

MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

by

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Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:1

EXT. FOREST - ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A MONK (25), in standard brown robes, RACES quickly through the trees. Clutches a large hardcover BOOK tightly in his arms. Frantic. Scared. This is FREMON.

SUPER: BRITANNIA, 924 A.D.

He comes to a clearing. A STREAM crosses his path.

He looks at the water. His mind racing.

VOICE (O.S.)

You may as well cross...

Fremon spins around, finds a MAN (30) standing feet away. Long dark hair. Beard. Chainmail armor. Sword in hand. Built like a soldier. This is MALACHI.

MALACHI

Because that's the only way you'll get out of here alive.

He points at the book with his sword.

MALACHI

If you drop the book, I'll allow you to escape unharmed.

Fremon glances at his book. Considers it.

FREMON

This is sacred text. Put to parchment by the hand of the Lord God himself. It cannot fall into the wrong hands.

MALACHI

It won't. I swear it.

Fremon still hesitates.

MALACHI

The rest of my men will be here soon, and they will not be so quick to show you mercy as I do.

Fremon looks at the flowing water. Then back at the book.

MALACHI

I will not make this offer again, priest.

Exhausted from running, Fremon gives in reluctantly. Holds the book out. It's a massive tome. Bound in black.

Malachi approaches. Takes the book gently from Fremon's outstretched hands.

MALACHI

Wise choice.

And then, suddenly-- HE DRIVES HIS SWORD CLEAN THROUGH FREMON'S TORSO--

MALACHI

The king thanks you.

With a look of frozen shock on his face, Fremon slips to the ground. And Malachi pulls his sword out.

Just then other SOLDIERS emerge from the trees. Similarly clad in armor. Swords in hand. One of them approaches Malachi.

SOLDIER

Do you have the book?

Malachi holds it out. Hands it to the soldier.

MALACHI

Put that in your satchel.

(to the others)

Let's go. The king is waiting.

The soldiers move off.

Malachi takes one last look down at Fremon's corpse. Sheaths his sword.

Then follows the others.

INT. CASTLE LUNDENBURG - CHAPEL - DAY

KING AETHELSTAN (30) kneels before a small crucifix. Eyes closed. Hands clasped in prayer. Long dark hair, full beard. The weight of his newly appointed crown still not taken its toll yet.

MALACHI (O.S.)

My lord.

Malachi stands at the entrance. He takes a few steps inside.

Aethelstan does not acknowledge yet. Eyes still closed.

MALACHI

We have the book.

The king opens his eyes.

He rises from his pew. Turns to face his general.

AETHELSTAN

Where is it?

Malachi unslings his satchel. Pulls out the black tome.

Aethelstan's eyes go wide in awe.

AETHELSTAN

The legends were true.

He takes the large book. Places it down on a nearby podium.

AETHELSTAN

*Spiritum Dei*. A book whose words were  
scribed by the very breath of God  
himself.

He traces his hand along the book's spine.

AETHELSTAN

Did anyone die?

MALACHI

A few priests from the Easton Grey  
Abbey. They fell trying to protect it.

AETHELSTAN

Unfortunate. But necessary.

Malachi hangs his head. Cautious with his words.

MALACHI

My lord, if I may... why all this  
bloodshed for a book?

Aethelstan looks through the pages of the tome.

AETHELSTAN

This is not just a book, Malachi. This  
is a testament. A covenant from the  
Lord Christ, written in his native  
Aramaic. Passed down to his disciples,  
and onward, until finally... it is here.  
And just as the New Testament revealed  
the word of God's only begotten son,  
this book heralds the coming of another  
child. Born of a virgin. Who will lead

(MORE)

AETHELSTAN (CONT'D)  
 a rebellion against the rulers of the  
 kingdom.

He turns. Looks at Malachi.

AETHELSTAN  
 There is something else you must do for  
 me...

EXT. EALDWIC - DAY

SAXON SOLDIERS on horseback descend upon the town of  
 Ealdwic.

Malachi leads them. Helmeted and armored. Directs his  
 troops to go door to door.

Soldiers BURST THROUGH doors of pheasant homes. DRAG OUT  
 WOMEN and CHILDREN. Kicking and SCREAMING.

They CUT THEM ALL DOWN-- brutally and indiscriminately.

A WOMAN BREAKS AWAY from the slaughter. Makes her escape  
 toward the dense FOREST beyond. INFANT CHILD in tow.  
 Wrapped in white linen.

A Saxon soldier starts off after her. But Malachi grabs his  
 arm. Holds him back.

MALACHI  
 I'll get her. Stay here and finish the  
 others.

EXT. FOREST - SAME

The runaway woman- ISADEL (24) - moves swiftly through the  
 dense brush. Still grasping her linen-wrapped baby in her  
 arms.

She comes to a large STREAM. The same one Fremon came upon  
 at the beginning.

She stops. Contemplates her choices. Can she cross it  
 safely while carrying her child?

MALACHI (O.S.)  
 You may as well cross...

Isadel spins around. Finds Malachi a short distance away.  
 Sword drawn.

MALACHI

But do you really want to risk your  
child's life?

Isadel looks at the water flowing over the rocks. Then back  
at Malachi.

ISADEL

What's the difference? If I stay you'll  
kill me and my child.

MALACHI

If you give me the child, I will allow  
you to escape.

She looks at her baby. The child looks back up at her.  
Unknowing. Innocent.

MALACHI

No harm will come to the child, I  
promise you.

She seems to hesitate. Then-

ISADEL

I know what your promises are worth.

MALACHI

This is your last chance, woman.

ISADEL

I know what happened to the priests.

Malachi freezes. Confused.

ISADEL

The ones from the Easton Grey Abbey.

Malachi tenses.

ISADEL

You and your men slaughtered all of  
them. The last one you killed... his  
name was Fremon. He was my brother.

A flash of recognition comes over Malachi.

MALACHI

He defied the king's order.

ISADEL

I came upon his body shortly after you  
dealt the killing blow. With his last  
breath, he told a different story...

## EXT. FOREST - FLASHBACK

By the edge of the stream, Isadel kneels before Fremon's dying body, her clothes stained with his blood. She gently caresses his face as he struggles to get the words out.

FREMON

King Aethelstan's men... have taken the book...

ISADEL

*Spiritum Dei.*

FREMON

Yes... They will come for you next...  
Your child will always be a threat to  
the king...

His light is fading. Isadel tries to hold back her tears but cannot.

He grips her hand.

FREMON

Find the messenger, sweet sister  
Isadel... the one who will protect the  
child...

ISADEL

How will I know who it is?

FREMON

You will know... his unseeing eyes will  
lead the way... so it is written...

And with that, his last breath leaves his body.

Isadel presses his head close to her bosom, the sobs coming uncontrollably now...

## EXT. FOREST - BACK TO PRESENT

Isadel presses her baby closer, protectively.

ISADEL

You promised him freedom, and instead  
you killed him. All for a king who  
believes that a divine child will topple  
his crown.

Malachi grips his sword tighter. Knuckles white.



ISADEL

I would rather die than give my child to  
a madman.

MALACHI

So be it.

Malachi advances. Isadel braces herself. Shields her child  
from the coming blow.

But just as Malachi raises his sword and prepares to bring  
it down, he briefly makes eye contact with the child--

And in that instant, the child's eyes BURST WITH A BLINDING  
WHITE LIGHT--

Malachi SHRIEKS as the light SCORCHES HIS EYES-- sends him  
FLYING BACK WITH POWERFUL FORCE-- SLAMS INTO A TREE--

He drops his sword. Covers his burning eyes.

Isadel looks down at her baby in glorious awe. The child's  
eyes are back to their normal color.

ISADEL

It's true... the book is truly the  
breath of God...

She looks toward Malachi, who is now sitting up against the  
tree, his eyes blackened and scorched shut. Smoke still  
pouring from the empty sockets.

He looks up with his blinded eyes toward the clouds above.  
His voice is suddenly filled with reverence.

MALACHI

I have seen the face of the Lord...

Isadel approaches slowly. Her brother's last words repeat  
in her mind--

FREMON (V.O.)

His unseeing eyes will lead the way...

She looks at Malachi's scorched eyes.

ISADEL

You are the messenger. The protector of  
my child. You will prepare the way for  
her coming.

MALACHI

Her?

Malachi rises slowly. Clutching the tree for support.

MALACHI

Who is she?

Isadel lifts her child to Malachi's unseeing eyes.

ISADEL

Her name is Gesa... the sister of Jesus  
Christ...

FADE OUT