

The Legend of Lady Godiva

by Celestial Melody

"A tale of twisted perfection and tainted ambition..."

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However, Godgyfu was also something no one in her Muggle family ever expected her to be: a witch who grew up to become one of the most influential women in Earth's myth and history.

Enter the world of 1000s Britain and follow Lady Godiva through her fated, ambitious and often sinful, life. Know, and learn to love, cry, fear, and treasure, the woman who rode through the streets of Coventry, and, thus rode into the pages of history, immortalizing herself in the minds of Muggles and wizards alike.

Book Be Born

Chapter 1 of 3

"A tale of twisted perfection and tainted ambition..."

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Author's Notes:

(I'm going to get all this rubbish out of the way at the beginning. *grins*)

Read the warnings for this story, please. =)

Thanks to the lovely Evie, the fantastic Theresa (notsosaintly), and my lovely moderator, Jan (Magical Maeve,) for all their help on my new story. I absolutely adore all of you.

The beautiful quote at the beginning of this chapter was written by Sir Walter Scott.

Latin Terms

"*Vae*" means 'damn.'

"*Oraculum!*" means, simply, 'Oracle,' because runes are, indeed, oracles.

"*Libri exsisto Prognatus!*" means 'Book be born,' which, coincidentally, is also the name of chapter one.

"*Forfexcutis*" is a spell derived from a combination of both scissors (*forfex*) and leather (*cutis*).

Book Be Born

O Caledonia! stern and wild,

Meet nurse for a poetic child!

Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,

Land of the mountain and the flood,

Land of my sires! what mortal hand

Can e'er untie the filial band,

That knits me to thy rugged strand!

The haunting mists of evening muted the warm orange glow of the fast-setting sun; clinging tendrils of smoky gray cloaked the craggy peaks of the untamed Scottish highlands, and in their turn, shadowed, blurred, obscured the ghostly outlines of a behemoth building set into those rocky crests. Threads of light, waning, wan, were swallowed into oblivion as the Grim of night dashed forth from his shadowy abode. As he ran, the courses flew before him, their wings beating in hasty retreat. The dark being dashed at them, scattering the flocks, snarling, "Charge!" and the eerie swarms of bats and birds echoed their answering cry: "Night comes so swiftly to those who run from it!"

Then, all was silent.

No sound broke the calm, save the lone cry of the single, deserted common tern slicing through the quiet, velvety night. But, lo! Soft, my child, o listener of this tale, see you that building yon? Ah, yes, I can see you do. Look closer: See that the windows, glass-paned and sparkling in the night, are lit from inside with a magical, warming fire and wonder, dear child, what is happening within.

Those same windows...eyes to the soul of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, so to speak...seemingly beckon to weary travelers (such as you, dear child) of these remote, dangerously beautiful Scottish peaks to approach the castle for there a warm welcome must surely await them, but, alas, this is not the case. No one of magic-scorning descent will ever see the beauty of *this* castle. Charms and enchantments have been placed meticulously upon it, protecting this budding school of magic, ancient and lore-laden, from the prying, peering eyes of its curious, often abusive, kinfolk.

But, child blessed, steal closer and peep through the windows. See what a grand room that is? Vaulted ceilings supported by thick oak timbers lend an unmistakable air of security to this school...an air of safety sorely lacking in the conventional thatch structures of the time. But never mind that; see the solitary woman who stands in the arched room? Pray, what says she? Creep closer and listen; listen hard...

*

A slender, poised woman, her raven-black hair rippling in the warm light thrown into the tower room by the crackling fire, stood behind the sparkling glass windows and gazed down into the grounds below. She sighed once and pivoted, winsomely tearing her dark blue gaze from the lovely sight of the moonlit lake lying under the soft blanket of night. However, though her eyes had been focused upon the lake, the woman's mind had been focused upon a distinctly *different* subject. Indeed, her thoughts were less agreeably engaged.

For who, she thought as she stood at the window, *shall select the children after we have gone?* Frowning in consternation, thin lines of worry creased the lovely witch's pale brow.

Ah, yes, she was a witch...a sorceress of extraordinary mental prowess, *and* the intellectual lifeblood of Hogwarts. Her sure, steady intelligence made up for any lack of intellect in her colleagues, though they, too, had talent in their own right. As for this witch, however, her gift addressed and, indeed, rested in the powers of the mind. She knew every incantation known to the wizards and witches of her day. She had painstakingly copied down or written every tome used by any given student of Hogwarts. *She* was Rowena Ravenclaw.

Pacing the warmly-lit room, Rowena mused on the matter that had been preoccupying her mind for the past few months. Who would bring the children to Hogwarts after the Founders had gone on? Dying did not frighten Rowena, but she feared most passionately for her beloved school. The fact that she could not think of an answer...for, usually, Rowena was the first to solve any problems the Founders had...only served to annoy her further.

Rowena was already in a foul mood, and when she paused abruptly and then flung herself into a wooden chair, she accidentally caught her sharp elbow on the corner of the wooden table beside her.

"*Vae!*" she yelped, as a sharp sting seared through her arm and reverberated into her shoulder. Hissing in pain, Rowena reached irritably for a polished wooden bowl lying on a nearby table while simultaneously detaching a brocade purse from the braided leather cord belted 'round her trim waist. Rowena promptly (and unceremoniously) dumped the contents of the bag...a set of bone runes...into the wooden pan. Rattling the bones in the pan, she chanted the spell used to shape the letters.

"Ivory Runes, ancient and true,

I pledge now my trust in you.

Tell me now what e'er betide,

This school of Hogwarts in distant time.

Oraculum!"

As she spoke the last syllables of Latin, Rowena cast the runes onto the rough wooden table. Twenty-two bones landed, clattering mystically, on their blank side, but the two that didn't made as little sense as they had a fortnight ago.

'*Manaz*,' for intelligence, and '*Wunjo*' ... success, Rowena thought with exasperation and more than a little disgust.

The two runes puzzled...and, indeed, *had* been puzzling...their caster greatly for many moons. Frowning deeper still, the bemused witch scooped the runes off the table and shoved them moodily into her drawstring pouch.

Why do the runes deceive me? I fail to see how intelligence alone can ensure that the children will continue to flock to Hogwarts.

Rowena lifted her eyes from the pouch of runes lying in her lap and stared across the room into the glittering fire so like the hellish infernos that countless scores of wizards and witches had been forced to meet before their magic had been honed, before the construction of Hogwarts.

When we have departed, our gifts...my intellect...will disappear with us. Surely, that fleeting gift cannot help this school's imperative survival.

Nevertheless, even as she hopelessly thought thus, Rowena's quick mind...indignant of its mistress' quick surrender and eager to prove its intellectual aplomb...was scrambling for an answer. Pacing the round room, surrounded by her library of leather-bound, dusty-paged tomes, Rowena suddenly paused, her hands outthrust before her, fingers spread wide, an expression of enlightenment and then utter satisfaction on her face.

Of course.

Striding quickly to the rough wooden table, Rowena seized a chair and drew it towards her slight body, absently plunking her bottom into it as she seized a stack of books and yanked them across the table. Burying her nose in the first of the spell books, Rowena pored over the pages, greedily devouring the knowledge written within, searching for the solution to the growing problem Hogwarts faced.

The first several spell books proved useless. Then, several hours later just as her eyes began to twitch and water from deciphering the scrawls of various authors, Rowena found, written in the cramped writing of Fanqri Facqua's *Preventative Magicking*, the answer she was seeking.

"For You who seek a potion, a spell, or an incantation to ward away evil tidings from what is to come," Rowena read, "select a trait possessed by You alone and identify an object of grave import to You. Use said trait to enchant the object, and, thereby, protect Yourself or said object in question from the future."

The passage was brief, tea-stained, and nearly illegible, but Rowena knew what she had to do. Sighing happily, the witch drew forth her wand of hazel wood and conjured a tanned hide of roe deer, which she cut to shape with a quick, efficient, "*Forfexcutis*." After that, Rowena conjured leather ties, parchment, and a bone needle and began to stitch the materials together with furious speed. Meager minutes later, the witch breathed a sigh of relief and placed her elegant hands before her on the table, resting on either side of the object she'd just created. Before her lay a roughly-hewn leather tome, unadorned and unassuming; the book's pages were blank ... for now.

Rowena pressed her fingers to her temples, contemplating her next move. At last, she withdrew her hands from her face and stood, pushing back the wooden chair quickly. Smiling, her face glimmering from the blue light beginning to glow from the tip of her wand, the trim witch gazed down at the book she'd just made and raised her wand.

"Write and scrawl; know ... be true,

Every choice is made by you.

Know, you will, when they take form,

Lord, lady, or lowly-born.

Who *will* the chosen be?

Perhaps from glen, my kinfolk they,

From misty hills, from craggy peaks

Flock they to learn my knowledge fey.

Or if they from the moors do hail,

'Mongst whistling wind-whipt' blustery plain,

Bring them down the winding trail.

Should they from valley issue forth,

Lands deep rich green and loamy spring,

Roam and seek; come hither North.

They from fen do journey near,

Salty marsh by breaking sea,

Child of water, your path is here.

Though you know of places many,

Britain only will you touch.

Though false hopes rise high,

Know that breach is nigh.

Too many years have they us used,

Nevermore shall we be abused.

Make your choice, make it well,

All hope we have rests with this spell.

Write, scrawl, do your best...

Know the hearts of children blest!

Libri exsisto Prognatus!"

The leather-bound book had been sitting quite innocently on the table until Rowena reached the end of her spell and, at the last syllables, had opened quickly and began to

flip rapidly through the pages of parchment, back and forth, back and forth, moving in little fans. Then, the book was still, frozen on the very last blank page. Lowering her wand triumphantly, Rowena strode forward and slid her tapered fingertips under the sheaf of parchment folded neatly to the left. Turning back the parchment, Rowena discovered that the spell she'd just uttered was engraved (deeply cut) in glittering midnight-blue ink into the first page of the tome.

With the air of a proud mother, Rowena scooped the volume into her arms and hugged it to her chest. *She* had formed the savior of Hogwarts. Not Helga, with her love of all mankind, not Salazar, with his bursting ego, not even Godric, who succeeded in all he did. Now, all the children would come to the school, ensuring its survival, for here was the deciding factor in choosing magical children from Britain. Each year, when a child of magical ability was born, the name of that child would be recorded in the book. Even as she gazed at the book clutched in her embrace, a thin prick of gold seeped into the pages. Rowena's eyes clouded over with pleased tears. *This is it*, she thought passionately, as the prick of gold expanded into a flowery, elaborate scrawl.

*

As the mewling cry of a newborn babe sounded far away in the earldom of Northumbria, the name of the infant was formed in the book at Hogwarts. As the mother of that infant died, her fever flaming and eventually consuming her, the newborn's name was inscribed: Godgyfu, Daughter of Uchtred the Bold, Earl of Northumbria and Lady Agatha, Daughter of Thorkell the High, Lord of East Anglia. As the husband of that woman sobbed (uncharacteristically) in agony for the loss of his tiny, delicate wife, the tiny child named for a distant aunt was carried away, her sticky, steaming body cleansed by the midwife who'd brought her into the world. Little did the tiny girl know that her life was the beginning of an epic that would enchant lovers of history and magic 'til the end of time.

The Falcon and the Faerie

Chapter 2 of 3

"A tale of twisted perfection and tainted ambition..."

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Author's Notes

Again, my heartfelt thanks to: Evie, Theresa, and Jan.

My Celtic definitions are shoddy and piecemeal, but they get the point across. In Godgyfu's "part of the world"...Northumbria...the language of the common people was Celtic, NOT Gaelic.

Technically, the educated (the nobility) spoke Latin, but by reverting to Celtic, Godgyfu is rebelling against society...as she is so apt to do...and addressing her earthy, ancestral roots. Oh, and her father, though he speaks Celtic with only a smattering of Latin, requires all his children to speak Latin. You'll discover why... but that's just a heads-up.

Celtic Terms

"*Mātir Tela-mon, Godgyfu gāris tū! Lawo, dī-reig-n, aidu luko, wo-ret-e Godgyfu weid abh sentu! Patano kom alaudā, worako kom wriganti, øeisko kom laku!*" means "Mother Earth, Godgyfu calls you! Water, wind, fire bright, help Godgyfu know the way! Wing of bird, curve of worm, fish of lake!"

"*Bikko*" means "small."

"*Wynds*" are, as far as I know, "minor streets."

Latin Terms

"*Pater*" means "father."

"*Diligo*" means "love." (I didn't want to use "amor.")

The Falcon and the Faerie

"Godgyfu! Child, come hither at once! Girl, where are you?" A harsh voice rang out through the county, but did not reach the ears of the one it sought.

*

In the Tweedish-Peregrine Wood just outside the township of Edinburgh, a young pixie-maiden crouched in the peaty earth, her tiny delicate hands busily shaping the black loamy clay, moistened into moldable material by the nearby, trickling Tweed River. Soft, brightly-colored autumn leaves cascaded down onto the crystal clear water while tangling artistically in the young girl's dark, tousled, elflocks. She truly *did* look like a faerie-child. And perhaps she was... A changeling, perchance, left by the faerie inhabitants of the cool, dark Northumbrian forest.

But though the voice calling the child was booming throughout all of outer Edinburgh, causing housewives to click their tongues and pull shut their windows in annoyance and perhaps a little fright, the "dryad" did not hear the call.

Little nine-year-old Godgyfu was building a tiny representation of Edinburgh on the banks of the Tweed, and though many children throughout the ages, around the world, had tried to do just that, they had inevitably met with little success. Yet, Godgyfu effortlessly managed to create a breathtaking village eroded neither by time nor the trickling water of the Tweed. One might, perhaps, call it magic, if such a thing existed ... or if anyone had ever managed to *find* Godgyfu's marvelous architectural attempt.

But dryads, you know, are very secretive, and keep their works hidden behind the veil of the forest, trusting in nature to protect what they most esteem.

Thus, Godgyfu hid her efforts from the dismissive yet curious eyes of her family, and no one bothered the young girl when she ran into the forest because, technically, she wasn't supposed to be there in the first place, and her affectionate though hard-pressed nurse did not believe her darling charge capable of willful deceit. But, of course, this seldom-spoken rule did not bother Godgyfu, for she had never possessed a shrinking countenance. Indeed, her independence proved a beneficial trait in later life during her ambitious climb to power. However, at this time, little Godgyfu was content to play on the banks of the Tweed, shaping tiny people out of the dark clay and placing them into comfortable "families" of four.

"You are Lord Greyart," she stated emphatically, smashing a stick into the tallest figure's hand, "and that is your rod with which you beat your poor little brood when they are bad." Picking up another handful of clay, Godgyfu formed a feminine figure and christened it "Lady Greyart," before continuing on with "Edgar and Ælfrey." Pleased, Godgyfu hopped to her feet, and, carrying the tiny figures carefully in her hands, scampered to a large flat rock lying in a rare patch of sun created by lack of foliage. The little girl placed the family of four on the rock and clapped her hands happily, while an expression of utmost joy danced across her little wild face.

The piercing cry of a bird of prey sounded from above, and Godgyfu, shading her dark eyes, glanced quickly upward, squinting her eyes to protect them from the bright patch of sunlight. Her brief discomfort, however, was rewarded, for, there, sitting haughtily on a branch, his proud streamlined head held high, was a male peregrine falcon. Godgyfu couldn't believe her stroke of luck; truly she was blessed for this was the very bird for which her forest had been named! Falling to her knees, Godgyfu raised her arms to the dignified bird and chanted as she'd been told to do when faced with Northumbria's prized child.

"Peregrine falcon, sw...Hm... sw...swift! That's right, *swift* and deadly, touch your child with your power. Peregrine falcon, proud and h-haughty, touch your child with your fortune? No, that's not right... favor! That's it," she exclaimed at the end of her soliloquy, raising her gaze to the beautiful bird seated above her.

Eyeing her condescendingly, the black-eyed falcon snapped his blue beak, and, letting out another sharp cry, spread his pointed wings, thrust his head back and shrieked loudly. Godgyfu laughed happily, jumping up from the forest floor, her arms still extended above her head.

"Aii...!" she screamed, in unison with the bird as he continued his symphony of screeches. The kingly falcon seemed startled at first, but remained perched on his throne and shrieked again.

Laughing madly at the bird's cheek, Godgyfu began to dance, faster and faster, 'til nothing could be seen of her slight body but a blur of flying leather strips and tangled, dark hair. Her pale, lightly-freckled body was smudged with the dirt of the forest floor, and twigs caught in her curls gave her an eerie, but beautiful, elf-like appearance. Spinning in circles, Godgyfu lifted her head and yelled with frenzied abandon, reverting to the Celtic tongue taught her by the local "witch."

"*Mātir Tela-mon, Godgyfu gāris tū! Lawo, dī-reig-n, aidu luko, wo-ret-e Godgyfu weid abh sentu! Patano kom alaudā, worako kom wriganti, øeisko kom laku!*"

Aye, 'twas all nonsense, but Godgyfu loved the taste of the Celtic language on her tongue...'twas so earthy, so rich and wholesome...and kissed each word away, tossing them carelessly into the green, gold, and scarlet atmosphere of the forest.

Gasping, Godgyfu finally flung herself to the ground, her head spinning, her eyes tripping dizzily in and out of focus. The peregrine falcon had stayed, his gaze interested, to watch Godgyfu's mad dance, but when she paused to catch her breath, he gave her a derisive, yellow-ringed stare and, with one last cry, extended his wings and *swooshed* off the branch, disappearing from sight like a veritable phantom.

As she reclined on the colorful leaves scattered topsy-turvy over the forest floor, Godgyfu breathed deeply through her nose, exhaling through her mouth, as the "witch" had told her to do, and, in doing so, quieted her swiftly-beating heart. Closing her eyes for a moment, the young girl listened to the rush of wind through the trees, the tinkling of the Tweed River as it skipped over rocks and pebbles, and the various clicks and squeaks of the inhabitants of Tweedish-Peregrine Wood. Rolling over on her side, Godgyfu poked a grubby finger into the earth and wiggled it around, an expression of supreme concentration playing over her young face. Finally, with a shouted, "Ha!" of triumph, Godgyfu pulled a long worm from the soil and deposited the poor blind creature in the palm of her hand, where it writhed self-consciously. Raising the worm to her dark brown eyes, Godgyfu stared at the creature, noting with avid absorption the tiny little rings that encircled the worm's long body. Moments later, with a dismissive squeak, Godgyfu tossed the tiny animal off into a clump of bushes and leapt to her feet from whence she trotted quickly back to the rock where she'd left the Greyart family.

Scooping up the baked clay figures, Godgyfu skipped to the riverbank and deposited the Greyart family on a rotting tree stump covered in toadstools. She then began lumping balls of clay into people-sized portions in preparation for her next family. As she worked, she chattered away to the family-in-progress, forming each with the same precision and care she had shown the Greyart family.

"You are Lord Bordeaux; you hail from Normandy, that you do. Your dear wife has died, but you have a beautiful daughter named ... named 'Godgyfu!'" As she shouted this last, Godgyfu smiled indulgently at the figure in her hands before gently placing the self-named figure into a tiny hammock woven from stems of hay.

Sitting back on her heels, Godgyfu surveyed her work satisfactorily. *This* was her favorite pastime...besides perusing the Latin scrolls kept in her stricpater's study...and she loved the challenge of architecture, a challenge she found distinctly lacking in the life she was required to live...that of a gentlewoman. To put it quite bluntly, Godgyfu had no interest in the supervision of embroidery, cookery, laundry or any of the menial domestic chores that occupied the life of a noblewoman. 'Twas, of course, rather fun to order the servants about, but the majority of them didn't even listen to Godgyfu, which took the fun out of the matter completely.

Though there was only so much that could be achieved with stones, grass, and leaves... Godgyfu had managed to create a masterpiece on the banks of the Tweed scaled according to the proportions of *real* Edinburgh.

At one end of "*Bikko* Edinburgh"...as Godgyfu affectionately called her creation...stood a representation of Edinburgh Castle, its small yet imposing, squared battlements set high on a mound of dirt mimicking the mountain that supported the real Castle in Edinburgh. *Bikko* Edinburgh Castle, however, stood waist-high and was as long as Godgyfu's body.

From the age of seven, Godgyfu had been building the Castle, and each year it had grown larger and more elaborate. Constructed of gray stones plastered together with a sticky mixture of clay and loam, the Castle housed content families of insects in its many rooms and courtyards and played host to occasional broods of dormice who congregated deep within the castle in the darkest rooms they could find. The furnishings of the rooms in *Bikko* Edinburgh were canopied beds made of leaves, thrones made of rocks and sticks, and tables constructed of sheets of bark. The décor was not elegant, but it had a certain, rustic beauty that only a faerie could have created. Moving to the exterior of the Castle, breathtaking gardens designed to imitate Celtic symbols were laid out with painstaking detail. These gardens were filled, at first, with colorful stones that Godgyfu had collected, and then with succulent plants, living rocks, and mushrooms, plants encouraged by the decomposing feces of the insects that'd lived there or dropped in the guise of seeds by passing birds.

These gardens continued for a foot around the main palace within the castle walls (constructed of pine cones and rocks) and then ran up to the edge of a flat, hard-packed portico, the Castle's Esplanade. From the Esplanade curved the *Royal Mile*, twisting and winding its merry way down the dirt mountain and intersecting with the *wynd*s of *Bikko* Edinburgh. The *wynd*s, in their turn, passed by miniature huts made of grass and populated by tiny families made of sticks and leaves who each had a clan symbol engraved into a stone and placed in their "yards."

However, as if this beautiful construction wasn't enough, Godgyfu had also dug the mysterious *Nor Loch* at the northern end of the castle and cut rivulets into the riverbank, lining the indentions with pebbles and creating canals to feed the lake, in which lived the occasional fish, but, more often than not, a score of water beetles who nibbled the murky water plants growing at the edges of the lake.

"*Bikko* Edinburgh" was Godgyfu's attempt to recreate the bustling beauty of the city she had loved from the moment she first set adventuresome foot in it. Though she'd been raised a country maiden, Godgyfu loved the marvels of the city, though she'd never content herself with living solely in the city. The tangles of the wild country

appealed too much to this little faerie for her to ever leave them completely, but never had she been as entertained as she was when she'd visited Edinburgh. Indeed, Godgyfu had determined...independently, as was her custom regardless of permission...that she was going to live in a grand townhouse, but have a country manor to escape to whenever she deemed it necessary. Children have such high expectations, and Godgyfu was no exception.

At last, the figures of the Greyart and Bordeaux families had been completed, baked, and were ready to place in their respective homes...two sections of the castle. Aye, the two richest families in *Bikko* Edinburgh were the (unmade) royal families' guests and deserved the best. Pinching Lord Greyart between her fingers, Godgyfu leaned precariously over the wall of the Castle, and, tongue sticking out of her mouth, proceeded to lean him against a wall, his walking stick supporting his stiff body. As she pulled away, however, leaving the Lord in his place, Godgyfu heard the tramp of leather boots, crunching the sticks of her forest outside the clearing; she guessed the person was about fifty meters away, and, by the disgruntled thud of the heavy boot on dry, brush-covered fields, she guessed it was a man ... a very *disgruntled* man. Gasping, Godgyfu jumped to her feet and pelted away from her village, dashing from the clearing, her callused feet flying over twigs and leaves, and...*smack!* She ran straight into her *pater* who was, in a word, displeased.

"Godgyfu!" he boomed, his beetle-black eyes...so like his daughter's, and, yet, so different...sparking dangerously. "Where have you been, girl? I called for you many times; child, how many times must I tell you? Are you so thick that you do not understand? Stupid girl!" he hissed derisively, his beard quivering in abhorrence.

At this, Godgyfu's eyes filled with tears, which she promptly blinked back, anger at her own weakness consuming her. Though she hadn't the best relationship with her *pater*, his constant disgust and loathing frightened and hurt Godgyfu.

There is something very wrong with me, she'd decided long ago, to make him hate me so much. What did I do wrong?

*

In a way, Godgyfu was right, because Uchtred the Bold did indeed blame his tiny daughter for the death of his beloved, second wife, the lovely Lady Agatha. The Lady Agatha was six years her husband's junior and was stunning, aye, but delicate and of a sickly countenance. Uchtred had married Lady Agatha when she was fifteen, and the instant he'd gazed into her deep blue eyes, he'd lost his heart to the tiny, dark-haired girl. Theirs was a true and affectionate love spent many days in the meadows of Edinburgh, lounging and loving, for Uchtred hadn't the responsibility then that he had now in this year of 1006.

Therefore, when Agatha, her brilliant blue eyes wide and joyous had announced to her husband that she was pregnant, a sudden burden had settled upon the young Celt's heart. He knew that his wife was weak; Uchtred had seen too many animal runts die to doubt what would happen to his wife if she gave birth. Many nights he'd spent, urgently pressing his wife to go to the local "witch," though he knew it was against his principles and that of his father, the townspeople, everyone he knew. Yet he would do anything to save his wife.

*

"Agatha, you must know what shall inevitably happen to you if you refuse to heed my warnin's, no, my honest entreaties. Visit yon witch across the way; no one shall ever know. I don't want to, no, I can't lose you." Uchtred knelt on one knee, his hands placed on his wife's hips, head bowed, tears glittering in his black eyes.

"My diligo, my husband, your concern touches my heart," Lady Agatha said, laughing easily as she took a fine-boned hand and placed it under her husband's bowed chin, raising his tear-stained face to gaze at her. "You worry too much; I shall be fine. I shall be as I ever was, but I will have my child to comfort me when you are away."

"I'll never leave you!"

"You cannot help but do so."

As Uchtred began to protest, Agatha held up a slender, white hand, silencing him. "I don't mean that you will desert me..."

"Never!"

"...but you might have journeys of commerce that you must make, or battles that you must fight," at this, the Lady Agatha shivered and her voice broke slightly, but she continued to speak, "and I should dearly love to have a child to remember our ardor by. That is all."

Uchtred gazed with adoration at his tiny wife standing valiantly before him, her skin glowing with the first early blushes of pregnancy and knew that she was determined...she would have this child, and there was nothing he could do to stop her. Perhaps she was not strong in her physical body, but her will was iron and he would bend to it.

"Now, my diligo, I'm in the mood for the fiery passion that created our child. Please?"

And Uchtred looked into Lady Agatha's fathomless eyes and saw a fire burning in them. And Uchtred rose from his knee and wrapped his arms about his slight wife, pulling off her evening chemise. And Uchtred carried his wife to the giant oak bed, in which they had consummated their marriage several months before, and loved his wife 'til the morning light peaked through the eyes of the manor, immortalizing the mutual purity of love in its beautiful, natural form.

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Though Uchtred had given in to the wishes of his beautiful bride, he continued to rest uneasily, and at the end of nine months, haunted the manor, striding from room to room as Lady Agatha's cries rang through the hollow passageways of the manor, echoing malevolently off the walls. Only when the cries of the mother had ceased and the screaming baby had been taken away to be cleaned by the midwife, only then did Uchtred approach the birthing room and enter. And he had seen, to his horror, the shrouded figure of his beloved, surrounded by blood-soaked linen. And he had fallen to the floor, the tears running down his face and catching in the dark hair of his beard. And he had been taken into the arms of his *own* mother, who held her boy and crooned sweet nothings into his ear as he sobbed his heartbreak into her lap. And on that day, the luxurious beard that Lady Agatha had loved to run her hands through, her laughter peeling out into the room, that sumptuous black beard had turned grey in Uchtred's agonizing loss.

From that day forward, Uchtred the Bold never smiled, and he never laughed, he never remarried, and he hated his youngest child with a passion for she had deprived him of the love of his life, the fragile and lovely Lady Agatha.

Savage

"A tale of twisted perfection and tainted ambition..."

Born in 992, the Lady Godgyfu lived the life of the nobly-born Anglo-Saxons. She grew up under the domineering rule of her heartbroken father, played in the fields and forests of Northumbria, and was married at the age of ten.

However, Godgyfu was also something no one in her Muggle family ever expected her to be: a witch who grew up to become one of the most influential women in Earth's myth and history.

Enter the world of 1000s Britain and follow Lady Godgyfu through her fated, ambitious and often sinful, life. Know, and learn to love, cry, fear, and treasure, the woman who rode through the streets of Coventry, and, thus rode into the pages of history, immortalizing herself in the minds of Muggles and wizards alike.

Author's Notes

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Savage

The high-pitched keening cry of a peregrine falcon sounded hauntingly from above, and Godgyfu's gaze darted upward, dark eyes searching for the elusive bird of prey among the sun-spattered clouds. But, glimpsing no sign of the streamlined sky-warrior in the cloud-muted blue of the cerulean autumn sky, Godgyfu's disappointed gaze dropped to the scraggly brush beneath her feet before snapping quickly back to her father's stormy countenance. "H-hello, *pater*," she whispered.

"Save your breath, girl, to cool your porridge. I'm not carin' where you have been, and I'm not desirin' your pathetic excuses," Uchtred growled, compulsively combing his roughened fingers through his graying beard. "More pressin' matters require your attention. Are you old enough for marriage, lass?"

Starting slightly, Godgyfu blushed pink underneath her freckles at the directness of her father's abrupt question: Never before had Uchtred shown such an interest in his youngest daughter, for he was absent from the manor a great deal, fighting the rabble bands of Pictish Scots along the untamed purple mountains of the northern Northumbrian border. Any miserable attention bestowed upon Godgyfu was always accompanied by insults, yet any acknowledgement was welcome to the tiny child standing cowed before her dismissive patriarch.

Godgyfu squared her thin shoulders beneath the weathered leather of her smock, swallowed, and lifting her chin, stated proudly, "I-I think so. I will be ten in a fortnight, sire, and bled for the first time last month ... on the Sanguine moon."

Uchtred narrowed his eyes and gazed down upon the upturned pixie face so like his deceased second wife's. Even though a sharp pain shot through his shriveled heart, he promptly flattened the pang of loss as he had learned to do through ten long years of wretched practice. Perhaps it was because he had lost his youthful love that Uchtred the Bold was able to kill without passion or feeling. He had earned his name justly, and due to the recent death of his father, his already fearsome skills had been honed by the ever-present need to protect *his* earldom from invasion. 'Twas true, then, that Uchtred's valor on the battlefield was unequaled by any in the land of Northumbria, and 'twas equally true that his ruthless, cold demeanor had earned him the admiration and respect of the troops he commanded ... and the fear, the utter *terror* of those he fought.

To be faced with such a man, then, Godgyfu might be called as courageous as her father, and yet, you see, she knew no other way of life. The hostile and negligent relationship between her and her father was constant in Godgyfu's young life...it had always been so. Yet she was allowed to run wild, for none seemed to desire the task of taming this wild faerie of the forests, not even the woman who had been Godgyfu's nurse for almost ten years.

So Godgyfu was not disciplined: She grew up as wild as the tangled bushes in the Tweedish-Peregrine Wood, and her unbecoming, unwomanly exploits were not unknown to the resentful, battle-hardened warrior-turned-earl standing squarely in front of her.

With a glowering look of supreme disgust, Uchtred reached out gruffly and seized his daughter by the chin, tilting her pointed, vixen face up to catch a beam of the rare sunlight. Turning her grubby face this way and that, Uchtred stared beadily down at his daughter with a glare matched spark for glimmering spark by Godgyfu's slightly fearful yet defiant gaze.

"Bled on the Sanguine? Not so worthless, after all," he mused. Snapping his teeth together, Uchtred reached up to pick at a louse in his beard before continuing. "Puny wean that you are," he muttered, "you will make a good marriage yet. 'Twill be a fair life for you when you wed Adamas the Studious, Roman scholar and guest of Ælgoth at Kiln." Uchtred dropped his hand from Godgyfu's chin as if his rough palm were on fire, then proceeded to wipe his fingers on the fabric of his tunic, his fierce, beetle-black eyes daring his daughter to retort. With a stare designed to quell, he gazed at the small girl standing horrified before him, an unreadable expression shadowing his stubbled face.

With a muffled squeak of astonishment and horror, Godgyfu numbly stumbled away from her father, her bare, callused feet scrabbling at the autumn leaf-covered field. She desperately hugged thin, dirty arms around her slight body, trying in vain to shield herself from the unexpected decree. Yet when Uchtred made no further announcement but continued to glare threateningly at his small daughter, Godgyfu felt her unbelieving eyes fill with tears, drops of her tender soul that she desperately tried to blink back, terrified that her father would see her shameful, *female* weakness.

The two stood there, frozen in time as scarlet and gold leaves blew serenely around them, one satisfied, the other terrified, but suddenly, Godgyfu could stand the eerie hush no longer and broke the stony silence with an animal cry. In beseeching penitence, she threw herself to the ground and clutched her father's leather boot-clad feet.

"Please, *pater*, dinnae make me marry," she whimpered, her tongue, caught completely off-guard, giving in to the dialect of the common people she had grown up with. The language that her father spoke, yet hated. "I'll be a good girl, a proper female creature who knows her place if only you will let me stay! Oh, *pater*, please." Sobbing dryly, Godgyfu clutched the smooth boot leather, willing with all the hope of her bleeding, broken heart that her father would not turn an unsympathetic eye on her. But the hearts of men and of monsters can be heartrendingly similar; with a grunt of disgust, Uchtred flipped his daughter off of his foot and reached down to grab the un-hemmed collar of Godgyfu's leather tunic, yanking her to her feet.

"You will marry whom-so-ever I see fit for you to marry. You, useless girl, are a horrible, fiendish demon, and I'll be well rid of you and the better off for it when you've been taken by Adamas," Uchtred spat, uttering the venomous words with agony and passion, for he had waited years to rid himself of the last reminder of his former love.

Shaking the child in hand violently so that her bones shook and her teeth rattled, Uchtred hissed, "Now, leave, spawn of the devil, leave and tell nurse to pack your belongings! You are to be married in a fortnight, and then gone will you be from my dwelling forever!"

Hot tears running freely down her pale, soiled face, Godgyfu endured the rough mistreatment of her young, fragile figure and endeavored to close her ears against the tirade of her cruel father, for each pitiless word pierced her keenly, but when he thrust her to the ground, pushing her with his boot in the direction of the manor, she suddenly became animalistic. With a feral snarl, Godgyfu pushed herself from the ground and leaped towards the sympathetic, beckoning forest, but unfortunately, Uchtred's boot connected sharply with her ribs and she dropped to the ground like a stone.

Gasping, Godgyfu fought for air as her father stepped closer, his mien menacing, his huge body...an ever-present reminder of his violent Viking ancestry...looming nearer and nearer. Though her ribs ached painfully, Godgyfu was determined to flee the horrifying man whose anger she did not fully understand but feared all the same. As Uchtred reached down to jerk Godgyfu to her feet, she bit fiercely into his hand, her sharp, white teeth drawing blood as they ground into his red, wind-scoured flesh.

With a yelp, Uchtred started back, pulling his hand from Godgyfu's mouth with a curse. In an instant, he had drawn back that same injured hand to slap his impudent

daughter across her face, preparing to crush green bone and mutilate cartilage with a single blow. But as he did, a loud *pop* smacked deafeningly through the air, and Uchtred threw up his arms to hide his face. Within a minute, he had recovered from his surprise and, looking down, arm raised, he was met with an unexpected surprise: Where before there had been a sobbing child, there was none. Where before there had been a cringing, cornered animal, a flattened patch of heather uncurled its soft arms. Where before Godgyfu's slight body had been crouched, several drops of scarlet blood lay shining in the sunlight.

An expression of astonishment wreathing his weathered face, Uchtred gazed at the empty ground; then, with the lumbering and fearsome appearance of a bear, he whirled, gazing around the deserted, heather-covered field. Fury replacing the former bewilderment and glimpsing not his child, Uchtred threw back his head, and, drawing a deep breath that expanded his barrel chest to its full, drum-like extent, he yelled savagely, a fearsome, Celtic war cry cutting through the early-evening air.

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Panting heavily, her wracking breaths interspersed with dry moans of sorrow and fright, Godgyfu wrapped her arms around her body, hugging herself as she stared around the familiar clearing. She did not know what had happened, but just when her *pater* had seemed as if he would strike her, a huge *pop*ping noise smashed loudly about her tender ears, and a huge rush of wind, its force scrabbling viciously at her eyes, its eager fingers yanking her long dark hair from her throbbing head, pulled her from the field and deposited her in the familiar clearing beside the Tweed River.

With a gasping sob, Godgyfu glanced fearfully around, her deep brown eyes darting back and forth like silvery, tempestuous minnows sometimes caught in the *Nor Loch*. As her wild-eyed gaze finally determined that she was safe for the time being, safe in her little haven, Godgyfu let herself fall to the ground, where she crossed her thin, hairy legs beneath her, weeping uncontrollably...hot tears, salty and bitter...into her hands.

The minutes passed slowly by, each tick-tock of the universal clock drawing the sun nearer to its bed beyond the western horizon, but Godgyfu stayed in the grove, pressing her face into the peaty earth, crying each tear until there were no more tears to cry. Finally, exhausted and drained to the point of collapse, Godgyfu rolled onto her back, her pale, puffy face bone-dry. A hard expression settled over the delicate features of the faerie. Though her lovely face was still beautiful, still whole, innocence had gone and worldliness had conquered the child of the forest.

As she stared up through the leaves of the shadowy trees, Godgyfu felt her heart give a flutter, for there in the branches above perched the peregrine falcon, eyeing her with a mistrustful curiosity. Its pinpointed eye, ringed with gold, stared into Godgyfu's, and the purity of the stare, the honesty, the "knowing," penetrated Godgyfu's swiftly chilling soul. A glistening tear slipped from the corner of her eye. Slowly, slowly, the tear slid down her cheek and dropped from the sharp angle of her chin.

With a *cree* of sympathy, the proud falcon launched itself from the tree and, strangely, miraculously, spiraled downward...feathered fingertips widespread...to the leaf-strewn ground. Clacking its sharp beak, the falcon shuffled toward Godgyfu, each tentative step bringing it nearer to the small, spellbound girl crouching mere centimeters away.

Godgyfu hardly dared to breathe, much less move, but sat still and waited, her shallow breaths coming in measured, warm gusts. As the falcon hopped closer, Godgyfu slowly raised her hand, all the while keeping her gaze fixed upon that of the peregrine. The minutes ticked by slowly in the steadily approaching night, but the line of trust between Godgyfu and the falcon stayed unbroken.

Creep, creep, creep in the night, children of darkness. Flitter, fly-by, float through the dusky air, infants of the evening.

A thin line of sweat pooled above Godgyfu's lip, and her arm muscles began to ache as the falcon crept tentatively closer. Somewhere, nearby, faraway, she couldn't really tell, a bullfrog croaked and soon the air was filled with the sounds of the evening. But still she did not move, and seconds later, the oily head of the falcon was pressed under her palm.

In a soft *kerree*... the falcon spoke to Godgyfu; it rubbed its head against her weathered palm until the tears flowed from her eyes like rain on an April day. But she was silent, even in her grief. She shook and it was like the thunder; her heart broke and shattered like bolts of bright lightning, but she was silent. And by and by, the tears subsided, the heart lay in pieces, and the shaking was replaced by stone.

The peregrine falcon still bowed its head under Godgyfu's palm, but it seemed to know that she was comforted. With a soft sigh, the bird shifted from one foot to the other and with the tiniest start, Godgyfu seemed to remember where she was. Her gaze jumped down to the bird beneath her hand as if to reassure herself that it was still there. The falcon, in answer, tilted its sculpted head to the side and blinked one inquisitive eye...it was not leaving anytime soon.

Visibly relaxing, Godgyfu sank once again into the ground and into the strange embrace of the falcon. All around the companionable two sang the crickets, the frogs; all around whistled bats and starlings; all around bubbled catfish and slithered snakes.

The peaceful minutes ticked by until unexpectedly, suddenly, with a clack of its curved beak, the falcon shifted under Godgyfu's hand. Godgyfu turned her head to meet its yellow glare and seemed to read in that gaze something of her fate. Anger and fear twisted her features in a manner never before seen by the inhabitants of the forest. In that gaze, the falcon told of Godgyfu's future vanity and greed, her disregard for nature and her hatred of lore. In that gaze, the falcon spoke of whom would be the successor of the fierce and abominable Uchtred...Godgyfu.

With a cry of rage and dread, Godgyfu grabbed the beautiful peregrine falcon by its snowy neck, and, before it could utter a cry, she twisted her hands swiftly in opposing directions and broke the bird's neck. The entire forest went silent. No cacophony of the night sang out as, numbly, Godgyfu scrambled to her feet, still holding tight to the falcon. Anger, then fear, bitterness, pain flowed through her veins, and Godgyfu let out a piercing shriek, only this time, there was no answering cry, for the blood of the answerer cooled in the body grasped in her hands.

All at once, the tumult of the forest that had been held back by shock and by Ardwina, fickle goddess of the wood, was let loose. A swarm of bats screeched into Godgyfu's clearing, whipping their diaphanous wings 'round Godgyfu's head, tangling her dark hair. The animals, once so familiar and loved, were now a source of terror to the shrieking child in their midst. The serenity of the woods was broken and the walls of that wood seemed to crowd in on her; glowing eyes narrowed and peered menacingly at her from behind bushes and from the ground, roots reached up like claws to grab her ankles.

With a sob, Godgyfu turned and ran, but she did not know in which direction to run, so she stumbled into the village of *Bikko* Edinburgh. The moment Godgyfu felt her bare feet crush the clay houses spread through the town, the remaining ties to her natural haven were severed. She had murdered the peregrine falcon; she had destroyed the homes of *Bikko* Edinburgh. Growling and screaming in wrath, hurt, loss, Godgyfu stormed through *Bikko* Edinburgh, kicking holes in the castle walls, trampling small families of squeaking, quivering dormice, destroying the elaborate gardens that surrounded the castle. Tears coursed down her face and mixed with the scarlet blood running freely from her scratched toes, but Godgyfu did not stop. She pillaged and wrecked and ruined the small town, and when she was done, when the carnage had ceased and the small bodies of animals and insects lay crushed in the *wynd*s, Godgyfu sank to her knees and wept.

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No one knows for sure what happened, but it was whispered among the household servants that Lady Godgyfu's nurse had found Lady Godgyfu asleep on the doorstep the next morning, her hair tangled with sticks and leaves, her feet bloody, feathers sticking to her small hands. They said that she was unhurt ("Prime for marriage," the old men smirked, chuckling nastily) but that something about her was different. Her face, they said, was sticky with the salt trails of recent tears, and it was hard. Cruelty, they said, was in her features.

Some said it was faeries. Some said she had gone crazy after a rough beating from her father. "Tsk, tsk," they mumbled and shook their heads. They spit in the dirt and rubbed the forbidden amulets hidden beneath their broadcloth shirts and dresses; some of the more religious crossed themselves in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Nurse massaged her toothless gums and said not a word though many pressed her for information. But whatever the reason, it was common knowledge by the next morning when the sun arose and day broke that Godgyfu had given her consent to marry Adamas the Studious.