



CHAPTER 1

The old man lumbers down the path, his tattered brown cloak dragging in the dirt sending up small tufts of dust. With crooked fingers, his wrinkled hand grasps his twisted walking stick, which looks as old as he does. Walking steadily he makes his way slowly to the old bench, in the center of the village, as he has done on countless afternoons. His sandals make a sliding noise as he shuffles along, the motion splattering his toes with a sprinkle of dirt from the road.

He looks up to see the eager faces waiting for him to take his place. Children and their guardians gather to hear the wise ones stories. Even now he can see them stirring and joggling for places as they giggle and nudge each other. Sometimes if they can manage it, the whole village will turn out to hear his tales from days long gone by. A smile spreads over the old wrinkled face as he thinks of his youthful days. He has gone all over the country in his travels over the years.

As he nears, the children automatically spread to open a path for the old storyteller. He settles his thin body on the old bench, the wood planks barely creaking under his meager weight. The children become silent and look with reverence and awe as they wait for the tale to begin. Cathbad surveys the young faces. Pushing back a strand of gray hair, his golden brown eyes shine with wisdom and twinkle as he looks over the eager faces of lads and lasses dressed in the common muslin of the village.

He fingers the long gray hair of his beard that blends in with his dusty cloak. His scraggly gray hair hangs down to the middle of his back, covering the hood of his garment. He's an old man now but once he was a magician and scholar, an acquaintance and friend to the great Merlin himself and was but one of the many wizards that Merlin trained to advise the great leaders in the world.

He licks his cracked lips and with his right hand on his staff taps it on the ground three times.

"Lads and lassies." Cathbad begins to speak. He clears his throat and resumes in his storytellers voice, a pleasant and deep mesmerizing sound.

"Today I'll tell you the story of Anwen, a child who suffered great tragedy but also a child who had a great secret. She was beautiful and brave and would grow up to do great things."

A young lad in rumped trousers pushes through the crowd seated in the dirt around the bench. His dark locks fall forward on his tunic as he brings forth a goblet of water and hands it to Cathbad.

"Thanks lad." With a gleam in his old eyes he brings his hand up to ruffle the lad's curls, the loose bell sleeves of his cloak fall down to his elbow revealing three silver bracelets that clink together and the faded woad imprint of two dragons wound around his wrist and forearm.

Taking the silver goblet, the old enchanter takes a drink and sets the vessel beside him on the weathered bench, worn smooth in places from years of sitting. The child settles himself down at the old man's feet.

As he begins to speak, stray rays of sunshine find their way through the thick branches of the rowan tree and glint off the goblet. The sunbeam cast a circle of light around the old man brightening the shabbiness of his robes. Somewhere in the background, a bird begins to chirp. His eyes sparkle as he remembers vividly the tale from many years ago that he will tell. A smile spreads across his lips as he looks around the crowd of young faces and starts his story.



CHAPTER 2

Long ago in a land across the sea lived a lass named Anwen Ballard. Her family wasn't rich. They lived in a small hut alongside the other farmers and traders in the small village of Amesby On Tor. Like most of the other hamlets in medieval times, the living conditions were very poor. The people who settled here were mostly Welsh and Irish and followed the old ways.

Cadoc and Enid picked the name Anwen for their youngest daughter because her hair was like corn silk, her eyes were pale blue and she had fine delicate features. Her older sister Alana was beautiful as well, with her milky skin, but her hair was red gold like their fathers and she had the faintest splash of freckles across her nose that spilled out over her cheeks. Unlike her sister, her eyes were cornflower blue, bright and piercing.

Anwen's parents agreed their youngest was the daughter to receive the mysterious medallion left by a wizard years before her birth. Cadoc hugged his wife and placed a kiss on the delicate pink cheek of the newborn infant before he crossed the room of the hut in which they lived. A large brown chest holding all their precious belongings sat on the floor and it was in this wood chest, which was a wedding gift from Enid's father, that they tucked the medallion away for safekeeping.

The rounded lid creaked as he knelt on the floor and opened it. The chest was made of worn wood planks with carving at the corners and a beautiful carved insert in the middle of the lid. The design was in soft muted colors and depicted thick willow trees overhanging a meandering stream, which disappeared behind some great boulders.

His wife sat bundled in quilts holding the sleeping child as she watched him from the bed, strands of her blonde hair falling over her shoulders and coming to rest on her bedclothes. Rummaging in the trunk, at last Cadoc removed a blue silk drawstring pouch, which he carried to the bed with a grin. Sitting on the edge beside his wife, he opened the bag letting the medallion slide out into his open palm. Rays of sunlight filtered through the window, sparkling off the silver as he looked at it running his thumb over the carved symbols on the round disc. Cadoc looped the brown leather cord around to triple it, thus shortening it considerably, and together they slipped it over the baby's head. It lay flat on her chest consuming almost half of it but they knew that one day she would grow into it.

They both beamed down at the little bundle wrapped in the blanket Enid had spent the last several months weaving. The white yarn of the coverlet made the child look even more delicate and fragile than she was.

Together they began to reminisce about that beautiful spring day years before when the medallion fell into their hands.



They were still newly married when a wizard came to the village of Amesby On Tor.

Cadoc Ballard was a thin agile man and blessed with lots of energy. He worked in the mill at that time, as he always did in the slow times, grinding up wheat and corn for the villagers. Raising sheep didn't provide the family with much wealth. He was able to help the miller out and trade his time for wheat and corn that would help his family through the winter. Like most of the inhabitants in the small village, they helped each other and traded for supplies.

Cadoc was at the mill that day long ago and became wary when the old wizard approached him. The man was thin; a bit stooped, and wore a long brown robe. His hair was a long gray mass that hung down over his garment and framed a wrinkled and weathered face. A long gray beard hung over his chest to form a point at his waist and he carried a walking stick of twisted brown wood with a clear globe on top. His eyes were deep brown but held a gleam as if he knew some great secret. The globe on his staff twinkled and threw out rainbow streaks of color as the sun struck it. An air of mystery surrounded this man and Cadoc was cautious as he approached him at his grinding wheel. His cloak was dusty and

ragged from touching the ground and his sandaled feet were exposed as he walked, showing a sprinkle of brown earth on his crooked toes.

“My name is Candor and I have come to speak with you and your wife Enid.” The old man’s voice was deep and smooth, not at all the voice of such an old man, yet it did hold a hint of weariness.

“What is this about?” Cadoc backed up until he bumped into barrels of grain stacked up against the wall. They rattled against each other with a dull clacking sound. He didn’t know this stranger but the man seemed to know him. The wizard stood still and looked at him softly.

“Please, don’t be afraid. I have a gift for you. I have come a long way to find you and deliver it. I mean you no harm.” Warily Cadoc looked him over and decided he was harmless. His face looked honest enough.

“Well all right.” Cadoc spoke reluctantly. “I suppose we could listen to your story and offer some tea to a weary traveler.” He was trying his best to put himself in the same place. He would certainly hope for an offer of hospitality.

“I would expect the same if I were in your place.” He told the wizard and gradually stepped forward and away from the wall. The barrels clacked together again behind him as they settled back into place with a gentle rolling sound.

“I do thank you for your kindness.” Candor smiled through withered lips showing a set of perfect white teeth.

Therefore, Cadoc excused himself and left for his hut with the wizard following behind. The old man’s eyes glowed and sparkled in shades of amber as he shuffled slowly down the dirt road using his walking stick to retain his balance. Cadoc wondered about the mysterious traveler and hoped he was right about his instincts to trust him.

The Ballard’s house was a small wood building fashioned out of rough-hewn lumber and logs from the forest nearby. On the tiny porch sat a worn bench. A lone tree on one side of the structure provided a bit of shade in an otherwise bare dusty patch of earth barren except for a few wild bushes that sprang up at random.

Half a dozen white chickens scratched and pecked in the dry dusty yard. They scattered, squawking noisily, as the men approached. Candor’s cloak dragged in the fine dirt, the frayed bottom of his garment pulling along tiny pebbles in the path.

Cadoc found his wife outside in the little garden behind the house. At the sight of her husband, she got up off her knees and brushed herself off. Strands of hair escaped the long braid down her back and fell loosely around her face as she hurried over, her plain muslin kirtle rustling softly. Who was this stranger with her husband? He explained to his wife why he was home and introduced Candor who nodded his head in greeting.

“My lady.” With introductions out of the way, they invited him in and Enid got busy heating the kettle for tea. The men seated themselves at the small rickety table next to one wall. Candor propped his staff up in the corner and then took his seat, glancing around as he waited for the water to boil. The clear globe on his walking stick cast rays around the dark room as the sun struck it from the window.

“So you say you have traveled a long way. Where do you come from?” Cadoc started the conversation.

“I live on the Sacred Isle of Tiernay De Ochiern.” Candor replied as he looked around the room. The hut was small consisting of two cubicles and was rather dark inside even though there were a couple of holes cut into the walls to serve as windows. These were covered with animal skins that had been tied back to let the sun and light in. The frayed muslin strips fluttered in the breeze that wafted in through the openings bringing with it the smell of sheep and new spring grass from the meadow nearby.

The inside of the dwelling was made entirely of dark wood logs which were rough and still contained the bark in places as well as thick twigs that jutted out, being what was left of the original branches and now used as hooks for hanging things. A weathered stone hearth was on one side, part of the irregular bricks stained black from the smoke of many fires. Here firewood was stacked for cooking as well as heating. Cooking pots sat on the floor and on a nearby makeshift shelf. Next to this was a smaller three-legged table, the legs made of smaller tree limbs cut off so both ends were flat. On this

table stood a washbasin for preparing the meals and for cleaning up after. An old rag hung from a twig above it and a wood pail for gathering water sat on the floor. The small-unfinished eating table and rustic stools along with a couple of wood benches rounded out the area.

Through a large open doorway was a small bed on a rough wood frame, an old trunk on the floor and a small chest in the corner. On top of the chest was a washbasin and ewer. *These people are very poor.* Candor thought as Enid slipped a beaker of steaming tea in front of him and set a basket of oatmeal cakes on the table before taking her seat. Candor nodded at Enid in acknowledgement of the refreshments and his lips turned up in a half smile.

“And you have come from this place with some sort of gift.” Cadoc spoke again. He had been watching the old man looking around the room. The wizard cleared his throat and pulled a blue satin pouch from a pocket in his robe. A gentle tinkling sound could be heard when he moved.

“I thank you for the tea. You’re very kind.” He smiled at Enid and took a sip from the vessel. *These peasants are kind indeed to share what little provisions they have with a stranger.* His dark brown eyes gleamed as he spoke.

“I’ve traveled for many days to find you.” He continued as he picked up a cake, his flowing sleeves brushing the top of the table. He tore off a piece of the bread and chewed thoughtfully as he looked down at the small pouch he placed on the table in front of him. The silk shimmered in different hues of blue in the sunlight streaming through the opening. Cadoc noticed fine silver threads woven into the fabric.

The wizard took his time finishing his cake and drinking more tea refreshing himself from his long journey. Cadoc and Enid looked at each other, over their beakers of tea, and back to their guest but remained silent waiting for him to speak. At last, Candor cleared his throat and began.

“I know you’re wondering about the nature of my visit.” His voice was deep and pleasant. His eyes glistened as he looked up at them, his old wrinkled hands rubbing the silk pouch.

“I have a gift from the Lady of Ardmere in the Kingdom of Apples. This place is on the Sacred Isle of Tiernay De Ochiern.” Cadoc and Enid clasped hands under the table having never heard of these places. A puzzled look came over their faces. As if reading their minds the old wizard tried to explain.

“I know you’re bewildered over this.” His voice was mesmerizing as he let his fingers run over the softness of the pouch. Enid didn’t entirely trust this stranger but felt she was falling under his spell as she listened to his smooth voice rambling on about the reason for his visit.

“Lady Glynis is the ruler of this sacred place. I’m her messenger and advisor as well as her confidant. She looked into her sacred pool on the crescent moon of Candlemas and saw you there. She knew you followed the old ways. She has been looking for the one who is to have the medallion. Looking in the pool, she had a vision. In the years to come, you will have two beautiful daughters. She had this medallion forged for the fairest one. Her most talented artisans set the symbols upon it as laid down by the Lady herself. It holds a grand legacy for this child but she must be schooled in the old ways like you both were and your parents were before you and their parents were before them. When she is born, you must slip this pendant around her neck and she must wear it always. The medallion will protect her from harm. One day when she’s old enough she will seek out its meaning and this legacy will be revealed to her.” With that said, he opened the pouch and the sparkling silver disc slid out into his weathered palm. Many intricate symbols adorned its surface. He handed it to Cadoc and Enid to hold and inspect.

“Can you tell us what all this means?” Enid looked up still mystified. Her blue eyes narrowed and she frowned as she held the shiny disc glimmering in her hand, the brown leather thong trailing down to touch the tabletop.

“It will all become clear when it’s time.” The enchanter pushed back his stool, his old robes rustling softly as he stood and reached for his staff in the corner. The large brown sleeve fell back to reveal three thin silver bracelets, tinkling softly against each other, and faded blue twin dragons tattooed on his forearm.

Cadoc and Enid look at each other upon seeing this and stifle a gasp. They quickly return their attention to the mysterious traveler when the wizard begins to speak.

“I want to thank you for the refreshments and your kindness to an old man. I must get back to my Lady now that I have completed my mission.” He walked slowly to the door, turning around and cocking his head.

“See that no harm comes to the medallion. Keep it in a safe place for the child to come.” He reached out and clasped both their hands in his own, the silver bracelets tinkling softly, and then turned to go. After he stepped over the threshold and onto the dirt road they turned back to the table where the disc lay shining upon it.

“I wonder what this means? He was pretty mysterious about it all.” Enid scowled, giving her husband a puzzled look as she squeezed his hand.

“Did you see the dragons on his wrist? Perhaps he is a wizard as he suggested.” Cadoc looked at his wife in earnest. They decided to question the mysterious traveler further and bolted for the door to stop him before he got too far away. However, when they stepped outside, the old man was gone.

“He’s already gone.” They sighed together and returned to the house.

“He just vanished as if into thin air. How can an old man move so quickly? You saw him. He shuffled along and could hardly walk.” Enid held her husband’s wrist in a tight grip as a look of fear came over her face.

“Well if he is a wizard we must do as he asked.” Cadoc hugs his wife and she agreed. Raised with the knowledge that wizards are wise men, they decided not to question his word. They looked in awe at each other as they thought about having two daughters in the future. Happy about this, they stood a minute at the table smiling and hugging each other with this news. The medallion lay upon the old wood with rays of sunlight sparkling off it casting brilliant streaks about the small drab room. Still holding each other, they glanced down at its luster and then returned it to the blue pouch and placed it in the trunk where it stayed until Anwen was born some years later.