

### **Powerful Destiny Excerpt:**

When the boy turned and began to run back the way he had come, Rolf motioned for Ragnar, his youngest warrior, to catch him. As Ragnar reached the boy, now struggling against his hold, a female appeared like a wraith out of the darkness of the cliff face. Rolf guessed she emerged from a concealed cave.

“Would you kill a child as well as our menfolk?” she challenged clearly, her voice ringing out across the distance, bouncing off the cliff and resounding with an echo.

Rolf stared as if struck, feeling suddenly as confused as the child, for her words were spoken in his native tongue. Then, as the moon drifted out from behind a cloud, Rolf let out a gasp.

The woman stood straight and proud, long hair as black as the night falling to her middle. A band around her forehead secured its flowing beauty. Her clothing was no different from that worn by any other Celtic female encountered in his past, but something about her bearing proclaimed that she was very different in some way. As she touched some sort of talisman at her belt, she muttered what could have been an incantation. Perhaps she was praying to her gods.

In all his life and many travels, never had he seen such a vision of loveliness. Then Rolf cursed beneath his breath. What was he thinking? This was a Celtic female, only fit for becoming a slave. Nevertheless, there was something about this female that told him she would be no man's slave, no matter how he tried to break her spirit.

Then a thought hit him like a thunderbolt. He had no wish to enslave her, but perhaps he could capture her heart. That idea astounded him so, that he turned away and took a few steady breaths. As he did, he could clearly see that some of his men were casting odd looks his way as they awaited orders. Who could blame them?

What childish nonsense was this? Never in his many summers was his head filled with such ridiculous notions. Norse warriors did not bother with such fancies—so where did these thoughts spring from. For the first time in many moons, Rolf felt uneasy, more like a boy untutored in love and life. Stiffening his shoulders, Rolf turned to face her and asked, more to conceal this confusion than anything else. “How is it you speak our language?”

Ignoring his question, she asked one of her own. “How is it you think it your right to invade our country and kill our menfolk?” As she moved a step or two away from the rockface, he noticed she carried a sword with confidence. A confidence unusual for a Celtic female. A few Norse women carried weapons with bravado and these shield maidens were well skilled in battle, but the Celtic women were not known to be so brave and capable in sword battles. In his curious fascination with her beauty, he had failed to see the weapon. Unwise in such circumstances. Celts were not to be trusted, be they male or female.

Rolf gripped his axe handle tighter, as he said curtly, “Perhaps if your menfolk did not put up a fight we might have learned to live side by side in harmony.”

Without flinching, she pressed the blade of her sword into the ground in front of her and as the cloud lifted further, he could see her expression. A small sound of disgust left her perfectly shaped lips. In fact, now he could view her clearly, Rolf wondered if she were a goddess—for she was nigh on perfect in every way. Surely only the gods attained such perfection. The Norse gods and goddesses dwelt in Asgard, so it was believable that the Celts possessed their own haven for their gods.

“You think we could ever reach such harmony?” Her beautiful mouth curved down into a smirk of disdain. “You kill our men; take our women and children as slaves.” Tugging the sword from the ground, she held it aloft. “We are prepared to die before we allow you to take us as your slaves.” At these words, she turned the sword until its hilt hit the sandy ground, and then bent forward until the blade pointed to her body, right below her breast. Clearly all she had to do was fall forward and she would be lost to him forever. Rolf let out a cry. “No! Stay your hand.”