

A Kiss at Vespers: Medieval Irish Romance (Ireland's Medieval Heart Novelettes Book 1)

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A KISS AT VESPERS

by Anne E. Johnson

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anne E. Johnson is a Brooklyn-based writer with a penchant for history. Between her master's degree in medieval music and her own Irish heritage, it was only a matter of time before she wrote about early Ireland.

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Chapter 1

The Irish Sea, 1008 A.D.

In the distance Asta saw the craggy cliffs of Ireland's eastern coast, ominous under the cloudy sky.

"Is that Eiré?" she called into the salt spray. To steady herself as the ship rolled with the waves, she grasped the railing. They had left the town of Chester in Britannia the day before, and she was finally getting her sea legs.

Magnus slipped his hand along the waistband of the boy's trousers she wore. "The Romans called it Hibernia," said her betrothed, speaking close enough to flick his tongue against her ear. "They must've thought it was always winter here."

Catching Magnus's tongue in her fingers for a second, Asta said, "Don't," but didn't mean it. She admired his bleached hair and weather-worn face, a sign of strength among Saxon seamen. "Someone will see."

"Who cares? You're dressed like a boy," he argued. "The guys will just think we're..." Magnus breathed on her neck with each syllable, "very...close...friends."

"Oy! You there!" It was the first mate, who never spoke lower than a shout. "You lazy babies, get your sorry eyes back to your posts or I'll let the jellyfish suck them eyes out of your skulls."

Asta shuffled her feet and looked at her hands, playing up the bumbling teen boy act. She longed for her bleeding blisters to turn to calluses. There was no rest for the men who rowed and

swabbed and hoisted the sails of this vessel. The Prosperity was a trade ship, bound from Chester to the small town of Dublin, which had been established only a few years before. The shipping company was owned by Asta's father, who never missed an opportunity to expand his business.

But her father didn't know she was there. She was supposed to be at a convent in Hereford for the summer. Instead, she'd cut off her hair with a hunting knife, stolen her cousin's leggings, tunic, and leather brogues, and signed onto her boyfriend's ship. They planned to sneak off to a priest in Dublin and get married.

It took a lot of hard rowing to move the Prosperity's bulk through the waves. With her slight build, Asta was taken for a weak young boy, the sort of orphan or run-away common in the muddy streets of Chester. So she was put to work carrying water and food, tying off ropes, and moving ballast.

"Water here, boy," the rowers called to her. Asta hated hauling that bucket around from man to man, almost as much as she loved the smiles on their rugged faces when she drew near each one and held the wooden ladle to his lips. Sometimes they looked at her with such soft affection and gratitude that she feared they'd noticed her womanhood.

The arms and torso of her dear Magnus bulged as he rowed, a testament to his fierce Dane roots. Asta let him slurp for an extra few seconds at the precious supply of fresh water. She longed for that hungry mouth to kiss hers.

Asta couldn't wait to be off that tiresome ship and out of those awkward boy's clothes. She wanted to join her life with Magnus's and to be his wife. It all seemed like a great adventure. And how beautiful he was! She even loved his rough hands straining at the stiff wooden oar.

Then again, she had moments of doubt. They never talked of anything but the joys of their wedding night. Asta couldn't help but wonder whether their marriage might hold more than one night of bliss.

She was jolted from her reveries when the ship stopped short and she was thrown against the rowers' foreman. Magnus was just letting go of the ladle when the second jolt came. This one was accompanied by a crash and the creaking scream of ship timbers against rock.

Hurled backwards, Asta hit the starboard rail hard enough to crack it. By the time she'd fought through the pain in her shoulder to lift her head, chaos had overtaken the ship. Men were running, shouting, pulling ropes, bailing water, jumping overboard. The section of rowing benches where Magnus had sat was gone, men and all, replaced by a splintered hole in the Prosperity's side.

Asta, trying to crawl toward the hole, was thrown again. Her head poked through the railing, so she could see into the bracken water, darkened by shards of ship and points of perilous rock.

"Save yourself, boy." The first mate pulled her to her knees, shouting as he jumped over the railing, "Abandon ship!"

"I'll not abandon ship!" she cried. Hand to hand she climbed along the railing, now nearly perpendicular to the water as the ship capsized. Asta lost her grip and rolled across the deck. She'd have plunged into the ocean but for the broken mainsail, which she grabbed as she slid past. Another crack split more of the hull's wood, and Asta's courage gave out.

"Magnus!" she screamed. "Magnus! Where are you? Help me!"

“Save yourself, child,” called Gunndar, a tough old tar who had always treated her with kindness. “Magnus is drowned.”

“No!”

“Yes, child. All the men on the back rowing benches were trapped under the keel when we struck the second rock. They fell through, into the deep.”

“It can’t be true.” Asta whispered the words through an icy haze in her mind. The world was muffled.

The old sailor shook her by the shoulders and slapped her face. Pain refocused her to horrid reality.

“It is true, boy. I saw it with my own eyes. Even dived down and tried to help your friend and the others, but they were caught fast against the rock, a great piece of the hull jammed against them. It would’ve taken the hand of God Himself to save them, may He rest their souls.”

Asta sobbed, more in terror than sadness.

“Calm yourself,” good Gunndar said. “Time to act like a man. You’ll be all right if you can manage to...”

The precious instructions were lost in the roar of the hull splitting in two. Asta, Gunndar, and the few other men still on board were tossed into the water with a skin-rending slap. Asta had never learned to swim. She splashed hopelessly, gulping in salt water, choking, and spitting. She thought of her father, her little brother, her Magnus, her bustling hometown. She’d never see any of them again. Her lungs burned. She thought she heard angels singing, and felt the angels lift her as she passed out.

Chapter 2

A spritz of cold rain awakened the chestnut-haired Asta, who came to with her mouth against salty wood. She found herself clinging to a piece of the shattered ship that someone must have set her on, and which now bobbed gently against the rocky shore. Asta’s bones ached with an exhaustion deeper than any she’d known, but she fought to pull herself up. The tides in this place were unfamiliar to her, and as a shipper’s daughter, she knew that tides could strand the unsuspecting.

Dragging herself up to hands and knees, she had a comical thought. “Thank Heavens I’m in a boy’s outfit, and not in a big, heavy dress!” She smiled at her good fortune, but then remembered all her misery. With the last of her energy, she pulled herself to a higher rock. Nestling in behind it with her knees pulled to her chin, Asta wept.

She must have cried herself to sleep. The next time she looked down, the water was lapping only inches from her. Although she felt a little more rested, her tongue was feathery with thirst, and the salt dried to her lips only made it worse. She knew not to drink from the ocean, but couldn’t

imagine how she would find fresh water before she perished. Climbing to the next rock up (she thanked fortune again that she was not in a dress) she looked out to the sea. Except for some wood caught against the rocks, there was no sign of the ship or its men. The wild sea had devoured them, a punishment for humanity's pride in trying to tame it.

"Magnus," whispered Asta. She closed her eyes, "Magnus, dearest love in Heaven, please help me."

It might have been merely the crashing waves, but she thought she heard his voice, hoarse and tired, saying, "Climb. Climb. Climb."

Despite her weakened limbs, Asta climbed, moaning each time she dragged her weight upward to a new perch. Every motion seared her to the core.

At one tricky spot she threw her weight forward to grasp a jutting rock a few feet away. Although she caught the upper rock, her foothold crumbled beneath her. As her hands barely held onto the outcropping, one foot swung loose and the other was starting to slip.

"Help me, God!" she cried.

She heard angels singing again.

"Why, Lord," Asta prayed, "did You not drown me in the sea, if it is Your will that I should die today anyway?"

The angels sang on and on, Latin chants unfamiliar to Asta's ear. The priest and deacons in her church didn't sound like this. But then, she'd never heard angels sing the chants before.

"Do You want me to let go?" she cried. "Is that Your will?"

She heard a voice. Not the distant angels or the great, booming voice of an omnipotent God, but the nearby voice of a child. He spoke in syllables she couldn't understand. *

In 1008 AD, Dublin is just a small town, newly opened to trade now that Viking violence there has died down. A young woman named Asta runs away from her boring life in Britain on one of her father's trading vessels bound for Dublin, hoping that she and the sailor she loves can find a new life together. But when shipwreck takes him from her, her whole world changes. She is helped up the rocky shores of eastern Ireland by handsome and enigmatic Brother Martinus, who takes her to the Monastery of St. Luran's to recover. Despite his vows of silence and chastity, Brother Martinus is entranced by the beautiful maiden who seems delivered to him by Providence. Their unexpected relationship causes both of them to rethink their concepts of faith and love.

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by James Joyce

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Stately - â€”That's folk, he said very earnestly, for your book,. â€”All Ireland is washed by the gulfstream, Stephen said.. shadow lies and on the scoffer's heart and lips and on mine. notes, one of joined halves, and laid them carefully on the... your medieval abstrusities.... He saw the priest bend down and kiss the altar and. Livre audio gratuit mp3 tÃ©lÃ©charger Gen Eki Cheerleader My - Online shopping for Books from a great selection of Contemporary, Romantic Suspense, Historical Romance, Fantasy, Gay Romance, New Adult & more at everyday low prices. Arrivals (Tremontaine Season 1 Episode 1). by Ellen A Kiss at Vespers: Medieval Irish Romance (Ireland's Medieval Heart Novelettes Book 1). stainer2019.xlsx - Stainer & Bell - Ireland.. 892. Ad Solem Ensemble... 483. Addison, John. Bagatelle for flute and --La Tambour bat aux champs (R) .. 390. - Twelve Etudes op. 39, nos. 1-7 Medieval French. *The heart's journey 485 ----Violin Romances in G and F (GR) 779. Book Reviews 44, 151, 269, 364, 458, 560, 670,... Georges Kiss) (R) . Newest Irish - An enterprise such as THE WORLD'S GREATEST BOOKS is to be judged from.. Mary Ann was sitting with her mother outside one of the caves in the rocky.. From the popularity of the romance it is reasonable to suppose that it fulfilled its... He favoured an idea of hers, that Jane's refusal to go to the Dixons' in Ireland A Kiss at Vespers-Medieval Irish Romance Irelands Medieval Heart - The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth â€” Volume 5 (of 8) , by William The Works of Alexander Pope, Volume 1: Poetry - Volume 1 , by Alexander Pope, Poetics (2003), ed. by Lisa Malinowski Steinman (HTML at Romantic Circles); [Info]... The poets and poetry of Ireland, with historical and critical essays and notes, charlotte mary brame (1836 â€“ 1884) biography - Victorian - etc. in Ireland, frogs mate â€” and therefore croak â€” in late winter and early spring.. In his 1986 book Joyce and Heraldry, Michael O'Shea reported that... in context, a bill is a Medieval/Renaissance weapon: various types,...

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