

Morrigan's Brood: Crone of War



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**The following excerpts are
from:**

Morrigan's **B**rood:

Crone of **V**ar

by

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and

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Morrigan's **B**rood series

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Prologue (Page 11)

Dearest friend,
I hope your journey is going well and that you will return to Eire soon.

A strange experience occurred a few nights ago. The shock of the entire encounter still resonates in my brain. I performed a ritual to part the mists, and then I found myself someplace else.

Marcus, it was so beautiful. The moon seemed ready to swallow the land, and the sweetest of smells wafted with the winds. The stars seemed to be in arm's reach. Then I knew that I had departed our world and that I now tread on the Otherworld.

Manannán Mac Lir must have allowed my entry into these realms. I considered seeking His guidance, but then a series of images overwhelmed me, causing me to forget myself.

Then all turned to bright sunshine, and I found myself face to face with the One-Eyed Seer. I stared into Her dark eye and felt so insignificant and unworthy. After all, here I stood, a silly, mortal woman, demanding Her attention.

I began to lower my eyes, trembling with excitement and a little fear. As my eyes started for the ground, I realized that I had witnessed a gleam of respect in Her eye.

I could feel Her power as She spoke.

She informed me of a secret that I must keep.

I've never felt such warmth, and then She bade me farewell.

I'm so upset that I didn't have the chance to spend more time with Her. This will probably be the only opportunity I have while walking this world to see Her.

I wish you were here so we could speak together again. Writing lacks the flavor of the incident that night.

There are strange things happening here, Marcus, things that I cannot discuss now.

Return soon to Eire, my friend. You are missed.

Maél Muire paused in her writing before tearing apart the scroll. Her writing seemed ridiculous. She paused before rubbing her hands together, wishing she could make sense of her meeting with the One-Eyed Seer. No words would ever describe the event to her satisfaction.

She stared at another scroll and opened it, resolving to begin anew. This time, she would stick to more comfortable matters.

Chapter One(Pages 25 - 29)



Red Sea

Sitara tossed and turned in the hammock. The visions of her family returned, crying in their death throes.

"Berti," she whispered, leaning towards the man on the floor. "I cannot sleep." She closed her eyes, wanting just to curl up against his shoulder to cry. She stopped with those insane thoughts. "Berti?" Sitara whispered again, "do you have any idea when we are going to get to..."

A steady snore answered her question. The man could sleep through almost anything. Storms and the noise of the raucous crew during the nearly the last three fortnights never seemed to have an effect on Berti.

"Berti?" She placed a hand on his shoulder and shook him a bit. He rolled in sleep and began making louder noises.

She pulled herself out of the hammock. It got harder every morning.

"Next time, I get the floor," she muttered, before opening the door and slipping out. "You seem to be comfortable on it."

Sitara walked around the crew's quarters. Only four remained out this night. The silence of the night seemed to stretch on for miles across the quiet waves. Sitara leaned over the rail for a moment, studying her face. She smiled at herself, seeing pieces of her family in her reflection.

A soft bleat made her look up from her reverie. Another bleat echoed through the lower levels.

Sitara grinned. As stinky as they became, she enjoyed looking after the sheep. Their gentle faces would turn toward her whenever she joined them, and they would rub against her hands, hoping for a scratch or a treat.

Sitara opened the trapdoor of the hold. She stepped onto the ladder and took the steps down to the deck. Soon, her eyes adjusted to the lack of light, and she could make out the shape of the twelve sheep as they shifted about.

One of them bleated again, and she noticed another figure kneeling next to that sheep.

The man ran a gentle hand across the sheep's back. She could see a pale hand and dark hair. However, the visage of the figure remained hidden as it leaned into the sheep. Sitara tilted her head to her right side and realized who it might be.

"Marcus?" Sitara queried, before taking a few steps towards the left side of the sheep. "I did not know that you..."

Marcus looked up at her, and a pair of glowing green eyes dazzled Sitara for a moment, until she witnessed his blood-drenched lips and elongated teeth.

The dread epiphany melded with a joyous realization. The divine avatar of Shiva had arrived. He must be Shiva. After all, Marcus radiated beauty as did the God, Shiva. Then again, he may be the male avatar of Kali, who shared the duties of destruction and creation with Shiva.

All that mattered now was that her family awaited her to join them in new lives.

Sitara trembled and fell to her knees. "I am ready to begin again, Shining One. I embrace the dance of my destruction and new life." She lowered her head, closed her eyes, and smiled, wishing to end her days in peace.

She heard another soft bleat, and then footsteps moved closer to her. Sitara held her breath.

A hand slid under her chin, tilting her face upwards.

"Sitara," the soft voice purred her name like a satisfied tiger, "who do you believe I am? Open your eyes."

Sitara opened her eyes. Marcus stared back at her with his normal eyes and natural features. The blood on his lips had disappeared. A small fleck of redness remained on his chin, but he soon swiped it away. He appeared embarrassed.

"You are an avatar of Shiva or Kali."

"No," he answered. "I am no God or Goddess." His eyes met hers, and he pulled Sitara to her feet.

"Have you ever heard of the Deargh Du of Eire?" he asked.

Sitara shook her head. "Do you mean that you will not kill me?"

He shook his head. "No, I will not. Allow me to explain. I am Deargh Du, one of the children of Morrigan. She is the Goddess of death, battle, and rebirth. Morrigan is quite similar to Kali."

"Why do you feed from the sheep?" Sitara asked. "Why not feed from me?"

"The sheep keep me from feeding too much on the crew," he replied as he sat down on a bale of hay. "I do not want to slow their progress. Not to mention that the sheep are an improvement over the rats and mice I have fed from of late."

"Rats?" Sitara asked, trying to disguise her disgust.

Marcus laughed, his chortles a strange, beautiful music to her ears. "I usually feed on humans, but my kind does not kill unless it is necessary. After all, we need mortals to continue our lives. We need to get to Alexandria, so I do not overtax the crew with my needs."

"Is this why you spend your days sleeping?" she asked. "Berti told me you drank too much."

Marcus' right eyebrow arched. "I spend my days sleeping because I cannot abide the sun, much like the Pacu Piti, Ekimmu, and Algul of your homeland. The Deargh Du, like them, are beings of the night."

"Those beings are but tales," Sitara said.

Marcus took her hand and placed it on the left side of his face. "I am no mere legend. I exist."

His warm skin started to cool beneath her fingers.

She pulled back her hand slowly.

"Is Berti?" she began to ask.

"Oh no, no, no." Marcus laughed again. "Berti is mortal."

Sitara smiled. "So why are we traveling to Alexandria? Please tell me the truth."

"We are looking for a lost treasure of another kind of blood-drinker. The Lamia consider it a holy relic of their God, Mars."

"So, he was telling the truth about that," Sitara surmised.

"Oh yes," replied Marcus. "The Deargh Du council needs it to keep the Lamia at bay, I suppose," he answered before sighing. "It is a very complicated tale."

"I cannot sleep," Sitara told him. "You could tell it to me. Perhaps it will keep my dreams away."

"You keep seeing your family," Marcus observed. His smile faded. "I understand."

"Yes," Sitara admitted. She sat down on the floor. "Tell me this complicated tale about the Lamia."

"The Deargh Du fear an invasion of Eire," began Marcus. "Many immortal invaders stalk Eire, Briton, and Alba. In fact, I was in Briton fighting another line of blood-drinkers called the Ouphe when the Deargh Du sent Berti to find me."

"Why did they select you for this duty?" Sitara queried.

"I am an outcast in their eyes." He gave her a most sardonic smile. "The Deargh Du do not care for me because I am, was... a Roman

invader to their home. I must be an abomination in their eyes, at least I am treated as such."

"That is a pity." Sitara leaned forward and placed a hand on his arm. "Do you miss their company?"

Her pale-faced companion barked a quick laugh. "Perhaps I would, if I ever knew them. I do miss Eire though. I miss the rain, the cold nights, and the mortals there."

She watched Marcus close his eyes. He opened them, and they were blue, yet something more. Marcus started to speak again.

"However, the Deargh Du deserve some of their righteous indignation," Marcus answered. "I assisted in the destruction of many people."

"So, are they who you write to?"

"Write? Oh, my correspondence." Marcus' frown faded into a smile. "I met a young druid some time ago, and we converse about my travels. Perhaps you could assist me with that. I believe that Maél Muire must find my writings to be quite dull."

Sitara giggled. "I am sure she finds them fascinating. Are you working on one now?"

"Yes," he affirmed.

"Then read it to me, and I will tell you what I think. Say it in Gaelic, since I need to learn more about the language you and Berti chatter in." Sitara stood up and headed toward the ladder. "But we must do it outside in the fresh air. It will keep my mind off my sorrows."

"Sitara, you survived because it was not yet your time to die," he stated, waiting for her to climb out of the hold.

"I know," she murmured, "but I still have my time to grieve."



Books of the Morrigan's Brood Series

Book One – Morrigan's Brood

Dec 2009

Eire is invaded by a race of blood-drinkers seeking an artifact they believe will restore them to power. Yet the Dearth Du, the protectors of Eire, are not prepared to defend the island. Only with the help of a Roman general from an earlier time can they hope to rise up against the invaders.

Book Two – Morrigan's Brood: Crone of War

July 2010

The Lamia expeditionary force has gained a foothold in Eire and has formed an alliance with a powerful Irish chieftain and his malevolent mother. To reinforce them, a massive Lamia army, which is departing Rome, will soon give them enough power to conquer Eire and find their lost treasure. Will the Dearth Du and their newfound friends be able to protect Eire from the invaders, or will the Dearth Du's suspicion of other blood-drinkers allow their enemies to be victorious?

Book 3 – Morrigan's Brood: Dark Alliance

TBD 2011

A new menace threatens the Balance within the Holy Roman Empire as vicious murders of both mortals and blood-drinkers spread throughout the empire like wildfire. Can a hastily formed alliance between archenemies thwart this new menace, or will festering hatred bring about the empire's doom?

Book 4 – Morrigan's Brood: Curse of Venus

TBD 2011

The Strigoi, the Cursed of Venus, have spread through the Holy Roman Empire and parts beyond like a plague. In response, Pope Leo III takes advantage of the scourge to settle an old score with the man he placed on the throne: Charlemagne. Will their bitter rivalry send the Empire further into chaos and destruction, or will their Dearth Du "angels" save them from themselves and from Venus' Cursed?

Book 5 – Morrigan's Brood: Shards of Light

TBD 2012

Many sets of eyes peer through the mist, watching events unfold as the dark alliance seeks out an ancient device that they hope will uncorrupt the menace that has nearly brought the Holy Roman Empire to its knees. However, not everyone beyond the mist is content merely to watch.

More titles to follow, including [Odin's Chosen](#) and [Dynasties of Night](#).

About the Authors

Heather Poinsett Dunbar

Born in Houston, Texas, Heather began writing her first book at age eight. While her grammatical structure left much to be desired, she continued to hone her writing and storytelling skills. During a college internship in London, England, her curiosity about ancient cultures and mythology intensified. She backpacked through Europe, fell in love with Scotland, cried at the retelling of part of Ulster cycle, garnered ghost stories from the Beefeaters at the Tower, wandered the Roman ruins in Bath, and danced around the stones in Avebury.

After spending all her spare time studying these new interests in many libraries and on the road, she began working on her masters in Library and Information Science at the University of North Texas. She now resides in the Houston area with her husband and three cats. She loves exploring the local culture as well as the many Celtic festivals and events in Texas. She works in the Houston Public Library system and her favorite authors include Morgan Llewellyn, Neil Gaiman, Terry Pratchett, Evelyn Vaughn, Alison Weir, and Randy Lee Eickhoff.

Christopher Dunbar

Chris Dunbar was born in Greenport, Long Island, New York and then moved to Texas as soon as he could, at least that is the story he tells to native Texans, such as his wife. Chris keeps searching for ways to leave Houston, like moving to Auburn Alabama, Dallas, and even San Antonio, but Houston just keeps reeling him back. Chris' day job is performing Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery, but his night job is coming up with creative ways to wound and maim the characters he and his wife Heather created. For fun, Chris enjoys the occasional novel and video game, but he also likes to delve into his Scottish ancestry and tool leather. When he can find the time, Chris pretends to play the Bodhran and the didgeridoo, much to the chagrin of his cats Lucius, Ophelia, and Clyde, not to mention his wife Heather.