

THE QUARRY

The Chosen One

James Douglas

Your honour, members of the Jury. My name is Symes the Ice Wizard and literature expert. Now knowing my skills in storytelling, I suppose you would like an account of how this fiasco all started.

Our tale begins in our home, Scotia of Greymane. A land where shields and swords are the most common weapons, royalty rule over the province and magic is a mysterious and powerful force that only the few diligent enough to study its arts can harness. Greymane is an island continent separated from the four neighbouring, giant continents surrounding us we have yet to explore. Scotia is the northern division of the island that has its own economy and government separate from the Greymane kingdom. Scotia is also known as the land of the fog, as every morning, a fog arises and spreads across the land that is so thick it covers most of the landscape for two hours. The skies are covered by cloudy mist and sometimes and can have days where it rains frequently.

There are ten-thousand inhabitants of Scotia, but the only people holding power are the thirty royals. Each of the thirty royals has a birthmark on the back of their necks in the shape of the sun. The castles, homes of the royals, are where every road in the country lead to and from. They were the first structures of Scotia, and every village on the island is formed from these roads and the castles they lead to. Each castle is heritage, crafted from large, rough stones and reach up to fifteen feet and cover an area of one-hundred and fifty by two-hundred square metres.

This society of ours stayed prosperous for more than one-hundred years. I only bring this all up as emphasis for the parallel to the day it all changed. When the army bearing the black flag with a white dagger arrived. The flag of the Dark Lady, Oblivion. Oblivion, as we discovered, was an outcast from the southern Greymane kingdom, exiled for attempting to overthrow the governing body and usurp the King of Greymane.

Now with an army, the Legion, of one-hundred-thousand mercenaries and criminals under her command, she took their sights to Scotia to claim as their own. Her Legion pillaged village after village and murdered villager after villager, ransacking their homes to strike fear into the hearts of the people. The royal family and the sheriffs stood little to no chance against her army and her magic of all four elements and darkness. Eventually, the Dark Lady drove out or killed every member of the royal family and became the Dark Lady, Empress of Scotia.

And I can already see your eyes glazing off while I'm speaking, so I'll just move on to why we are all here.

We discovered this when my wizard friends, Philes—that old lunatic—and Gendry, and I returned to it from our year-long isolated study of the magic arts, we found our home village, Cadun, in ruins. The carpenters, the bank, the bakery, the butchery, the town hall and all of our homes were reduced to nothing but burning wood and straw, and the stone walls nothing but rubble. Villagers lay massacred on the tiled-roads, their blood staining and running through the cracks. Those left alive were in shock and mourning. The butcher's daughter was burying her father in the back of the butchery. The carpenter held his lifeless son and wife in his arms, crying and wailing outside the ruins of the carpentry. Castle Cadun that overlooked Cadun had crumbled into cobblestone debris with the large boulders that caused the stronghold's destruction amongst the wreckage.

Philes, all wise wizard (at least he thought so), wept, covering his golden eyes with his thumb and finger as his brown teeth bit his lip. He soaked my cotton robes and long grey beard

with tears but avoided the book tied in leather straps over his shoulder. I consoled him and I moved my jars of fluid which I tied over my robes like a necklace before he hugged me. I absorbed the desolation as a drop of sweat dripped down my long-pointed nose and more trailed down my wrinkled cheeks.

Gendry, a wizard so gentle in nature that even a lamb could bully him, took out a bandage from his satchel and a handful of leaves from the vines hanging around his neck. He rubbed his hands together with the leaves in between until hands glowed a bright green. He placed his hands on the bleeding neck of the carpenter and the carpenter barked at him to leave. He mustered his most comforting smile from under his long, black beard and said:

‘Shh please tell me what happened,’ Gendry whispered to the carpenter, fighting back his own tears.

‘They came, the Legion of the Dark Lady!’ He struggled to push out of his mouth. ‘They slaughtered everyone in this village and no one could stop those animals! They’re gone to the other castles. God help anyone who lives through their massacre...’ He quietly sulked as Gendry continued to heal the carpenter, looking over to us concerned.

‘Gentleman, there is only one person who can defeat the Dark Lady,’ Philes proclaimed, exiting the hug, and wiping his tears. ‘The Chosen One!’

‘Ah yes, the Chosen One,’ I sighed, ‘the one you think will save Scotia from desolation.’ My voice oozed with sarcasm as I crossed my arms.

‘You know this story well! It was foretold upon the ancient walls, that when a great darkness destroys the land, a hero bearing the sun shall vanquish the darkness. That must mean the sun mark on the necks of nobles! All we must do is find a noble still alive and they can defeat her!’

‘I am fully aware, you overdramatic codger, but the only people with the marks of the sun are nobles, and we don’t know how many this Dark Lady has even left alive!’

‘Then we search all of Scotia to find one in hiding.’ He pointed his finger towards me with a giant grin on his face.

I let out a mixture of a growl and a sigh at this stupid plan. ‘Philes, let me explain this simply. Even if we could find one in hiding, where would we even begin to look? We would have to search the whole continent before we found a single noble left in this carnage!’

‘Would you rather leave the people to continue suffering?’ Philes asked.

Silence was shared between us. We scanned the wreckage further and the damage of a once-thriving town. How many more towns would share this fate if we do not step in?

‘We will gather tomorrow and search the lands,’ I announced to my friends.

The next day, the three of us mounted our horses as we travelled the many roads leading to what remains of the seven kingdoms and their surrounding villages in search of the Chosen One of this prophecy.

Philes had a better stroke of luck, as he recounted us. After a month of searching, he arrived in the small coastal port town of Tusae, which was thankfully spared the wrath of the Legion. The buildings were cubic, smooth, and were painted white as snow. The streets permeated with the smell of salt water, alcohol, and human waste. The sun reflected brightly off the sea and the white buildings. While roaming the bustling street markets, and shielding his eyes from the light, he had his purse swiped by an urchin boy. Before he could conjure his Magical Hand to retrieve it, a cloaked young man swiped his purse out of the urchin’s hand. With a smile, the young man walked over to Philes and handed over his purse.

‘Sorry about that, sir. The little street kids always swipe valuables when the sun is its brightest. Best to keep your hands over your purse in the future. Have a nice day.’ The boy turned around and his hood came off. On his neck was the birthmark shaped like the sun. Without a second thought, Philes put his hand on his shoulder and halted him immediately

‘What is your name, young man?’ he asked.

‘Wolne, sir.’

‘Tell me Wolne, have you ever heard of the prophecy of the Chosen One?’

‘Yes sir, I have.’

‘My dear lad, my companions and I of the Three Great Wizards have been searching for the Chosen One for some time. I suspect you are the goal of our quest.’

‘Me? The Chosen One?’ Wolne repeated in disbelief. ‘But sir, I’m nobody special. I’m just Wolne.’

‘Nonsense, my companions and I have been searching for a person of noble birth and the mark on your neck is proof of your legitimacy. You are the only one who can defeat the Dark Lady.’

‘But sir, I don’t think I’m strong enou—’

‘Young man, do you wish to stay here and let the world fall into further ruin until only corpses remain?’

Wolne stayed silent, looking at the floor. ‘Fine.’ He agreed uncertainly, looking up to Philes’ line of sight.

‘Good.’ Philes grinned and motioned Wolne to follow as he continued walking. ‘Now it is time for your training.’

The rest after we all returned to our wizarding castle was weapons training, motivational speeches, planning for attack and eating oranges and broccoli soup every day. Your honour, please excuse me from recounting all of this, as it is rather boring. Allow me to skip ahead.

Ten months passed and what a change. Young Wolne grew into a muscular youthful warrior adorned in shining armour, long flowing blonde hair, and a red shield adorned with a painted sun, similar to his birthmark. It was his twenty-first birthday present from me. On the anniversary I brought him to the Wizard’s Fortress, I stood in the Coronation Room; a dark cobblestone room lit only by candlelight that surrounded the room’s floor in a circle, Wolne stood by the door to see the three of us inside.

‘Wolne,’ Philes announced, ‘enter the Ring of Fire.’

Wolne entered and bent his knee to three of us. Philes walked towards him with a glowing white broadsword in hand.

‘What is your destiny?’

‘To kill the Dark Lord, Oblivion,’ Wolne sternly stated.

‘And what will this bring?’

‘Peace and prosperity to the land.’

He smiled. 'My boy, you have trained more diligently than any noble knight of Greymane. You have proven yourself worthy of this, the Oathkeeper. An ancient sword whose blade can reach the temperature of the sun!' He bestowed the glowing broadsword to Wolne, who looked shocked at the old man, whom merely smiles back at him. 'Arise, Wolne.'

Wolne arose and Philes hugged him as a father would his son. 'I am proud to call you my disciple.'

Gendry and I looked at each other concernedly and motioned Philes forward for a private conversation.

'We have to admit, Philes, you had us worried. Taking ten months to prepare Wolne for the greatest evil Scotia has ever faced,' I admitted.

'That is quite uncalled for!' He protested stubbornly. 'We needed to be with him to make sure his training and our plan is foolproof!'

'No, I must admit,' interrupted Gendry, stroking his black beard, 'we don't know how many towns have fallen from the Legion. All we have done is spy upon the castle, nothing else!'

'Fear not, my friends,' He smiled at us confidently. 'Our patience shall be rewarded.' He walked back to Wolne. 'Come, dear friends, let us ride and defeat Oblivion once and for all!'

With a hearty cheer as we left the room, the four of us mounted our horses from the stable and rode the countryside towards Oblivion's castle.

It was a freezing night as we trotted through the fog, which covered the grassy plains of the castle. The Dark Lord's castle was made up of four watchtowers connected by twenty-foot walls and was surrounded by a moat. Guards of the legion patrolled the castle grounds inside the watch towers and outside the castle walls.

Wasting no time, my friends and I used our magic to launch fire, ice, and lightning at the guards as Wolne galloped his way through. Wolne did his fair share of slicing guards heads off and stabbing them through their armour with Oathkeeper, but in hindsight, it was us that cleared the area of any other lifeform but Wolne.

We swung the front door open and marched into the main hall. It was dimly lit with the full moon emanating light from the glass dome on the ceiling. A woman in a green regal dress and crimson, red, wavy hair sat relaxed on her onyx throne atop a platform. It was Oblivion.

‘How did you get in here?!’ she barked at us. ‘Guards!’

Wolne, as the guards came rushing towards us, pointed Oathkeeper at Oblivion. ‘Your reign of terror ends today, Dark Lady Oblivion!’ he announced ferociously. ‘I am Wolne the VI, the Chosen One and rightful heir to the throne! Once you are slain, Scotia will be at peace!’ He then charged at the guards, screaming at the top of his lungs.

‘Wait!’ Oblivion held her hand out, and both Wolne and the guards stopped and looked at her. ‘Wolne, did one of your villages get burnt down by my army?’ She asked.

‘Yes, yes they did! You left Marbletop, my home, in ruins!’ Wolne replied, gritting his teeth.

‘Oh goodness...’ She held her hands to her head. ‘My dear boy, I am so sorry for your loss. In my conquest, I never wanted the massacring of your land, its people, and nobles.’

‘What? But you gave the order to have my village slaughtered!’

‘Yes, my early Legion was comprised of those of dubious background and acted on their own accord. Rest assured, they were publicly executed for their needless pillaging. In fact the, new Legion is comprised of men inspired to follow me after this display.’

Wolne lowered his sword. He puzzled at this lapse in knowledge that was new to all four of us.

‘But... what of the other villages and castles?’

‘The new Legion army have been helping to reconstruct the villages that the old Legion has done and continue trade along your roads once again.’

‘But... What of the Chosen One story? I’ve been training my whole life to bring Scotia back from darkness!’

‘Listen, young Wolne, I know my sudden usurpation of your government was more bloody than was intended. It was my mistake to use criminals in the first place. They were the only ones who wished to join my cause. All I can say to convince you that I am not the Dark Lady that you think I am, that I only want to make up for the suffering I brought, and help Scotia become a great power that can rival even the Greymane kingdom.’

‘So... so this whole time, the ten months I have been training in the Wizard’s Tower has been—’

Suddenly, Gendry interrupted by shouting, 'A complete waste of time!'

Wolne then walked over to us, his face scrunched in anger.

'Gentlemen, it was a desperate time! We had to act fast!' Philes justified to them all.

'You could have acted by observing what was actually going on after all this time! How could you have not seen those soldiers get executed while we spied on the castle?!' I questioned to him.

'I never got a chance to see my wife's grave in Cadun,' Gendry protested in tears. 'Because we were on this fool's errand!'

'You all are just as guilty! You didn't see it either! We must have missed it!' he protested.

'Don't you push the blame on us!' Wolne shouted and poked his finger hard at Philes' chest.

As we bickered, Oblivion blinked and looked over to her guards. 'Rodrick, can you please send them to prison? We will set up a trial in the morning.'

'Yes m'lady,' Said Rodrick, the commander in red, black and gold armour. He and the four other soldiers pushed us towards the cellar door as we continued to squabble. Now did we jump to conclusions? Yes, definitely. But in those desperate circumstances, even the sanest of minds can be swayed by the most ludicrous of notions. So if you have any mercy in your heart, at least go easy on the boy, Gendry, and I. Lock up Philes, I beg of you, for starting this whole mess. He's in his seventies now, so he wouldn't be serving a life sentence for long. I rest my case.