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Enchanted Realms

Written by Valan Peters

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Enchanted Realms

2nd Edition, Revised for 2015

Valan Peters



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All the characters in this publication were real persons who lived on this earth more than nine hundred years ago.
Any resemblance to people living now is purely coincidental.

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Author's Introduction

Do you believe in life after death and reincarnation? Well I do – I definitely do. Aware of myself living in the 21st century with all its noise and bustle and yet conscious of another facet of my being who lived on this earth more than nine hundred years ago.

This story came through an open channel who had no knowledge of the period described or of what he had dictated. For the most part I was an interested recorder, although at times she came so close that I felt what she felt and was almost overwhelmed by her emotions.

As a result of this psychic experience I wrote day after day with excitement and amazement as the story unfolded; people, events and places I had never heard of became a living reality as they filled the pages of my notebook. The main historical data can be confirmed but, needless to say, though legends abound this was not possible with the mystical elements.

This is a true story of long ago - a tale of battle, cruelty and love but, above all, it is the story of the magic and spiritual knowledge that has almost vanished from this world since man turned away from the Light. It is indeed a fact that truth is often stranger than fiction!

Part 1
Brothers-in-Arms

Prologue

William, Duke of Normandy, sat in the round tower where Harold had sworn away the crown of England some two years before on the sacred bones of St Edmund. William's thoughts were on this matter and also on the ecclesiastical council, which had been held at Caen in July, where he had sought papal aid to enforce his right to the English throne. The aid was forthcoming, but not without reserve.

William was jolted from his mind's wandering by the torches that flared on being kindled by Gilbert the Wise. As he was called by the duke, Gilbert moved across the chamber, avoiding the choking smoke of the central fire pit. The wood hissed and spat as it was licked by the rising flames.

William's hard, angular face looked very sinister as he sprawled on the throne that housed the sacred bones in its curved archway above his head. His general attitude would have suggested laziness to any stranger, but Gilbert looked into the hard, shining, ebony eyes and saw all the excitement, ruthlessness and love of power. He saw the burning passion for England's throne growing stronger in the duke's heart.

"What tidings bring you, Gilbert, magician of magicians? Will all go well with my proposed conquest of England? Tell me – good news or ill – I fear nothing. Your foretelling has never failed me yet."

"My lord, you do me many honours beyond my worth, but, in honesty, I will say that my tidings are both well and ill – in these ways. I have consulted those who hold the reins of destiny from on high and the stars are favouring you greatly since the death of Edward the Confessor and the crowning of Harold Godwineson. The time is right!

"The celestial lion of your birth is ascending into the heavens until the fifth hour after noon, on the fourth and tenth days of October. If you do battle against Harold during this time his defeat will be assured. But, hear me now, if you attempt to win England after the appointed time nothing will save you from an untimely death."

"As you said, Gilbert, your tidings are both well and ill together."

"Yes, my lord. I must add that St Edmund spoke to me during my time of solitary prayer and fasting."

"Tell me of our sacred martyr's heavenly speech."

"He told of a vision that constantly fills all of Harold's sleeping hours."

"Not a vision of victory and its path, I'll swear by the body of the Virgin," said William.

Gilbert looked with great anger at him for some time in a strained silence, which made William so uneasy that he coughed and apologised for his blasphemy.

"My lord, you will never swear so in my presence again for, if you do, I shall retire to Lisieux for the duration of my life. Do you fully understand me, my lord?"

"Yes, Gilbert, I understand. Pray forgive me and continue."

Gilbert nodded. “The vision is terrifying for Harold wakes every night screaming with a pain that fills his mind. His anguish is brought by the vision of the dark angel Naxiftul who drives a red, hot spike into his eye, plunging his tormented soul into the depths of damnation. In his dream the sign is manifesting in truth to show Harold that, if he does not give up the crown of England, he will die before the fifty-seventh rising of the celestial sun – as from the morrow.”

“I must prepare to get started if the signs point the way to victory. Sir Robert, my father, hear me in your heavenly palace and Herleve, my mother, princess of celestial magic, hear me. I am to rule England and add it to my kingdom.”

Without wind or any seen reason, the torches on the wall and the large fire flickered very brightly showing the power of an unseen force that lurked, ever watchful, until called.

“Gilbert, give my order that the ships gathering at Dives are to sail for Saint-Valery-sur-Somme where I will join them to set forth for England.”

Chapter 1

Naxiftul's Day of Darkness

Their fathers were two knights who were in the services of Roger of Montgomery. William came from a small township called Dol on the coast of Brittany, whilst David came from Fecamp in Normandy. Roger of Montgomery decided to join the duke in his invasion and so their fathers and families came to England.

This invasion was run on the lines of a business investment with shares being allotted in proportion to the contribution of knights or ships, with an added incentive of a bonus for good work in the field. Thus the land of the slaughtered English would be divided accordingly.

During the summer of 1066 a great company assembled around St Valery at the mouth of the Somme. Mercenaries, Normans from south Italy and Spain, nobles and knights all fired with the idea of seizing the wealth and land of England. By the beginning of August a large fleet carrying around seven thousand men – mostly persons of rank and quality – was ready to follow the duke.

However, for six weeks the south wind refused to blow and the army, bound by no ties, began to get restless. Extreme measures had to be taken and the bones of St Edmund were carried along the shore with due pomp and religious ceremony. The very next day the wind

changed to the southwest. This was considered a good omen as such signs were thought to be of grave spiritual importance.

William gave the signal and the whole fleet put to sea with all their equipment and horses. The duke, who had a faster vessel, soon found himself alone in mid-channel and had to wait. On the twenty-eighth of September the fleet came together and anchored safely at Pavensey Bay, where there was no opposition to the landing. During the next fortnight the army was organised, Sussex raided for supplies and some defensive works were ordered for the protection of the fleet and base.

King Harold, hurrying from the battle of Stamford Bridge and mustering all the forces he could in London, reached Pavensey on the evening of the thirteenth of October. He took up his position on the slope of a hill that barred the direct route into the capital.

The Battle of Hastings commenced on the morning of the fourteenth of October. During this battle William and David became as brothers, leaning on each other's resources and comradeship in the heat of the final foray. The battle had been in progress for two hours when David, charging on horseback up the hillside, suddenly found his reins pulling sharply towards the ground. From the side an opponent had swung his huge-headed axe, severing his horse's head from its body. David was dragged over the front of the carcass to the ground.

As the house-carl stepped forward to deliver a fatal blow, William, riding at full speed, knocked him off balance and cleaved his helmet almost in two. As William's horse could not carry more than one, both

men decided to fight on foot. They fought relentlessly for several hours with only sword and shield against the huge axes of the house-carls. Both were wounded several times and, in the last moments of the battle, were so exhausted that they fought back-to-back leaning against each other.

The duke honoured them with his praises for their valiant deeds and vowed they would not go unrewarded for their strength and courage. William was already known to the duke for his valour in previous battles, but this was the start of David's rise in England.

Leaving the war-torn hill of Hastings and descending to the encampments below, both were grieved to see so many of their friends and comrades lying dead on the hillside. In seeing all this they turned several times to look at each other, their faces revealing the sheer disbelief that they had not gone to join their forefathers in one of those many mansions reserved for the knights who had fallen in battle.

Travelling with the Conqueror, they saw the almost maniacal way in which he slaughtered all the English who barred his passage. They saw the submission of Dover on the twenty-first of October and the surrender of Canterbury on the twenty-ninth of October. In the first half of December they marched in a great circle round London, leaving in their wake a scene of murder, rape and devastation. At London itself they met with no opposition and so it was that William was crowned king on Christmas Day.

Chapter 2

Death in the Sun

Roger of Montgomery was given the shire known as Shropshire and the Earldom of Shrewsbury.

David and William received large areas of land close to the Princedoms of Wales. In April 1067 they left London together with a knight known as Edmund the Righteous, their families and a retinue of servants and men-at-arms – the total company numbering over a thousand. The first part of the journey to Hereford had to be taken as quickly as possible, for bands of Anglo-Saxon warriors were still marauding and pillaging the countryside.

On their fourth day out they came upon a valley with a river running through it and, as evening was drawing close, rode no further. The encampment was arranged in a military fashion with sentries posted around the perimeter. Fires were lit and the animals, which some of the men had brought back from hunting, were soon roasting. There was much gaiety, singing and drinking of wine – an easy happiness overcame them all.

With the exception of the knights, they soon forgot their circumstances. Roger warned that any man found drunk on duty would be flogged – an effective deterrent. Just after midnight there was a cry from the northern end of the valley. Down the hill ran one of the guards rousing the camp as he went. Most of the men were ready for

battle in a few minutes. Forming ranks of five deep they moved out north, east, south and west.

Roger ordered that no quarter be given and in the skirmish that followed this was carried out ruthlessly. Later, when all casualties had been assessed, twenty or so of their men were found dead. Bigger fires were lit and the guards doubled for the remainder of the night. Next morning the whole camp rose early. From now on they would camp wherever possible in places where approaching enemy bands would find it difficult to catch them unawares and, if they met with the slightest resistance from villagers, they would make examples of them.

For several days their journey was again very pleasant. They were now deep into the heart of the countryside and making good progress when they came to a narrow road. This was no more than a dirt track cut into the side of a steep hill lined with pine trees. They travelled along this for several miles until one of the outriders came back to the head of the column, reporting fresh tracks around a bridge and men hiding in the forest. From where they stood this part of the forest and hillside was not visible.

They halted the whole column and prepared a plan of action: archers, spearmen and foot soldiers would climb into the pine forest with two of the knights making their way around behind the enemy. When the long horn was sounded they were to close in from the rear.

Some two hundred footmen left the road and descended into the valley. Making sure they were not seen, they ascended the opposite side, which was very thickly wooded. Roger was safeguarding against the age-old trick of catching an enemy on a bridge, which

ensured an inescapable slaughter. They waited until the men who had descended the valley were in position. At a given signal from the far side of the valley the largest part of the army prepared to set off.

The women and children were left behind with a small guard. To avert suspicion the shield maidens (maidens of great strength and skill used in battle) dressed in clothes borrowed from the womens' chests. Looking as though there was no order of ranks – maidens chatting, minstrels playing – they slowly advanced towards the bridge and were within yards of it when a battle cry went up from all around. Men were pouring out of the forest from behind and in front of them.

William, who was leading the party, gave the call on a horn signalling everyone to dismount. The maidens threw off the garments concealing their battledress. The horses, made nervous by all this noise and commotion, were pushed and herded, snorting with fear, towards the oncoming enemy, blocking their path – if only for a time. Shield maidens, knights, spearmen and footmen formed a perfect circle with the archers kneeling on the outside loosing their arrows thick and fast.

Suddenly, the band of Normans who had encircled the enemy on this side of the bridge appeared from the forest, slaying the enemy from behind. At this point the Norman archers moved back into the centre of the circle and, stacking their bows, drew their swords for the further onslaught. The spearmen dropped their spears into a horizontal position forming a spiked fence; many of the maidens took off their helmets to bewilder the enemy who showed hesitation at killing them.

By now, the Norman soldiers who were in the forest on the other side of the bridge were closing in on the Saxons trapped by the horses. They were lifted bodily from behind and thrown over the side of the bridge. The battle was over and the enemy had been completely defeated with very few losses to the Normans.

William had the prisoners brought before him.

"Who among you is the leader?" he asked, looking over the tired and beaten foes.

"I am," spoke a tall, well-built man standing with his helmet held beneath his arm.

"You are a treacherous animal, Saxon."

"How can it be treacherous, Sir Knight, if one is fighting for one's home and country?"

"To attack the loyal subjects of William of Normandy, who is your lawful and crowned king, is treason."

The Saxon spat, and this so incensed William that he drew his sword and beheaded the chieftain before he could be stopped. The body was hung from a tree at the end of the bridge as an example to others.

The bridge was cleared of horses and the men and maidens made their way back to the waiting women and children. Resuming their journey, that evening they camped on a high hill with some woodland at the top. They stayed there for three days in order to give the men a rest and draw up certain plans of action.

Chapter 3

Mystical Encounter

These battles worried Roger. The next time he and his Norman knights might not be so lucky. Calling them together, he explained the position.

"Gentlemen, we are less than halfway to our lands and our losses in battle with these Saxon bands have been considerable. I therefore propose that we capture a few Saxons and find out what large towns stand between us and our destination. Where possible, we will avoid conflict with the English until we are settled in our new homes."

That night, David and William with some of their men raided a small township a few miles from the camp, bringing back many prisoners, men and women. The men were tortured and put to the sword when they could tell no more of the conditions ahead. The women were given to the soldiers and many tried to kill themselves rather than be raped. When David and William saw what was happening they were ashamed of their night's work. Roger only felt that he was protecting his people against further hardships and at dawn ordered the company to break camp.

The township was now three days behind them and with each day the terrain had become steadily more hazardous. The rolling hills and gentle valleys had been slowly swallowed up by jagged mountain ranges and small woods had grown into wild, impenetrable forests.

As they made their way up a dusty, winding track, large outcrops of rock hung over their heads and long, heavily spiked brambles tore at them as though trying to bar their passage. They reached the summit of a thickly wooded hill as an enormous orange sun, filling most of the sky, began to fall like molten lava behind the distant western mountains. The upper heavens were blanketed by the dark, blue-black smoky coverlet of coming night.

The main track led northwards along the hilltop among the high dark trees. On reaching the far end of the trees, they dimly saw the road winding up and along a steep ridge. Roger told them to erect the tents beneath the largest oaks. Stretching below them to the west, the rocks and trees got smaller as the hillside fell away revealing a large valley plain. Its far side was checked abruptly by a sheer wall of rock, which reached up to a great height towards the firmament.

Halfway up, they saw a fortress, which looked very dark as though hewn from granite. Its pinnacle towers were tall, like pointed spears poised ready to strike up at the descending clouds. The sight surprised them, for they had seen no signs of enemy bands all day and the fortress could have housed many men-at-arms. It could only be reached by stone steps that led up the steep face and could, by virtue of its construction and position, have held a large army at bay forever.

The last embers of the sun died down behind the mountains and black starry night was upon them. After the evening meal David and William left their ladies and went to take another look at the fortress. When they arrived at

an observation post the sentry said, "I think the fortress is uninhabited as I have seen no sign of any lights."

William seemed pleased, but David felt uneasy. Suddenly, as they talked a light appeared in one of the high windows and gave out a strange glow across the valley. They fell silent, waiting, rooted to the spot for what seemed an eternity. The light vanished and the valley was plunged once more into darkness.

William and David began to talk as they walked from sentry to sentry discussing what they had seen. An intangible fear had overcome them. The sentries were also uneasy and some visibly jumped at their approach. They were making their way back along the line when the light fell once more onto the valley. This time it appeared at the entrance for the front of the fortress was bathed in a pale light. It began to descend the stairway and move out across the plain in a very odd movement. David was the first to break free from its hold; he clasped William by the arm and shook him forcibly.

The light stopped moving directly in the centre of the plain and was placed upon the ground. Five men became visible and all appeared to be clothed in white. The light shone on their garments and their brightness was greatly increased. From all around came whispering voices, which slowly became louder, until chanting filled the air. The singing was unlike anything they had heard before and it seemed to both men that time stood still. Sweat formed on their foreheads and they felt as though they might sink into unconsciousness.

David turned to William. "I will not be afeard of a strange light and of a fortress that is almost uninhabited."

William agreed. "As far as I can see there are only five men in the centre of the valley floor."

"I am going down to have a closer look at this strange spectacle."

William forewarned of any such action – but his words rattled emptily into the night for David was already descending the slope. At the bottom was some shrubbery and beyond he could see clearly a large, impregnable row of thorn and bramble, which stood at least fifteen feet high, like a forbidding many-spiked wall.

He made his way along it for several minutes towards the very centre and found a small iron gate, but it would not yield to his forcing. Looking around, he saw a tree with overhanging branches stretching, as far as he could see, beyond the wall of thorn and bramble. As he was climbing, the thought struck him that, once inside, it would be difficult to get out again. Still thinking this, he dropped to the ground below. As he fell the light seemed to increase; then he was on his feet running towards the central figure.

Drawing his sword as he ran, he could make out quite clearly the scene before him. Twenty paces from the nearest figure he suddenly crashed into something, which sent him reeling back and he crumpled into a heap on the ground. Getting up, he approached again but this time more cautiously. On the ground were two lines of stones, which appeared to run some distance in either direction. He made a move to step over them, but found something blocked his path – something invisible. He put his hand out and it touched something solid, but he could see nothing.

The man standing nearest to the light was quite old and yet he looked in some way very strange and beautiful.

Around him on the ground was a large circle of stones the colour of turquoise. Within this was another circle, whose stones appeared as white as the sun. David saw that to his left and right, men were standing in each corner of a large square, which began at his feet. Within the square, stones were arrayed in magical patterns. The man in the middle called David by name. If all else had been strange, this was beyond belief! He carried on speaking in a voice which was pleasant yet full of mystical power.

"Hear me, David of Fecamp. You have lived to tell the tale of the Battle of Hastings where Harold Godwineson died by Naxiftul's burning bolt. Your master, William the Blasphemer, lives and wears England's stolen crown upon his head. He does not know yet of the great torment this tiny island will bring him before he dies an agonising death in Rouen. Poor William, whose eldest son, Robert, will rise up against him.

"Listen to my words as you have never listened before; heed my foretelling and in your future life find solace therein. Remember me for kings, rulers, dictators, conquerors – they all come and go, but I remain untouched by time or tide. I see the world moving on into the darkness away from the light. Before two score years have passed vile and most terrible deeds will be done in the name of God and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

"You will receive a son whom you will call David and your comrade William will beget a daughter who shall be named Gwendolyn. The two children will be betrothed at birth. They will be instructed in the secrets of magic and the Natural Law of the world – these things will gladden their lives.

"Seek out the tiny, mauve flowers of Eden and prepare them to eat at your feasts. By the secret token all will be made known to you. This is a very religious night and I have much to do before the moon begins to wane. So go in peace, my son, and may all your days be filled with love."

David went down on one knee and thanked the magician for his good counsel; he rose, turned and made his way back. When he reached the iron gate it was open and he closed it behind him. He pushed against it once more, but it would not yield.

William was halfway down the slope coming to meet him. "David, David, thank God! I thought the demons of hell had got you."

David, although shaken by his experience, laughed aloud and told him of all that had passed. William was hard pressed to believe such a story and it showed clearly in his face.

David took him by the arm. "Tell no one of the meeting."

When they reached the summit all the guards gathered round.

David addressed them. "There is nothing to fear; it is only a religious ceremony and you are to honour it as such."

The two friends made their way back to the camp where they sat talking by the fire until tiredness overcame them.

Next morning the camp rose at dawn. They moved up along the rocky path, which led away from the valley and, on reaching a bend, David and William turned to look back at the fortress. The sun's rays were just beginning to touch it – it sparkled and seemed as though it had perhaps been there longer and would remain there longer than any of them could ever imagine. With a last fleeting glance they turned and rode quickly on their way.