

Triptych

an *Outlaw King* fanfic

by Rodo

for *evewithanapple*

SUNLIGHT STREAMED THROUGH the small window and woke Elizabeth de Burgh. She blinked slowly, taking in the feel of the sheets and the woollen blanket on top of them. She had spent so long in cages and prisons designed to provide little comfort, she jerked awake the moment she realised where she was. Opposite her, Robert was watching her with a fond smile.

“Good morning, husband,” she drawled, remembering the night they had spent together after years of separation. Years that they could have spent getting to know each other better. This was the first time they woke up at each other’s side, she suddenly thought. It was all still so new, even after all these years.

“Good morning, wife. Did you sleep well?”

Elizabeth grinned and began to take him in properly, now that she was no longer blinded by euphoria and daylight illuminated his face. There was more grey in his beard now, and some in his hair. He had gained scars and wrinkles, yet beneath it all, he was still the same, serious man she had fallen for. He still made love the same way as well.

“Yes,” she answered, and it was true. She was finally free, and it was as if a weight had fallen off her shoulders.

Robert reached out to cup her face and pressed a kiss to her forehead, followed by another to her lips that she responded to eagerly. Elizabeth wished they had time for a repeat of the previous night, but she could hear the servants busying themselves outside the room and finally made herself break away. Robert glanced regretfully over his shoulder towards the door.

“Duty waits on no man, I’m afraid, least of all a king,” he said.

“We’ll have the next night,” Elizabeth promised him.

“And many nights more,” he replied with a last, chaste peck to her cheek before leaving their bed.

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Elizabeth spent the morning with Marjorie, each working on their own embroidery. It pained her to see how much she had missed of her step-daughter's life, but even though she had become more restrained now that she was almost a grown woman, she was still the bright little girl underneath it all. And she was better at embroidery than Elizabeth could ever hope to be.

"The nuns taught me," Marjorie told her when asked. "They work for the priests and monks in nearby abbeys and churches. I can embroider a chalice cloth with a cross while blind by now."

For a moment, they both remained silent and Elizabeth stared at the outline of a thistle in her lap. "Was it bad?" she asked, not sure if she wanted to know.

Marjorie shrugged and sighed. "They were nice to me, mostly. Nicer than they were to the novices, at any rate. I missed you, though, and Jessie and Father."

Elizabeth hadn't even thought about the big, friendly dog in years. Briefly, she wondered what had happened to him, before deciding it was best to believe he'd spent the rest of his life with some of the peasants near the castle, who had no doubt spoiled him rotten.

"I missed you too," Elizabeth admitted. "Quite a lot."

Marjorie beamed at her, and it was as if the years they had missed out on didn't matter. Carefully, they navigated their way through a conversation on what had happened to them. Elizabeth remained mostly silent. Little had happened to her, truth be told. Marjorie didn't need to know about the cage, and apart from that, Elizabeth had been shuffled from castle to castle, only occasionally being allowed to see her parents. Marjorie, on the other hand, was a font of stories about growing up with the other girls at the nunnery, working in the gardens, and learning to sing chants in Latin. Elizabeth's favourite was probably the one about dropping a bucket of water onto the abbess that had earned Marjorie a fortnight of praying for forgiveness.

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Everything had been arranged to perfection, Elizabeth knew, but it still didn't quite rid her of the doubts. What if she had forgot something? The tables were arranged, the chairs and benches prepared, the cooks were busy and would have told her if any ingredients were missing by now. She took a breath and took in the great hall. Servants were lighting the candles and arranging the plates and

cutlery. The tapestries were all in place, and everything was as regal as she could make it.

Later, when the feast began, she sat in the place of honour at Robert's side, as befit a queen. Their guests arrived one by one, kneeling in front of them as Elizabeth inclined her head, trying to memorise their names. There were Lord Mackinnon of Skye, Lord Randolph of Moray, and Angus Macdonald, who had been a friend of her husband's even before he was crowned. Finally, a young man with wild dark hair stepped forward, a line of three white stars on blue on his chest.

"Lord James Douglas," the herald announced, and the young man bowed deeply.

"It is a pleasure to finally meet you, my queen," Lord James said. "I have heard much of you from your husband."

Beside her, Robert huffed in amusement.

"Only, good things, I hope?" Elizabeth asked a little sharply.

Lord James's head jerked to the side to look at her husband, then he relaxed when he saw that Robert wasn't tense at all. Elizabeth could no longer bite back a smile.

"Of course," he replied, before taking a seat next to Angus. The two men started squabbling good-naturedly almost immediately.

Elizabeth turned to Robert, who was smirking slightly. "What *have* you been telling people about me?" she asked him.

Gradually, Robert's smile became more earnest. "Only good things," he assured her.

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