

SONG FOR A LOST KINGDOM

Book III - The heart beats in time (Preview)



STEVE MORETTI

SONG
FOR A
LOST KINGDOM

Song for a Lost Kingdom

Book III

The Heart Beats in Time

by Steve Moretti

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Editor: Lara Clouden

Copy Editor: S. Daisy

Published by DWA Media

OTTAWA • CANADA

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CHAPTER 1

APRIL 26, 1746 - TEN DAYS AFTER THE BATTLE
OF CULLODEN



“**D**O YE PREF a two-armed corpse or a one-armed husband with a beatin’ heart?”

The grizzled surgeon raised a bottle of whisky to his lips and guzzled deeply, waiting for Adeena’s answer.

She looked down at James lying stiffly on the long wooden table. Outside, the bitter wind flapped the walls of the canvas tent relentlessly. She searched for the eyes of her husband in the receding light. When they did flutter open briefly, they were hollow and black.

“James?” she whispered, lowering her head close to his face. “I don’t want...” She touched her swollen stomach. “We... don’t want... to lose you.”

She laid a hand on his forehead. He was burning up. He moaned quietly, and then gasped in a struggle for air.

“Madam?” the surgeon pressed her again. He wiped his lips with his filthy sleeve, the smell of whisky heavy on his breath. She wasn’t sure what to make of this man who had suddenly appeared in the Jacobite camp with his bag of medical tools and potions.

Adeena hesitated. "I'm not sure."

She knew James was supposed to die on board *Bellone*, the French ship she'd shoved him off of just last week. He would die of a fever, sometime in May, she recalled from the Wikipedia article that was burned into her brain. She closed her eyes and the date came to her:

13 May 1746.

She looked again at James's left arm. It was deeply bruised – from the yellow gash near his shoulder where he'd been hit by a lead ball at Culloden – all the way down to his blackened, trembling fingers. He was supposed to die of his injuries onboard that ship.

Adeena gently touched his exposed shoulder. Black pus oozed from the wound. James cried out, but the sound was barely audible, like the whimper of wounded animal about to be put down.

She stood up and turned back to the surgeon. "You've done this before, Mr. Anderson?" She couldn't bring herself to call him 'Doctor.'

He grinned and spat on the floor. "Aye, madam. Certainly 'ave." He rubbed his chin and looked at James lying on the table. "If we donnae amputate, ye'll sure lose him. Maybe tonight."

James suddenly cried out. "Katharine?"

Adeena crouched down again, bringing her face close to him. "I'm here." She kissed his cheek and held her lips to his rough face.

He was shaking. "Katharine?" he whispered again. Then he was still. She could feel him fading away.

Adeena stood up and turned to Anderson. "Okay. Take his arm."

KATHARINE SAT UP STRAIGHT, STARING AT THE TALL PAPER vessel of hot tea, the freshly-baked raisin scone, and the little chunk of butter that sat beside it enshrined in gold foil.

“Adeena? Where are you?” Tara laughed.

Katharine smiled at the dark-haired beauty sitting beside the bed who had re-introduced herself and delivered a bounty of delicious delights. “Just enjoying heaven... Miss Tara!”

“Heaven? Well Dee, I guess maybe a hospital could seem like that, after everything you must have seen these past months.”

Katharine sipped the tea. My goodness! Such heavenly taste! It was some kind of sweetly exotic flavour topped with freshly whipped cream. And the warm pastry, brought surely from a hot oven nearby. She took a bite of the scone, savouring the taste and the warmth melting in her mouth.

She closed her eyes and smiled. *Dying is the best thing that's ever happened to me.*

“Are you really back, Dee?” Tara interrupted, “Or are you still—”

RING! RING!

The sound of bells emanated from Tara’s handbag.

“Wonder who that is?” Tara asked, lifting her bag and extracting a small, flat pink object. She looked down at it. “It’s Philippe,” she said and held the thing to her ear. “Hey, where are you?”

Katharine sipped her tea watching Tara. Who was she talking to? It seemed to be the object itself, but that didn’t make any sense. As Katharine listened, she got the feeling Tara was talking to someone with whom she had great affection.

In heaven, Katharine reasoned, the world is full of wonder and many things were quite beyond her understanding. She finished the raisin scone in a few bites and watched Tara talking into the thing.

“Yes, Philippe. I’m here with her now.”

Philippe? Was that one of the men she had met a few days ago? There were so many of them in heaven. They all had such

white teeth, smooth skin and their fragrance... oh it made her heart flutter. They smelled so clean and captivating, so spicy and fresh.

Maybe one of them was meant to be hers – a companion to make paradise complete.

OLIVER ANDERSON NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD BE THIS EASY.

When he had learned of the one-thousand-pound sterling reward for capturing a Jacobite officer he left his tiny village of Lochailort in search of a prize. There were rumours of rebels hiding in the hills, but he thought it more likely they'd try to escape by sea.

He was right.

At the only inn at Arisaig, after a day's ride from his farm in Lochailort, he heard whispers of a camp of rebels. Some were wounded waiting for a ship to escape from Scotland before they were found. The most seriously injured men were desperate to find a surgeon. His satchel of carpenter tools and his bottles of spirits should do the job.

Now he needed to work fast. The wife of James Drummond had refused to leave her husband's side until he sent her to fetch blankets. He couldn't carry his prize all the way to Fort William, but if he could disable Drummond, preferably without killing him, Anderson could return with Hanoverian soldiers.

The lieutenant of the Pretender, the so-called 'Duke o' Perth,' would fetch a handsome reward. Maybe he could negotiate an extra thousand pounds for a traitor of such rank.

Anderson glanced at his tools; a saw, a file, a hammer and two bottles of whisky. If he made a mess sawing off the arm, his bounty might die before he could return to claim the gold.

Cutting off Drummond's foot would be much better. The Duke's wife would keep him alive, and there was little chance he'd be able to run very far from here.

KATHARINE CLOSED HER EYES AS SHE DREW THE BOW AGAINST the strings of the old cello.

The music welled up inside her, aching for her fingers to release these dark tones across the heavens. She coaxed out each note slowly and deliberately, until they washed over her like a sorrowful embrace. Somehow Maestro Duncan's cello had followed her to this new world.

Her song, the one she had struggled with at Kinnaird when she was among the living, now rose from her stringed companion. Words echoed in her head. Had they come to her in a dream?

Gone is my heart without you. Now I am lost once again...

She whispered, tentatively mouthing the phrases that filled her mind. The words eloquently intertwined with the music, draining and inspiring her at the same time. She rode the wave of emotion that poured from her, ending with a final crescendo.

Her head sagged. Tears washed her face.

The voice of a man spoke gently. "Your music... it's so powerful, like you."

She opened her eyes and looked at the face staring at her. It was the same man who had brought her the cello.

Philippe.

He had been summoned by the dark-haired one, Tara. She stood behind him, holding that pink toy she carried everywhere. She used her thumbs to touch it and play with it, never looking up.

"*Merci, Philippe.*" Katharine sensed he was French, because of how Tara had pronounced his name: *FEE-LEEP*. "*Je suis vraiment humilié.*"

Philippe, sitting close beside Katharine in the little room near her bed, touched her hand, then leaned closer and kissed both her cheeks. Warmth spread over her face.

Tara put down her pink toy and stood up. Her face looked a little red too. "Adeena Stuart," she laughed. "Hands off my man!"

Philippe chuckled, but kept his eyes on Katharine. "It's nice to hear you speak French again. I'd forgotten how good you were. Now if you could sing *en Français*, we'd be in real trouble!"

Katharine sighed at the sight of his smile and his penetrating eyes felt as if they looked deep inside her.

Tara slid her chair closer, motioning for Philippe to move. He dragged his chair aside and Tara drew up closer to Katharine.

"Dee, we brought you the Duncan, just like you wanted," she said with a hint of sternness. "But, it's got to go back soon."

"Back?" Katharine was confused. "To where?"

"To Edinburgh. You know, Museums Scotland? We were supposed to return it on the seventeenth, but after what happened, they gave us a few extra weeks to sort things out."

"But..."

"But what, Dee?"

"Isn't that *my* cello? Did it get sold?"

Philippe stood up and laughed. "*Oui, madam*. To the highest bidder!" He touched Katharine's shoulder. "You've been gone too long. But it's so good to have you back."

He smiled again. His white teeth and dark eyes, his perfect skin and that musky fragrance... Had he just just bathed?

"I have to run ladies, interview at noon on the radio," he said, slipping on a leather coat.

"Radio?" Katharine had no idea what that meant. Her French was good, but not that good. "*À la prochaine*," she sang out as he turned to leave.

Tara stood up and put her arms around Philippe. She kissed his lips lightly.

"Later," he said and walked away.

Hopefully, Katharine thought with a smile, he will return soon – when the dark-haired one is gone.

ADEENA WONDERED WHERE SHE COULD FIND BLANKETS AS SHE stood outside the surgeon's tent.

Was she doing the right thing letting him take James's arm?

It was so hard to know if she could affect the future. Nothing she done since she had become Katharine Carnegie and then Lady Katharine Drummond, had prevented the Battle of Culloden or changed its outcome. And although she'd pushed James from the *Bellone*, it didn't seem as if he was going to survive. Anderson, the surgeon was just not...

"Katharine!"

A voice broke her thoughts. It was George, running towards her like a crazed animal. "Where's James?" he screamed.

"With that surgeon, Anderson, in the tent. I need to get blankets for —"

"He's no surgeon!" George interrupted as he stopped in front of her, at the entrance to the tent.

"What? Oh God! I left James alone with him!"

George pulled open the flap of the tent and pulled his sword free of its sheath. "Stop!"

Adeena followed and to her horror saw that James's head was covered with a black sack. There was a rope around his neck. He was laying on the table with one of his boots and socks off.

Anderson gripped a rusty wood saw in one hand, while he held James's exposed leg firmly in place with the other hand. He sneered. "Tae late!" He lowered the blade on James's bare ankle and dragged it back roughly over his skin.

George flew across the room toward Anderson knocking him away.

Adeena rushed to her husband. The saw's rusty teeth had ripped through the skin of his ankle. Blood oozed from the wound. She covered it with her own hand, trying desperately to stop the bleeding.

George and Anderson rolled on the floor of the tent, each man trying to land a blow against the other. Finally, George pinned Anderson down, but struggled to hold the wiry man to

the ground. Anderson flayed back and forth and kicked George between the legs.

Adeena picked up a knife sitting on the table. Suddenly Anderson broke free from George and scrambled toward Adeena.

She brandished the long knife at him. "You butcher!" She would gladly plunge the knife into his neck if he took another step closer.

Anderson studied Adeena for a moment and then slowly crept back towards the open flap of the tent. He sneered at Adeena and George who finally managed to get back on his feet.

"I'll be back," Anderson growled. "Nae gonnæ lose my thousand' pounds. Ye can try n' hide, but we'll hunt ye down and fin' ye." With that, he turned and fled from the tent.

"We can't stay here," George gasped. "Your husband's too big a prize."

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I hope you enjoyed this preview of the final book in the SFLK
Trilogy.

You can preorder Book III,
The Heart Beats in Time
now on Amazon for Aug. 15, 2020 delivery.

And if you have any comments, send me an email:
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Thanks!
Steve Moretti
July, 2020

