

Excerpt: Quest For The Grail

Chapter One

She stood naked inside the circle of stones, small need-fires burning around its perimeter, keeping out the cold chill of the Irish Sea and illuminating the night.

She was not alone. Hordes of peasants crowded as close as they dared, peering in to witness the ancient ritual of *Hieros Gamos*.

She waited. *He* was coming. The man-god who would spill his seed into her priestess-mortal body, ensuring fertility and prosperity to her people. She shivered slightly as the air shifted.

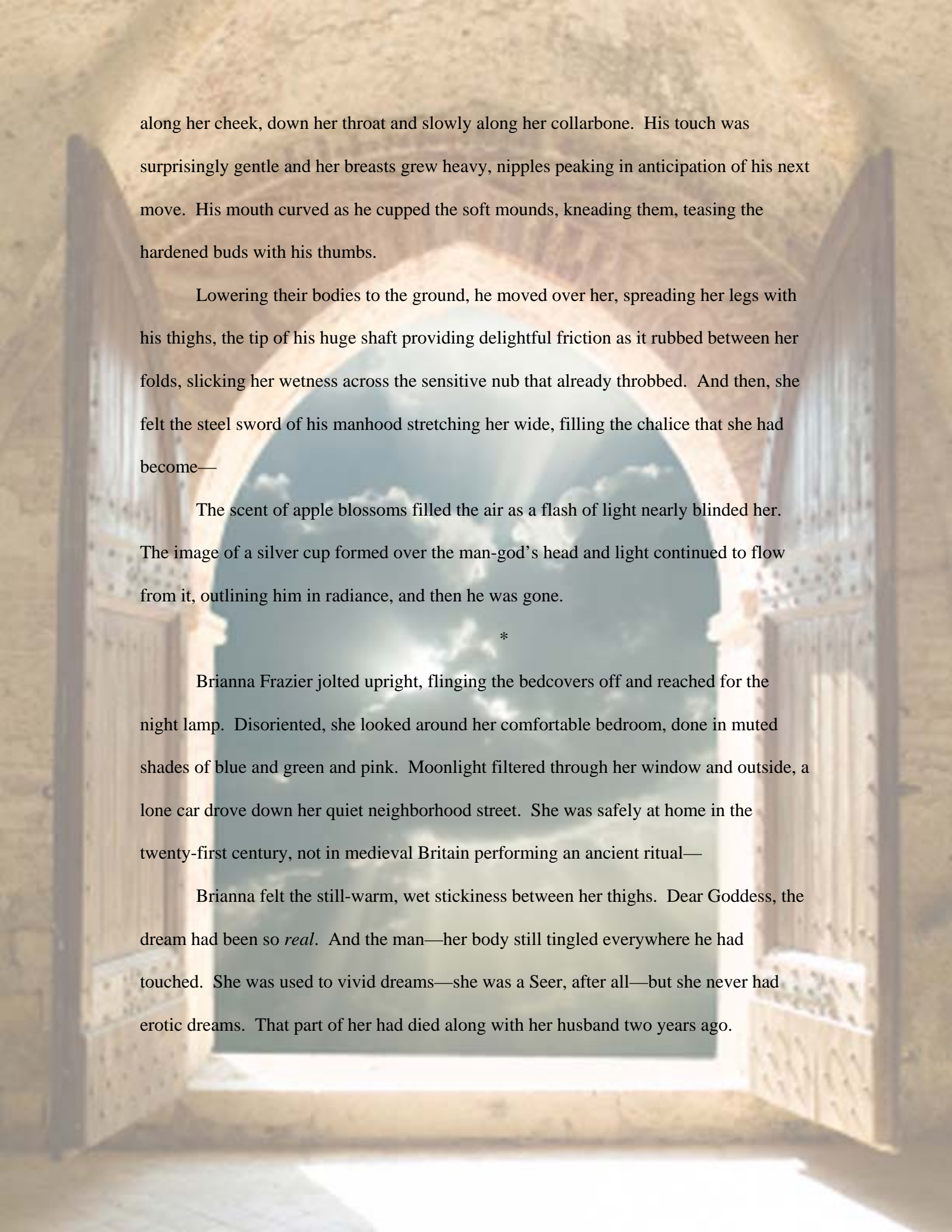
He was *here*.

From the darkness he emerged, the firelight framing him in silhouette. Even shadowed, she could see he was powerfully-built—bulging biceps that could yield a claymore with little effort, muscular thighs used to controlling a warhorse in battle.

The god-man. He moved into the light, eyes burning with intensity behind the half-mask he wore. Dark hair brushed his bare, broad shoulders and a light dusting spread across his chest, forming an intriguing line down his flat, ridged belly to where a massive cock jutted out from inky curls.

Suddenly, she felt very small and fragile. Still, she was a priestess. She represented the Earth Mother wedding the High King to the land. Adjusting her own mask, she lifted her chin and waited.

He stopped mere inches away, his body heat enveloping her like a warm blanket, along with a subtle scent of freshly-bathed skin. Reaching out, he trailed his fingers



along her cheek, down her throat and slowly along her collarbone. His touch was surprisingly gentle and her breasts grew heavy, nipples peaking in anticipation of his next move. His mouth curved as he cupped the soft mounds, kneading them, teasing the hardened buds with his thumbs.

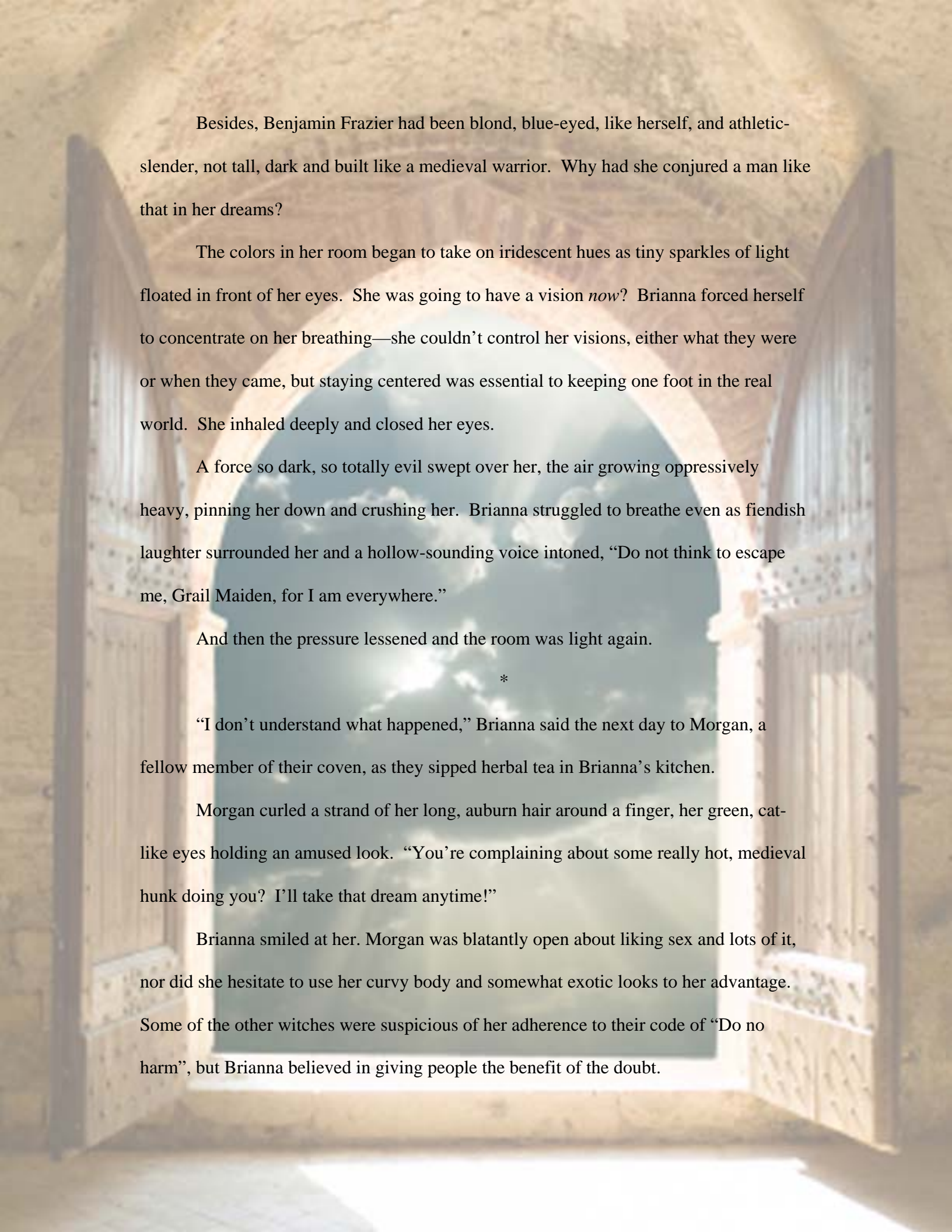
Lowering their bodies to the ground, he moved over her, spreading her legs with his thighs, the tip of his huge shaft providing delightful friction as it rubbed between her folds, slicking her wetness across the sensitive nub that already throbbed. And then, she felt the steel sword of his manhood stretching her wide, filling the chalice that she had become—

The scent of apple blossoms filled the air as a flash of light nearly blinded her. The image of a silver cup formed over the man-god's head and light continued to flow from it, outlining him in radiance, and then he was gone.

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Brianna Frazier jolted upright, flinging the bedcovers off and reached for the night lamp. Disoriented, she looked around her comfortable bedroom, done in muted shades of blue and green and pink. Moonlight filtered through her window and outside, a lone car drove down her quiet neighborhood street. She was safely at home in the twenty-first century, not in medieval Britain performing an ancient ritual—

Brianna felt the still-warm, wet stickiness between her thighs. Dear Goddess, the dream had been so *real*. And the man—her body still tingled everywhere he had touched. She was used to vivid dreams—she was a Seer, after all—but she never had erotic dreams. That part of her had died along with her husband two years ago.



Besides, Benjamin Frazier had been blond, blue-eyed, like herself, and athletic-slender, not tall, dark and built like a medieval warrior. Why had she conjured a man like that in her dreams?

The colors in her room began to take on iridescent hues as tiny sparkles of light floated in front of her eyes. She was going to have a vision *now*? Brianna forced herself to concentrate on her breathing—she couldn't control her visions, either what they were or when they came, but staying centered was essential to keeping one foot in the real world. She inhaled deeply and closed her eyes.

A force so dark, so totally evil swept over her, the air growing oppressively heavy, pinning her down and crushing her. Brianna struggled to breathe even as fiendish laughter surrounded her and a hollow-sounding voice intoned, “Do not think to escape me, Grail Maiden, for I am everywhere.”

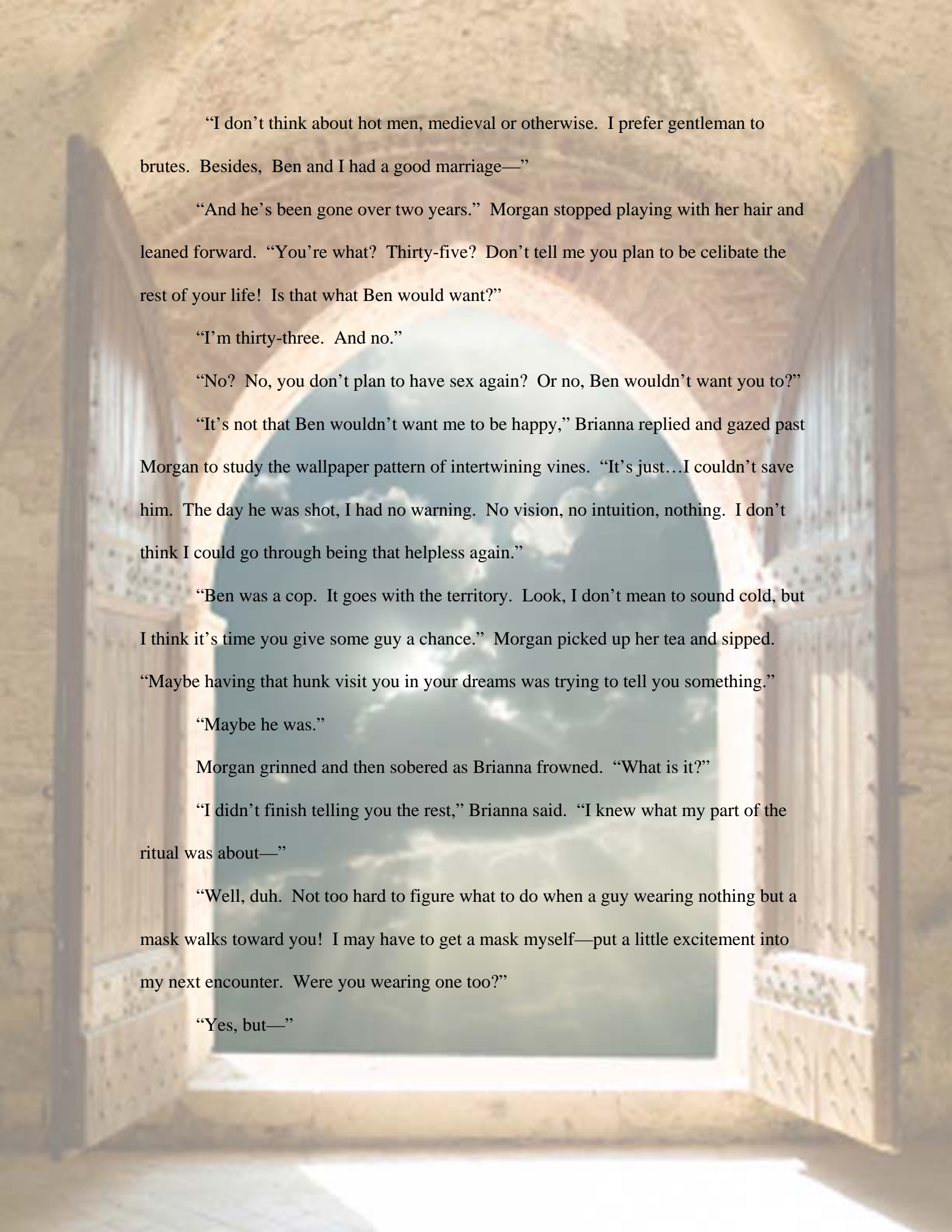
And then the pressure lessened and the room was light again.

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“I don't understand what happened,” Brianna said the next day to Morgan, a fellow member of their coven, as they sipped herbal tea in Brianna's kitchen.

Morgan curled a strand of her long, auburn hair around a finger, her green, cat-like eyes holding an amused look. “You're complaining about some really hot, medieval hunk doing you? I'll take that dream anytime!”

Brianna smiled at her. Morgan was blatantly open about liking sex and lots of it, nor did she hesitate to use her curvy body and somewhat exotic looks to her advantage. Some of the other witches were suspicious of her adherence to their code of “Do no harm”, but Brianna believed in giving people the benefit of the doubt.



“I don’t think about hot men, medieval or otherwise. I prefer gentleman to brutes. Besides, Ben and I had a good marriage—”

“And he’s been gone over two years.” Morgan stopped playing with her hair and leaned forward. “You’re what? Thirty-five? Don’t tell me you plan to be celibate the rest of your life! Is that what Ben would want?”

“I’m thirty-three. And no.”

“No? No, you don’t plan to have sex again? Or no, Ben wouldn’t want you to?”

“It’s not that Ben wouldn’t want me to be happy,” Brianna replied and gazed past Morgan to study the wallpaper pattern of intertwining vines. “It’s just...I couldn’t save him. The day he was shot, I had no warning. No vision, no intuition, nothing. I don’t think I could go through being that helpless again.”

“Ben was a cop. It goes with the territory. Look, I don’t mean to sound cold, but I think it’s time you give some guy a chance.” Morgan picked up her tea and sipped. “Maybe having that hunk visit you in your dreams was trying to tell you something.”

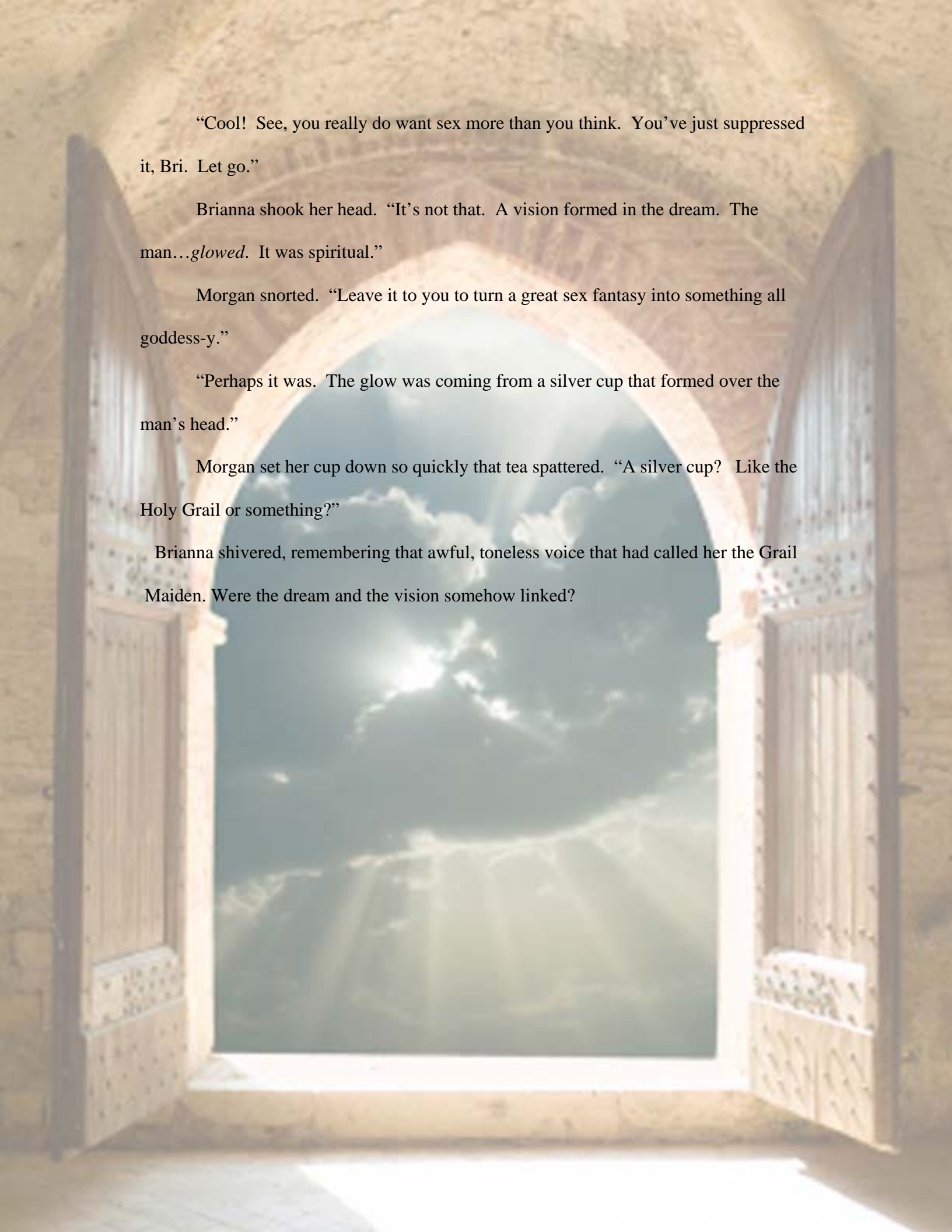
“Maybe he was.”

Morgan grinned and then sobered as Brianna frowned. “What is it?”

“I didn’t finish telling you the rest,” Brianna said. “I knew what my part of the ritual was about—”

“Well, duh. Not too hard to figure what to do when a guy wearing nothing but a mask walks toward you! I may have to get a mask myself—put a little excitement into my next encounter. Were you wearing one too?”

“Yes, but—”

A stone archway with an open wooden door leading to a bright, cloudy sky with sunlight rays.

“Cool! See, you really do want sex more than you think. You’ve just suppressed it, Bri. Let go.”

Brianna shook her head. “It’s not that. A vision formed in the dream. The man...*glowed*. It was spiritual.”

Morgan snorted. “Leave it to you to turn a great sex fantasy into something all goddess-y.”

“Perhaps it was. The glow was coming from a silver cup that formed over the man’s head.”

Morgan set her cup down so quickly that tea spattered. “A silver cup? Like the Holy Grail or something?”

Brianna shivered, remembering that awful, toneless voice that had called her the Grail Maiden. Were the dream and the vision somehow linked?