

On the Observations of Sir Kay By K.M. Shea

Kay rubbed his eyes and leaned back in the rough wooden chair. He sighed and pushed the two flickering candles arranged on the table back to make room for a logbook. It was new and almost cost him a fortune, but Kay couldn't stomach writing about this new future king, Britt Arthurs, in the book he previously used to record his foster-brother's progress.

Kay mended his quill and removed the lid of his inkwell before he started writing.

Today Merlin cast a spell to summon a proper king from the future. I had my doubts it would work, as the future king would have to touch the sword, but Merlin's magic pulled through. Or so he claims.

The future king is no man at all, but a woman. She is older than me and arrived wearing odd, indecent clothes. She accepted Merlin's explanation without much fuss, and indeed she seems to be an agreeable person. She speaks well, but she uses words and refers to locations and things that I have never heard of, a side effect of being from the future I should think.

Nice as she may be, Merlin is mad to try and place a woman on the throne, even if he is the one that is really ruling.

Kay sighed again and put his writing materials away. "Arthur, you fool," he said with no feeling. His simmering anger with his foster brother had finally burned away to leave only regret.



Kay rubbed his hands together as he watched Britt scoot closer to the inn fireplace. It was in the evening hours of Christmas Day, and Merlin and his men were celebrating in the inn common room.

Knights toasted to the success, not so much in Britt's ability to pull the sword and prove her worthiness in becoming King of Britain as in Merlin taking the first step towards unifying the country's.

Kay swept crumbs off the table he sat at and set down his logbook and inks.

Today was the day of the tournament. Merlin insisted on making Britt Arthurs pull the sword as part of an elaborate play which I doubt more than a handful of people noticed and amused only himself.

He wanted me to take the sword from Britt Arthurs and go to my father, claiming I had pulled the sword. A pox on Merlin! What knight who has a healthy respect for the heavens would dare come between the God appointed King and the sign of his worthiness? I know Merlin plans to grace me with the influential title of seneschal, but sometimes I wonder what I did to deserve to be the butt of his jokes.

I must confess that Britt Arthurs is more competent than I gave her credit for. She has not been blinded by Merlin's persuasive statements and admits in wry humor that she's aware she won't be ruling. She is guarded in her meetings with myself and my father. I must get her to be forthcoming somehow, for I greatly need to find out if she has any defensive skills at all.

One of the reasons I was against a woman as a king is because I feared she would be easy to kill. If I could teach Britt Arthurs how to wield a dagger, perhaps it would give her a fighting chance.

As Kay wiped his feather quill clean Britt plopped down on a bench opposite from him. “I can’t decide if Merlin is a raving genius, or a lucky idiot,” she announced, watching Merlin laugh in good humor as he toasted a knight.

“Wizards are often an unfortunate combination of both,” Kay grunted.

Britt started at Kay for a moment before her lips cracked into a rather pleasing grin. “You may be right.”



Kay winced as he rolled his shoulders, attempting to relax his bruised, stiff muscles. “I did not think my duties as seneschal would include being beaten senseless,” he grumbled, hiding the pleased quirk of his lips behind his mustache as he retrieved his logbook, quill, and ink.

Today Britt Arthurs has surpassed my greatest hopes. My father—being the inquisitive soul he is—asked Britt Arthurs if she knew how to ride.

She does, not very well if one listens to her, but I am certain she must be good based on her modest description of her skills with the sword.

I asked her to fight so I could properly gage her skills—after all I must calculate how many guards will need to be posted around her. How foolish I was!

Britt Arthurs is the best swordsman I have ever encountered. She moves with a swiftness that is unparalleled, and never blocks or parries a blow. She moves forward, constantly pushing with endless attacks. If I moved fast enough I could occasionally attempt a blow, but she would always counter strike or—in a rare case—dodge.

Facing Britt Arthurs with a sword is, I will admit, terrifying. She does not have the bloodlust or the intent to kill as many men have. She is, instead, far worse. When she lashes at you it is like facing a dragon. There is no cruelty in her eyes, only the promise of a swift end.

She has not the strength necessary to wield some of the more brutal weapons, like a mace or spear, and she knows nothing—not even the rules—of jousting. Her utter hopelessness in these various weapons, though, is eclipsed by her skill with the sword.

She does not appear to know her own talent as she claimed I was holding back during our brief skirmishes. (If only that were so.)

It was disheartening to be so soundly beat by a woman, but I am so relieved that Britt Arthurs will not die easily that I am not much repulsed.

I must think of a creative way to guard her, for she jealously protects her privacy. Guards posted to her will not be a popular rule, but what else can I do?



Kay stumbled into his room in the wee hours of the morning. He stared at his bed for a few moments before shaking his head. “No, it is important to write while the memories are fresh,” he said, making his way to the small writing table.

Today, the day of Pentecost, my Lord Britt Arthurs was crowned King of Britain. King Lot, King Urien, King Pellinore, and King Ryence all protested as expected, but it was still done.

During the celebration feast my Lord Britt Arthurs granted boons and such. She gave me the post of seneschal. I know Merlin made the decisions of whom to post to what positions, but I am honored by the title all the same.

My Lord Britt Arthurs did buck orders and announced Sir Bedivere as her marshal. Merlin was displeased—likely more over my Lord Britt Arthurs making a decision without his say so—but Sir Bedivere does not seem to be a bad sort of knight. I have already sent out inquiries about his character and skills. I have heard back from my London contacts, who speak favorably of him, but I will have to wait until we arrive at my Lord Britt Arthurs’ new castle—which is yet unnamed for Merlin gave little thought to it when he ordered construction some 10 years ago—to conduct a more detailed character study.

Preparations for war are underway as King Lot and his sniveling brother King Urien insulted my Lord Britt Arthurs at the celebration feast. Something of a fist fight broke out during the feast. I am sorry I did not get to do more than knock King Urien to the ground. I should have liked to shake him until he was dazed, but my Lord Britt Arthurs and Merlin ended the fight before I had time.

I am taking pains to record the London price of grain and ale and other necessary provisions that an army will need. The prices are somewhat steep, I feel, so I will inquire in other parts of Britain as soon as possible.

In more favorable news the training of Cavall goes well. The kennel master has been training him in protective and battle maneuvers since I sent a letter to him in February. He claims the dog is not overly aggressive, but I shall have to judge for myself before I gift him to my Lord Britt Arthurs.

I am still well pleased with the idea, for a dog will be able to follow my Lord Britt Arthurs everywhere—even into her private quarters, where I dare not send guards. Additionally, my Lord Britt Arthurs will most likely be less offended by a dog she believes I mean to be a pet than a squad of soldiers.

Finally, I—and most all of the knights here in London—made the discovery that my Lord Britt Arthurs has another tool with which she can break a man: her smile.

I would be sorely embarrassed to write this, for it sounds like worshipful dribble, but my Lord has a lethal smile. The smile is entirely too feminine, but Merlin’s rumor that my Lord has faery blood makes most perceive it as an enchanting smile. I have never seen such straight, white teeth, and my Lord’s entire face and countenance seems to change when she smiles. I suspect she is in a state of constant apprehension, for I did not notice how tense she is until she relaxed in her smile.

I suspect she will unknowing swindle many a knight change many a mind with the smile. Merlin is already amusing himself, trying think of the ways he use my Lord’s new found charisma.

Kay frowned as he reread the paragraph. “Errors, I’ll have to rewrite it,” he said, glancing at his bed before he hunched over the logbook. Not five minutes later Sir Kay was sprawled across his desk, clenching the quill in his sleep.



...hope we can claim a suitable sword for my Lord. Faery swords are known for being temperamental, but I believe the right one will be instrumental for my Lord's welfare. It grieved her so to give up the sword she pulled from the stone.

Tomorrow I will record the details of my Lord's magical weapon, and my first impressions of the castle Merlin has built for my Lord.

Kay put away his writing materials and waited until the ink dried before he shut the book. He arranged the saddle packs behind him so he could sleep propped up, and settled down to doze as the campfire crackled and his father snored.

He was pulled from sleep some hours later when Britt sat upright, a strangled gasp exiting her chest. She was wide eyed and mussed, but eventually her posture slumped as she relaxed.

Kay nodded when she met his gaze and he shut his eyes. He was surprised when he heard rustling as Britt went through a pack. His eyes popped open and he watched Britt unearth a thick, strangely covered book.

Britt flipped through the pages, stopping abruptly. She read from it—murmuring softly under her breath.

Kay watched curiously, but his curiosity turned to worry when the book fell from Britt's hand like a stone. Britt was pale, and her eyes were hazy with confusion and terror.

When she picked up the book again Kay stood. He hesitated, intending to take a step towards her, before retreating and approaching his father—who had suspiciously stopped snoring when Britt started paging through her book.

"Father," Kay quietly said.

"I know, what's wrong?" Sir Ector said, putting aside the pretenses of sleep as he stood.

"I don't know," Kay admitted.

Sir Ector patted Kay on the shoulder before he stood and picked his way around the fire. "Britt?"

When the frightened woman looked up Sir Ector crouched down. "Lass, you're crying. What's wrong?"

Britt burst into heart wrenching tears.

Kay hurried to the horses, affectionately patting his hobbled stallion when it blearily blinked at him.

Kay winced as he leaned against his mount. The raw grief of Britt's sobs were like a sword to his gut. He glanced back at the fire.

Merlin was up now, but Sir Ector held Britt in a fatherly embrace, speaking to her in the soothing tones he used with small children and hurt animals.

Kay grimaced again when Britt cried louder. It occurred to him that while he marveled over Britt's hidden skills and talents and busied himself with his new duties he never dwelled on the personal sacrifice she had made by becoming king.

"I won't let this happen again," Kay vowed, his words frosted with Britt's tears in the otherwise quiet darkness.



Some weeks later Kay looked up from his calculations—he was trying to estimate the cost of lady’s maids with enough discretion to keep their mouths shut—and watched Britt eat.

The tall monarch stared at the ceiling as she slipped Cavall a piece of egg. She yawned and shook her head slightly before she grabbed her wine cup. “Sir Kay, am I holding open court today?”

“I apologize, I do not know, my Lord,” Kay said.

Britt leaned back in her chair, slipping her enormous dog another piece of food. “There’s no need to apologize, you aren’t my secretary, but thank you,” she said before she stared at her pewter plate.

Kay pushed away his sheet of calculations and unearthed his logbook. His records on the new King were growing so detailed it was easier to write throughout the day than wait until the evening. Britt was the only one who showed any interest in the logbook, and he didn’t have to worry about her ever reading it—she couldn’t read his writing.

My Lord Britt Arthurs is troubled. I cannot say for certain, but I suspect she is homesick for her time. The captain of the guard squad that is posted to my Lord during the night has informed me that she does not sleep, but instead roams the castle walls. I followed my Lord and her guards twice at a distance. She appears to be restless and disheartened.

I fear the lack of sleep will weaken her constitution. I must say something to Merlin about it.

At least Britt is well enough to eye me balefully whenever she complains of her guards. I am glad her insomnia does not affect her personality, but I am gladder still she hasn’t yet figured out Cavall’s purpose as a guard dog.

Note: I must find and train a secretary for my Lord.



Kay snapped awake and rubbed the sleepy haze from his eyes before he blearily looked around his desk. There were lists of soldier enlistment, weapon costs, provisions purchases, and detailed maps of the area Merlin and his men had selected to serve as base camp.

Kay leaned back in his chair and glanced at his Britt Arthurs logbook. He hadn’t written in it since Merlin left to magic King Ban and Bors’ 10,000 mounted men across the ocean. He hadn’t even had a chance to report his impressions of Roen—Britt’s new horse. (Who was really becoming more of a pet to her than a warsteed.)

Kay sighed before he leaned back over his sheets of figures and numbers. “Later,” he said.

Internally Kay promised himself he was *not* delaying the record keeping because then he would be forced to face the fact that they were going to place Britt Arthurs in the middle of a bloody battle.



Kay watched Britt throw a stick. Cavall dutifully fetched it and brought it back to her, earning himself a pat on the head.

Kay smiled briefly before he returned his attention to his logbook and finished his entry for the day.

My Lord appears to bear no ill marks from the war. She was not physically hurt, but I had feared all the blood and death would affect her. It is good Merlin brought her back early—although I wish he had taken a squad of soldiers with him.

Young Ywain follows my Lord like a puppy. His admiration of her grows on a daily basis. Merlin sees this too and has begun studying Britt more thoughtfully. He asks for her opinion now before making final decisions.

Sir Bodwain's attitude towards my Lord has shifted as well, for he now treats her with a great deal of respect instead of toleration. I do not know what has changed his mind, but I am glad for it.

Writing this down has made me note how my Lord's knights and advisors have changed, but I do not think my Lord has changed at all. She is still easy going and strong both physically and mentally. Perhaps even I do not give her enough credit, for she is but one person and she has changed the fate of an entire country.

Kay looked up from his writing to watch Britt throw the stick again. Cavall retrieved it, eliciting praise and a hug from Britt.

Merlin was circling Britt, speaking to her although the monarch clearly was not paying attention. As if to prove the point Britt turned and called out, "Kay, when are we going to go on our daily ride? I have a carrot I've been holding onto for Roen and it's going to turn to mush soon if I keep sitting on it like I have been."

Kay glanced at his log book and smiled. "Whenever you wish, my Lord."

"Let's go now, then."

"I object, you still haven't learned how to properly bow," Merlin said.

"I'm King, why do I need to know how to bow?"

"There is that," Merlin grudgingly admitted.

"Come on, Sir Kay. Let's go," Britt said, hurrying through the courtyard before Merlin could come up with a rebuff.

"As you wish, my Lord."