

Virgin of the Spring

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Susan Sizemore

An Erotic Time Travel Novella

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Ginger was certain that there must have been a time when she found public fornication shocking. Now, crossing the courtyard between the baths and the sanctuary of the sacred spring she barely glanced at the naked couple coupling on the altar at the center. What the pair was doing was a sacred rite meant to please the gods. She did take a moment to glance their way and smile appreciatively, for the lad had a truly fine ass, and the way his broad back narrowed down to his waist was truly a work of art. But the lust being shared out in the open did nothing to arouse her at the moment. Her attention was more on the upcoming meeting than on the pleasures of the flesh. Especially when those pleasures weren't hers to share.

It was spring, festival time, and people were crowding in from all over the countryside of southern Britain. It was a joyful time for most people, but for those with knowledge of the darkness moving toward them it was also worrying.

As priestess of the spring, Ginger was deeply concerned that the Lord of Ched had called for his senior people to gather in the precinct where she presided. She already knew that the next few days were going to be very hard on her, and she was certain that her talent as a seeress was going to be called upon on this day when she was supposed to be resting up for the festival.

Lord Ched was there when she arrived. He was a big man going to fat, his grizzled gray hair cut

short in the Roman manner. Despite being near fifty he was still handsome. It was obvious where his daughter Morga got her beauty. Morga was chosen of the Mother and she and the year king should have been here instead of outside worshipping on the altar. Ginger wondered at the exclusion, but it wasn't a warning from her extrasensory perception that twisted her belly with apprehension. She hadn't always been the priestess of the well. The machinations of power and politics were as much a part of her original world as science and psychic research. Traveling back in time hadn't made life any simpler. Of course, back home she'd been more of an observer than a player. She was also well aware of the irony that the disaster of a time transfer gone wrong had turned her from the observer she was supposed to be into a person of importance in this time and place.

Not much importance, thank goodness. She wasn't trying to change history—even if she wasn't sure what the history was supposed to be. She was trying to survive in a dangerous, alien world where at least her psychic gift gave her a small edge. Well, a job, to be more precise. She very rarely saw anything about her own future, but the seeress gig put a roof over her head, two meals a day, and the protection of the most powerful person in the region. But all that could change soon if the invaders moved inland from their raids on the coast.

It seemed a certainty, really. Except that her recent visions had shown her fire and death, but no clear images of who the victors would be.

The steward of the manor followed Ginger into the sanctuary. After him came the harried-looking commander of the guard. The bishop visiting from Wales came inside as well. It was not a large space, though the entrance was wide and open to the courtyard. The four of them gathered around the tiled basin into which the waters of the sacred spring trickled from the back of the sanctuary. Ginger made up a quick prayer to the goddess of the water and to the new God of the cross and when she was done with the blessing they got down to business.

The guardsman did not wait for his Lord to speak. "Can we make this quick? With the crowds coming in—"

"We need a new war leader," Lord Ched cut him off. He looked around the gathering, expression hard, daring them to argue. "Right now. This very day would be good. Do you want the job?" he demanded of the guardsman.

A scar ran over the empty socket of the guard's left eye. He glanced toward the courtyard with his one good eye. They all followed his gaze. The couple was still busy on the altar. Morga's thighs were wrapped tightly around the year king's slender waist and the beautiful young man was pistoning away with hard, swift strokes. He was covered with a glowing sheen of sweat, his muscles bulging.

Damn, but that boy had stamina!

"He's perfect," the guard said. "How could I take his place?"

"He's not perfect," Lord Ched said. "He's an idiot, a fool, and a braggart. He pleases my daughter and her belly's already swelling with a second brat, but he's useless for anything but fucking."

"In normal times that would be enough," the steward spoke up. He rubbed his jaw; the tough stubble on his cheeks made scratching sounds. "I suppose we could go back to the old ways and sacrifice him come the Planting Ceremony instead of just letting the lads wrestle for rights to Morga this year. The gods might like that. The crowd certainly would."

“Morga would not,” Ginger said.

“Nor would I,” added the bishop.

They were both ignored.

“Even if we return to the old ways,” the lord said, “we need someone to replace the year king first. Someone who can fight. Someone who can lead. I’m too old. Morga’s son is still with the wetnurse. Tradition dictates that the year king lead us into battle. A battle is coming, and that boy out there isn’t up to the job.”

All Ginger wanted was a little peace and quiet while trying to find a way home, but the invaders marching up from the coast weren’t likely to leave anyone in peace. Or even alive, if the rumors of complete slaughter proved to be true. The whole point of returning to the Dark Ages was to find out what happened, but on the other hand, she was stuck in the Dark Ages where she didn’t know what happened.

At least on a grand, historical scale. She was a board-certified psychic. But her gift only went so far, in certain directions, and after that she was as on her own as anyone else.

She found herself staring at the couple again. They were moaning and thrashing and happily rutting, and unaware that their fate was being decided by the sacred pool. She didn’t like the year king or bitchy, vain Morga for that matter, but she was struck with a sudden burst of compassion for them.

Her thoughts were interrupted quickly enough by Lord Ched. “What shall we do, priestess? Look into the water and tell us what the gods say.”

As she had suspected would happen all along, their fate was in her hands. Oh, she always tried to tell the truth of what she saw in water, but divination was one thing and politics was another. Right now it looked like she was going to have to find the right balance of both.

Ginger sighed, but didn’t argue about her duty. She owed the lord of the manor her life as well as understanding his concerns. His world was threatening to fall apart, and the people he was sworn to protect were in danger. She gestured for the men to stand back and knelt by the pool. They moved with great alacrity, obviously delighted the decision was in her hands and not theirs. If things turned out wrong later they could always claim that the priestess read the signs incorrectly.

Ginger brushed away any bitterness; in fact, she put the men out of her mind altogether with easy practice. She looked into the crystal-clear water, her awareness going far deeper than the eight-inch depth of the pool. As always, she was amazed at how quickly her perceptions attuned to the energies present at this energy nexus.

From a long way away she heard herself ask, “Question?”

From even farther away the lord’s voice came to her in an echoing whisper, “Who shall lead my people to war?”

Almost instantly a face appeared on the surface of the pool, though Ginger was aware she was the only one who could see it. A pair of piercing green eyes caught hers and she gasped, for she was certain that he could see her as clearly as she saw him. Nothing like this had ever happened before.

"I see visions, I don't make contact."

"That's not my fault is it?" his rough, deep voice answered. "Who are you? Where are you?" he demanded.

His gaze ate her alive but all she could do was continue to stare. She wanted to fall into the vision, into him, wanted him to fall into her. She wanted him the way a woman wanted a man and her body burned with a sudden need. She wanted his hands on her, all over her, though she knew they would be calloused from years of sword work. She wanted his mouth hard on hers. She wanted his cock thrusting between her thighs. She wanted possession—and to take.

He was as handsome as any year king should be, but for a small scar on one cheek. He couldn't be the man the lord wanted, then, for a year king must be perfect.

A crowd of men suddenly appeared behind the stranger's wide shoulders. They were a rough and dangerous-looking lot, with travel-stained clothes and heavy packs.

"Mercenaries," she said. He was their leader, the alpha among a pack of hungry wolves.

"Wolves mate for life," he said, then shook his head hard. His words made no more sense to him than they did to her.

"What do you see?" Ched's anxious voice came to her.

The question drew her away from the vision, but it was a sense of urgency that drew her to her feet. "He's here," she said. "Now. At the gate."

* * *

"What did you say, sir?"

Bern felt the weight of Sergeant Kaye's hand on his shoulder as the world came back into focus. "I hate when that happens," he muttered. He frowned, and the sergeant stepped back. "Was I just talking to somebody, Kaye?"

"You spoke," Kaye answered. He glanced at the rest of the team, who were spread out across the road. "But you weren't talking to any of us."

"I was afraid of that."

Bern's rating on the psychic scale was a lowly little three, enough to get him transferred into the TTP's security force but not high enough to really interfere with his leading a normal, sane life. Except—sometimes he heard voices, or had a flash of intuition. He'd learned to listen to the voices and trust his gut feelings. He'd just had one of those flashes, though he couldn't remember the details—but it was an area lower down than his gut that was demanding he pay attention.

"Something's up," he said. And in more ways than one.

He studied the lay of the land while he got the erection under control. It was spring, very close to the major seasonal fertility festival, and the road they were on led to one of the holy sites scattered all over the southern part of the island. This particular temple to the local mother goddess was located on private property, and the pilgrims were camping out in cow pastures on either side of the road. The manor at the top of the hill had been built by a wealthy Roman colonist, but the local

chieftain had taken over after the Romans abandoned all their foreign outposts a generation ago. Bern didn't care about the festival, but it was a good cover for checking out the place. *

Lost in Dark Age Britain, desperate to return to her own time, Ginger is overjoyed when the rest of her time travel team arrives at the sacred spring where she's taken shelter. She is also overwhelmingly attracted to the sexy team commander.

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