

The shadowy, devilish figure with the sinister red eyes and the delighted smirk of yellowed fangs came closer. There was no stopping it. The throats of her brothers were slit as she watched. The chains chaffed her skin as she tried to go to them. The blood pooled in crowns around their heads. She was locked in with their corpses. Their screams still echoed in her ears. She was so cold, so dead, so alone.

Waking with a start, Gwyneth breathed heavily, a cold sweat beading on her forehead. The nightmares never ended. Every attempt at sleep was haunted by the fanged demon in black. She couldn't forget, not until the crown was on her head.

Throwing off her covers she prepared herself for the battle to come: the battle to take back her kingdom from Roderick, the man who killed her family.

The army was ready and waiting as she mounted her horse. She looked from face to face, seeing only loyalty in each pair of eyes. Many of them she had given a new life from the depths of villainy, and many others were nobles who had stood by her father in years past. This vast expanse of men in arms would bring her the victory she craved, but she knew the bloodshed would be great.

Riding at the head of her army, Gwyneth halted them within sight of the grand stone castle she had once called home. Her obsidian armor glistened in the afternoon sunlight as she sat mounted in front of her black army. The last eight years of her life had been spent for the upcoming victory.

Turning to her comrades, she gave a concise nod and then spurred her horse into a gallop as the shouts and trumpets sounded for the charge. The drawbridge was being raised as they rode forth, but it was not raised fast enough. Her army burst into the courtyard under a thick volley of arrows. The battle had begun.

Charging toward the doors to the throne room, Gwyneth slashed her way through the enemy. Her horse galloped up to the marble staircase and halted as she dismounted at the foot of the stairs. She hacked her way past even more men as she strode up the stairs to shove the thick oak doors open. Inside waiting for her was the King and his royal guard. Her eyes caught his for a split second before Gwyneth thrust herself into the fray. The faces of her brothers as they died came into her mind as she fought her way toward the King who was biding his time, watching the daughter of his former enemy draw near.

Roderick was entertained by the bloodshed before him and almost allowed himself a grin at the thought of ending this willful woman himself. When he had taken the throne for his own selfish gain years ago, he had relished in the royal family's demise. Now he would have another chance to spill their blood.

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Out in the courtyard, the army was fighting bravely under the command of Lord Geoffrey and Hal. They were slowly taking the castle, but the enemy seemed to keep coming in a steady stream. The thought of Gwyneth alone before the might of the evil King pressed them to keep fighting in order to reach her sooner.

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Inside, Gwyneth had cut down the last of the royal guard and stood panting and bloody before the king. She was strong, but not strong enough to keep fighting for much longer. King Roderick stood from his throne and drew his broad sword as he unclasped his fur robe and descended the steps on which the throne was raised. Like a coward, he was going to take advantage of her fatigue. In an attempt to save her strength, Gwyneth waited for her shadowy demon to approach.

"Well, well, Lady Gwyneth, I never expected you to have the audacity to challenge my rule." Roderick growled as he swung his broad sword at Gwyneth.

"I'm reclaiming what's mine." Gwyneth spat as she blocked his blow with her own sword. The sheer force of his sword stroke rattled her arms and slid her feet back across the ground, bringing an expression of pain to her face. Roderick let out a dark chuckle.

"You're the last of the bloodline. How fitting that you'll die here like your father and your mother." Gwyneth braced herself for another jarring blow. When it came, it brought her down to one knee and split her sword into two fragments. Roderick's eyes gleamed when he saw the opportunity to take her life. As he raised his arms above his head, Gwyneth lunged desperately and tackled Roderick to the ground, sending his sword skittering across the marble floor. Roderick fell hard, giving Gwyneth the time to produce the dagger from her belt and poise it at his throat.

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Lord Geoffrey and Hal could see their men starting to weaken. They were nearing victory, but the battle had lasted longer than they anticipated and many lives were lost. They gave one last rallying cry to vanquish their foes before they stumbled to the throne room to aid Gwyneth.

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The pained scream echoed throughout the throne room as Roderick's dagger slashed into Gwyneth's side through the weak spot of her armor. He had acted quicker, and the result proved deadly. Gwyneth fell off of him, clutching the bleeding wound in her side as Roderick retrieved his sword. She watched in fear as his footsteps came closer to her and the point of his sword dragged beside him. Looking around desperately Gwyneth spied a sword lying near her beside the body of a dead guard. She groped desperately at the hilt of the sword that was just barely beyond her fingertips. Roderick laughed aloud, delighting in her pain.

"Silly little girl. Your family was never fit to wear my crown."

Just as Roderick was bringing down his sword upon her, Gwyneth got her grip on the hilt of the sword and swung it up into Roderick's abdomen, cutting him deeply, while his sword grazed her left arm. Gritting her teeth against the pain, Gwyneth staggered to her feet before her kneeling enemy and gripped her sword in both hands, summoning all of her strength.

"Long live the King." She snarled before hacking off his head. The crown clanged to the ground, resting in the pool of blood that spilled from Roderick. Just as she vanquished her demon, Lord Geoffrey, Hal, and many others poured into the room in time to see Gwyneth stumble up to the throne, her sword slipping out of her grip with a clang as she approached the stairs and ascended them.

"Lord Geoffrey, crown me."

She called as she turned to stand before her subjects, blood still seeping from her armor. Geoffrey quickly retrieved the blood stained crown and ascended reverently to Gwyneth's side.

"My Queen."

He placed the crown on her head and then bowed to his knees. The other lords followed his example as Gwyneth sat herself on the throne and looked over the bloody carnage of her kingdom.

"Lord Geoffrey," She forced her words out as her eyes dimmed. "Lord Hal is the next legitimate heir after I. He shall be crowned upon my death."

Hal began to argue but Gwyneth raised her hand with great effort to silence him.

“Promise me that my kingdom will never again fall. Bury my brothers in their rightful place, and give me my place beside them.”

Hal bowed his head in consent, “I will, my Queen.” Gwyneth smiled for the first time in eight years and closed her eyes. She knew her revenge had been completed and that she could finally rest in eternal peace. As her dying breath escaped her lungs, she heard the mournful cry of “long live the Queen” and slipped into a peaceful, everlasting slumber.