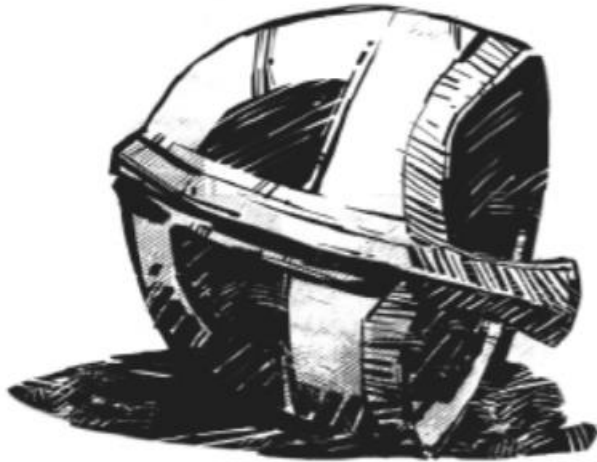


# NINETEEN

## TIME TO MOURN



**IT WAS OVER** before Magnus could do or say anything. His father let go of Tostig's

### ANGLO-SAXON BOY

hair and Tostig slowly fell forward. Magnus was stunned, and couldn't tear his eyes away from Tostig's corpse, half expecting him to jump to his feet and laugh. But Tostig stayed where he was, and Magnus looked up at his father.

"What did you think would happen, Magnus?" the king said. "Tostig would have done the same to me if he and Hardrada had won the battle – and to you too."

Magnus suddenly felt something dark and dreadful inside him, a fury that writhed in his guts like a wild beast that wanted to eat its way out of his flesh. He was still holding his sword, and he gripped the hilt tightly and took a step forward. But Hakon grabbed him from behind, pinning his arms to his sides and swinging him round. "Easy now, Magnus," the housecarl whispered in his ear. "Calm yourself."

Magnus struggled for a moment, but eventually he gave up and sagged. Hakon released him, and Magnus stumbled away, barging through the silent housecarls. He kept walking until he came to the riverbank. There he threw down his sword and pulled off his helmet, hurling it to one side. Then he fell to his knees and was sick, his stomach heaving and churning until there was nothing more for it to expel.

He sat for a while, and dimly heard cheering, his father's army celebrating their victory. He knew that Hakon had followed him and was standing nearby. But his mind was full of Tostig's last moments, the images repeating over and over again until it was as if nothing else existed. Then at last there was more noise, men calling out, and the ground shook beneath him as it only does when warriors march.

"Is that the rest of Hardrada's men?" Magnus muttered, rising to his feet.

"It seems so," said Hakon. He was looking east, beyond the battlefield.

The Vikings were advancing, a solid mass of chain mail and shields, and the Saxons were re-forming their shield-wall and moving forward to meet them. Magnus took a

## ANGLO-SAXON BOY

deep breath and let it out slowly, the taste of vomit and bile still filling his mouth, his throat raw. Then he picked up his sword and started running, past Hakon and towards the new battle. Hakon cursed and hurried after him.

There were more Vikings this time, and they fought bravely, but they were just as doomed as Hardrada and the others. They were outnumbered, the men of the North felt invincible, and Harold's housecarls were as coldly ruthless as ever. Magnus grabbed a shield from a corpse and joined the shield-wall, but he didn't stay in it. Instead he pushed forward, screaming a challenge for anyone to fight him.

One Viking stepped up to take the challenge, and Magnus swiftly cut him down, then he did the same to another, and another, and yet another, until the whole Viking shield-wall seemed to melt away in front of him and there was nobody left to kill. Magnus stood alone, head back, blood dripping from his sword – and he roared his rage at the sky until his voice vanished and he could roar no more.

But the darkness was still inside him.

Hakon dragged him from the battlefield, but by then it was all over. The other half of Hardrada's army was defeated, most of them dead, the survivors begging for mercy. Harold granted them their lives, on condition they went home to Norway and swore never to invade England again. They wouldn't need seven hundred ships for the return journey. Magnus heard there were barely enough Vikings left to fill thirty. But many Saxons had died too, their corpses tangled with those of their enemies.

It was too late to return to York, so Harold's army made camp for the night. The men lit fires and sat by them, speaking of shield-brothers who had died and tending each other's wounds, or laughing as they wiped blood off weapons and mail shirts and arm-rings

they had looted from Viking corpses. Some, like Magnus, simply sat in silence, hoping the flames would burn the day's images out of their minds. A housecarl had been sent to find him, but Magnus had refused to go to his father's tent. He wanted nothing from his father, and he had nothing to say to him.

"You must eat," said Hakon, offering Magnus some bread and sausage from his saddlebag. "You need to keep your strength up."

They were sitting by the fire Hakon had made against the cold of the autumn evening, the red and yellow flames leaping to the stars in the dark sky above.

"I'm not hungry," said Magnus, pulling his cloak more tightly around him.

Hakon sighed, and bit into the bread himself. "I know everything seems black to you now. You saw a terrible thing happen today, but you cannot let it destroy you. Men fight each other, and they die. You know this. Life goes on."

"Not for Tostig," said Magnus, shaking his head. "And that's my fault."

"You can believe that if you like." Hakon bit off a big chunk of sausage. "Or you could be easier on yourself. Most men would say Tostig made his own fate. It was always going to end this way for him, whether you were part of it or not."

"But I *was* part of it, Hakon. I know that, and Tostig knew it as well."

Silence fell between them, and they both stared into the flames. A wolf howled somewhere nearby, calling its pack to feast on the corpses that covered the battlefield. As far as Magnus knew, his uncle had been left where he fell. "Your father had no choice, Magnus," Hakon said at last. "Such a challenge cannot go unpunished, even if that means killing your own brother. He would have been seen as weak if he had spared Tostig. Now everyone will know just how strong a king he is."

## ANGLO-SAXON BOY

Magnus looked at him, then lay down on the cold ground and drew his cloak over his head. He slept badly, his dreams full of slashed throats and spurting blood, and he woke with a start just after dawn to a world of pale light and white mist. Moments later a man came riding down the road from York with a message for the king.

Duke William had landed with his army on the Sussex coast.

Magnus's father marched his army back to York, where another messenger was waiting for him with more news. Men came and went in the great hall, but Magnus stayed with his troop, avoiding his father. By late morning the order to return to the South had been given, which was no surprise. Two hours later Magnus's father led the column of warriors through the gatehouse and out of York.

It was a much shorter column than the one that had arrived in York two days before. Hakon told Magnus that the battle of Stamford Bridge – for such was the name the fight had been given – had cost the lives of three hundred of the king's housecarls, and another hundred or so were too wounded to ride. Edwin and Morcar had lost many men as well.

"Yet they can hardly stop smiling," said Hakon. He and Magnus were riding at the rear of the column, as far from Magnus's father as possible. "It meant they had an excuse not to give your father any men – they claim they need those they still have to defend the North. They are just waiting to see who will win the coming battle."

Magnus didn't comment. He wasn't sure he cared any more, about that or anything else, although he did feel a pang of worry for his mother and sisters in Sussex. He was so tired he could barely stay in the saddle, and every part of his body ached. His heart ached too, but after a while he managed to empty his mind, and from then on all he saw was

his horse's mane and his own hands holding the reins.

His father left him alone for the first few days on the road, concentrating on driving the column on, pushing his men even harder than during the journey to the North. Then one cold night the king came looking for his son. Magnus was lying by a fire, wrapped tightly in his cloak, unable to sleep, Hakon snoring beside him. Magnus heard footsteps approaching, and he knew who it was before his father spoke.

"Stand up, Magnus," he said quietly, and Magnus did as he was told. His father stood on the other side of the fire, the dying flames only just keeping the surrounding shadows at bay. "I have given you enough time to mourn your uncle," his father went on, his face hard and stern. "But tomorrow you must take your place at my side again. Or do you no longer wish to help me in the fight for our kingdom?"

Magnus thought for a moment, his eyes fixed on his father's. "I will help you," he said at last. "But now there are two things I can never forgive you for."

His father gave a hollow laugh. "Only two? I suppose it could be worse. And stop pretending to be asleep, Hakon – I know you are listening. We ride at sunrise."

Four days later they arrived at Thorney, and Magnus's father called a council of war. Scouts reckoned William had brought an army of eight thousand men, many of them mounted warriors. He had re-fortified the old Roman castle at Pevensey to use as a base, but he had also sent out war-bands to ravage the countryside, looting and killing and burning farms – particularly those belonging to Harold Godwinson.

"William is trying to provoke you into attacking him before you're ready," said Stigand. "Your men need to rest, and the Fyrd hasn't fully assembled yet."

Magnus's father was sitting on the throne that had been Edward's, staring into space, tapping his lips with a finger. "Well, he has succeeded," he said at last.

## ANGLO-SAXON BOY

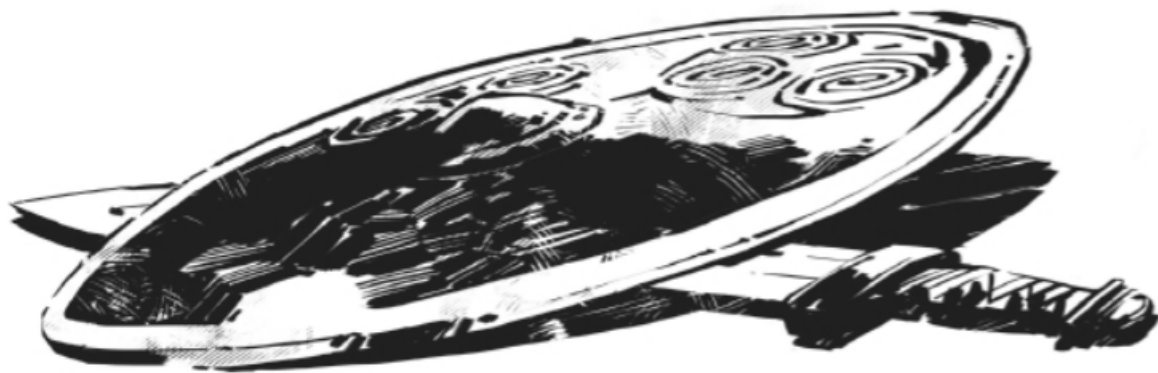
They rode out of Thorney the next day, Magnus beside his father, the great silver serpent of housecarls following, weapons and armour glinting in the dawn light.

Magnus wondered how many would meet death at the end of the road.

# TWENTY

## THE MADNESS OF BATTLE

SENLAC RIDGE, 13/14 OCTOBER 1066



**IT TOOK THREE** days to reach Sussex, but they stopped at last on a hill crest, the leaves of the trees already partly red and yellow, the distant sea glittering under the golden autumn sun. Not much more than half the southern Fyrd was waiting there, as

well as some minor lords from Wessex and Kent with their own housecarls. Magnus's father held another council of war, yet he simply shrugged when he realized his army was barely equal in number to William's.

"... And the scouts say *all* his men are real warriors," said Magnus's uncle Leofwine, Gyrth beside him with Magnus's brothers and Hakon. "They're far more experienced than the Fyrd, who make up two-thirds of our army..."

"Each of my housecarls is worth three of William's men," said Magnus's father. "So that will help to even things out. I am right, Hakon, am I not?"

"No, you are wrong, my lord," said Hakon, and Harold frowned. "I would guess that each of your housecarls is worth at least five of William's men."

Magnus's father smiled and slapped Hakon on the back, and everyone laughed. But the laughter was forced, uneasy, and Magnus knew they were all worried – all except Hakon, of course. Harold ordered the army to move on, and they took the road south, making for the coast. Several columns of black smoke rose into the sky ahead, and Magnus thought again of his mother and sisters.

Late that afternoon the scouts came racing back to report that William's army was moving up to meet them. Dusk fell, but a crescent moon provided enough light to ride through the evening. Eventually Magnus's father gave the order to camp for the night at a place called Senlac Ridge, a wide slope descending beyond it towards the distant town of Hastings and the sea. The Normans had made camp at the bottom of the slope, their fires dotting the darkness like reflections of the stars above.

Magnus helped Hakon check on the troop, making sure the men had eaten and were settled for the night. Then he went in search of his father and found him standing alone at the edge of the ridge, staring down at the Norman camp.

## ANGLO-SAXON BOY

“Father,” he said, “I wanted to ask you about Mother, and whether you...”

“You need have no fear for them, Magnus. They will be in London with your grandmother by now. I sent a troop to rescue them before we left Thorney.”

Magnus felt a surge of relief. “Thank you, Father. I am glad to hear it.”

“And I am glad this will soon be over. I know it has been a hard road for you, but we are nearly there. Then perhaps you and I can become friends once more.”

“Perhaps,” said Magnus. But he wasn’t sure if he believed it.

There was movement in the camp before dawn, men rising to get ready for the day. Those with strong stomachs ate and drank, while others prayed or wished their shield-brothers good luck in the coming storm of blades and arrows. The sky cleared slowly from the east, a cloudless blue vault above them, thick white mist like a colossal fleece keeping the Norman camp hidden at the bottom of the slope. But Magnus could hear movement there too; men shouting, the neighing of horses.

His father summoned his commanders for a final council of war. They met on a small rise at the crest of the ridge, where Harold had ordered his great war banners to be set up. The White Dragon of Wessex and the Fighting Man flapped in the soft breeze that had sprung up with the dawn. Both images were on green backgrounds, the dragon roaring, the fighting man brandishing a sword.

“We will make our stand here,” said Harold. “There are woods on our right and left, so William’s men will have to charge up the slope to get at us, and that will tire them. My housecarls will take the centre, the Fyrd and the other housecarls on either side of them. Leofwine and Gyrth, your men will hold the flanks. All we have to do is make sure our shield-wall doesn’t break, and let them wear themselves out...”

Orders were given and the men formed up shoulder to shoulder along the ridge, a rock-solid shield-wall eight hundred paces in length. Behind the front rank were three more, and behind them were five groups of a hundred men each, ready to plug any gaps that might appear during the battle. Magnus’s father waited until everyone was in their place, then he rode out in front of the shield-wall.

“Men of England!” he shouted, rising in his stirrups. “This is our land, but these Normans have come here to take it from us! What do we say to them?”

“Normans *OUT!*” voices yelled, and Magnus chanted it with everyone else, all of them banging spears and axes and swords on shields. “*OUT! OUT! OUT!*”

Magnus’s father drew his sword and raised it to the sky, then rode to his place on the crest of the ridge. Fear and a terrible excitement raced through Magnus’s veins, his mind emptying, his exhaustion vanishing. He and Hakon were together in the centre of the shield-wall holding spears, the war banners visible right behind him if he looked round. In front of him was the slope, the Normans still concealed in the mist at the bottom. But suddenly there came an answering cry.

A voice called something in French, and thousands of other voices cheered. Then a dark mass of warriors emerged from the mist and tramped up the slope, archers and men with crossbows in front, men on foot behind. The ground trembled beneath Magnus’s feet and his heart started jumping like a bird trapped in a cage. He gripped his shield straps and spear shaft tightly, lowered his helmeted head until he could only just see over his iron shield rim. That lone Norman voice called out again, and instantly the air thrummed with the sound of arrows and crossbow bolts.

Yet again Magnus felt the shock of two shield-walls crashing into each other, and found himself in the madness of battle, all the pushing and chopping and hacking. But

## ANGLO-SAXON BOY

the Normans pulled back after only a few moments. There was a pause, and then their mounted warriors thundered up the slope, men in chain mail with kite-shaped shields and long-bladed lances, on powerful horses that were like warriors themselves. They crashed into the Saxon shield-wall and it buckled – but held.

It held through the morning and into the afternoon, resisting wave after wave of attacks, the sky darkening with clouds of arrows between each one. Dead Normans and horses lay heaped in front of the Saxon line, and the grass beneath Magnus's feet was slick with blood. Many Saxons died too, but each time a man fell his body was dragged back from the shield-wall and another stepped up to take his place. Soon Magnus felt so tired he could barely hold his shield. But he fought on, determined not to let his shield-brothers down, supported by the strength of Hakon beside him.

A few sights burned into his mind, and he knew he would remember them for ever. A huge housecarl, stripped to the waist and carrying an enormous battle axe, bursting out of the shield-wall to chop down a Norman horse with one blow of his weapon, hacking off the rider's head with his second stroke, then being spitted on a lance. A Norman foot soldier leaping over the shield-wall like a wolf, killing three men before being cut to pieces. Duke William himself on a rearing horse, rallying his troops.

Then at last came the turning point. Another wave of Normans crashed into the shield-wall, but almost instantly retreated, apparently in panic. Some Saxons – the men of the Fyrd between Harold's housecarls and Gyrth's on the left – seemed to believe they had broken the Normans' spirit, and rushed out to follow them down the slope. "Stay in the shield-wall, you fools," yelled Hakon. "It's a trick!"

Magnus saw immediately that he was right. The Normans suddenly stopped and turned to face the Saxons, cutting them down as they ran. More Normans came to

join in, like hunting dogs who scented blood. Then they charged up the slope again, smashing into the shield-wall and destroying the left flank. Elsewhere men of the Fyrd saw what had happened and turned to flee, leaving more gaps in the defence.

There was a brief pause as the Normans gathered themselves for one last assault. Then they came on – foot soldiers, mounted men, all of them together, determined to finish it. Magnus glanced back at his father, but a sweeping sword blow from a mounted Norman clanged on his helmet and knocked him off his feet. He lay staring at the sky, a kestrel circling high above him, or perhaps it was a hawk... Then he blacked out.

Magnus woke to juddering confusion, a clamour of voices and movement, and he realized he was being carried over someone's back, blood dripping off his face. He blacked out again, and when he next came round he was lying on the ground, Hakon kneeling over him, his brothers looming behind the housecarl. "Magnus, are you all right?" Hakon was saying. Magnus gripped his arm and pulled himself to his feet.

"I ... I think so," he said, although his head throbbed. "What of the battle?" He saw now that there were fifty or so housecarls with Godwin and Edmund, a mixture of Gyrth's and Leofwine's men. They were all mounted, and had three spare horses.

"The battle is lost," said Hakon. "William's men are closing in for the kill."

Magnus looked beyond him, towards the crest of the ridge. His father's war banners still fluttered, and he caught a glimpse of his father, his sword drawn, a tight circle of housecarls around him facing outwards. But the Normans were swarming up the slope, a dark, unstoppable wave of men and horses trampling over the corpses of Saxons and their shield-brothers, and soon he could see his father no more.

"We must save my father..." he said, and tried to push past Hakon.

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“It is too late for that, Magnus,” said Hakon, blocking his path. “You are the one we must save now. Go with your brothers. They will take you to safety.”

“What about you?” said Magnus, although he knew the answer.

“I have an oath to fulfil,” said Hakon, smiling. “Live long, Magnus.”

Then he ran back to the fighting, the low sun striking fire from his sword, and crashed into the Normans. Blades rose and fell, and Magnus turned away.

Darkness swooped over the land as he and his brothers rode north.



# TWENTY-ONE

## A FINAL FAREWELL



**THEY RODE FOR** three days and nights, pursued most of the way by mounted Normans. On the fourth morning they reached London, riding at last into the city across the old Roman bridge from the south bank of the Thames. News of the battle had clearly preceded them. The bridge guards had vanished, and there was panic on the streets. Much of the population seemed to be leaving, the wealthy in carts loaded with their possessions, the poor trudging on foot, everyone heading north.

## ANGLO-SAXON BOY

Magnus was worn out, and almost fell from his horse when they reached his grandmother's house. His brothers carried him in, pulled off his chain mail and laid him down on a bed of rushes. He slept like a dead man till the next day.

He woke late in the morning and was soon summoned to a council of war. It was held in the chamber where he and his uncles and brothers and Hakon had spoken with his grandmother earlier that year. Now it was filled with a host of people, mostly minor lords and priests, including Archbishop Stigand, all of them arguing. Magnus's grandmother was there, and his brothers and sisters. Gunhild hugged him.

"I am so glad to see you, Magnus!" she said. "If only Mother were here too."

"What do you mean?" he said, his blood turning cold. "Where is she?"

"We didn't want to worry you," said Edmund. "She sent the girls to London with the housecarls, but for some reason she stayed behind."

Magnus stared at him open-mouthed, but he had no time to ask questions. "Come and stand by me, Magnus," his grandmother said in Danish, her voice cutting through the noise in the room like a sword, her eyes seemingly even more icy than ever, her cheekbones sharper. Magnus did as he was told, and she gripped his arm, her bony fingers digging into his flesh. "Stigand, tell us what you know," she said.

"Things could not be worse." The archbishop spoke in English, his face grim, and everyone fell silent. Harold was dead, his army wiped out. Duke William was making his way north, brutally crushing any resistance, burning towns and villages if the inhabitants refused to submit to him. He had also sent a messenger to London giving Harold's family and supporters a week to surrender and declare him king.

Magnus only half listened, his mind full of worry for his mother. Why had she stayed in Sussex? He remembered the columns of black smoke rising into the sky

and wondered if William had already captured her, if she was even still alive... Then something of what Stigand was saying got through to him. "We could raise another army," said the archbishop. "Call out more of the Fyrd, pay for bought men."

"What about Edwin and Morcar?" said somebody. "Aren't they pledged to fight?"

"It seems not," said Stigand, shrugging. "Aldgyth has returned to Mercia, and there is a rumour that her brothers have already promised to support William."

Voices cried out in anger and disbelief and panic, and curses were heaped on the names of the northern earls. Soon everybody was arguing again.

"*ENOUGH!*" roared Magnus's grandmother, silencing them. "*WE* will fight, and we will find the men. But we need someone they can follow."

"There can be only one choice," said Stigand. "And that is ... Magnus."

Suddenly Magnus felt the eyes of everyone turn to him.

"Me?" he said, stunned, his cheeks burning.

"Yes, Magnus," said his grandmother. "We know your father was training you to be his heir. It has come sooner than expected, but that is the way of things. This is the moment for you to take your rightful place as head of the family."

"And king," said Stigand. Magnus's brothers clapped him on the back, and others cheered and called out his name, a mixture of hope and desperation in their voices.

Magnus stood surrounded by the tumult, but strangely separated from it as well. Yet this was what he had wanted – to be an important Godwin, one who would always be remembered – and you couldn't be more important than a king.

So why did he feel now that it wasn't what he wanted at all?

## ANGLO-SAXON BOY

The council went on late into the night. Messengers came and went, rumours flew, people shouted and argued even more. As the hours passed, Magnus could sense everyone waiting for him to tell them what to do, to lead them. But he could think of nothing to say, and eventually his grandmother said he should go and rest. Magnus thanked her and hurried away, telling his brothers he wanted to be alone.

He returned to the chamber where he had woken and lay down, even though he knew he wouldn't be able to sleep. His mind kept returning to his mother. There was still no news of her, and the more he thought about her, the more worried he grew. Finally he could bear it no longer. He rose from the bed, threw on a dark cloak with a hood, and crept from the room, heading for the stable block behind the house.

He rode out of the city by the western gate, making sure nobody saw his face, and kept going westwards, avoiding Thorney Island. Then, as the sun rose behind him, he turned his horse southwards, following a narrow track through the forest.

It took him four days to get to Sussex. Four days of keeping to the little-known tracks and deep woodland, and staying away from villages. He saw few people, and those he came across ran from him, an armed man on a horse. William's route to London was further to the east, and he encountered no Normans. But burned farms and tall columns of smoke rising in the distance showed where they had been.

He arrived at the farm which had been his home on an afternoon when the sky was as grey as iron and a cold wind was gusting down from the hills. But it couldn't blow away the stench of charred timber and rotting corpses. Magnus rode through the smashed gates and saw corpses in the courtyard, people he had known all his life, arrows in their backs or their throats cut. Even the dogs had been slaughtered.

He jumped off his horse in front of the wrecked hall, its walls blackened by fire, its roof

gone. He looked away for a moment, and when he turned back his mother was standing between the scorched door posts. "My son," she whispered, and they held each other for a while. Then she stood back, her cheeks wet with tears. "My prayer that you should survive the battle has been answered. What of your brothers?"

"They are safe, at least for the time being," he said. She asked about his sisters, and Magnus told her they were all with Grandmother Gytha in London.

"There is no better place for them," said his mother. "Your grandmother is a Viking down to her bones, fierce as a mother wolf when her cubs are threatened."

"But why did you not go to London too when you had the chance?"

"This is my home, Magnus, or at least it was until the Normans came. They did what you see, then took me to William. I thought he would kill me, or give me to one of his men as a reward, but he found another use for me after the battle. Only I could tell your father's body from the other dead. Oh, Magnus, what they did to him..."

She cried softly and Magnus held her again. "He is beyond all earthly pain now," she said at last. "William wanted him buried quickly, although I know where his grave is, and perhaps one day I will bring him home. Yet our new master is a generous lord. He gave me my freedom in return for finding your father. So I came back, because I had nowhere else to go. But it is not safe for you here, Magnus."

"I know," he said. He had realized that he would be killed if William caught him. William was ruthless, and would dispose of anybody with a claim to the throne. "But I had to find you, to make sure you were safe – and to ask for your counsel..."

He quickly explained what had happened in London; how they had chosen him to be the next king, the leader who would carry on the fight against the Normans.

## ANGLO-SAXON BOY

“That is what your father would have wanted,” said his mother. “But I never wanted it for you, Magnus. Power is a monster that eats all those who strive for it.”

She was right, of course. Magnus thought of Tostig and his struggles, of Hardrada and his wish for glory, and of his father’s great plans and plots and schemes. They had all ended in blood and slaughter, in burned farms and battlefields strewn with corpses. He knew that to defeat William he would have to be just the same as them, and be prepared to do the same kind of things they had done – or even worse.

“Is it not my duty, Mother?” he said quietly. “After all, I am a Godwin.”

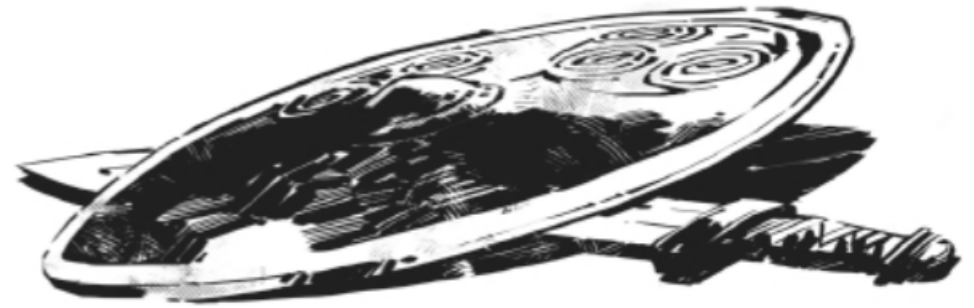
“You are much more than that, Magnus. You are a son and a brother, and a fine warrior. And sometimes it is braver to say no than it is to do what others want. There could be another life waiting for you, in another land, with other people.”

The wind had dropped, but now it returned, scuffling round their feet and tugging at their clothes and hair, the horse tossing its head and snickering. Magnus felt his heart rise, most of his doubts and fears vanishing. He knew now what he wanted to do, and realized that deep down he had always known. That was why he was here, seeking his mother’s blessing to leave, rather than in London being a king.

But there was still one worry that nagged at him. “What about you?” he said to her. “If I go I can never come back. I won’t be here to protect you or my sisters.”

“I can take care of myself, Magnus.” She laid a cool hand on his cheek and kissed him. “I will find an abbey to take me in, and live a life of prayer, and your grandmother will look after your sisters. You must think only of your own future.”

Magnus hugged her one last time and climbed back onto his horse. Then he rode away, heading west, towards the setting sun.



# HISTORICAL NOTE



***MAGNUS REALLY LIVED*** – his name is recorded in several of the original sources. Most of the other characters are real too. Hakon and Gisli are fictional, but there were certainly men like them in the eleventh century, a time of violence and war.

William of Normandy was crowned King of England by Archbishop Ealdred on Christmas Day 1066. William allowed Stigand to remain Archbishop of Canterbury until 1070, but then had him put in prison, where Stigand died a few years later. William died in 1087, and was succeeded by his son, another William.

Magnus's grandmother Gytha did gather more men and fought on, retreating at last to Exeter in Devon, where William besieged and defeated her in 1068. After that she made her

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*way to the court of King Sweyn in Denmark, taking her granddaughter Gytha with her. The date of the older Gytha's death is not recorded.*

*Magnus's brothers also fought on, ending up in Ireland, from where they launched raids against William before fading from view. Edwin and Morcar tried to make friends with William, but also rebelled. Edwin was killed in 1071 and Morcar died in a Norman dungeon in 1087. William finally crushed all Saxon resistance.*

*Magnus's sister Gunhild became a nun, and Sweyn arranged for his other sister, the*

*younger Gytha, to marry Prince Vladimir of Smolensk in what is now Russia. Many of her descendants married into the royal families of Europe. Our current queen is distantly descended from her – and from William of Normandy.*

*Magnus's mother is thought to have spent the rest of her life in an abbey.*

*Nobody knows what happened to Magnus. He walked out of the pages of history in the autumn of 1066.*