

Preview of *Camelot's Queen* by Nicole Evelina

I made it to my room and slammed the door. Alone at last, I leaned against the door, struggling to catch my breath. Tears spilled over as the enormity of the day finally sank in. I slid down to the floor and ran my hands through my hair. How could my life have changed so much in only a few hours? I thought Arthur had grown to love me, but he had just accepted a former lover back into his confidence after only having been reunited with her for a few hours. What did that mean for my marriage?

I didn't know how long I spent contemplating my situation, but just as quickly as the tears had come, I started laughing. I was being ridiculous. Arthur had had to learn to live with Aggravane at court long ago. Granted he'd sent my former betrothed on missions away from Camelot as often as possible, but he had still learned how to cope with his presence. I was behaving like a child. Galen had been right the day we argued in the forest so many years before. I really was worse than a fisherman's wife. And worse, I had changed little with the passage of time. I stood, straightening my dress and mentally preparing myself to apologize to them both.

After a few deep breaths, I went back down to the meeting room, expecting to find Arthur and Sobian discussing the finer points of her new role. But to my surprise, the room was empty. Octavia came in, holding a tray to collect the ale pitcher and our used glasses.

"Do you know where Arthur went?"

She eyed me carefully. "He is in his room. Alone." She emphasized the word, knowing I would wonder. "They told me about her new role. Are you in agreement that it is wise?"

"I will be," I reassured her.

Octavia made a noise indicating she wasn't so certain then busied herself cleaning up the table. That was when I saw the lone sheet of paper. Thinking it to be notes from Arthur and Sobian's discussion, I bent over the table to get a better look.

My blood turned to ice. The letters were formed of patterns made by varying lengths of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines. It was written in Ogham, the ancient language of the Druids, so it could not have come from Arthur. He hadn't studied with them long enough to have learned it. Plus, its message was not one a husband leaves his wife.

I ran to Arthur's room, rubbing my hand over the goose-pimpled flesh of my arm. "You may wish to rethink your decision," I said as I entered.

He looked up. "Why is that?"

I held the paper out to him. "This was left in the meeting room." I shivered again.

He plucked the paper out of my hand and turned it in several directions, trying to figure out how to read it. "Ogham. That's unusual. What does it say?"

I grabbed it back, irritated beyond decorum. After what had happened with the madman and Sobian, I didn't think I could take much more.

"That's the problem. I think it's a threat. *'My queen, you may close your eyes to the one you scorned, but that will not keep me away. I will breathe your last breath so that you will live on forever in me.'*"

Arthur's face darkened. "Only one man could claim such a thing."

I looked at him quizzically, brow furrowing. "How do you know Sobian isn't party to this? It appeared right after she did in the very room she last occupied."

Arthur sighed, clearly frustrated that I didn't trust Sobian implicitly as he did. "Because this isn't her way. As she said, if she wished you dead, you would be. She has no need for idle threats."

"Who then?"

"Think about the message." His tone took on a condescending air I did not care for. "Someone you once rejected? Who did you give up to marry me? You may not want to see it, but the answer is right in front of you."

He didn't have to say the name. Suddenly I knew exactly who he blamed. His menacing gaze was fixed on my former lover.

Guilty or not, Aggrivane was in serious trouble.