

Vanishing Stone III

By Michele Dutcher

Eva stood in the lobby of the visitor's center in Wenvoe Wales, staring at the pair of meter-high skeletons on display.

“There were three of them originally,” said the curator, coming up behind her. “The third is on display at University.” The fifty-something man offered his hand to the woman in greeting. “Jeffery Lyons at your service.”

“Eva Vaughan.”

“I was told you'd be coming in.”

“Were you able to find something then?”

“With the information you sent me, and after due searching, I believe it's possible you are a descendent of Edward Vaughan – or in Welsh form, Iorwerth Fychan. I don't usually meet with genealogy seekers, but your case intrigued me. I believe you may have a connection with this very display, in fact.”

“I'd love to hear more, Mr. Lyons. Please – lead on.”

The curator led her to a small library near the back of the center, to a leather-bound book - perhaps one foot by 20 inches high. He put on white cotton gloves, and began turning the pages. “In 1327 Iorwerth Fychan was present at the siege of Caerphilly Castle. You can see it here - Iorwerth Fychan's name, in both Welsh and English.”

“Fascinating!” exclaimed Eva, bending over the page.

“The interesting part is still forthcoming, I assure you.” He pulled out a drawer from a flat chest in the corner, placing some loose, vellum papers on the table. “It appears that Iorwerth was the ancestor of two women, Miriam Fychan and Marwolaeth Fychan. On this page it says that Marwolaeth seemed to grow from a baby into a woman in one dreadful night.”

“I don't understand.”

“I don't blame you,” smiled Jeffery. “In the 1300s Wales was hit with four harvest failures and a sheep disease called Rinderpast – which took a terrible toll on the herds. In just three generations, the population of Wales slipped from 300,000 to fewer than 200,000.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Miriam seems to have done the unthinkable.” The curator pointed to the text. “On the evening of the 13th of June in the year of our Lord, 1378, the woman Miriam Fychan took an infant girl to the Cairn in Tinkinswood, to the stone of Vanishing, to make her disappear.” Jeffery looked at Eva. “The text continues here – but much of it is illegible – there's something about three fairies – ergo the skeletons out front.”

“Amazing.”

He drew out another page from the stack. “In the early morning hours, two women of the clan Fychan walked into towne from the direction of the Cairn. The younger woman shouted in the voice of a thousand devils as she came. 'I have been summoned from the Void, having crossed the eternal Gulf with my fairies, to seek vengeance upon those men who sent me into the outer blackness. Goat of a thousand eyes, thou unnamed but always present, come forth through the space between the stars and serve me now!’”

“I don't believe in that sort of thing,” whispered Eva.

“The Church of England did – enough to have a Bishop write it down so the warning tale would never be forgotten. There was a young priest inside the church who gives his testimony on this page. He calls it the night of a thousand screams. Upon being awakened from a deep sleep, I heard the wind begin to howl and roar, with thunder pealing from the sky with such violence that I thought perhaps my Lord Jesus was returning to claim his own, so I swung wide the church door. Instead, I saw a woman - with a sword lifted to the stars - being carried towards the town on a sea of vile spirits blacker than the densest of inks. The darkest of these minions raced into the square, rattling the doors of townspeople as though to tear them off their hinges. There was a woman with her – Miriam whom I knew – and these women Fychan were followed by a horror as tall as a mountain that seemed to stumble as it came, obviously not being common to this world. As the townspeople hid and shook within their meager homes, a few elders were pulled from their homes by the beast's tentacles that grasped the men, breaking them in half before trampling them beneath its weight, pieces of their bodies being absorbed into the horror's slimy mass. The massacre continued by the savage beast as if its hunger for blood-soaked flesh would never be satisfied. Finally, I beheld the woman herself, with glowing eyes, sword in hand vowing to return when the stars once again aligned. She was then pulled by the monster into a rift as the heavens flashed red with forks of lightning.”

The quiet man stepped away from the pages and looked at Eva.

“Am I the descendent of this death woman?”

The curator chuckled slightly. “No, no – Miriam, the Aunt, went on to have six children of her own – some of the descendents migrating to Canada – from which your line comes.”

“Could I have a copy of the text?”

“I'll send it to you digitally – just leave your email address. Perhaps you'd like to visit the megalith on your way out of town?”

“In fact, I found it myself on my way in. I got lost and simply chanced upon it.”

“Well, I'm pleased to have finally met a Fychan woman – I can sense your strength and resolve. Miriam would have been proud – and the sword-wielding Marwolaeth as well.”

As Eva was leaving the visitor's center, she passed once again through the display area, stopping a moment before the small skeletons. “Well done, loyal friends, well done,” she whispered before stepping out the door.

The End