasken overlooking her people's lands, with lust in his eyes. Why was he here she thought. We have nothing that he wants. But if she had known what she had seen in her dreams was of things to come. She would have spoken to her father of them.

Katelynn was not the only one who was having a hard time going to sleep that night. Eric was lying on his cot trying to think of a way to keep Katelynn and Bryon from seeing too much of each other before it could be arranged for them to leave. But Eric knew that would be impossible. It was a small village and there were a lot of preparations to do before they could embark upon their journey. It was a four-day journey to the highlands where the thistle mint grew if weather permitted. They would be able to ride most of the way. But the last part of the journey they would have to walk the horses. Eric now wished he had not said he would guide the stranger to the Highlands. But he had and now he must find a way to keep Bryon from wanting to come back here after he had saved his homeland.

Chapter Two

The next morning the village was a buzz with all the things the stranger named Bryon had told them. Even the ones that were doing most of the grumbling the night before, seemed to be enchanted with the words of his lands to the south. As Katelynn and her mother Christine was preparing the morning meal, Richard and Bryon came in from a morning walk. Bryon asked if there was a stream nearby so he could wash before the meal was served. Richard showed him the direction in which to go and off he went.

Katelynn trying not to sound too interested said, “Do you think he will be all right? He does not know the forest in this area.”

Richard let out a little chuckle and said, “My daughter if you are afraid he will get lost maybe you had better show him the way.”

Christine could not help but notice how her daughter's eyes lit up. And this worried her. She knew her daughter was infatuated with the stranger amongst them and was not sure what to say. Christine also knew her daughter was about to get her heart broke for this could never be. Eric had already talked to Katelynn's mother about his plans to ask for Katelynn's hand. She knew that nothing good would come from Richard tempting his daughter in such a way. Katelynn asked if she could go make sure he had found the stream all right and her father had told her that she could go.

As she walked to the stream someone else noticed she was going the same way as Bryon had. Eric followed Katelynn far enough behind so she would not know he was there. When she reached the stream she saw Bryon bent over the stream scooping handfuls of water over his face. His shirt was off and she could see his tanned muscular arms and back. As she stood there and looked at him she felt she would never see another man as handsome as this. As she started to speak to him he turned and saw her standing there.

When she tried to speak she was unable too. Then she gained her composure and said, “My mother has a root we use for washing with. She would have gave you some if you would have asked.”

That was a stupid thing to say she thought to herself.

He was having just as hard of a time talking as well. The way the morning sun shone on her hair made it look even redder than the night before with the firelight making it look as if it was dancing. He felt the stir in his loins again. He wanted to grab her and kiss her and rub his hands over her smooth skin. But he knew if he were to do that he would not be able to stop himself from going further. She was not just a scullery maid or some whore from the brothel she was different.

He turned away and asked angrily, "What are you doing here?"

Katelynn was confused she had saw the way he looked at her. Why was he angry with her for being here? Was she not good enough for him? Then she remembered the way he had spoken of the women of his lands and how beautiful they must be in their fine clothes and such. She turned and ran back towards the village with tears stinging her eyes. Eric was far enough back that they had not seen him but he heard their exchange of words and smiled he knew the stranger was not interested in Katelynn for any thing other than to look upon as she was a very beautiful woman. But Eric wanted to be sure that it was nothing more.

As Katelynn walked into the hut she tried to hide what was left of the tears, she could still fill the sting in her eyes. But why should this stranger upset her so. She knew nothing about him and how could she think he would be interested in someone below his station. But she was the daughter of the village chief. Her hurt now began to swell into anger. She walked towards the hearth where her mother was finishing up the morning meal. Christine knew her daughter well. She could tell she had been crying and by the look on Katelynn's face she knew her daughter was hurt and confused. But what could have happened at the stream to cause this? Had Bryon said something or done something to cause such a change in her daughter and if so what could it have been?

Christine asked, "Did Bryon find the stream okay? The morning meal is ready. Is he going to be along soon?"

Katelynn answered, "He will be here, he was finishing up when I got there." Katelynn did not want to be there when he returned. She did not know if she could sit across the table from him and look upon his face. She hurried and finished her meal and told her mother and father she was going to the other side of the forest to gather some of the early berries. Her father had not taken notice of Katelynn's change of mood. But the change in her daughter deeply concerned Christine.

After Katelynn left, Bryon sat beside the stream and thought about how he had spoken to her. He knew he had sounded very angry and now felt sorry for it. There was no reason for him to have reacted that way but he was afraid she would see in his eyes what he felt. He had never been good at concealing the way he felt, his father had told him many times it would be his downfall if he should ever be on a battlefield and his mother told him it was a blessing because then the woman he falls in love with would know that it truly loved her. He sat there for along time just looking into the water as if the reflection of himself would give him an answer. He would not go back to the hut right now. He would sit here and wait awhile. Maybe Katelynn had chores to do and by the time he got there she would be gone.

Eric sat and watched him for a while and wondered why he was not going back to the village. Maybe he had not heard all of their conversation. Maybe they had made an arrangement to meet back here after Katelynn had finished her morning chores. Eric decided to wait in hiding for a while. As he sat there he thought about the journey ahead of them. He could make sure Bryon never returned from the Highlands. After all the lands were in unrest and there were bandits along the road as well. And no one would ever suspect any different, but then again Bryon would not be able to return with the thistle mint root to help his people and Eric was not sure he could face the fact he would be the one responsible for their deaths. Soon Eric grew very hungry he had not had his morning meal yet and decided that Katelynn would not be returning. As he turned to leave he took one last look. Bryon was still sitting beside the stream looking into the water.

After awhile Bryon lay back and stared at the sky. He wanted to take it all back but he

knew he could not. As he lay there he began to doze and dream. He dreamed of his homeland and all that was happening there. His dreams were filled with the sight of his people being ravaged by the sickness. The villages were plundered and burned to the ground. He saw Lord Drasken's army marching thru his homeland as if in triumph. Bryon woke with a start for his dreams had disturbed him deeply. Bryon knew he must hurry if he was to save Dunkeld from Lord Drasken and this cursed sickness.

He rose to his feet and decided to take a walk through the forest. He heard movement and began to walk very slowly towards where he thought the noise had come from as not to alert who or what it was. Could Lord Drasken know of his father's plan to send him to the highlands to try and find the rare thistle mint? He crouched down behind the ferns that grew in the forest and watched. It was not long until he saw what he had heard. It was Katelynn she was picking berries that looked like they were just ripening. He rose from his hiding place and she was startled when she saw him she believed he had already went back and was having his morning meal.

He walked over to her "Katelynn," he said "I hope you can forgive me for my rudeness, when you came to the stream."

He still could not be honest with her and tell her why. "I was just surprised to see you there." He began "I should have thanked you for your kindness. Would it be alright if I walked with you?"

Katelynn was so surprised by his words she could find no words to say. Bryon turned to walk away knowing he had lost his chance to get to know this beautiful woman standing in front of him.

Then she said, "Please do not go away. Yes, I would like the company. I am gathering berries. The ones that are first of the season are so very sweet."

As he turned she saw he was smiling. His smile made her forget all the anger she had felt that morning by the stream. They continued through the forest and came to the edge of the forest where the berries grew abundantly. Soon the basket Katelynn had brought was filled with the sweet berries and they started back to the village. They had talked of many things, the journey, his homeland, his family and the all the dangers that being on the road could bring.

Then she asked him, "Why is it that you have not gotten this sickness that is in your homeland?"

He looked at her and replied, "I can not answer that for I do not know. It is a mystery even to our court physician. I have been in the villages where it is the worst, trying to help my people and it has not yet come upon me."

They came to the stream where he had spent his morning. They were both very thirsty from their walk and all the talking they had been doing. They sat down and both drank of the water. As they cupped their hands to drink the cool water, their shoulders brushed together. They turned and looked into each other's eyes. He could not let another chance escape him. He cupped her face in his hands and kissed her. Katelynn was so surprised she pulled away.

"I am sorry," he told her, "But I have wanted to kiss you from the first moment I saw you. I will never do it again please forgive me."

Katelynn reached out and touched his cheek and answered "I did not jump because I did not want you to kiss me I was just surprised."

He then put his arms around her and kissed her again. They lay there beside the stream for a long while. Embraced in each other's arms Katelynn wanted this moment to never end. But it was getting late and she knew if they did not return soon her father and mother would be getting worried.

“We should be getting back.” Bryon said as he turned and kissed her one last time. “ I have a lot to do before Eric and I leave.”

Oh how she hated to hear him say he would be leaving but she knew this was what must be and she could not stand in his way.

As they walked back to the village she asked him more questions. Did he have any brothers, what was his mother’s name, was her eyes blue like his? And he answered her willingly He felt he could talk to her about everything. He had never been around a woman he could talk so freely to. He asked her questions also mostly about her people their customs and the surrounding lands. Were the highlanders friendly to strangers when traveling through their lands? How far into the highlands would he have to travel to find this plant? Most of his questions she could answer, but some she could not. If he wanted the answer to these questions she told him, he would have to ask her father he would know she was sure.

Eric saw them walk out of the forest and into the clearing. He seen them holding hands and the way she looked at Bryon would never be the way she would look at him. Not as long as Bryon was alive. So he began to plot a plan to get this stranger out his way. He would be the one there to comfort her. And then he would do everything he could to make her fall in love with him and look at him the same way

As they walked into the hut Christine saw the look in her daughter’s eyes and knew that all her fears where real. What ever had happened that morning was now part of their past. And what had happened while Katelynn had been out picking berries was now their future.

Chapter Three

After the morning meal Katelynn and Bryon walked to the stream. They lay there and listened to the water flow over the rocks in the stream. As they looked into the sky they spoke of their past what each wanted for their people and what they wanted for their own futures. He told her when he returned to his homeland with the root of the thistle mint. And he was sure the unrest there was over and Lord Drasken had been defeated he would return for her. She was not quite sure how to respond to this she had never thought about leaving Glen Roy. As he embraced her and their lips met she forgot all but what was then and now.

He told her they would be leaving the next morning. That Eric had said he needed a couple of days to finish getting things in order so he would be able to be away for a while. But Eric had things in order he was meeting with some Highlanders that were rouges and would do anything for the right price. He had hired them to go to Galloway in the Lowlands of the south. To find Lord Drasken and to tell him of Bryon's journey and what he was doing. Eric knew if all that Bryon had told them to be true that Lord Drasken would want him stopped. And then Bryon would be out of the way and Eric would have Katelynn as his wife.

Christine watched as her daughter and Bryon came out of the forest from the direction of the stream. She was afraid for her daughter. She knew that only heart ache lay ahead for her. That this stranger was filling her head with foolish notions. And that Katelynn had to stay here in Glen Roy.

This was her destiny Christine had been told this the day Katelynn was born. She was to rule over these lands and bring back peace after a time of unrest in these lands. Christine had never told anyone what the Druid High Priest from her village of Glen More had told her that day. Because he had fore told of a time when brother would rise against brother and how from the south would come a man that was not a man but a demon. She knew this man could not be

Bryon for she was a woman of seeing also and knew he was not the man she needed to fear.

Katelynn was not aware of the powers she had for they had not yet awakened but Christine knew it would not be this way for long. For she had seen the man Bryon called Lord Drasken in her dreams. And she knew it was time for her to start preparing Katelynn for things to come. She would have to help awaken the power that lay within her. She thought Katelynn was already starting to feel this power. Katelynn had told her some of the things she had seen in her mind, her dreams and her feelings.

She would have to take Katelynn to her people's village in the highlands. So she could learn their ways and customs. Christine had not been there since her father William Chief of the Highlands had banished her from her village for leaving with Richard. He was a Celt and she a Druid. But Christine's mother Margaret had been there when Katelynn was born and had brought the High Priest.

For the blood of the Druids ran strong in Christine's people. And Katelynn was born with the gift of far seeing. Katelynn also had the gift of knowing what plants, flowers, roots and bark to use and to mix to heal. She had not been taught this she just knew. And she had been chosen to lead the people of this land through the times ahead. And she would triumph, the High Priest had never said this but Christine knew her daughter.

Her will was so strong she would fight to the death rather than give up. The highlanders would gather their forces to rally for her as well. And with all that Christine knew, it would darken her moods for a long time to come. It would be some time before Katelynn would be ready to face such an enemy. She need not worry about this now, but she must prepare for what ultimately what would have to be done.

Richard noticed the change in his wife's mood and wondered what could have turned her mood so sour. He then looked out the door and saw Katelynn and Bryon walking to the hut. Could this have been the reason? Did Christine disapprove of this young man? He recalled a time when he was the stranger in a strange land and how he had fallen so deeply in love with Christine and she with him. How she had to leave her village to be with him. And of her father's anger at her for this, because he was an outlander not of their tribe. Could it be after all these years she was realizing what she had given up and did not want her daughter to have to leave her people to go to a land that was strange and far away. Or had Christine kept hidden all these years the sadness of leaving her village and as the years had passed regretted it more. He would have to wait and see but could only hope he had not disappointed Christine. And that she still loved him as she had all those years ago.

Richard remembered well the first time he had seen Christine it was as he lay on the floor of her father's hut. He could only remember what had happened moments before the rush of water came down the mountain and knocked him down hitting his head on a large rock. Christine and some of the women from her village were out gathering roots. They had heard him yell as he fell. They had all ran to see what had happened. Christine had told him the flash flood had already slowed to a trickle when they had found him. There must have been something up stream that had caught and caused a dam. And when it released this had caused the flash flood. It was late spring and the snow was melting fast further up in the mountains.

He had a bad cut on his head and had been unconscious for quite some time. Christine had taken care of him and as the days passed he began to fall in love with her. He was up and moving around after almost a week, but was still not well enough to travel. And when he was well enough to travel he had asked her to go with him. Christine had left her village and family to be with him. And now he was afraid their daughter was thinking of doing the same.

Chapter Four

Lord Drasken sat at the table where he, his advisors and sorcerers gathered to plan in what manner they should use to bring Stephen down. So that all his people will see that Drasken is the Lord of all the land and his laws is what they will follow.

Drasken heard the guards talking to someone outside of the gates.

He went to the window and called out to the guard, “What is going on there?”

The guard answered and said, “There is a man outside the gate says he brings you news from the North of Stephen’s son Bryon.”

“Let him in you fool,” shouted Drasken. He turns back to the table and says, “Why would Bryon be traveling north? Would he be going there to gain support from the people of the north? We must do something about this right away.”

The guards escorted the young man into the chambers were Lord Drasken was. The man tells him all that Eric had said to him about the journey where they were going and what they were going after. He told Lord Drasken when Eric and Bryon would be leaving for the highlands to find the thistle mint that grows only in that area. And about how long of a ride it would be to get caught up with them. He told Drasken that Eric had said he would try and hold them up for one more day. To give him time to catch up to them.

Lord Drasken looked at the man and asked, “Are you one of these people?”

The man answered and said, “I am from further north of the village. The village where he is staying is under the rule of a man called Richard. The village is called Glen Roy.”

Lord Drasken thought for a moment longer and said to one of his guards, “Have my horse readied for a long journey. I will need two men to ride with me. Pick the best for tracking. I want them to understand we will be scouting the land and want to go as unnoticed as possible. I do not want Bryon or this Richard to have any idea why we are there.”

He turns back to the man who brought him this news and says, “My guard will take you to a room for rest and so that you may eat and have drink. You have came a long way, when you

have been fed and rested I will travel back to this place with you.” The man left the room with the guard.

Lord Drasken had a lot to think about now. He ordered the room cleared. He had to make a plan. He had to think of a way to go about the countryside unnoticed. He wanted to see what Bryon was up to. Was he really there to find this plant or was it just a cover for his true reasons. Were the lands to the north a place that maybe he should be interested in also? He would have to make this journey. And take care of any threat that could come from Bryon being there.

There was a knock at the door and two men walked in with the guard he had sent to get them. He told them why they were sent for and what they would be doing. He told them to make sure they were armed. But nothing that looked like they were more than merchants. He was coming up with a plan as he spoke and told them to go prepare to leave by morning light.

Drasken sat down at the table where they had all been not so long ago talking about what to do about Stephen and now he had to deal with his son as well. He thought back to when the people of this land had rose up against his father. How he had seen his father killed before his eyes. He had sworn then that he would avenge his father’s death. He would take back all that was taken from him.

As he sat there he wondered if the dreams he had been haunted by, was not of this place? A place he had never seen and a woman with hair as red as fire and eyes of emerald green. She was so beautiful in his dreams but he always had a feeling of foreboding when he awoke from these dreams. Was she the woman that had been foretold to his father all those years ago? Was she the one who would rule beside him? Or was she the woman that would defeat him. He was now anxious to set out and find this place that haunted his dreams. He walked over to the window and looked out. The sun was setting and the land looked so beautiful. The rays reflecting off the water that surround the castle looked as if they were dancing. He saw the beauty in this as he did in all of nature’s beauty but he was driven by revenge and anger. He hated the people for what they had done and now he Lord Charles Drasken would have his revenge.

Drasken began to get ready for the journey. He did not believe they would have any problems along the road but wanted to be prepared if there was. As he got ready to lie down for the night he kept thinking about the woman in his dreams. As he drifted off he began to dream of her. She was standing beside him over looking the valley that haunted his dreams as well. How beautiful she looked with the wind blowing her hair back. But he felt as though she was not happy being there as if she was being forced to stand there and look. He awoke and found he was so soaked in sweat. Why did this woman haunt his dreams? Who was she?

The next morning they were on the road before the first cock’s crow. There was not much talking between the parties. They all had other things on their mind. At mid day they stopped on the roadside and had a meal of dried venison and a couple of sweet cakes. Lord Drasken knew they would have to hunt for most of their food for they had only packed traveling food. A few pieces of dried venison and some sweet cakes was all they had brought with them. If this was to go as planned they needed to act the part and not raise any suspicion.

When he asked the man who had brought him the message from Eric why had Eric sent him to tell him of this.

The man replied, “My lord, I know not why. He only asked that I be very secretive about where I was going and why. He told me to show you to the path into the forest. And that you would have no trouble in following them.”

“How many men are they taking with them?” asked Drasken.

“Only Bryon and himself My Lord,” answered the man.

This seemed strange to Lord Drasken maybe Bryon was there just to get the plant the man had told him about. It made no sense that if he was out gathering men to help fight him. That he would only take one man with him and one he knew not well but a man who knew the land to the north well. Maybe he was just using this Eric as a guide. Just as he was using this man as a guide, but this man would never live to tell anyone of his presence in these lands. He had already told his men that were with him what the plan was for the highlander.

That night as the moon came up over the horizon Drasken noticed how big and full it was. There was really no need for a fire they ate early while it was still light and had a hot meal. The men had killed a rabbit and they had cooked it. Now the embers lay dieing and the moon was so bright there was no need for light from a fire. They all settled in for the night. The two guards took turns keeping a look out.

Once again before the cock could crow they were up and on their way. He did not want there to be too much distance between them and Bryon. They rode the whole day not even stopping for a mid day meal. The man told Lord Drasken they were getting close to where the path led into the forest. In the forest is where the village of Glen Roy was. They stopped and made camp early. Once again the men went out to hunt for food and came back with some eggs they had found in a nest. Lord Drasken told them to build a fire so that if any one seen them they would not think it funny to see four travelers sitting around a low burning fire. As this may alert them that something was a miss. As the fire burned Drasken looked into it and thought. By mid morning they should be close enough to the village that they would not need the man to show them any further.

At first light they were heading into the forest. Lord Drasken had already told his men what to do so as not to cause too much noise in case there was someone in the woods. Around mid day they stopped for a meal. As the man was getting ready to get the last of the venison he had left in his pouch one of the guards grabbed him from behind and slit his throat he never even saw which one it was done very quickly and very quietly. They took him deep into the forest and buried him.

He had told them he did not want someone to come upon him and think about the three strangers they had seen in the forest. After all the man was a stranger as well for he had told him that he did not know any of the people in Glen Roy. After this was done they stayed at the camp sight for the rest of the day and night. He thought it would be best to go into the village about midday. When most of the villagers would be out working and doing their chores. And most of them would see them coming into the village and they would be more interested in stopping their chores for a break. Just to hear the news from where these men came.

As they rode into the village Lord Drasken looked around these were not men of war, they were farmers. They had no reason to get involved in what was going on to the south. Then he knew the reason for Bryon's journey to the Highlands had to be to find this plant called thistle mint. Then he saw her she was the woman in his dreams. There could be no mistake it was she. Her hair was tied back so it would stay out of her face as she pulled the weeds out of the garden that she was tending.

Since they had started into the forest Lord Drasken had a feeling he had seen this place before but knew this could not be true. As he looked upon this woman of beauty, the woman that haunted his dreams, he knew then this was where it had all been leading. He knew now the reason he had felt so strongly he should be the one to go and see what Bryon was up too.

Chapter Five

Katelynn had started the day as usual down by the stream. It seemed to help her remember he would be coming back. And the misery of missing him was made easier when she came here. But she had to tell him she could not leave her homeland. This thought scared her. For here in Glen Roy was the only world she had ever known. As she bent down to pull more weeds from around the plants in the garden. She began to think of him again, her thoughts were so caught up with remembering the touch of his lips on hers, his arms embracing her she had not heard all the commotion of the strangers riding in.

All of a sudden her thoughts were disturbed. She could feel someone staring at her. She turned to see the strangers and one of them was looking directly at her. She felt a shiver go through her. What was so familiar about this man? Why did his stare seem to be penetrating her very soul? The way he sat atop the black horse seemed so familiar she had to turn her head away but she knew he was still looking at her.

Richard had come out as well to meet the strangers riding in. He invited them to his hut for food and drink. Lord Drasken and his men agreed they would accept his invitation after they had found lodging for themselves and their horses.

Richard said to them, "But this is just a small village we have no place to lodge travelers. And most have no horses. But I have a small stable and room for one and I am sure we could find rooms for your companions with some of the other families in the village."

Lord Drasken agreed and went to talk to his men and to tell them they were not to call him by any other name except Charles his given name. He did not want these people to know he was the man that Bryon may have spoken of. He told them if either of them slipped and called him Lord or Lord Drasken while in this village he would kill them before they had time to get the full name out. Both agreed they would call him Charles and agreed they would find lodging in other households in the village.

Katelynn had been disturbed by the stranger's stares. She walked to the stream and sat down. Why did this stranger bother her? And then it came to her. He was the man she had seen in her dreams this was Lord Drasken the same man Bryon had spoken of. She got up and began

to run back to the village. When she burst into the door about to tell her father what she had dreamed and who she thought this man to be she stopped. For he was sitting at their table having a meal and drink. And what was father saying he would be staying with them until they went on their way. She could not believe what she was hearing.

She looked at her father and said, "But father this is the man Bryon spoke of. I know it is, I have seen him in my dreams."

As she said this he almost choked on his food. How could this woman have dreamed about him? And had she saw him so vividly that she knew him now.

Her father said to her, "No, Katelynn this is Charles from further south than even Bryon. He comes from the villages of Galloway. He is a merchant out looking for new trades. He will only be here a couple of days."

Katelynn was confused how could she be so wrong. Maybe it was the light of the sun or the way his face was shaded when she first saw him. Now that she was face to face with him she could not be sure. She felt so embarrassed she apologized and went outside.

Her mother had followed her and asked Katelynn, "Why have you not told me of these dreams?"

Katelynn looked at her mother and said, "I thought they were just dreams mother. That's all just dreams."

Christine looked at her daughter and knew the time had come for her to tell Katelynn and prepare her for what was to come. But what of this stranger called Charles for he looked like the man she had seen in her dreams as well. But she could not think of that right now she had to tell her daughter of the past and what was thought to be of the things to come.

"Katelynn," she began, "There is something we must talk about."

She told Katelynn why she never spoke of her people. She told her what had happened when she had left her village to be with Katelynn's father. How her mother had come to the birthing of Katelynn. And of the High Priest that had come with her mother when Katelynn was born. And what the High Priest had to say about Katelynn's destiny. That she was the prophetess of the Druids that had been fore told of many years ago. As she finished she said to Katelynn, "The time has come for you to go to my people and learn their ways. There are teachers there that can help you more than I. I thought I would have more time before this would come to pass but I see it must be done now. For now your powers are awakening. I will make arrangements for your safe passage there."

Katelynn's mind was racing how could she leave now Bryon was coming back for her. She could not leave she had to be here when he returned.

She turned to her mother and said, "Mother I can not go now. I must wait here for Bryon as I promised."

Christine looked at her daughter with tears welling up in her eyes and said, "Katelynn you must do this. This is not just for you this is for all our people, but also for the people of the North, South and Central Lands. You must learn how to use the power for good and to lead our people to peace. You must now think of more than just yourself. Your people will need you to be strong and show them the way."

Christine turned to walk back into where the men were talking.

As she walked in Richard looked at her and asked, "Is everything alright Christine?"

"Yes," she replied. "If you will excuse me I have some things I must take care of now. Richard I need to speak to you in private please."

Charles rose from the table and thanked Christine for the meal and said he was going to

find his men and would return later.

After Charles had left. Christine told her husband the same story she had told Katelynn. She also told him of her dreams of this man that Katelynn spoke of. And how this Charles looked a lot like the man in her dreams. Richard told her that it was probably because he was a stranger. And since Bryon had told them of this stranger, maybe she just put his face on the face of the man in her dream. And Katelynn had probably done the same thing. He told her he would consider what she had told him and would give her an answer the next day. But he was not sure if he wanted Katelynn to go.

Richard had known Christine had the gift of seeing and dreaming but she could control it. And not once through the years had she spoke of it to him. She had never let it influence any decisions that had been made. So why now, could this be the man that Bryon had spoke of? Maybe he should let Christine take Katelynn into the highlands and let her learn their ways. For he had a great respect for these gifts that Christine's people had. He knew there had been wars waged and won just on what they dreamed or their visions of the future. But still this was his daughter, was Christine so sure that Katelynn carried these gifts in her blood as well.

Katelynn was trying to sort out in her mind all the things her mother had told her. She was now more confused than before. What was happening to her? Her whole world had been turned upside down since Bryon had come into it. Maybe Charles was not this man she had dreamed of. But how could she be sure. In her heart she felt she was right that this was the man that Bryon had told them of. She would stay away from him while he was in the village. She was not sure how she was going to do this; her father had told him that he could stay with them. His searing brown eyes looked at her as if he could see into her very soul. She would have to be on guard while he was in the village.

She walked back to the village through the forest she was glad she had come here to walk. It had done her good; the air was cool from the shade of the trees and there was a slight breeze blowing. She heard someone following her. When she turned she saw Charles walking up behind her.

He said to her, "I am sorry that I upset you today. You told your father you had seen me in a dream. I hope this dream was good, but by the way you burst into the room I think it would be safe to say that it was not."

Katelynn kept walking not wanting to answer him. He walked right beside her and did not say anything more.

Then Katelynn turned and said, "I have apologized for my outburst. I did not think I would need to do it again."

"Why would you think I was this man in your dreams?" asked Charles.

"When I saw you with the sun behind you and your face shaded it was just as it was in my dream," replied Katelynn.

She did not tell him she could feel him staring at her. "I must be getting back. It is getting close to evening and mother will be putting the evening meal out. She does not like to be kept waiting to sit down to eat."

As they walked towards the village neither of them said anything more. Charles knew this was the woman in his dreams. The fire red hair and her emerald green eyes you could see the soul of the world in them. She was more beautiful than even his dreams could make her. But somehow he must gain her trust and this would not be easy they had already started out badly. What had been her dream, had she dreamed of him they way he had of her? How he wanted to ask her but knew he could not.

Christine was putting the meal on the table when the two of them walked in. She could not hide her surprise to see them together.

Katelynn saw this and said, "I was walking in the woods and Charles saw me there and we walked back together."

Neither Christine nor Katelynn spoke as they ate their evening meal. Richard and Charles seemed to talk endlessly about what was going on in the south.

Richard finally asked what Katelynn had been wondering all evening. "Charles, May I ask what you know of this Lord Drasken. There was a young man that came through these parts not long ago and told us of him?"

Charles had been waiting for this question and had thought out carefully how he would answer.

"Well, Richard," he began, "From what I have seen and heard Lord Drasken is only trying to regain what was took from him many years ago. When the people of Dunkeld rose against his father and took control of his lands. Lord Drasken watched while his father fought so hard for what was his and when it was over his father lay dieing in the very castle that he had been born. I believe Lord Drasken only wants back what by birthright is his. I cannot say anything more for I really do not know the man and of course all is hear say. Only if you live in someone else's mind can you say what they think or feel. And I wish to never know that of anyone."

He could tell by the look on the faces staring at him it had been a good answer. Now let them think on that he thought. He knew by morning Bryon would not be as noble as they first saw him. He was fighting a man who was only trying to take back what was taken from him. Maybe Katelynn would feel different also. But he could tell something more had passed between Katelynn and Bryon.

Would this story be enough to make her to start doubting him? And Eric was it because of this woman that he had sent him word of Bryon's where a bouts and what he was up to? Does he think that I would come and take care of Bryon and Katelynn would be his to pursue? Now Charles had questions but they would wait till the morning. He wanted to see in the morning how the story he had told them of himself was to go. Would they feel sympathy for him?

Chapter Six

It had been two days since Bryon and Eric had left the village. They had not found much to talk about along the way. They only talked when Bryon would ask a question about a certain tree or maybe a bird he had seen. For there were things here that Bryon had never seen. What a strange and beautiful place this was. Eric had seemed a little strange since they had left Glen Roy. Always looking behind him almost as if he was expecting someone to be following them. Katelynn had told him he could trust Eric so he would. It was just he knew that if Lord Drasken got word of him being here he would come and try to stop him. But Katelynn had assured him that there was no way anyone in the village knew Lord Drasken for she would know.

Eric was also doing some thinking as they rode along. He was wondering what was taking Lord Drasken so long to get there, he had held up their departure for an extra day. Had the man he hired just took the money and had never went to tell Lord Drasken as he had promised. Or was Bryon who he claimed to be. And Lord Drasken was not as interested in him as Eric had thought. Eric had lain awake last night thinking what if Drasken did not come to take care of his problem for him then what would he do. Would he be able to take care of it himself? If nothing happened before they reached this spot on their way back he would have to deal with it himself. He must start thinking of a plan. He would have to decide when would be the best time to strike.

The trails to the north had been easy to travel, but they were going into the Highlands now and it was getting harder to ride. If it was not the thick forest it was the rocky hills. The forest had become so thick the higher they climbed and the hills were covered with sharp rocks. Making it impossible to ride the horses. They were walking more now than they were riding.

It was near midday and Eric said, 'I think we should stop here and rest for a day. It seems to be harder to breathe the further up we go and it will be harder traveling. We need to rest well before we continue.'

Bryon agreed he did not think he had ever climbed anything as high as this before. He was breathless as he looked around at the beauty that surrounded them. Eric pointed to a place below in the valley.

"That is Glen Roy," said Eric. Even though it was mid summer it was still cool during the

day in the Highlands, and the nights were cold.

As they unpacked their traveling gear Eric said, "I feel like some fresh meat. I have had enough of traveling food. How about you?"

Bryon had to agree he could use a good hot meal and said, "Yes, I would but I do not know this place I would not be much help but I could stay and get a nice fire going," he replied.

"Fine," said Eric. "I shall return with the biggest rabbit you have ever seen."

Bryon began to gather dry wood and some dried moss to start the fire with. It did not take him long to gather enough dry wood to last for the night. Before long he had a good blaze going as he sat there and looked into the fire burning the color of the flames made him think of her. Oh how he ached to feel her in his arms and to look into her beautiful green eyes. He heard someone holler and looked and saw Eric coming towards him and it was the biggest rabbit he had ever seen.

That night as they lay looking into the sky from their bedrolls Bryon asked Eric, "Do you think someone is following us?"

"What would make you ask that," Eric replied.

"Because you keep watching behind us like you are expecting someone," Bryon replied.

"Oh," said Eric "It is just the people of the Highlands sometimes do not like strangers on their lands. And before there could be trouble I would rather call them out so they will know who we are and we will know who they are and know why we are here."

Eric was very proud of himself for thinking of that answer so fast. For he never thought that he was being that obvious he would be more careful in the future. And he would remember that Bryon was watching him as well.

"I am glad you are thinking for us for I had not thought of anything like that since I had Richard's permission to travel through these lands," Bryon said.

"Yes, but you are in the Highlands now and it is ruled by William. It is better to be safe and know who is behind you than not know they are there at all," said Eric. He had left out the fact that William was Richard's father-in-law.

That night there came a bitter cold wind down upon them from the top of the mountain. They were both glad that they had listened to Richard and had brought extra clothing and covers. They lay their horses down to help block the wind that was sweeping down from the mountaintop. Eric was glad that Richard had gathered more than enough wood for the night. It would help keep them from freezing.

When Eric saw the pile of wood he had gathered. Eric had laughed and said, "Well, we will have to make sure we come back this way so we can finish using up the good fire wood you found."

Then they both started laughing but they were not laughing now. Both of them was only to glad to have the extra wood to keep the fire burning and the little warmth they got from it. With the horses blocking most of the wind they did keep most of the heat around them. It was not easy to sleep that night. But in the very late hours of the night the wind died down and they were able to sleep.

They woke the next morning and there was still a chill in the air. Bryon got the rest of the rabbit and built the fire up again to cook it. After they ate they got their things packed away and continued on their journey.

Around late morning Bryon asked, "Do you think we could stop for awhile?"

Eric thought for a moment and said, "Yes, I think that would be a good. We sure did not get as much rest last night as I was hoping. We will go a little ways further there is a stream

ahead and we can get fresh water and let the horses drink. We will stay there for the night.” Eric thought for another moment and said, “Would you gather the wood?” They both started laughing and Bryon said, “Sure about the same as I did yesterday.”

Eric was really starting to like Bryon. He was starting to doubt if he could go through with his plans. Especially if Lord Drasken did not take care of things for him. Eric had a feeling that they were being watched and he wondered if it was Lord Drasken. A little while later they came to the stream that Eric had spoken of. That night as they sat around the fire and ate the trout that Bryon had caught, they talked some more. Eric still could not shake the feeling they were being watched. But by whom, could it be someone from William’s village? In the morning before they left he would scout around and see if he saw any signs of anyone else being in the forest. But as he looked around now he saw no signs of a fire in the darkness of the woods. Who or what ever was out there was taking a lot of care not to be seen.

Chapter Seven

As Katelynn lay on her cot that night she thought of what Charles had told them as they sat around the hearth after the evening meal. Could this be true that this man Lord Drasken was only trying to take back what had been taken from him? What would she do if the same had happened to her? As she drifted into slumber she was still thinking these thoughts. And she dreamed, now as her dreams unfolded they were different. The man in her dreams began to look like Bryon. She was standing beside him on the hill over looking her village. Then when she turned to look at him it was Charles. He reached for her hand and she took it. He embraced her and she responded to the embrace and they kissed a long passionate kiss. Katelynn awoke from this dream it had frightened her. She lay awake the rest of the night trying to figure out what the dream had meant. She did not have those feelings for Charles so why was she dreaming of them being together. Katelynn now was beginning to wonder if what she felt for Bryon was not just fascination with the fact he was a stranger and had told her of all the beauty of his homeland. What was she going to do? Could she have been so wrong about Bryon? What if Charles had come to their village first? He was very handsome also, but there was something about him that Katelynn could not explain. Maybe it was only because she first thought he was Lord Drasken.

Katelynn saw it was beginning to get light out and thought she might as well get up for she knew there was no sense in laying here and thinking about it anymore. As she came out of her room she saw Charles was already sitting at the hearth. He looked as though he was deep in thought. She walked over to the urn to get a drink and saw it was almost empty. Charles had heard her come into the room he knew it was Katelynn for he could feel her presence.

As she sat the urn back down he said, “ I was going to go get some water. Would you like to walk with me to the stream?”

He wondered if she would ask him any questions. He had thought out how he would answer as he had all the other questions they had asked.

Katelynn answered, “Yes, A morning walk would help clear my head.”

Clear her head of what thought Charles? He knew she had not slept much he had heard her tossing and turning on her cot most of the night. Had dreams of him disturbed her sleep just as dreams of her had kept him from sleeping as well? Or was it that she did not trust her feelings now and was disturbed by this.

She went to pick up the urn and Charles said, "I will carry that."

"Thank you," replied Katelynn.

As they walked she started wondering about her dreams again.

And she said to him, "This man Lord Drasken, My father asked you about. How is it you know so much?"

"All the people of the lands to the south know of him," he replied. "It was not that long ago that this had all happened and was still fresh in the minds of the old and young in his homeland."

He could tell by the look on Katelynn's face this had satisfied her for now. They walked the rest of the way to the stream in silence.

Christine was surprised to see her daughter not there and neither was Charles. But then she saw the urn was gone and decided they must have walked to the stream to get water.

Just then Richard walked into the room and said, "Why do you look so worried my love? Your thoughts have been in another place as of late. And I am not sure why."

She looked at her husband took his hands and said, "I only worry for our daughter my love. For this will be a very trying time for her. She will feel and see many things differently and I am just afraid for her that is all."

"Oh," Richard replied, "I was starting to wonder if you now had any regrets of leaving your homeland and coming here with me. Since these strangers have come into our village you seem to have changed but now I understand. Your worries are for our daughter. She has a very strong will and I think she will make the right decisions." Christine knew her daughter would make the right decisions but how would they be influenced. She saw the look in her daughter's eyes after Charles had told them of what he knew of Lord Drasken. She herself now wondered would she not feel the same as he did if it had been her in his place.

By the time Katelynn got to the stream she was very thirsty she bent down to get a drink. Drasken watched as she cupped the water in her hands and began to drink. If he could only tell her the truth maybe she would understand. But he did not want to risk that yet. She still did not trust him he knew this. He still had a few days Bryon had been gone three days he was not even in the highlands yet. The man that Eric had sent had told him it would take them four days to get there if the weather held up. Drasken thought on this and knew he still had at least five more days before he must decide what to do. But for now he would concentrate on winning this beautiful woman's trust.

He knelt down beside her and started to fill the urn. The more he moved it around on the bottom of the stream the dirtier the water got.

Katelynn began to laugh and said, "I am glad I came with you or we would be drinking dirty water today. Here let me show how to get the water in the urn without all the dirt."

She reached down and made a depression in the bed of the stream and waited for the water to clear then put the urn into the depression. Before long the urn was full.

Drasken picked up the urn from the water and sat it down on the edge of the stream.

He then said, "If you would like to go on back now I will bring the water when I am done."

"I will wait for you," said Katelynn. "You do not plan on bathing do you?"

"No," said Drasken. "I do not plan on bathing I thought I would sit here for awhile. It is so peaceful here with the sound of the water running over the rocks."

"I like coming here," said Katelynn. "To do the very same thing. I lie on the grass there and close my eyes and just listen to the sounds all around me. It seems to soothe me somehow."

They both then lay down and closed their eyes. Katelynn had not thought she would drift off but she did. Charles heard her breathing slow and was in rhythm with the sound of the water

it seemed. He sat up on his elbow and looked down into her face. How he wanted to kiss those lips and run his hands up her thighs and make her beg for him to take her. Before he knew what he was doing he was kissing her. She awoke and pulled away.

He was shocked that he had not controlled himself and said, "Please forgive me I do not know what came over me. You looked so beautiful lying there sleeping. And I have wanted to kiss you since I saw you tending your garden."

Katelynn did not know what to say. This was the second man in a week that had told her the same thing. Her mind was racing what was wrong with her. She thought she loved Bryon but Charles had just kissed her and she could not tell him not to do it again.

She got up and said, "I think we need to be getting back. Mother and father will be up and wondering where we have gone off to."

Charles got up not feeling too good about what had just happened he could not read her thoughts. He should not have let himself lose control that way. He wanted her to want him as he wanted her. He picked up the urn and put it on his shoulder. How strong he was Katelynn thought. And she found herself wondering how it would feel to have his arms embracing her.

Chapter Eight

The weather here sure changes a lot thought Bryon as he got up from where he had slept that night. The day was already steamy and he knew the sun had not been up too long. He looked around and did not see Eric anywhere. Was he off finding something for the morning meal? Bryon did not think so he now wondered if there was someone following them and Eric was trying to find out whom. But why had Eric not woke him and told him then. Would it not be better if both of them were out there scouting around for any potential danger.

Just then he heard his name and saw Eric coming towards him. When Eric got to the camp Bryon asked him where he had been. Eric told him how he had a feeling someone had been watching them since the day before. And from what he had seen it was only local men out hunting. Probably wondering what they were up to as well. Eric told him he did not think there was any danger. That who ever it was had not tried to hide their presence.

They finished up what was left of the trout from the night before. If Eric had not been looking so hard for signs of Lord Drasken following them, he would have noticed that the men that were following them were not hunters at least not the kind hunting for game. They were friends of the man that Eric had hired to go to Lord Drasken in the South and tell him of Bryon's plans. Their friend had not yet returned and they wanted to know why. They waited and watched just in case he was still with Lord Drasken the man that Eric had sent word to. Maybe he had decided to come on into the Highlands with the safety of traveling with someone and not alone. But they had not seen Lord Drasken's party pass either.

About mid day they came to a plateau. Eric stopped and told Bryon this was where the thistle mint grew. They would have to look around for it was more plentiful in some places than in others. It was not long before Eric found a patch of it growing and as Bryon bent down to dig up the roots he understood why it was called thistle mint. It had spines that looked like hairs but stung when you touched it. After he touched a pod he tried very hard not to touch it again. His fingers were stinging, Eric told him not to try to rub off the tiny hairs for it would just make them go deeper and would be more painful. And not to get his hands too close to his face for he did not want any of those hairs getting into his eyes. The roots had the smell of mint therefore the name thistle mint.

They dug for the roots the rest of the day only to stop for a bite to eat. Now that Bryon had the roots he was in a hurry to get back. So he could take the root to his homeland and come back for Katelynn. The sun was almost gone when they stopped digging. The air up here was chilly and they had not thought about a fire for the night. So they both got under the same covers so that they could share the heat of their bodies.

Bryon dreamed that night, but his dreams disturbed his sleep. In his dreams he saw Lord Drasken and Katelynn together by the stream in the forest near Katelynn's village. They seemed to be laughing. He called out to Katelynn but she could not hear him. He was trying to warn her but every time he called her name the wind would blow and his words would be lost. He then saw blood on his hands and Katelynn lay at his feet and her dress was soaked in blood. What had

he done? He wanted this dream to end but was it a dream it seemed so real. Why could he not wake up if it was a dream?

When he woke Eric was shaking him. "Are you alright?"

"Yes," replied Bryon, "It was just a dream I think."

"I hope I never have a dream like that," replied Eric. They both lay back down and tried to sleep but neither of them could.

"Would you like to talk about it?" asked Eric. "Sometimes when I have a dream that disturbs me," continued Eric, "I talk about it and it makes me feel better."

So Bryon told him what he had dreamed now Eric was concerned what if Lord Drasken was in the village. What if he was to cause harm to come to Katelynn and his village? He could stand the guilt no more and told Bryon what he had done and why. Bryon told him they must put that behind them and try to figure out a way to get back as quickly as possible. For he knew that Katelynn and the village was in danger.

They sat up the rest of the night thinking of a plan. They had to get back to the village. But what after they got there, they did not know if he would still be there or even if he had came at all. For it was just a dream and that was all. Bryon had had many dreams but this one was different and he knew it was.

When there was enough light to see they had decided to get their gear together and start back. They were both so deep in thought of what they must do they did not see the three men coming up behind them. The three men knew they would need to talk to Eric to find out about their friend and that the other must be the man Bryon that he had sent word of to Lord Drasken in the south. As Bryon bent over to get his cover rolled up they hit him from behind with a large rock and grabbed Eric and held him.

"What has happened to our friend you hired?" they asked. "We have not heard from him since he left. He told us what you had asked him to do and if he was not back in three days time we were to find you. Now what has happened to him we want to know now?" Eric had no answer that he could give them. He had no idea what had happened to their friend and this is what he told them.

The three men tied Eric up and put him on his horse and took him with them. They did not think that Bryon would make it. The cut on his head from the force of the rock hitting him was very deep and he was loosing a lot of blood. They would take Eric and he would tell them where they could find this Lord Drasken. But it was not so much for their friend as it was that he had the coins that Eric had paid to him and they all wanted their share.

There was a cave not too far away where these rouges stayed, because they were not welcome in any village in the Highlands. And everyone knew them by face. So they had found this cave to make there home. They made money by doing deeds for people that they could not do for fear of being found out.

As they came upon the opening of the cave the men all got off their horses and let the horses roam. The horses had always been there when they had came out so they felt no need to tether them. Eric got down off his horse and the men assumed that it would stay with their horses grazing. But the horse had a sense that he was not home and began to wonder away. By the time one of the men had noticed it was gone it was quite sometime later. Now they had to worry about someone recognizing the horse and wondering where it's owner was.

Bryon tried to get up but it was no use he could not move. The pain in his head was too severe. If he tried to move it made the pain worse. His last thoughts before he blacked out again were of Katelynn. Was she in the clutches of Lord Drasken? Had Eric got away and was he

going to be able to help her? As these last thoughts went through his mind he spiraled into darkness.

Chapter Nine

Katelynn walked in behind Charles. "I was wondering where you had gone," Christine said. "I am glad someone thought to go get water early. It was to late last night when I noticed it was low but thought there would be enough until the morning."

"I went to get a drink when I got up and it was empty. Charles had said he was getting ready to go get some water and asked if I would like to walk with him," Katelynn said.

As they sat down to eat the morning meal Christine looked at Katelynn and asked, "Do you think Bryon and Eric have made it to the highlands in the north yet where the thistle mint grows?"

Katelynn had not seen the look on Charles's face when the question was asked but it had not escaped her father.

"I would think they would be on their way back by now," said Katelynn. "They have been gone five days now."

Richard was paying very close attention to Charles now but could see no other signs of what he may be thinking.

Richard then spoke to Charles, "Do you know Bryon? He is from the village of Dunkeld. He came through here several days ago and told us of the sickness and the unrest that was in the lands farther to the south. He had said there was a sickness spreading through the land and he had came here to get the root of a plant that only grows in the Highlands north of here. He is also the one who spoke of the man called Lord Drasken. He told us that he had come to his village and had demanded that they give all the land to him. Bryon said that his father had refused and Drasken had said he would plague the lands with a sickness."

Charles had not been prepared for such forwardness he now had to think of something quick.

"Yes, I have heard of him," he began. "I believe his father's name is Stephen. Their village is further north of mine. Most of the people do know each other they are small villages. But I did not know that Bryon had left, and had journeyed into the north."

Richard could not see any changes in the man as he talked.

He then asked Charles, "Why have you journeyed here?"

Another question thought Drasken did Richard know something he wondered?

"I have come north for trade as I have told you I am a merchant and there is not much trading in the south right now. With this sickness spreading I decided to try my luck further north."

Just as Richard was about to ask another question there was a knock on the door. It was the two men who had come with Charles. Richard told them to come on in. They looked at Charles and told him they needed to speak to him in private.

They walked outside one of the men said to him, "Sire."

Drasken turned and glared at him he knew he must remind them both about their mission.

"I told you if either of you called me anything but Charles while we were here I would kill you before you could finish saying the name. Now consider yourselves warned the next time I

will not be so forgiving.”

Both men looked at him and said, “Yes, Charles.”

“Now what was so important that it could not wait until we were to meet later?” Drasken asked.

“There were three men in the village the day after we got here asking about the us. What our names were, where did we come from and why we were here,” said the guard.

“And why was I not told of this before now?” snarled Charles. This was all he needed now, Richard asking all these strange questions and now these three men asking questions.

The other guard spoke and said, “We ourselves only found out last night. This may be a small village but they still have women who will lay with a man for money and they do like to talk. We found out as much as we could. The three of them have traveled on to the north. They are looking for their friend. We think it is the man hired to guide us here.”

“Well then,” said Charles. “You must have hid his body well for I am sure they searched the forest before they came here. Or they would have said they were looking for the men who killed their friend.”

Charles would not worry with this right now. They were gone and maybe they would not return until after he and his men were gone. He was thankful for the interruption maybe Richard would not have so many questions on his mind now. Katelynn had said that Eric and Bryon had been gone for five days. This gave him three more days to try and win Katelynn. But what if he did? How could he tell her who he really was? Maybe he could get her to see how wronged he had been by the people.

“Charles, Is everything alright?” asked Richard.

Charles was surprised he had not heard the Richard approaching. He must remember he needed to stay aware of everything. Especially now with these men going about the countryside asking if any strangers had been seen in these lands.

“Yes,” replied Charles. “Everything is fine. My men had heard that there was another merchant in the area. And thought it would be a good idea if we went to see him. He is coming from the north. I would be interested in hearing if it would be worth my time if I were to go any further. We will be riding out tomorrow to see him.”

“Oh, maybe I could go along I would be interested in news from the north,” said Richard.

“I am sorry but us merchants have a code and we could not discuss business with someone who is not of the trade about. You do understand. But I will try and find out as much news as I can for you,” said Charles.

“Then you do plan on coming back through our village?” asked Richard.

“It should take no more than a day or two,” replied Charles. “Then we should be coming back through this way. I will not keep the news from the north away from you for long I promise.”

Both men walked back into the house. When they sat down at the table Richard looked across at Christine and said. “Charles will be leaving tomorrow he is going to meet another merchant. I have asked him to bring back news from the north and he has promised he would be back in a couple of days.”

“I must say to you now many thanks for lodging me. I hope my payment was enough to cover everything. Do I owe anyone else for the care of our horses?” asked Charles; “You must have hired someone to take care of them for you,”

“No,” said Richard, “I took care of them they are very easy to take care of. Just water and fresh straw to lay on a little grain to feed on.”

Charles reached out and gave Richard a gold coin. Richard refused to take it but Charles insisted.

“Please take it,” said Charles. “It will help replace the grain you took from your own storage. It will be quite some time before the grain is ready for harvest.”

Richard had to agree. It had taken a lot of their grain to feed the horses. But he could not think of anyone in the village to buy it from. And he said this to Charles.

“Well, I could see if anyone on the road or any other merchant I happened upon would have any grain for sale,” suggested Charles.

“If you would be so kind,” replied Richard.

And so with that settled Charles rose and said, “I must prepare for our leaving now. I shall return later to gather my things. For myself and my companions should stay together tonight for we will be rising early.”

Katelynn had not said a word since the men had come back in. He would be coming back also about the same time Bryon was to be back. Then she would have her answers of this she was sure. Katelynn was not the only one thinking this so was her father.

Katelynn found herself looking for Charles the later the day got. She was not sure where they had decided to make camp, but she knew it had to be close to the stream.

It was late afternoon when he came back to get his belongings he had left there that morning. They were alone in the house mother was at a neighbors and father was out doing his daily things as chief of their village.

Katelynn had to be sure she walked over to the hearth where Charles was sitting. She picked up his hand and rubbed his palm against her cheek. She felt a fire rush through her, torching every inch of her body. He was looking deep into her eyes, and he lost himself there. They both reached out to the other he kissed her fully on the lips. She felt the fire raging through her again. He touched her so softly she was unaware of where he was touching her until she felt the pain and desire as he nibbled and bit her erect nipple.

She stopped him and said, “Please we must not go any further. Mother or father could walk in at anytime.”

It was hard for him to stop. The fire she had started ached to be quenched. His member was hard and ready. But he knew that it could be relieved in other ways. He wanted her to give herself to him completely and then he would ravage her beauty and her juices would flow just for him. When she was ready he would take her full force for she had that kind of fire in her as well.

That night as she lay on her cot she touched her body the way she wanted him to touch her. She felt the fire begin again and she quenched the thirst. Was it that this man just awoke that part of her? For she could say she did not have the same feelings for him. When Bryon had kissed her she felt light headed and funny inside. When Charles kissed her it felt as if someone had set her on fire. She thought on this for a while it must be only lust she feels for Charles. And lust would fade. Love would not.

Katelynn got up early the next morning she made her way to the stream where she was sure Charles and his companions were camped. It took her some time but she did find them. They were just getting on their horses when she called out to them. Charles was not surprised to see her. He knew she would be there but he thought she would come in the night. He had been wrong but she would come to him sooner or later and beg for him. And this he was sure of.

“I had to say goodbye,” Katelynn said

“This is not goodbye,” said Charles. “I will be back in a few days.”

“Yes it is,” said Katelynn and she walked away

Chapter Ten

Bryon knew he was being taken care. He did not know how long he had been here. He could feel himself getting stronger and he had been staying awake for longer periods. But never long enough to actually see who was taking care of him. They spoke his language for he had heard someone talking as he went in and out of the darkness. Today he had got a glimpse of a woman before he slept again he remembered her hair but from where? It was red as the evening sky after the sun had set and it set the sky on fire.

He caught a glimpse of a woman. Was that in his mind or was she really here? He called out her name, “Katelynn.”

The woman who sat on one side of him looked at the elder woman on the other side of the room.

“Mother,” said the younger of the two, “Could he be calling for Christine’s Katelynn? They are about the same age and we know there was someone else with him. We also know that this man was hit from behind, because of the wound to the back of his head and he was laying face down. Could Katelynn have been with him and she herself in danger or worse?”

“I do not know my child but we must send for Christine now. If Katelynn was with this man she must get here right away and help find her,” said the older woman. “Tell your father he must send someone for her now, it is time for him to put all else aside. Richard has been good to Christine and she is happy. This is for the life of his grand daughter.”

Margaret looked at her daughter Elizabeth and said, “If Katelynn was with him any hopes of her to be alive or in her right mind is very few. The young man has been here for eight days now.”

It took very little time to get an errand boy to take the message to Christine. He would be there within two days and would return immediately with her.

Things were still not in focus to Bryon his vision was still blurred. His head still ached if he tried to stay awake for too long. But he could feel himself getting stronger. He still had not seen who was taking care of him.

But he kept seeing the woman with the red hair. And he would see her in his dreams. He would call out her name over and over. But while he lay awake he could not speak. He had tried and it seemed as though no words would come.

The men had left Eric alone in the cave for two days now. He was very thirsty and hungry. He was starting to believe the men were not coming back. He had been working the rope that tied his hand behind his back. The rope was not as tight as it was when they had first tied it. A little more wiggling and he may be able to get them loose enough to get his hands free. Then he would get out of here and go see if he could find Bryon. But he knew it would be too late. He had seen the blood coming from the back of his head.

Eric continued to work with the rope that tied his hands he felt it give more just a little longer and he would be free. He felt the rope give more and he started trying to pull his right hand free. He felt the blood running from the cuts the rope had made from him working so hard

to get loose. The blood was making his wrist and hands slick. Maybe this would help him pull his hands free and he began to try harder. Then he felt his right hand slipping through the rope. He was just about free. His heart was racing he was going to be able to get out of this and try and make things right. He knew he had made a very big mistake. Bryon had become his friend and he knew he truly loved Katelynn.

His right hand was free! Now, he must get out of this cave before they came back and find Bryon if he could. He would then go to the village and tell Richard what had happened. He just hope he was not too late .It would take him a few days to get back to the village he did not have a horse and would have to be very careful traveling just in case the three men came back to cave and saw he was gone. He was sure they would come looking for him.

He found the spot where the three men had came upon them. Bryon was not there his horse was gone also. But this did not surprise Eric. The horse had probably started wondering to find water. And had just continued to wonder around. Maybe it had started back for the village. He knew of horses that would do this. If their riders had gotten knocked off the horse, or the horse had reared and knocked off the rider they would head back for their home. He had hoped that this was the case, if so then the men of the village would be out looking for them.

Eric had know way of knowing that Bryon and his horse had been found by some women of Glen More. This was William's village, Katelynn's grandfather a days ride from this spot. They had been there digging the root of the thistle mint also. The healing powers of the root were well known and most people of this region came here to harvest the root in early mid summer.

"He may have been found and was being helped by one of the villages in this area. But he must start making his way back to the village," he thought. " And what would he say to Katelynn."

He thought a moment longer, " How about the truth? And hope she would forgive him."

Chapter Eleven

Katelynn knew that Eric and Bryon should have been back by now. She had been watching for them. Someone from the other end of the village was waving their arms and saying something but she could not make out what it was. Several of the villagers were running out of their huts and looking up from whatever task they were doing.

She began to run to see what all the commotion was about. Could it be Bryon and Eric returning? As she approached she saw several horses without their riders and recognized one of the horses. It was Eric's horse! Where was Eric and if Eric was here where was Bryon? She made her way through the crowd that had gathered. Then she saw it was not Eric or Bryon but Charles. How did he come about having Eric's horse? She heard a woman wailing she saw it was Eric's mother. His father was trying to hold her.

Katelynn wanted to get closer she wanted to hear what had happened. She heard Charles telling Eric's father they had found the horse wondering along the road on their way back. And thought it maybe had gotten away from its owner. So they had brought it back with them to the village. Eric's mother began to wail louder.

Katelynn knew this could only mean something terrible had happened. But where were Bryon and Eric now. Had they been ambushed? Were they injured or had something worse happened? Were they even still alive?

Katelynn looked at Charles with tears in her eyes and asked, "Where did you find Eric's horse?"

"About a days ride to the north of here. He was heading in this direction," replied Charles.

"Was there anyone else around? Did you see another horse?" Asked Katelynn.

"No," replied Charles. "But we did not look. I never thought there was a reason too."

Richard had made his way to where the crowd had gathered.

"Father," Katelynn said. "You must get some men of the village together and go look for them."

"Don't worry Katelynn we will find them," her father told her.

Charles knew now that what stood between him and Katelynn was Bryon. And he would make sure that Bryon did not make it back.

"My men and I will help," Charles said. "The more men we have looking the better the chances you will have of finding them."

Richard agreed and asked for any man who wanted to join the search to be at his hut by mid morning. When Richard walked out of his hut at mid morning there were about twenty men waiting to help with the search. Those that had horses split into two groups. One group would ride to the left of the men walking and the other to the right. This would cover more ground.

Richard had promised Katelynn he would do everything in his power to make sure they searched until there was nothing more they could do. But Richard did not believe they would find Eric or Bryon.

Chapter Twelve

The men of the village had been gone for two days when the runner from Christine's homeland arrived. He immediately sought out Christine to tell her the news from her mother. When Christine saw the messenger she knew him to be from her father's village.

"I have brought news to you from your mother," said the runner.

"What news do you bring?" asked Christine. "Is my mother in ill health?"

"No," replied the young man. He then told her what her mother Margaret had told him to tell her.

"He is alive then?" asked Christine.

"Yes, he is alive and getting stronger. But your mother was concerned that Katelynn had been with him for he yells her name out in his sleep," explained the young man.

"Katelynn is safe she is here. Her father and some men of the village are out now looking for him and a companion that traveled with him to the north," said Christine.

About that time Katelynn walked into the hut. Her mother explained all that the young man had told her.

"We must travel there now mother," said Katelynn. "See if we can find out what happened to Eric."

The young man told Christine that he had been instructed by Margaret to wait and escort her back to the village. She told him that she would need a little time to prepare for the journey but that it would not take them long. She went to Eric's mother's hut and explained to her what was happening and for her to tell Richard when he returned.

By the time Christine returned Katelynn had their traveling supplies together and was ready to go. He had told Christine that it would take several days to get to the village. And they may have some luck and see some of the men out looking with Richard, and have them go find Richard and tell him where Christine and Katelynn had gone and why.

Just as they were leaving Katelynn saw someone stumbling towards the village. He looked very familiar; as he got closer Katelynn realized it was Eric.

"Mother it is Eric," she exclaimed! "Stop we must find out what he knows."

Eric was so exhausted he could hardly talk but he got enough out that both women knew that the men could be in danger. They needed someone to find Richard as soon as possible and warn him of these men. Katelynn now began to wonder about Charles, had she been right? Was he Lord Drasken? And where was Bryon? She did not know what to say to Eric when he was able to finish telling them what he knew.

She held his hand as he lay on the cot and said, "Eric you have always been like a brother to me. I am sorry I do not have the same feelings that you have for me. I only hope I can forgive you for putting the man I love in danger. As he has forgiven you."

She saw the hurt in Eric's eyes and knew he regretted what he had done. Katelynn knew she would forgive him. For she knew love could make you do very strange things.

After they had talked to Eric and he was resting they started out again. Katelynn could only hope they made it to the village before Charles and his men found it. Bryon was alive and to

cheat death again would be impossible. She knew if Charles and his men found him first that they would kill him.

As they made their way to the north they could see signs of Richard and the men. They saw where the men had started into the forest. This was probably where Charles had told them he had found Eric's horse. How she prayed for their safety, for she knew that Charles was Lord Drasken. How she knew this she could not explain. It was then she realized what her mother had been telling her of her gift for seeing. But now she would not call it a gift but a curse. Why had she not seen the truth before now? Was she blinded by the lust that Charles had awakened in her? Was this his plan all along? But what of the things he had told them? Did this make what she felt for him different somehow? Her mind was in such turmoil she could not think of these things right now.

Christine was watching her daughter and knew all she must be thinking of. Did Katelynn feel she had betrayed Bryon? What had happened between her and Charles? Christine knew that her daughter was deeply troubled. Katelynn had to work this out for herself. But Christine would give her daughter guidance only if she asked for her assistance. Then Christine would tell her what her thoughts were.

When they arrived in Glen More three days later, Christine's mother and her sister met them.

"Katelynn this is your grandmother Margaret and your Aunt Elizabeth," Christine told her.

As Katelynn looked at the two women she understood where her mother got her looks from. But they did not have her features and she really did not look like her father either. So where did she get the color of her hair and eyes from?

They were taken immediately to the hut where Bryon laid. Katelynn sat beside him and began talking to him. Bryon awoke and saw this beautiful woman sitting next to him. It was the sight of Katelynn that had brought his memory back. He sat up to hug her and fell back on the cot. His head still hurt badly when he tried to sit up.

Christine said to Katelynn, "It will be several days before he will be ready to travel. He will be well taken care of. You must prepare yourself for what is to come my daughter."

Just as Christine had finished speaking in walked a man, he was the biggest man that Katelynn had ever seen. The man seemed familiar to Katelynn somehow. He had hair as red as Katelynn's his eyes were the color of green that reminded her of her own. This must be my grandfather she thought.

Christine looked at him and said, "Father this is your granddaughter Katelynn. Katelynn this is my father, your grandfather William, Chief of Glen More."

As he reached out to hug her she saw that his eyes were filling with tears and knew she did not need to say anything. After he had hugged her he looked at her mother and was openly crying now. Katelynn had never seen a man weep like this. Her mother stood and he held her. Katelynn now saw a glow about her grandfather that had not been there when he walked in and it made her feel good. This all had happened she knew for reasons, Bryon coming to Katelynn's village, her grandmother and aunt finding him barely alive then bringing him here. It was strange for her to think of these things as though there was a reason. Maybe this was part of the awakening that her mother had spoken of.

Now that Katelynn was here she would need to try and learn how to use the knowledge she would be taught while here for the good of all. She knew she would not have much time. That the men would be getting back to the village soon if they had not already. Then Charles would learn that Bryon and Eric were both alive and had told them all that had happened. She must

devote herself to finding the truth within herself. Her mother had told her she was destined to lead her people. That she was the Druid Prophetess. And that she would be responsible for bringing peace to the lands of the north. She wondered now if her grandfather knew of this as well. Had he known that her mother was the one who would give birth to the Prophetess?

Katelynn and her mother had been at her grandfather's village for three days. That night after an exhausting day of training she dreamed. She dreamed of her village she saw it in flames and Charles watching as the flames shot higher. There were more men with him than had been the last time she had saw him. That day Christine announced that Bryon would be able to travel after a few more days of rest. And they would be traveling back to her Glen Roy. Her father had told her he would send an escort with them. Himself and a few of his best men would escort them back to Glen Roy. Did he know of the trouble that loomed on the horizon as Katelynn had dreamed of that night? When she awoke the next morning these were the questions that she wanted to ask him. But he was not in the village all that day. And no one could tell her where he had gone. Not even her grandmother knew for sure. She had told Katelynn that maybe he had gone out to hunt. So they would not have to worry about food while they traveled back to Glen Roy. She thought about this and agreed that she was probably right. But she still needed to speak to him

The next two days she was so busy trying to prepare herself for the storm that was brewing. She had spoken to Bryon on a couple of occasions and now knew for sure the man that called himself Charles was indeed Lord Drasken. Bryon explained about the revolt of the people and how Lord Drasken's father Phillip had tortured the people when they did not pay him for his protection from bandits and attacks from other villages. He also explained why he had chosen the name Charles. That this was his given name and therefore he used it so to trick anyone whom came in contact with him so that no one would know that he was in these lands. He wanted it to be kept a secret for some reason. But Bryon was sure he knew the reason.

He had come north to find out what Bryon was up to. And he now believed that Lord Drasken was thinking of trying to conquer this land to the north as well. If this were true then he had to get back to Dunkeld and restore order and get the root to them to see if its healing power would help cure the sickness that was spreading through the land. He hoped he was not too late and that the sickness had not ravaged his homeland. But he had been gone for too long. He did not know what to expect when he returned to Dunkeld. But all he could do was hope he was not too late.

The morning they were to start back to Glen Roy, Katelynn rose early just so she could speak to her grandfather. She told him of all the things she suspected. And he told her that yes he had been told that the Prophetess would be born to one of his daughters. That was why he had gotten so angry with her mother for leaving. When she gave birth to a daughter she would be the one that would bring peace to the people. But the child would not have the teachings to help her for the battle she must face.

"Grandfather," Katelynn said. "How could you know it was my mother and not Elizabeth that would give birth to the Prophetess.?"

"The same way your mother was told about you at your birthing," William began. "A High Priest of the druids was at your mother's birthing."

"This man Charles that you speak of Katelynn," her grandfather began, "He came to this part of the world for one thing and that was to do harm to young Bryon. And now he desires another and that is you my child. You will need all your strength to fight him. And I will help with my knowledge. But you must be strong for he is a man who does not take well being put

aside as you have already done.”

Katelynn felt her cheeks begin to glow. “ How could he know these things?” she thought. Her thoughts were not in turmoil anymore she knew where she stood as far as Charles went.

It was not long after she had spoken to her grandfather that they were on their way back to Katelynn’s village. Bryon told William along the way what he knew about Lord Drasken and all that had happened in his lands to the south. How he feared he might be to late to stop the sickness. But feared even worse they would be to late to stop him from taking the village of Glen Roy.

William said to him, “ I do not believe this man will harm the village until he sees that Katelynn will not give in to him. Only then will he become enraged and try and take Glen Roy by force and Katelynn as well.”

They continued on until nightfall and stopped to make camp. Katelynn could feel Charles close. Only if she had known how close, he had been following them since late afternoon. He saw that Bryon was with them and began to make plans for an ambush. The other men had began to head back to the village. Charles had told Richard that he and his men would make their way back at a later time. That maybe they would see something that the others had missed. Richard had told him that he believed they had done a through job of looking but that it was up to him and the villagers would surely appreciate this. After this was said Richard and his men headed back to the village.

Chapter Thirteen

Charles and his men had stayed behind for a couple of days. He did not know why but Charles knew that this is what he must do. Around late morning on the second day Charles and his men heard sounds of many horses and a wagon. They hid away from the road and watched as the travelers passed. This is when he had seen Bryon and decided to follow them. Now as they stopped for the night Charles thought this would be the time to go in under the cover of night and take Katelynn and have his men take care of Bryon. He would then go back to Galloway and return with men to take the village of Glen Roy. He knew she would fight him on this and any love he wanted from her would be forced but he would not be told no not now not ever.

As Charles and his men began to make preparations for that night, his men began to wonder why he wanted the wench so bad after all she was just the daughter of a village chief. They understood why he wanted Bryon dead but the girl they did not understand this.

The moon was waxing and only a sliver showed through the clouds from time to time. It was perfect for what they were about to do. But they had not planned on there being guards placed at points around the camp. Charles had gotten through with no problem but the other two men had alerted one of the guards and they had been captured. With all the excitement of the other two being captured no one heard Charles as he got away with Katelynn.

He had found her easy enough he then heard one of the guards yell, "Who is there?" And then heard one calling to the other guard to come help that there were two men trying to sneak into the camp. He slipped his hand over Katelynn's mouth and grabbed her up with his free arm and carried her kicking out of the camp. She fought hard but she was no match for his strength.

When they reached his horse he told her, "I will remove my hand. But if you make one sound I will make sure everyone in your camp die a slow and horrible death."

Katelynn did not know that the men he had sent to kill Bryon were at that time a captive of her grandfathers, so she did not utter a word for fear he would have them all killed. He tied her hands behind her back and put her up on his horse. They rode all that night and most of the next morning finally stopping to rest around midday. He had not taken the road that was well traveled. He had started across the countryside in case someone was trying to follow them. He knew that his men had been taken captive and within a short time Katelynn had been discovered missing. And was sure that Bryon and the men that were with him were at that moment trying to catch up to them.

As he cut a piece of venison Charles told Katelynn that he was sorry it had to be this way but he would have her for his own no matter what the cost. He cut another piece for her. She refused it.

She spat in his face and told him, "As long as I am with you, I will not eat nor drink. I will make myself look so undesirable that not even a blind man will want me or maybe I will die of thirst and hunger. But I promise you will never have me."

Charles shrugged his shoulders and went on eating, "If that is the way you feel maybe I should kill you now and be done with it," he said.

Soon after the two men were caught that were with Charles, they told Bryon of his plans to return here and conquer these lands. It had not taken long for the men to turn on Charles, they had not agreed with him taking the young woman to begin with and knew it was only going to stir up the people of the Northern lands by doing this and that their homeland could not spare the men to travel all this way to fight these people. It would take them to far away from where they were needed at this time. But they knew he was not thinking with his right mind and that was because of a woman. So someone had to stop this lunacy.

Bryon and two of William's men had set out after Katelynn and Charles. They were not far behind. Charles had not thought his men would turn on him so soon. He knew they would to save themselves but had not counted on them to be so fast about it. Bryon had picked up their trail very easily. It was if Lord Drasken or Charles is what Katelynn had called him and the two men with him had confirmed what Bryon had thought about him using his given name, to help keep his where a bouts unknown. But he was not very good at hiding his trail. It was very easy to follow. He had gone off the main road and was traveling through the countryside. He had told Christine and her father to go to Richard and tell him what had happened. To get all the men of the village to make preparations for battle. William had also sent one of his men back to his village to gather all the men there and told them all to start for Glen Roy as soon as they were ready and not to waste any time.

Katelynn knew they were getting close to her village by the way the countryside looked. A forest surrounded her village and it sat in a valley. The forest protected the village. The forest would not protect them from this man and she knew this. They stopped at the top of a hill and she looked down into the valley and thought of the dream she'd had. Charles was thinking the same for he had also dreamed of this very spot. Now he remembered the feeling he got from the dream of her not wanting to be there with him.

Katelynn thought if she was ever going to get away from him now would be the time she was close to the forest and close to her village too. And she could hide in the forest. She knew the forest well. She also knew there were a few small caves she could hide in. Maybe she would make it to the village. He had not tied her hands back after she had went to relieve herself. She wished now she had thought of escaping then but that was a little while back she was much closer to her village now.

She clasped her hands together and hit him in the back of the neck then jumped off the horse and began to run. At first Charles was not sure what she had done it had caught him off guard. The blow to the back of the neck had left him a little light headed. He shook off the feeling and now began to chase her. She had made it to the forest before he could regain his senses. Now he would have to hunt her down like a wild animal. He wanted to catch her before she could make it to the village. Charles had been so disoriented he did not hear the men approaching him.

Katelynn had found a small cave a little ways into the forest. She had gone inside and was hiding there. She heard a rustle of leaves and the crackle of the dried forest floor being tropped on. Her heart was beating so hard she felt it in her ears. She was afraid that what ever or who ever it was would here it. She was hiding as far back a she could then she saw the silhouette of a man standing at the entrance to the cave. He stumbled in and grabbed for her she screamed she saw it was Charles. She felt something warm and sticky on her hands. Was it his blood or had something gotten in his way and he had its blood on him. She looked up and saw someone else coming into the cave. She started running to the front of the cave. Before she could see whom it was she passed out. She had not eaten or drank anything for two days. And was so

exhausted from the running she could not hold up any longer.

Chapter Fourteen

When Katelynn awoke she was outside the cave and someone was putting a damp cloth to her mouth she was so parched she began to suck the water out of the cloth

“Slow down not too much right now, “ she heard someone say.

The voice was so familiar she opened her eyes and there he was. It was Bryon he had saved her. She remembered the smell and feel of blood and looked at her hands and saw the blood.

“What happened?” she asked.

Bryon told her how they had caught up to them and had seen her running for the forest. How Charles had not heard them approaching and Bryon had shot him with an arrow. That had injured him in the left side. He then took off on his horse. Part way into the forest he had fallen off. They had followed the trail of blood. And he thought that Charles had gone into the cave to get away from them. The other two men that was with Bryon were bringing Charles out of the cave, he was barely alive. They slung his body over the saddle and tied his hands to his feet under the belly of his horse.

Bryon asked Katelynn, “Are you strong enough to ride now?”

“Yes,” replied Katelynn. “I am ready to go home.”

They made their way back to the top of the hill that overlooked the valley where Katelynn’s village was. They got down off their horses and looked around. Bryon took Katelynn by the hand and they walked a few paces away from the other two men. He turned her head to look into her eyes and as he done this he saw that he could never take her from here. She would shrivel up and die in his world.

He embraced her and said, “I am sorry I ever said I would take you from here. I love you too much to take you from what gives you life. I will stay here with you my love and learn your ways. For I belong here with you and I will never ask you to leave this valley again.”

He then put his lips on hers, she felt the passion rising in her. She knew then what her dreams were telling her. He was her strength and knew with him beside her all things would be possible. She would lead her people through the unrest and bring peace back to her valley. Now she knew what her future held.

The spell of the moment was broken when they heard the one of the men yell and saw both them racing for their horses. When Bryon and Katelynn turned to see what was happening they saw Charles taking off on his horse. Some how he had got out of the rope that had tied his hands to his feet and was sitting up in his saddle.

Bryon told the men, “Let him go. He will not live long enough to get to the next village.”

The men stopped and did not go after him. If they had known what was to become of Charles and how it would change all their futures they would have went after Charles finished him then.

Bryon looked into Katelynn’s eyes again and said, “Let’s go home.”

The End

Written by: Kimberly Sherwood

July 2001

I want to thank you for choosing to read the first book of this series. It has been long in the making the next part of the story will be ready after the first of the year 2012. Please feel free to leave any comments as they are always appreciated either positive or negative it all helps.

I want to thank my husband for giving me the time, my mother for the encouragement, my friend Mary McBurnett for giving me the courage to begin this project and my grandson Bryon for the strength to complete it.