

ARTHUR'S BOSOM

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THE CHILDREN OF ARTHUR: BOOK FIVE

BY

TYLER R. TICHELAR

Arthur's Bosom: The Children of Arthur, Book Five

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“Oh, no, he’s surely not in hell. He’s in Arthur’s bosom, if any man ever went to Arthur’s bosom.”

— William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

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PROLOGUE

THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE

CAPTAIN VANDERDECKER LOOKED up into the night sky and reflected upon what a lonely life it was to wander the earth alone on the *Flying Dutchman*; he knew those few to whom he had shown himself believed him cursed, but it was not so; rather, he roamed the seas in his phantom ship to put a little fear into them, a fear that might cause them to repent and turn to good. He had committed no great crime, no great sin, but rather he posed as a terrible sinner for the sake of his fellow men, for they were mostly a weak and cowardly race, and so while fear caused them to do evil, at other times, fear could steer them back onto the right path, and so he had taken the path of fear so they might find their salvation.

Years before, he had agreed to this role, in time playing upon the tales told of how he had been led to this cursed life filled with isolation and misery so that those to whom he spoke would tremble before him and then repent and change their ways before it was too late. Captain Vanderdecker enjoyed his fear-inspiring performances

immensely, and once he had released his captive victims from his presence, he spent a great deal of time chuckling to himself, and often, he would use his powerful spyglass to watch them later in life and be pleased by the change he had caused in them.

Yes, at times it had been a lonely life, but Captain Vanderdecker knew his mission was nearing completion, for since Lilith had passed from this world, fear had been slowly losing its grip over much of mankind. Soon it would seem as if all his time spent in this wandering state had never happened at all. And in the meantime, he occasionally met with those who shared his mission—Morgan le Fay and Merlin and several others, all believed to be only characters from legend, but who, in truth, served the Goddess-God by serving mankind to bring about good for all.

Most days, however, Captain Vanderdecker's only companions were the stars in the night sky. They were his true friends, for they guided him upon the sea, and they were loyal and ever-vigilant, never swaying in their trustworthiness. Oh, he knew man's faulty wisdom believed the stars merely to be great flaming balls of fire like the sun, but he also knew that the stars had loving energetic souls that contributed to the music of the spheres, playing a beautiful visual and auditory symphony for him every night as a reminder that he was alone only temporarily and would one day be reunited with the great Source of All Wellbeing that guided the Universe.

And so tonight, like most nights, Captain Vanderdecker lay upon the deck of the *Flying Dutchman*, looking up at the stars, listening to them, sometimes wishing upon them, his wishes actually being prayers for the happiness of the human race, of which he had once been a member before he had tasted of living water and taken up his mission.

The stars entertained him, often singing to him songs of kings and queens, heroes and villains, mermaids and magical beasts, and of a world far better than that he knew currently existed because it was based in the beauty of the imagination and the love that someday the human heart would know when it was free from the fear and strife that mankind caused. Only then would mankind have learned enough to evolve into the next stage of its existence.

Suddenly, in the midst of this beautiful symphony, like a jarring wrong note, from high up in the sky, Captain Vanderdecker heard the whooshing of what first appeared to be a falling star, creating a dissonance as it whirled through the heavens. Standing up to get a better look, he saw it blazon with a fiery light through the night sky. Unsure of what he was seeing, he ran down into his cabin to find his spyglass.

Once back on deck, Captain Vanderdecker put the spyglass to his eye, and looking up, he saw a comet with a flaming tail soaring through the heavens. Then, almost in disbelief, he said aloud, “Despite waiting all these centuries, it seems to have come so suddenly.”



Prester John never gave thought to the passing of time. In his sacred kingdom, time mattered little, for he knew that everything happened in the time best suited for it, and so there could be no rushing, no hurrying of it, and certainly never any indication that it was too late—that not enough time remained to achieve whatever wanted achieving, for time was infinite, and hence, no need for worry of any sort existed.

Those who came to Prester John's land to seek wisdom usually came believing time was their greatest enemy, for they had spent all their lives living by its dictates, and they had come to know it as a cruel taskmaster, even if only an illusory one, for humans were ever prone to creating unneeded worry and anxiety for themselves, especially in recent centuries as they invented clocks and timers with alarms and all manner of technological, digital, and electronic taskmasters to capture every second and turn it into profit, affixing a monetary value to it until they came to fear it in their mad rush to produce, produce, produce before it was too late—but too late for what?

When Prester John did think of such matters, he only chuckled, for he knew it was never too late. Still, he felt sorrow for the scurrying madness of the human race, so he rejoiced whenever someone came to his land; once arrived, his visitors would require several days before they were able to relax, to let time's worry leave them, and once they did relax, they felt the freedom from time's restraints to be a great relief and then even a joy.

On this particular day as he walked about his kingdom, Prester John was musing over time's fallacy and reminding himself of the words he had once heard the Savior speak, "Look at the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor do they spin." Was not all mankind's toiling and spinning an effort to fight time, to prepare to have enough before it was too late? The Savior had told them to look at the birds and the beasts of the field and see how at peace they were with the earth, never worrying about the hour or day, but simply walking, running, eating when they felt the need, and not an hour or a minute before or after they so desired.

Prester John gazed out across the fields where he was walking, enjoying the solitariness of the moment, for at times he needed to distance himself from those he nourished when they came to his land, for he could still sense their internal anxiety and questioning as if they were bees buzzing beside his ear, and if he did not distance himself from it until it lessened, it could badly upset his spirit. He much preferred the calming presence of animals over humans, although it was the humans whom he was called to serve.

But now, as he sought out the peace of the beasts of the field, he was surprised to find the landscape before him very empty. Where was the lioness and her cubs that he had visited with for so many days past? And why were there no birds soaring through the air? And looking down to see whether the ants were at least about his feet—he often looked down to be sure not to harm anything—he saw the earth appeared to be bare of moving life. But then, unexpectedly, a field mouse scurried between his feet, and then another, and then two or three, and soon he found himself standing amid a stream of mice, many tumbling over his feet in their panic, but what had so frightened them?

Then like a bolt of lightning, the words that the Savior had once said about him to his friend Peter sprung to Prester John's mind: "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"



Every day since she had become Lady of Avalon some fifteen centuries before, Morgana had looked into the Holy Pool after eating one of the Nuts of Knowledge from the Ancient Hazel that gave the gift of the sight. Some days she saw nothing of concern. Some days

she saw the sorrows of mankind. Some days she saw acts of kindness. And now and then, she saw something that required her to take action. It had been several years now since she had been called upon to interfere in the ways of men. The final chapter before the epilogue of mankind's history had been enacted when Lilith had departed the earth, and now there was only waiting to be done; Morgana knew not how many years she needed to wait, but she had learned patience after all this time.

And so Morgana had expected this day to be the same as any other—doubtless there was some minor squabble in the Middle East, but those squabbles were nothing like they had been years ago; not a bomb had gone off in years; there might be a fire in Montana or an earthquake in Japan, but those were not caused by humans, so they were of less concern to her; what did concern her had lessened in recent years, though she still found interest looking into the Holy Pool and viewing the increased acts of charity and kindness she saw being done since Lilith's departure, and Morgana felt finally that the fruits of all of her and Merlin and their many compatriots' works were ripening.

But when Morgana looked into the Holy Pool today, for the first time in many years, she found herself surprised. What she saw was something she had never seen before, and yet something she had always imagined someday seeing since first she had become Lady of Avalon. She watched, eyes wide, her senses more alert than ever before in her life, her whole being caught up in the drama about to be played out, and when she came out of the trance, she knew what she must do.

Through the air, on invisible and inaudible waves, save to the intended receiver, she sent the following message:

“Merlin, the time has come.”