

Ciara held the mug of steaming tea between her hands and waited for Cian to join her on the settee. Her brother had already settled himself in the big armchair, his long legs stretched out before him, his feet crossed at the ankles.

Eventually, Cian joined them, handed Liam a beer, and settled himself beside Ciara. He took a long draught of his own beer, set it on the table near the settee, and laid his arm possessively across her shoulders. Ciara wanted the contact. She needed it, just now. Still unnerved by her vision, she knew she would have to tell them something, but how much should she reveal of something she didn't wholly understand herself?

"Maybe it wasn't a vision," she began, and immediately Liam harrumphed his opinion. "No, really, I mean it," she said. Again, her brother's raised brow said others might be so gullible but not him.

"Ciara, I was there when you predicted Brandon's misadventures. It wasn't anything like this," observed Cian. "Then, you were calm, laughing even. This was a very different reaction."

Liam agreed and once more gave her a look that said she'd better come clean.

"The vision of Brandon was different," she agreed. Brandon was the second son born into the family, six years older than Ciara and as wild as they came. He gave the term "bad boy" a whole new meaning. Ciara had seen a dark sky envelope him, the clouds roiling around his boneless form, twisting him about before flinging him off to an unknown future, only to be rescued by a beam of light that dropped him gently to the ground. She knew he'd go through hell, but also knew he'd survive; that someone, or something, would come to his rescue. And it had happened just that way.

This vision was nothing like Brandon's, nor like anything else she'd ever seen. It was like she was there, in a different place, and seeing all kinds of carnage, like a real battle scene. But it had been brief, so brief. Just a flash, and it was gone. Yet what she'd seen had chilled her to her core.

"Ciara, ye're daydreamin'," chided Liam.

"I'm not. I'm thinkin'."

"Well, think out loud so we all can hear."

She cast a mutinous glance at Liam and felt Cian's fingers stroke her neck, a calming motion. "It wasn't like my visions before, where I saw others in them," she began. "Ye know I've never been able to see anythin' about my own future. Not even when I was nearly hit by that car the day I decided to take my bicycle out on the road after Mam expressly forbid it."

“Ye’re lucky Brandon came to yer rescue, and just in time, too,” said Liam.

She nodded and looked to Cian for support.

“It’s okay; you’re here, in this room, and no one’s going anywhere. I’ll always keep you safe.”

As if Cian’s words gave her strength, Ciara continued. “Remember that day on the beach at Garrettstown, and I had that funny vision of you in armor?”

Cian nodded.

“Well it was like that, only worse, more intense. It was awful and scary, like a real battlefield.”

“Maybe it was,” Liam interrupted. “After all, we’d just finished that last sequence and that was definitely a battlefield. Maybe that sparked it off?”

Ciara shook her head. “No. This was too real. It was like I was there. Really there. In a real battle. And nothin’ was familiar, like. It reminded me of...”. Her voice trailed away.

“Like...?” Liam prompted.

Shaking her head again, she said, “No. It’s gone. I don’t know.” It was true. The vision was fading almost as fast as it had come on, and now that she was trying to recall it, it seemed to be slipping away, like vapors from the smoke machines on the film set, drifting into the wind, mingling with the clouds. Gone.

“Well, whatever it was, try letting it go. I can tell it’s upset you but we have a good week to look forward to. You’ll love Denmark,” Cian said, trying to cheer her up.