

# THE BATTLE FOR BRISINGAMEN

(FREYA'S POWER)



HARMONY KENT





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## DEDICATION

For all true friends everywhere, who sometimes prove more genuine  
than those connected by blood.

*The Battle for Brisingamen*  
*by Harmony Kent*

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## PROLOGUE



(**H** *all of Souls—A long time ago ...*)  
The exiled god paced about the gloomy caverns beneath Niflheim as she continued to cajole him.

'Oh come, come, Ezra ... it's quite simple. You have much to gain and little to lose.'

'So say you, Hela, and what is it you would risk?'

For answer she circled the leader of the Palefaces once more, and a smile played on her lips. It was difficult to keep track of her movements, her being so ethereal and wraith-like. All of a sudden, the Queen of the Dead stood right in front of him.

'I don't like to play games,' she said, as she gave him a cold look. 'Now they've moved the necklace, it will be a simple matter to retrieve it. Just think: you shall have the whole realm, power such as you've never known.'

'And what do you get out of it?'

'You test my patience, give answer now. Do we have a deal?'

'Yes, we have a deal. But I warn you, if you cross me—'

She gave a tinkle of a laugh and said, 'As if you could ever threaten me ...'

HARMONY KENT

Ezra stood—he'd stayed down here long enough, and it was past time for him to return to the stronghold of Valgrind.

'Let me know when it's time.'

'Oh, you'll know, Paleface.'



## CHAPTER 1



*(Somewhere between Leman Bank and Ower Bank—1985)*

**S**Aart Visscher held the wheel and watched the moon as it reflected on the night-black waves. The calm sea remained unaffected by the breeze, which moved the cold air. He stamped his feet and huffed out his breath, which frosted in the night air before it dissipated. The engine chugged around him. Aart cleared his throat in an effort to rouse his drowsy brain. Damn professor—he'd kept him up half the day when he could have enjoyed a luxurious slumber in anticipation of his night trawling. The prof wanted Aart to look out for old bones for him, as if he had nothing better to do. Still, he paid Aart for the useless stuff, and fishing wasn't as lucrative as it used to be.

Aart's family had been fishing for further back than he could remember. Indeed, his last name—Visscher—literally meant 'fisherman' in the Dutch of his family's ancestry. He'd carried on the family business of beam trawling: dragging weighted nets across the sea floor and hauling them up full of various items; fish of course, but also things that were hard to explain like lumps of peat, often containing what looked like animal bones. Over the years, the fishermen had simply thrown back into the sea that which they couldn't explain. If it wasn't Sole, Plaice, or other bottom fish, then it was no

business of theirs. Some of the things dragged up over the years stretched the boundaries of belief. For instance, what was a huge animal tusk doing on the bottom of the sea? Professor Vanderveen thought some of the objects found came from creatures long extinct.

Aart shook his head and spat over the side, and his weathered features creased into a smile. For all his strangeness, Jan Vanderveen had become a friend. An older man who took Aart seriously, and who actually listened when Aart spoke, which was seldom. Most people took Aart for an uneducated simpleton. But he observed a lot—soaked it all up like a sponge. His rare utterances were usually pithy and cut to the heart of the matter.

The trawler scuttled along. Aart's fingers—stained yellow with nicotine, his nails blackened with grease from the night's work, his rough nails short, and his palms callused—worked at the winches. He had big hands. He was a big man. 'Gentle giant', as his wife would have it. He smiled again at the thought of his wife waiting for him at home.

Aart left Olsen at the wheel so that he could go and check the catch himself. The boat groaned and shuddered as the heavy nets rose from the sea. He manoeuvred them over the deck and lowered them slowly. The smell hit him straight away—one he'd grown well used to by now. He paid it little heed and moved over to the netting to see what the night's fishing had brought in.

Dark mud, which looked like peat, covered the nets. Quite what peat was doing out in the middle of the North Sea, he had no idea. Aart picked up his shovel and knocked the heavy mud from the nets. Something clattered and skidded across the deck. Aart stopped tapping with the shovel and moved over to where the object had come to rest. He bent down to examine it.

'Well, I'll be damned,' he said under his breath.

This was no animal bone. This was a human jawbone. Complete with teeth. Aart wasn't sure if this was one for his friend the professor or for the police. He picked it up with care and moved over to the wheelhouse, where he found somewhere safe to keep the bone. He then went over to the logbook and noted the coordinates, as Jan had

asked him to do. He frowned, went back to the nets, and continued the night's work.



THE BONE TURNED out to be 9,500 years old. No need for the police, then. Jan Vanderveen and his young assistant Dirck de Molle had shown great excitement. This was the clearest find yet. Professor Vanderveen had collected items from this area of the North Sea for years. Dirck had joined him as a research assistant a few years ago.

One of the earliest finds kept and passed on by the trawlers in the area was a long, spiked deer antler, which looked like it had been fashioned into a tool for hunting or fishing with. It had been carved into a long curved point. That find occurred in 1931. The ability to date things back then was limited to say the least. Now, Jan had access to equipment that allowed him to use radiocarbon dating. Perfectly preserved, the human jawbone even had worn molars attached. It appeared as if it may have come from a burial site of some kind. In addition to the jawbone, Vanderveen had accumulated over a hundred artefacts—animal bones which showed signs of slaughter, and tools made from antler and bone—one of which was an axe decorated with a zigzag pattern.

Because he had the coordinates of these finds, and as objects on the seabed tended not to move far from where erosion had freed them, he felt confident that many came from De Stekels—an area of the southern North Sea called 'the spines' in Dutch—because of the steep seabed ridges. All of which implied there had been a large settlement in this area at one time. The aggregate evidence was overwhelming. They had found 'Atlantis'.



*(SOMEWHERE IN DOVER—2000)*

Gemma bounced into the office, wearing a smile. Dirck's interest peaked, and he raised an interrogative eyebrow.

She laughed.

He waited.

'Oh, Dirck. Ask me.'

She settled herself into the chair on the opposite side of his desk.

With a smile and a shake of the head Dirck relented, 'Okay, Miss Gemma, what did you find?'

She pushed her laptop across the table, stood, and moved her chair around until it sat next to Professor de Molle. She'd worked closely with oil and gas companies as they mapped the ocean floor between Britain and Europe. They'd sent down divers and compiled various scans and surveys of the seabed. Gemma powered up the laptop and turned the screen so that they could both see it. Then she opened a full-colour image of this so far unknown underwater land.

'This is what they found from their seismic surveys.'

The screen showed a map of sorts, largely in oranges and yellows. The untrained eye would have struggled to make much of it. Dirck, however, sat up straighter in his chair.

'I knew it,' he said in a hushed voice.

Gemma zoomed in on one particular point and traced a route with her finger. 'This is where the Rhine and the Thames met and flowed south into the Channel River. And look at this ...' Her excitement was palpable.

The screen displayed an image of what would once have been a vast and large river system—as yet unnamed. The landscape would have been gently rolling hills, wooded valleys, lush marshes, and lagoons. Quite probably the climate would have been a couple of degrees warmer than in the present day.

'This site must have been close to a major river system,' Dirck said in a quiet voice, awed. 'Maybe they lived on river dunes. It looks like an absolute paradise for hunter-gatherers.'

Gemma nodded; this latest evidence would change the way archaeologists would see this once dry land. There had been settlements here and, perhaps, a vast population. The existence of a land bridge between Britain and the coast of France had long been known, but it had so far been seen as a crossing place. A point at which people

could traverse to get from here to there. Whereas what they stared at now at implied settlements—big ones.

Gemma turned her head a little to watch Professor de Molle. She felt more interested in his reaction than the revelation on the screen. Dirck sat lost in thought, eyes distant and inward-looking, and a small smile settled on his face. An attractive man in his mid-thirties, he had sand-coloured hair and deep brown eyes. She loved the way he called her 'Miss Gemma' with the lilt of his Dutch accent, which felt almost like a caress. Gemma had begun to work with him five years previously, when he came over to the UK to further the studies he'd begun under the tutelage of Professor Vanderveen, who'd died in the early 1990s. Almost as though he'd read her thoughts, a slight frown gave his forehead a few extra lines. He turned to her with a sad look in his eyes.

'Such a shame Jan couldn't see this.'

'He knew, though, even without all this.' She waved her hand to indicate the computers and new evidence, collected with modern equipment. 'He knew what he'd come across.'

'Yes,' Dirck said and nodded agreement. 'Such a gift he gave to me. To carry it on for him.'

Gemma smiled, 'They're going to let us dive.'

Dirck lifted his head with wide eyes, and again gave that slight questioning raise of the eyebrows.

Gemma couldn't help but chuckle. 'They've said we can go down with them next week. With their divers. We can see for ourselves.'

A large smile spread across Dirck's face, and his eyes danced. He leant forward and enveloped Gemma in a fierce hug. Then he pulled back a little and said, 'Oh, Miss Gemma.' He gave her a sloppy smack of a kiss on her cheek before he pulled her into another hug.

Gemma returned the embrace—she felt warm and safe enveloped in his arms. Such a show of emotion and affection both surprised and pleased her, as Dirck wasn't usually so demonstrative. In the five years they'd worked together, the most physical contact he'd allowed himself had been to place a hand on her shoulder occasionally. Dirck broke the embrace, took hold of her hands, and held them in his lap.

'We should celebrate,' he said. 'Tonight?' He questioned her as much with his eyes as with his words.

'Yes.' Gemma nodded, unable to withdraw her gaze and transfixed by his eyes.

'Okay then.'

Dirck let go of her hands and stood. Then he walked over to one of the windows and looked out. After a small silence, Gemma gathered together her things and moved her laptop to her desk. She felt foolish all of a sudden, and then Dirck turned and strode over to where she stood.

'I'll pick you up at eight,' he said, and then he bent his head and kissed her lightly on her lips. He gave her a brief smile and returned to his desk. Just then, Gemma's telephone rang, which she found a welcome distraction. She could feel the flush on her cheeks.



GEMMA SHIVERED a little on the deck of the small boat that had taken them out to an area off Dogger Bank. The Bank took its name from the Old Dutch for fishing boat: Dogger. She decided the shivering was more due to nerves than chill. Dirck waited nearby, suited up ready for the dive. She'd never dove before today, and even though they would swim with trained and experienced divers, and remain attached to a line, she still had a queasy feeling in her stomach. One of the diving team walked over to them.

'Professor de Molle, Miss Hughes?' When they'd nodded their attention, the tall man continued, 'We're ready to go down now. So, if you'll come over with me, we can put on the tanks and do a final run through. We'll stay just a bit below the surface for the first few minutes, let you get used to it, and then we'll go down slowly.' He must have seen the concerned expression on their faces. It reassured Gemma to see Dirck looking a little nervous too.

The diver said, 'This part of the channel is shallow, so we won't really be doing any deep-sea diving today.' He offered them a smile. 'My name's Stephen, by the way.'

'Gemma.'

'Dirck.'

Stephen nodded, led them over to the other divers, and introduced them to the rest of the team. They were six in number—the four trained company divers plus herself and Dirck.

Green would be a good word to describe them right now: green as in inexperienced and also as in sick with nerves. This useless bit of cogitation amused Gemma and helped a little. Her heart gave an extra thump when she pulled on the clear mask and placed it over her eyes. She tried to focus as the team took them through their equipment and safety checks once more. They'd attended a teaching and practice session a few days before, at the request of the firm they were diving with. So at least all of this wasn't completely alien.

Green also described how it looked down beneath the North Sea. It appeared almost luminescent. The lights they had with them helped to create that effect too. It looked beautiful. Quickly, Gemma found she was enjoying herself—all nerves forgotten. What she could see of Dirck behind his mask told her he was having fun too.

On their way to the specific site they were to explore today, they'd passed over the remains of a shipwreck or two. This area held quite a few shipwrecks. When told that, Dirck had asked if that was because of the shallow depth. Stephen had replied in a vague way and only elaborated when they pushed him further. He said the area of what people had begun to call Doggerland seemed to do something to radio and sonar equipment. When they'd tried to question him more, he'd laughed it off and commented that perhaps it was the UK's version of the Bermuda Triangle.

In but a short time, they reached the site of particular interest. They approached with care, not wanting to disturb anything. It was clear where work had begun already. One of the divers had come to take photographs of the area and chronicle the work. Two others had different kinds of equipment with them. While the fourth, Stephen, seemed to be detailed to work with the two of them. Dirck and Gemma soon became immersed, oblivious to all else as they examined what lay before them. They took samples for later analysis. Gemma's

excitement mounted, and she could see why this area had generated such interest. In far too short a time, Stephen indicated they should head back. Gemma and Dirck complied with reluctance.

While they journeyed back to Dover port, Gemma reminisced about her celebratory night out with Dirck. They'd gotten along well. At the end of the evening, as Dirck had pulled up outside her flat, Gemma had expected him to make a pass at her, or try to obtain an invitation indoors. He'd done neither. As she thanked him for an enjoyable evening, he'd smiled and told her she looked beautiful. Then he'd walked her to her door, and when she'd unlocked it, he'd lowered his head to hers and kissed her. While it was a sensual kiss, Dirck didn't show any inclination to take it further.

Gemma couldn't decide whether she felt grateful at his courtesy or annoyed. Their working relationship had remained mostly the same, although they had definitely become more relaxed around one another. She felt they'd become friends as well as colleagues. Gemma couldn't decide whether she wanted anything to develop or not. And, for sure, working as a team of two would grow decidedly awkward if things ended up not going too well between them. At the same token, it could also be a wonderful opportunity for them if things did work out.

Professional considerations aside, she did feel lonely sometimes. At 28 years of age, Gemma felt fed up with being single. Most of her friends had married or settled into serious relationships, and she sometimes felt like a bit of a social pariah. That wasn't any reason to get involved with somebody, though, just so she could fit in. Besides, she enjoyed the freedom of independence. Gemma could eat what she wanted when she wanted, go to bed when she wanted, and watch whatever she wanted on TV, and so on. In short, she enjoyed not having to answer to anybody. Most of the time. Just sometimes, a bit of company would be nice. She shook her head and gave a little laugh at herself—definitely a case of wanting her cake and eating it.





ANALYSIS of their samples confirmed what all their other evidence showed. One of the samples came from part of a fossilised tree stump. A cedar tree. Not something they'd expect to find on the ocean bed.

However, a definite cloud hung over their jubilation. The huge area of Doggerland, now under the sea, had seen some tremendous breakthroughs recently, which included evidence of how it had ended up at the bottom of the ocean. It seemed that as well as gradual ice melt and sea rises, a single catastrophic event had brought about the land's final demise. Evidence suggested that a massive landslide the size of Scotland, known as the Storegga Slide, had occurred just off the edge of Norway's continental shelf. This had, in turn, caused a huge tsunami in the North Atlantic Ocean, and evidence that this tsunami had reached the coast of Scotland had been found.

Unfortunately, this had only gotten widely investigated due to a planned natural gas field. This wasn't the only development planned for the historically significant area. A number of the big international energy companies had an interest in the North Sea for various energy harvesting schemes. This area, which Gemma and Dirck had spent years exploring, along with other Palaeontologists and Archaeologists, was being eyed as a potential development site.

Already, fishing practices—using various methods of dragging the seabed—had caused much damage, but this was nothing compared to the potential destruction that would occur if oil drilling, gas fields, and wind-farm construction were allowed to progress.

## CHAPTER 2



**T***he North Sea—about 60 miles off the Coast, over the Dogger Hills*  
(—2001)

The day shone hot and bright—the glare of sun and waves fierce. Good job that Dirck had his sunglasses with him. After admiring the view overboard, he turned to admire the on-board view. Dirck smiled then disappeared below decks, soon re-emerging with two glasses of chilled lager. With a smile, he leant down over the prostrate body and touched one of the ice-cold glasses to Gemma's bare abdomen. She twitched in surprise. Gemma opened her eyes and smiled up at him. Then she sat up and took one of the offered glasses.

'Mm, thanks,' she said and took a long drink. 'You done?'

Dirck nodded and dropped to the deck next to her. It'd been a long day, but worth it. Between them, they'd managed to get quite a few sonar readings of the area. Gemma was taking a well-earned break when Dirck joined her. They'd hired a yacht for a long weekend, and had travelled out on Friday. The pair had spent all of Saturday and up to mid-afternoon Sunday taking readings with the equipment installed on-board for the purpose. They planned to head back on Monday and spend the rest of the week compiling and collating the data they'd gathered. When Dirck had suggested this weekend, he'd

intended for the whole of Sunday to be relaxation time, but the equipment had played up, so it had all taken longer than he'd expected.

The diver, Stephen, hadn't been wrong about the area's strange propensity to mess up equipment. Dirck wondered again what had caused the malfunction. Still, time to have fun now, before getting back to the grindstone. He pulled off his tee shirt, leaving his chest bare, and felt more comfortable in just his shorts.

'Want some more sun-cream?' Gemma asked, as she offered the bottle.

'Thanks.' Dirck took it from her and rubbed some into his arms, and then he covered his chest and neck. Gemma offered to do his back for him. He turned his back to her until she'd finished. That felt good.

'Here, I'll top you up, too.' He'd intended to do her back then pass the bottle back, but found himself rubbing over her shoulders down her arms, and back up to her shoulders. She leant in against him, and he rubbed the lotion into her abdomen between her bikini top and bottoms. He grew aroused. Dirck cleared his throat—he hadn't intended to seduce her.

'It's okay, don't stop,' Gemma said with closed eyes.

Dirck realised he must have hesitated. He continued with her legs, starting at the bottom and working his way up. As he rubbed her inner thigh, he swallowed. Gemma opened her legs a little to give him access. He put the sun-cream down with his free hand and lay next to her—his hand still between her legs. She opened her eyes, and they gazed at one another. Dirck bent down and kissed her, slowly at first, but becoming more passionate. Gemma opened her lips, and he explored her with his tongue. Dirck caressed her more intimately with the hand he'd left resting against her bikini bottoms. Gemma gave a low moan and arched her hips when his fingers slipped inside her. Her wetness and heat coated him.

After a little while, Dirck eased off Gemma's bikini and pulled back to look at her stretched naked beneath him. She was beautiful. Smooth skin, not too slim, and shapely. Pixie-ish in a cute sort of way. Dirck brought his mouth down to her breasts and kissed and

caressed her. She ran her hands through his hair and pulled him closer. Dirck changed his position until he lay on his side next to her and, again, stimulated her with his fingers. He explored her mouth with his tongue. Her hands reached down and tugged at his shorts. Gemma pushed them down to his ankles with her feet, and Dirck kicked them off the rest of the way. Then she took hold of him and moved her hands rhythmically. She trembled as she came, and her wetness ran over his hand. Dirck neared climax, and he reached down to stay her hand. They both breathed quickly and loudly.

'I want to come inside you.'

For answer, she moved beneath him and wrapped her legs around his.

'You're sure about this?' he asked.

'Oh, Dirck, please.'

Dirck rested his cheek against hers as he entered her. Her heat and wetness heightened his arousal. He moved slowly, at first, but soon built the tempo. Her hands dug into his back while she moved with him, and her cries came louder and longer. Gemma climaxed again, which stimulated Dirck further. He thrust harder and faster into her, and gripped her buttocks with his hands, and then he cried out himself in a short bark as he ejaculated. He stayed inside her for a little while, laying with her beneath him, until their breathing returned to normal. His penis became more flaccid, and he slipped out of her and lay on his side. Then he pulled her into him. She reached up and kissed him, and they continued to lie still for a while. Dirck enjoyed her closeness, and took pleasure in just being next to her.



DUSK DESCENDED, and they sat eating dinner in the cabin. The discussion centred around Doggerland, and the plans that had been unveiled recently for the wind-farm off the east coast of Britain.

'Just when we're starting to get concrete evidence and can begin