

**JASON, THE ONE
HUNDRED AND
FIFTY-SEVENTH**

BOOK I

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Jason,
the **O**ne
Hundred
and **F**ifty-**S**eventh
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*To Addison, Andrew J., Andrew S., Drue, Elise,
Jacob, Jonathan, Joshua, Kade, Macy, Mercedes,
Michael, Preston, Rachel, Shelbi, & Valerie*

**You all have inspired my passion in writing, and
for this, I am deeply indebted to you.**

**May the words herein show you and all the
readers how God uses the individual gifts He
has placed in each of us to tell the story of His
Kingdom. This is your story. This book could
not exist without the sixteen of you.**

In the Year of the Moor,
fifteen winters past the
Great War, is this story
found of the rise of the
great King,

Jason, the
One Hundred
and Fifty-
Seventh

-Chapter One-

THE FOLSH OF THE FOREST

In the midst of the trees, with steady blows to the high drifts, a team of horses was making its way through the wretched storm. They moved quickly with breathy snorts chilled and determined to make way for their passenger. Being pulled was a man sitting down and bent over. His face, not too far from his knees, was bitterly cool, and his lips trembled with a blue desperation. His hands writhed in numb agony, and his toes trembled through his stockings. His many coats were useless as the cold seeped through the cracks in the carriage only to continue to torture his

body. He reached down to the floor with his right hand and grabbed the chilly metal hub of his long spirally cane. Then, with a hoarse and tired voice, the man yelled for his horses to stop. They stopped. The wind continued its blistering pace and the carriage swayed while the man positioned his cane and stood. He lit a small torch, and there, in the deepest part of the forest, the door of the carriage opened and down the man clambered with his back stooped and his hands clinging tightly to the torch and cane. His shoulder length hair made its way out of the back of his coat as the wind hit him with a terrible gust. He hung the torch on the outside of the carriage, climbed up to the top with much delay, and dropped four large wooden chests to the soft snow beneath. He then grabbed a rope and let it fall. Once back on the ground, the man placed his cane in one of the chests and tied the rope around the four containers. He grabbed the torch, and began to

walk pulling the cargo over his left shoulder. His feet crept forward against the wind step by step. On for much time he dredged, and then, all of the sudden, the walking stopped. He bent down ever so slowly and fell on his knees. He reached for the trunk closest to him and opened the lid to find his cane and a spade. Around him he began shoveling the snow aside. He cleared more and more, growing more impatient with each try. He soon found the hardened ground and struck it with the spade. On for several digs he continued, but then, the spade suddenly slipped out of his cold hands and disappeared into the darkness. He quickly took the torch and his cane and went in the direction the spade had flown. The snow was blinding and the wind was ever pressing. He walked a few paces and then dropped to his knees again and ran his hands through the snow in desperation. Several more times he tried in vain to find the spade in the great expanse of snow

around. Furious and now coughing uncontrollably, he could not hold his temper any longer and slowly stood on his knees only to take his cane and try to break it across his right thigh. Tears formed in his eyes and he sat down into the snow and took his hands to his face. He started to weep. As the evening went on, he neither stopped weeping, nor was aware of the blizzard around him. Such despair overtook him. His body became increasingly stiff and his bones numbed over. The only hint of life in his figure was the occasional tear that continued to descend from his eyes only to add to an icicle at the bottom of his beard. He wondered what would happen now that he had failed.

Then, to his left side, he heard the snap of a twig. Immediately he moved as best as he could to his feet, while he supported himself with his cane.

He shuddered in pain and held the torch in front of him.

-SNAP!-

There it was again--this time louder, and closer. He began to walk in the opposite direction of the sound and the icicle on his beard quickly dropped to the ground. Then, howls echoed in the forest and there were many crashing branches. He was now sure of what was making the sound, and his pace quickened as fast as he could bear. He did not know how many of them were chasing him, but it did not matter. After a few hard paces he started to hear the snarling, snorting, and growling of the folsh behind him. With his cane in his right hand he continued to run and trudge through the snow. The sounds of the folsh were coming closer. His strides strained and all he could think of was the jagged teeth of the

ferocious canines. He snapped branches with his shoulders and caught his cane on several stumps as he struggled along. All he could see with the torch was thousands of snowflakes illuminated in front of him. The heavy breathing of the folsh was sounding close now. He continued on through the horrid wind and many drifts wheezing with cold, short breaths. He looked over his shoulder again and suddenly was struck across the knees with a large branch jutting over his path. He crumpled to the ground in pain. He felt something in his legs had broken, and pulled his hands over his head and put his head between his knees. The folsh surrounded him. The man saw out of the corner of his eye there were two females and one male. With nasty growls and loud barks they announced their prize to the raging blizzard around them. One of the females began walking slowly to within a few inches of his head. He could smell the stench of hare in her

mouth. Her snorts were scarily warm against his skin and he witnessed her mouth opening ever so slightly to begin her attack. His cane was ready on his other side to strike her. Just then, from his other side, the male leaped into the air with claws and teeth bared. The man took his cane with his right hand and crossed over and pierced the female soundly in the back of the neck. She immediately bit his arm and he cried out in pain as her teeth sunk into his fragile skin. The male folsh stopped, realizing the female was hurt. The two remaining folsh fell back to a manslength and stood next to each other panting and watching the man wallowing on the ground in pain. The female he speared had run away into the forest. The dogs walked up to His face and sniffed it haughtily in victory. Their teeth again showed. The man then reared his left arm back to strike the other female, but the male immediately bit his arm. There was no way for him to survive now.

His arms were now completely numb. The old man fainted there in the snow and the last thing he remembered was a bright flash of light.

-Chapter Two-

ON TO ROTHAMPTON

Cold snorts and the smack of leather straps awoke Clyde from his sleep. He was on his back looking up and viewing the trunks of trees rising tall above him reducing to a fine background where the white of the sky could be seen. The trees were moving by fast. One look to his left side showed he was on a sleigh, and just as he surmised this, the loud whip sounded again and several more snorts were heard from what he knew to be horses. He then heard a voice shouting at the horses in urgency,

“Go fine horses! Run your hearts out! We’ve got much to do here!”

They hit a bump and his knees shot a terrible pain through his body. Clyde looked again to his side and saw how fast the sleigh was moving and immediately wondered what could be the cause for this rapid pace. Just then, he heard a terrible sound, and at once recognized the driver’s need for haste. He could hear the wholesome barks and snarls of what sounded to be a full pack of folsh females. Clyde could feel his body warming with adrenaline.

“Yah! Yah! Yah!” shouted the voice of his driver again.

He realized it was the voice of a female. The sleigh now turned harshly to the left and Clyde was grateful he was strapped tightly to the sleigh. On for several more thoughts they went, and the

sounds of the nasty dogs seemed to be growing further and further behind. As they continued a while more, the forest became quieter. The occasional smack of a whip and the smooth gliding of the sleigh blades were the only sounds that told him they were still moving. Soon, the driver stopped, and for a few moments Clyde laid there with his eyes going back and forth trying to gain more understanding of the situation. He then heard the driver dismount and walk back to where he was. The sky was bright behind the woman which cast a dark shadow on her face. Then, she knelt down and Clyde could make out the features of her face. Her eyes were a riveting blue and sparkled like diamonds. She had a fair complexion, pretty pink lips, a small nose, rosy blushing cheeks, and a little pointed chin. She had long, thick sorrel lashes, and was rather small and slender. She could not have been a night past sixteen winters.

“Well, hello good man”, she kindly greeted Clyde as a smile reached her mouth.

“Good morning, my dear”, Clyde said with a trembling mouth. “Where am I? Who are you?”

The slender beauty took her right hand and brushed a few of Clyde’s red hairs away from his face.

“My dear, sir, my name is Trudi Gatwick, and by good fortune I had found you lying this morning in the deep wood.”

“Where am I? What Happened?” Clyde struggled to utter.

“We have barely escaped a pack of folsh. With great fortune, they grew tired and stopped. We are on our way to Rothhampton now where I and my father, John will care for you. What might I ask is your name, good sir?”

Clyde closed his eyes slowly to rewet them. When he opened them again after a few seconds, he responded, “I am Sir...”, “Sir...”

“Rest easy, my Sir, and don’t speak. I will find your name this evening once we are warm. You must rest”, Trudi comforted.

Clyde barely spoke, “Thank you, my lady.”

“My dear man, it was my great pleasure to do so”, Trudi reassured Clyde as she held the back of her hand over his forehead to check for a fever.

At this, Clyde closed his eyes to blink once more, but this time fell back to a sweet sleep. His lips parted a little to breathe, and Trudi smiled at him before looking around to see if anything was still following them. She knew it was necessary to move as quickly as possible, for his injuries were great and there was no guarantee she would arrive

before the storm hit. She tested the straps over his body to ensure they were still secure, and walked back to the front of the sleigh where her four horses were. Her horses were all identical with light brown hair and a large white spot between their eyes. Their manes were a stark white. She talked sweetly to them and praised them for their valiant run. The horses could already smell the sweet smoke from Rothhampton and were ready to finish their long trek. Trudi climbed back up to the seat of the sleigh and called out with a strong voice for her horses to continue. The horses reared and began their steps once again. Trudi could see the skies graying and knew the storms would come soon. With only a few nights until Harsh Rain, the wet storms were already swelling. It became dark quickly, and Trudi lit her sleigh light with a long pole. Even though she knew her way, she wanted to be sure the light was prepared should it take any longer

with her hurt friend. Within a span of thirty thoughts, rain started coming, and after another five thoughts it was all Trudi could do to keep her eyes open. The rain came in all sorts of directions and there were moments when she would stop the sleigh completely to drape a tarp over the horses' heads so they too could find a reprieve from the wet weather. It was the most unfortunate of storms for their circumstance. The day had started with a full kneelength of snow, but already, the rain had turned the ground into a muddy mess. On for much too long, she worked the horses and tried to stay on higher ground to stay on the snow that was left. At last, after the rain had pelted her face a thousand times, she came to the ridge overlooking the city lights of Rothampton and continued west on the road into the country. At last, she stopped the sleigh on the outside of a beautiful white-fenced opening in the forest with two tall torches lit. The

entryway had a long road leading over a river and up a small hill to a beautiful darkwood cabin with thick smoke lifting from the chimney. There was a barn with eight stable doors twenty manslengths to the left and the driveway split between the two buildings. The rain had all but destroyed the picturesque snowscape she saw before she left. At the sound of her voice, the horses went down the muddy driveway, over the bridge, and up to the side of the cabin. Trudi jumped out of her seat and went over to the man. He was not breathing. Then, the door of the cabin opened and her two dogs ran between her father's legs as he came down the steps to greet her with a torch held in front of him. Trudi greeted the dogs quickly and rushed to give her father a hug.

“Oh father, it is so good to see you.”

“It is so wonderful to see you too”, John Gatwick sighed. “I was beginning to worry for you with this storm.”

Trudi pulled back and looked at her father’s eyes.

“Trudi, what’s wrong?”

“Father, there was a man I found in the Far East Forest early this morning. He was badly wounded. A folsh attack I am sure of. He is now nearly dead and we must care for him. I found him unconscious and was able to pull him onto the sleigh and bring him here. I am afraid, though, he very well may have passed.”

“Who is he?” John asked as he moved to the back of the sleigh.

“He was too weak to say”, Trudi replied.

John saw a long gray figure in the back of the sleigh covered with a blanket. Trudi had fashioned a tarp that suspended over his head to keep the rain away. With difficult positioning and struggle he and Trudi were able to bring the man into the cabin. John was sure to leave the dogs outside. They laid him lightly on the stone floor at the base of the fireplace. The flames of the fire trickled onto the man and John slowly removed the blanket to reveal a large wound across his neck. He looked to be very old in the face, but his hair and beard was such a vibrant red. He was at least as tall as a kneelength added to a manslength. John checked to be sure the man was alive and to Trudi's delight, he was. They stared in silence for a moment while they tried to gather their thoughts.

“Father, he was simply lying in the forest with these injuries. It is by sheer chance I came over

him this morning. I had left a bit early and took the longer way, and otherwise, I wouldn't have seen him there.”

Trudi was too flustered to realize how cold and soaked she was and John went to gather a blanket to wrap around her. They both moved the man onto a chair facing the fireplace. Once he was placed, the chair was laid back. They removed the blanket the rest of the way. The man was in a black harrowing suit. His body was red, torn, and broken from what John confirmed to be a folsh attack. After the blanket was removed, it was barely enough to see the man's chest rise enough to take a breath. John went to his room to gather some bandages and Trudi went to gather some medicine from the kitchen. Soon, they both came back. With rags, and as much care as possible, they both washed his wounds. John went to his room again to fetch a new shirt and trousers for

the old man. He fit the clothing him and Trudi went upstairs to bring a feather-stuffed blanket to place over his chilled body. The blanket was not nearly long enough to cover the man, so Trudi returned with another to lay over his feet. The man was still fast asleep. She looked at her father, and gave him a tired embrace. She expressed she was hungry, and also remembered she needed to return the horses the barn. John told her instead to go the kitchen and warm some food, and he left out the door to dry the horses and drop some hay for them. Soon, John returned soaking from the rain and they both sat down to some warm pettistonchi. Trudi and her father ate several bites before John carefully set his utensil next to his plate, looked up at Trudi, and asked her what had happened.

-Chapter Three-

RAFTS AND OHLER

BEANS

The waves ripped around the Grand Peroya of the Sea, and Henry was ill in his stomach. Each drop of the thick rain penetrated his body and the crashing waves on the left and right of the ship would only bring more water for the men to bail. For five nights the torrential rains had all but drowned the vast merchant ship. The crew had done well to keep it afloat, but now they were throwing the food and rations overboard except what was left in their knapsacks. They knew their situation had turned from desperate to fatal. The

storm had already taken Nitty, the wrenchman three nights before. With no sign of the storm lessening, many of the men grew helpless and lost the desire to bail. They all believed this might very well be their last night. Then, Henry saw the Captain's door open and out came their fearless and trusted leader holding a lantern with his left hand and covering it with his right arm.

Hawthorne was a very tall man, a full manslength and a head, and his broad shoulders and arms spoke of strength and dignity. The warrior of the sea had been fortunate in battle. All but two scars marred his body and they were over his left eye cutting through his eyebrow. His face was set and determined. He wore a brown knapsack cloth over his head, and wore a furry-brown comskin shirt with sleeves going down to his elbows. His white trousers were dirtied and torn, but met up nicely with black boots at his knees. He had rich black hair tied in the back, cool green eyes, and a

menacing scabbard and dith weighing on his left side. Hawthorne walked to the middle of the ship and the men gathered holding on to whatever they could in anticipation of hearing some direction from their leader. Hawthorne knelt down with one knee and kept his balance with his right hand holding a rope that cut across the planks. He then smiled a little, to the surprise of the men, and loudly announced through the rain in a husky-aged voice,

“Men, we’re all going overboard. This ship is all but lost.”

“What, Capt’n?” asked Murray, the second mate.

“Boats”, yelled Hawthorne amidst the howling wind and thunder claps. “Each man on his own. Yash is close. Pergonia is close. We make boats now, men!”

“But, Capt’n, what if we separate?” yelled back Burlapp, the fishermen.

“I’ll say it again, men.” Hawthorne now stood and spoke to his eighty shipmen through the cold and loud rain.

“We will die on this ship, men. The Simpervir will guide us. Now, go. Be ready soon,”

All of the men nodded, and they immediately broke into separate directions to prepare for their plunges. Remmahs and lians were gathered, which were sledges and spikes shipmen used for mending the ship. All of the men began fashioning little rafts from wood ripped from the deck. Much noise and clamber was heard amidst the rushing waves and barreling wind. Each man took their diths from their scabbards and cut two kneelength pieces of wood and placed them a manslength from the other. They then placed

three to four planks over the top of them to form the raft. They all tied their knapsacks filled with oler beans securely to their belts. Six of the men returned from the galley with one oar for each sailor. Henry had spent most of his time making sure his lians had made the wood secure on his raft. He took his knapsack and counted five nights of food and carefully placed his signal horn in the center of the bag. He then went to help Woodley with his raft. Woodley had been thrown overboard by the storm two nights earlier and had been rescued in rare fashion. Henry observed his friend was not quite as thrilled as the others at going into the water. To everyone's surprise, Hawthorne had spent his time making several rafts: one for himself, and six for the men who delivered the oars. Soon, everyone was done and none too soon. The storm had worsened to a terrible twist, more than any of the men had seen yet. With howling wind and rain rushing from

side to side, Hawthorne called the men together for the last time. Hawthorne stood up while all of the men kneeled to hold their balance.

“Men, let us remember her. For the glory of the seas. For the glory of the Grand Peroya of the Seas!”

“Hear, hear.” yelled the shipmen in unison.

“Men”, Hawthorne cried out. “It has been a pleasure.”

“Hoy! Hoy! Hoy!” all of the men shouted together.

Their captain spoke once more, “Be done with this ship. I shall see all of you soon.”

At this, the men parted to their rafts and began to haul them to the starboard side. The first to go was Brinkly. Twenty-five more men followed in

similar fashion and then it was Burlapp's turn. It took four men to raise the rafts over the edge. Henry was one of the last to go and looked back to find Hawthorne standing right behind him. Henry was tall, about a footbone shorter than Hawthorne. He had long black hair he would always gather with a tie to the back of his head. Many of the strands of his hair had come away from his ears and were pasted to his cheeks from the wet weather. He had sun-drenched skin and wore a very fine shipmen's suit that demanded a belt to hold up the grey pants and tuck in his white sailor's shirt. His hazel eyes were thoughtful and adventurous. His jaw was defined and his countenance was almost always bright. Even in this circumstance, he was very excited. He then helped push off his bestmate, Erik, and soon it was his turn. Hawthorne himself helped him on board the raft and with the aid of the second mate, Murray, and Rupert, the Bowmaster,

the three men pushed the raft to the ledge.

Hawthorne leaned close to Henry's ear and said,

“Henry, brave this water, boy. I'll see you soon.”

“Yes, sir!” Henry spoke as a rush of wind hit the side of the ship and the raft was pushed by the three leaders of the Peroya at the same time.

Henry grabbed hold of one side of the raft as he neared the surface of the water. He hit the water with great force and was knocked off of the raft completely. He quickly sank deep into the frigid sea. He struggled to gain his senses and began swimming toward the sounds of thunder and wind at the surface. He finally arrived at the top and quickly took a breath. The waves were fierce. He had tied his hand to the raft but the rope had slipped off at impact. His oar had been forced from his hands as well. It seemed a hundred waves were smacking him at once and it was too

much to even keep his mouth clear of water. Henry began to panic searching and pining for his raft as his body chilled. It was only when the lightning struck that he could see anything, and, after what seemed to be a thousand strokes, he finally found the outline of his vessel. The rain flooded his eyes as he tried desperately to swim his way to it. Up and down into the ocean he went, gasping for air on every occasion. Finally, his tired hand met the slivers of his raft and he held there for a few more rounds of thunder. He tried four times to get on but his arms were too weary. He knew he could not hold on for much longer. Then, Henry peered behind him to see amongst the lightning a most menacing wave coming right for him. This was his chance. In one fluid motion the wave caught Henry and he pushed as hard as he could on the raft to bring himself upon it. The wave crashed into Henry and doused him completely, but when the wave

was finished he found himself on the raft and held on with all of his might. The rain continued to batter the sea and the winds swelled back and forth with a plethora of tones. Henry struggled to stay on and was greatly worried that he had not seen any of his shipmates. As the storm continued its blistering habit, Henry began to wonder how he would fare. Unbeknownst to him, the squall had a great deal more punishment to bring.

-Chapter Four-

THE REDBEARD FROM GOXTON

Clyde opened his eyes and realized a wondrous orange fire in front of him within a wide hearth. The blankets on him smelled of smoke and burnt appleberry, and there was an aroma in the room that sent whiffs of buttered breads and sugary spices. Clyde turned his head and noticed two people at a large and thick table with a candle lit in the middle. There was a man who had all of his attention pointed at a woman sitting on the left end. Soon, the woman turned to look toward him

and noticed he was awake. She stood up. As she stepped into the great room, Clyde recognized her.

“My dear sir”, the woman began. “How are you feeling?”

“Trudi?” Clyde asked in a murmured, tired voice.

She stepped closer to Clyde to feel for his temperature.

“Yes, I am Trudi, and you have a very good memory for a wounded traveler, I must say.”

Clyde noticed there was but one unruly piece of her hair, which curled onto her brow like the forelock of a spirited stallion. He was sure she had one of the kindest faces he had ever seen. After feeling his forehead for a few seconds, she excused herself and returned bearing a cool, wet

washcloth and placed it gently on his brow. This time, the man from the table came with her.

“Where am I, my lady?” Clyde asked.

“My kind sir, you are now in my father’s home here in Rothhampton. I reside here as well.”

“My thanks to you”, Clyde said as he coughed a little with his mouth closed. He struggled to say the next sentence. “I know not of any repay I can offer you except for the utmost of my gratitude.”

“My kind sir, you have no need for any recompense. It was my great pleasure to offer my help.”

“My lady, I will never forget it.”

Her father leaned toward her to whisper something and Trudi turned her ear toward him. Then, John moved to sit down in a wicker chair

on the opposite end of the fire from Clyde, and Trudi went back into the kitchen. Clyde noticed Trudi had long flowing red hair, down to the back of her knees in two thick braids, pinned at the nape of her neck with what looked to be at least sixty hairpins.

“Hello there, good man,” John started. “I trust you are feeling snuggier now than last night?”

Clyde saw he had short graying hair, a rounded face with high cheek bones, and dark olive skin.

“I am”, replied Clyde.

“I am John Gatwick. Welcome to my home. At this, John began to rock a little while he folded his fingers and rested them on his lap.

“I am grateful, John, for you and your daughter.”

“Might I ask what your name is kind sir?” John continued.

“My name is Clyde. I hail from Goxton.”

“Goxton, how curious”, exclaimed John. “Why, that is a town ruled by Jacques, is it not?”

“It is”, Clyde offered. “I was raised there, but I have not been home in seventeen winters.” Clyde coughed again with his mouth closed, and then the second cough demanded his mouth open to let out the raspy cold air from his lungs.

John sat back, rocked a little more, and then spoke, “I hope you don’t speak much if you are weary and unable to. I am curious, my dear sir, why a man of your age and wisdom would choose to place yourself in the way of the Meridian Forest at a time of year such as this.”

Clyde closed his tired eyes and shifted his jaw a little to the right. As he was beginning to open his mouth, Trudi came over to the fireroom with some food. He watched as she and John helped lift him carefully into a seated position. He winced in pain. Trudi took a spoonful of broth and let it slowly into Clyde's open mouth. He managed to sip quite well and with time he had finished and was given some tarmin to warm his insides.

“I am sorrowful to have ruined your evening”, Clyde apologized.

“It is not a problem in the least. It is our pleasure, and we are glad you and Trudi were both safe this day”, John responded.

Clyde spoke to Trudi, “How did you find me?”

“Well, it was by sheer goodness that I found myself in the forest this morning”, Trudi started. She rewet the cloths and applied them again to Clyde’s neck. “I was on the Eastside for many errands, and I also was visiting a dear friend from Rolja whose mother was very ill. We had endured the last snow in Sandborg, and I knew rainstorms were making their way fast toward the river. My schedule demanded I be back in town by Cumminsdays so this was my reason for setting off in between the storms. I knew the forest would be faster for me if the first rain came.”

“I pray I did not delay you”, Clyde interrupted.

“Oh no, not in the least”, replied Trudi.

“Tomorrow is Cumminsdays, so I haven’t missed anything.”

“What is it that you do, my dear lady?”

“I am a fruit bearer from Rothhampton as far East as Sandborg.”

“Oh, I see”, said Clyde. “I once had a niece who did the very same thing just outside of Goxton. I thank you for your service to your land.”

“It is always my love and pleasure to do so”, smiled Trudi.

“Please go on”, Clyde asked.

Trudi continued, “It was about mid-morning when I noticed what must have been your empty carriage in the Mideast part of the Forest. Your four white horses were still faithfully standing there. I came up to the carriage and found it empty. I did not see any tracks leading to or from the carriage, but I did hear the barking of folsh far in the distance through the chilly morning air. At this, I determined I should investigate from a

distance, and see what the matter was. On for several thoughts I traversed through many snowdrifts and suddenly came upon you lying in the snow. You were unconscious. At the time, there were no signs of the beasts. I saw your many wounds and breaks, and I immediately prepared to lift you aboard my vessel.

“What of my weight? Did you not have trouble lifting me?” asked Clyde.

“It did take me a great while, but I managed to release one of my horses and with his help I was able to pull you to the base of the sleigh with a rope around your torso. I then carefully pulled you aboard one limb at a time. As I was untying the rope, sharp barks were heard very close to us. I secured you, grabbed Caine, my horse, and attached him back to the team as fast as I could. The folsh became visible just after I hopped to

the top of the sleigh. I drove the dear horses hard. For a good thirty thoughts the race was even, but I knew after awhile the dogs would give up with exhaustion and we would be alright.”

“I believe this is when I met you. I am starting to remember”, Clyde said.

“You are right” said Trudi. “We only had to drive for a little while longer and the dogs had left us. This is when we met.”

“My lady, again I am overwhelmed with your assistance. I owe my existence to you, and take it with great weight.”

“My dear Clyde, I am still unsure as to the level of my help when it is something that should be done in any instance. It was my pleasure to do so.”

At this, Trudi rewet the sponge and continued to clean Clyde’s neck and face. John then took the

blanket off of Clyde's legs so he could examine the damage to his knees once more.

“The physician is out of town this evening, but he will be back in the morning”, assured John.

“The top of your knees look badly broken but your legs are fine. Trudi has already done a fine job wrapping your arms in the forest earlier today.”

As John was placing the blanket back on his legs, he noticed a small bronze band around Clyde's left ankle with an inscription.

Θϊδδß

He placed the blanket back quickly hoping Clyde had not noticed his discovery, and sat down again in his chair. Trudi moved to stand with her back to the fire.

“We should retire soon for bed”, said John.

Trudi interjected, “Before we do, dear Clyde, I must let my curiosity get the better of me. I came in when you were telling father of your reason in the forest last night.”

Clyde turned slowly toward Trudi, “I have been in many places in the last seventeen winters. Most of my time has been spent here and in Sandin.”

Clyde then coughed again and started to stare off in the distance between Trudi and John. Trudi looked over to her father confused. The old man whispered, “I am afraid it is apparent the enemy knew of my whereabouts last night. I can only suppose the folsh were sent to me.”

Clyde shook out of his temporary trance and looked again at Trudi.

“So, what was it you were doing in the forest?”

Trudi asked again.

“That, not even I can speak of”, he coughed.

“Or, I am afraid it would mean great danger for all of us. I’ve suffered much over the last few days and to find myself in such a warm place at the end of these circumstances does my heart very well.”

“Well, we’re glad we could help”, John said.

“I trust it is time for you to rest, dear Clyde”, said Trudi.

“It would be good”, said Clyde. Trudi went to the bedroom just to the right of the fireplace to prepare the bed. She quickly returned and helped her father lift Clyde as best as they could. Soon, he was laid gently down in a warm-feathered bed.

Trudi spoke, “I am thankful our paths were able to cross and we shall see you in the morning with a physician.”

“I will look very much forward to it”, Clyde said. He smiled briefly and winced as he labored to take a breath.

John extinguished the lamp above him.

“Good night, dear Clyde”, Trudi and John said in near unison from the doorway.

“Good night”, Clyde said as he closed his eyes.

The door to the room closed. Clyde was in the darkness once again with only his memories to remind him of his danger, and the unruly cold wind and rain smashing up against the shutter.

-Chapter Five-

THE CONSTABUL'S ARREST

Trudi awoke suddenly with a loud rapping downstairs. She sat on her bed petrified for a moment to ensure the sounds were real and not in a dream. Sure enough, the loud smacks on the door were heard again and she grabbed her robe and made her way down the stairs quickly. Her father had already awoken from his chair next to the fire. They both met groggily at the door before John mumbled and shouted from the inside,

“Who is it?”

“By the order of the magistrate, you are to open this door at once or we will use force upon it”, said the gruff voice of a man on the other side.

John opened the door to see what the matter was. It was still pouring rain. He squinted as he saw six manslength soldiers each holding a torch. There was a taller man behind them. John asked to see their seals, and soon let the soldiers in along with a dark-jacketed Constabul.

The suited man spoke, “My name is Nathaniel Overmong, and I understand you and this cabin have received a visitor this evening, am I wrong?”

“You are right”, John said. “We have received an old man. Why might I ask, is the reason for your urgent call?”

“I am most sorry to disturb you, sir, and you too, my lady.” He looked at Trudi for a little longer than usual before turning back to speak to John.

“We are here to arrest him.”

“Whatever for?” John asked. “What has this wounded man done against the magistrate?”

“You have in this cabin a tried and convicted murderer. His name is Sir Clyde Duncan Diminution of Goxton, and you should find the two of you with good fortune that he did not seek to harm you. This man has been a fugitive for longer than I myself have been alive. It is with much fortune we have found him. I must plead for your pardon as my men seize him from this place. Where is the man?”

John pointed, “He is in the room to the right of the hearth. I am most sorry to harbor such a

villain and trust you understand it is by ill-information that we fed and cared for him tonight.”

“We are only grateful the two of you are safe”, Constabul Overmong spoke. He looked again at Trudi and smiled as he moved toward the room with the soldiers. In one quick motion the seven men let into the room. Then, one of the soldiers returned to the doorway quickly to ask John frantically where the man was. John rushed to the opening only to find a disheveled bed and the latch of the shutters broken. At once, the men rushed out of the room and through the front door to the outside. John followed them and saw from the light of the torches Clyde had not made it but a few paces toward the river. He was limping terribly. In one swift tackle, two of the guards put the old man on the cold, muddy ground and tied his hands quickly. They dragged

him to a carriage and with a tip of a hat toward John, the Constabul and his guards quickly left. Their torches lit the rain and trees around them as the carriage went up the way, over the river, and onto the road.

John went inside slowly. He blinked a few times while he closed and locked the door. Trudi came over from the fire and hugged him tightly. John saw from the flickering embers she had tears in her eyes.

“I am so sorry, father”, she said. “I am so sorry.”

“It is alright, my dear. It is alright”, John said as he stroked her hair. “It is most alright.”

“I could not even see one morsel of danger in the man”, Trudi said staring off while still resting on her father’s chest.

“My dear, we can only be thankful nothing happened to harm us tonight. There is also much that could have happened when he was with you in the forest. I am most grateful you are sound and home.”

Trudi pulled back and smiled a little at her father.

“I am as well father. It is surely wonderful to be here again.”

She wiped the remaining tears from her face and took in a big sigh as they moved into the great room and John grabbed his pillow and blanket from the chair. She kissed her father on the cheek and he kissed her back on the forehead.

“Good night, Father.”

“Good night, my dear. Sleep well.”

Trudi walked very pensively up the stairs. She went into her room, lightly fell into her bed, pulled her covers fast to her neck, and blinked for a great length of time. She tossed for the remainder of the evening with not a droplet of sleep as the rain continued to pelt the shutters in a monotony that was only reminding her of the old man. And then, at last, as if the forest and the sky struck a bargain, the rain depleted. Soon, a glaze of pink began to cascade through the seams of her shutters and onto her blanket. Trudi rose and stretched a great deal before moving to open her window. She opened the shutter gently and an orangey pink light came onto her face. She took in a long smell of the dew emanating from the grass and trees. Trudi then heard her dogs bark, and smiled when the barks echoed among the trees. She dressed herself for the day, spent some time tidying up her room, and soon walked down the stairs. She peered into her father's bedroom

and was surprised to see his bed empty and unmade. Trudi walked smoothly over to the front door and opened it a little to look for her father, and quickly saw him outside the barn brushing the mud from the horses with the dogs playing next to him. The barn had been painted a bright blue while she was away. She smiled without her father seeing her, and spun back into the house to prepare the morning meal. She decided on gelbref, which is a fruity blend of field oats and juice from Tubrust, and in a few thoughts, the food was ready and just in time to welcome her father through the door.

“Good morning, my dear.”

“Good morning, father”, she said as she turned around from the stove. I didn’t expect for you to rise up this early. How are they this morning?”

“They are fine and in good spirits. Such a glorious morning for once. Caine was concerned. I think he is worried to never see you again after seeing me last night and again this morning. I am sure it will do him well for you to speak with him before you go to Jerome and Margaret’s.”

“Oh, I surely will. I have not even had the chance to thank all of them for their efforts yesterday. What a strange night it was.”

“Yes, indeed”, John said as he took off his boots and made his way his place at the table.

“Were you able to sleep, my dear?”

“I tried, but I could not. There was much too much to think about.”

Trudi came over and served a large portion of gelbref to her father and then sat to his right and dished some for herself.

“Trudi, be sure to return back quickly today so you can rest and recover from your journey. You have been much too hard on yourself lately.”

“I know. I will, father.”

Trudi sat down. She watched her father take the first spoonful and nod his head in approval and she then took her first bite. They both smiled at each other briefly. Then, they heard the dogs barking outside, and horses hooves clacking on the road. Soon there were loud footsteps heard coming to the entryway. John wiped his face and stood up to go open the door. Trudi decided to stay at the table and eat another spoonful. She heard her father tell the dogs to go back to the barn, and she then heard him speak to a man. They traded conversation several times, and soon John backed away and Constabul Overmong stepped into the room, and removed and held his

hat. He looked into the great room first and then turned a little more to find Trudi rising from the table to greet him.

“Mister Overmong, what a pleasant surprise”, Trudi said.

“Good morning”, he gestured toward her and then quickly stood to face both of them. He was at least twenty winters old with a daring face, brown hair, and bright blue eyes. His age and smile was unusual for a man of his position.

“I must first thoroughly apologize for the abruptness of my entry last night. Although I trust you understand my reasons, I felt it necessary to return this morning to ensure you realize how sorrowful I am to have caused such a clamor at a time so deep into the night. I only beg for your apologies on that account.”

John answered, “Constabul, you have our deepest thanks and regards for your efforts last evening, and we have not given a further thought to the inconvenience of our awakening. We would much prefer for criminals to be caught than sleeping in our home.”

“Indeed. Well, I am most glad you both are alright.”

“What is to happen with the man?” John asked.

“I have sent him to Amingod”, the Constabul said resolved.

John and Trudi quickly looked at each other in surprise.

John nodded and continued, “Well, we are happy you captured him, then”.

John invited Officer Overmong over to the table. He politely refused at first, but they both insisted and soon he sat to John's left, across from Trudi with a fine bowl of gelbref in front of him.

The Constabul waited until John and Trudi had created a spoonful for themselves, and then took his first bite.

“My goodness, my largest compliments on this gelbref”, Nathaniel said as he took another bite.

“The gelbref was made by Trudi”, John said proudly as the three of them continued to eat a few bites.

“Well, Trudi, you are most kind for letting me partake of this delicious meal. My compliments to you.”

“Well, thank you, sir”, Trudi said smiling before looking again to her bowl.

“How long have you been in Rothhampton?”

John asked.

“I have only been here for a few Dermuers now.

I finished my training in Clamindin and was assigned this post for no less than five winters.

“I am sure after last night’s event, you are ready to go to Salus for less excitement”, laughed John.

“Yes, indeed”, the Constabul chuckled.

“Where do you hail from?”

The Constabul was in the middle of another bite and then answered, “I was born in Sandin and was taken here after the campaigns eleven years ago. I have been in Clamindin until now.”

“Well, we congratulate you on your promotion”, John said. Trudi nodded her head and Nathaniel looked over to her and then back to John.

“My thanks to you for it. I am most thrilled to serve the people here.”

“It means well for Rothhampton to have the magistrate such an amiable person”, John said.

“No doubt it will mean well for behavior.

“I certainly hope it will.”

Nathaniel took one more bite and then leaned in closer to John. John stopped stirring his gelbref. Trudi repositioned herself in her chair.

He lowered his voice, “I must tell you and your daughter something of importance.”

John and Trudi leaned in a little more.

“I am part of the resistance.”

“The resistance?” Trudi whispered smiling.

“Yes, indeed”, Nathaniel said as he looked to her and then started speaking to both of them.

“I have brought the wonderful news that we have planned to appoint a new king for us. There are several men in consideration and the elders are moving to Rothhampton to convene this very night. I have come to invite you, John. I have heard much of your affluence and would very much like to have a man of your experience in our conversations.”

“It is so kind of you to offer, Constabul, however it has been far too long for me to be of any help I am sure.”

“I am afraid I must differ with you, John. I have heard much from Rothhampton of your prominence here and it would be my pleasure.”

“Oh, do, father”, Trudi spoke up. “You must.”

John looked at her and shook his head a little as he pushed back from the table and took his right hand under his nose. He pulled his fingers slowly under his lips and smiled at both of them. He finally spoke. “I shall give it some length of consideration, and I appreciate your thoughts of me very much, Constabul Overmong.”

“I mean it with all of my heart”, the Constabul said. “We will meet at dusk by the North Shore.”

“I will give it thought”, John said again.

Nathaniel leaned back and looked at Trudi. “Miss Gatwick, I must thank you again for this wondrous meal.”

“It was our pleasure”, Trudi said as she smiled.

“Please know we hope it was not the last time you eat at this table.”

“It would be my joy to return”, Nathaniel said as he rose.

“It is surely a pleasure, and know you are always welcome in this house”, John offered.

“Mister Gatwick, I thank you for it. It means much to know you and your daughter.”

Trudi and John walked him to the door and the Constabul thanked both of them for their time and again apologized for the trouble the evening before. With one last smile he left and John closed the door.

John stood there for a thought and then looked over at Trudi, “He is a fine young man, is he not?”

“Indeed”, said Trudi. “He is most congenial for an officer.”

“Indeed”, John said as he smiled at her. “Trudi, the horses have need of me if I am to ready them for your journey into town this morning.”

“Very well. I will wash in the kitchen and be ready soon.”

“Very well”, John said as he strapped on his boots.

John soon went to the barn and Trudi gathered the plates and noticed how empty Nathaniel’s dish was. She hummed as she washed the bowls and dampened the fire in the stove.

There were then several light knocks at the door. She glanced over and saw Nathaniel’s hat hung on the hook. She briskly walked over to the door and dried her hands on her apron. She glided her hand gently under the hat, took a deep breath, and opened the door. There, in front of her was a

man dressed only in white. He looked very old and had a crooked jaw. He had a straight white tie and a white coat that went clear down to the ground. He had white hair, a white beard and mustache, pale white skin, and a white sailor's hat with a white feather stuck in the left side. The only thing out of place was his deep brown eyes. He smiled a little and then spoke,

“Madam, was there a visitor here, last night?”

Trudi looked down to the barn, but didn't see her father or the dogs.

“What is the nature of this call?” Trudi asked.

“Was there a man by the name of Clyde who was here?”

“First, I must ask you to give me your name, sir.”

“I am sorry to bother you, my lady. I trust he has left already?” The man looked past her to the inside of the cabin.

“I will not inform you of any event”, Trudi answered as she moved to close the door and leave him there. She looked through the little crack left in the doorway and finished, “Good morning to you, sir.”

The man tipped his white hat toward Trudi, “Good morning to you as well, my lady.”

He turned around and left.

Epilogue

There is much left in the tale of the rise of Jason, the One Hundred and Fifty-Seventh. With great battles, chivalrous knights, evil tyrants, and romantic courtships, there is plenty to await. If you have enjoyed the story thus far and would like to be notified of the release of Book II, please send an email to the author at dwilliams@thespeechmaster.com to make a reservation. Comments, Questions, and Notifications of typographical errors are always more than welcome. The author looks forward to presenting Book II by the end of the year 2008.