

# Ravenshaw Chronicles

## Part I Preparations

It is the twentieth day of the eleventh month in the year of our Lord 1095.

They tell me my grandfather was a hero. They tell me that he died defending King Harold. If that be the case then my father might be called a traitor. He swore fealty to the Norman king. He adapted the new Norman way of life. I do not know what the difference is, but I have heard that things have changed. All of my life I have been considered Saxon, now all of a sudden I am to be thought of as a Norman. This is the only life that I have known. My head knows that my loyalties lie to my family and King William II, but what will my Grandfather say if I meet him in heaven?

I do know my real loyalty lies with my younger sister Rhiannon. She was so small when our mother died trying to deliver the last of us. Maybe it was because she was so frail. Maybe it was because she was the youngest daughter, and I was the youngest son. I was always her protector.

I do not know what will happen to her. My eldest sister, Mary, is already married and Catherine, is betrothed. Rhiannon has seen almost 11 winters now and there are still no men who we feel are worthy to promise her.

For that matter, I do not know what will become of me either. I have seen 17 winters and I am to marry Ingrede. She lives to the south. I have not met her yet, but I know that she comes with almost no dowry. She will be ready to wed in 2 years.

My eldest brother, AElwyn, stands to inherit all rights and privileges afforded to our father by William the Conqueror. He already acts the part. He is haughty. His vanity goes unabashed. "AElric," he sneers, "I will give you the pleasure of announcing me as AElwyn III when the time is ready. That is a high honor for someone of your stature." I know it is his right, but it is my right to keep my loathing for him in my head.

Ain, my elder brother is quite the opposite of AElwyn. He is a good man. He has been studying His teachings and has "**taken up the cloth**." I am blessed to have Ain as my brother. He taught me to read and to write, but AElwyn insists that it is a silly hobby. Ain has been away for about a month now. Pope Urban has called a meeting of all the holy men throughout France. Word of the council has come across the sea clear to our manor on the border Scotland. Ain went to the meeting as well. It has always been his wish to meet Pope Urban since the **Bishop of York** mantled him. He has been gone now for nearly 6 weeks. It is mid November now and I miss having him about the manor. He is good to talk to and far wiser than I will ever be.

December 25, 1096

What a swine we have for a King! Blessed of all days! My family returns to our keep after the Mass of Christ's Birth, and who is there...a tax collector from the King. He tells my father that taxes are due by nightfall and if we do not have them, then Rufus was going to strip us of our land and our rights. We have never missed our tithes to the church, or to the crown! We had most of our share, but we had to collect from the

freemen on our lands. I spent the better part of the day doing this. Of course I tried to have some compassion and humility during it all, but AElwyn was there as well showing his might and promising to raise their houses within the hour should their rent not be paid forthwith.

God forgive me for being morose on such a blessed day, but I have grown weary of this King. Initially he had great popularity, especially among the freemen. Soon it all changed. He conscripts more people for his wars against France. Now he begins to send his armies northward to Scotland. I have no doubt that he will pass through our lands and expect us to give him more names to take off our lands. We can scarcely cultivate the crops now with so many people gone. And I do not wish to wage war with Scotland! I have lived only a few miles from the border all my life and some of my better friends are from there.

What a miserable place he has made England become. Less than a decade after his father died, we survive only to squabble. God forgive me but I would not be disappointed if King Rufus would meet some horrible fate by falling from a wagon or dying in some hunting accident.

January 6, 1096

Creator of all miracles be praised! Ain returned from France today. We were all happy to have him. I was not aware how much his arrival would throw the entire manor into an uproar. Lord AElwyn threw a big feast in his honor. Both freemen and serf were entreated to a day of rest from the fields. My brother insisted that every person be permitted to attend the feast.

Although there were festivities in his honor, Ain's demeanor was different. On his right shoulder he now wore a tattered red cross. He had a grim look that he tried to hide. I pulled him away to speak plainly. He told me there was grave news in the world and that he would explain to everyone during feast.

Catherine oversaw the butlers making sure that all the serfs were trenched. Then Ain stood up and gave the blessings over the feast. Then we began to eat. After we ate, father had the finest mead brought out. As we began to make merry for the night is when my world forever changed. Ain stood up and began:

“Good men, I bring messages from his Excellency in Rome, Pope Urban. I met with him and many others at Clermont some weeks ago. He said miserable times are ahead of us. A great tide of Persian races alien to our Lord Jesus Christ has besieged Jerusalem and taken for their selves the Holy Sepulcher. Even now those lands are in the hands of this enemy. All good souls saved by His sacrifice in those lands have been forced to deny him, or be put to the sword, or enslaved. The Righteous are publicly tortured for the entertainment of these devilish broods. Christened children have their necks stretched and are violently and unmercifully hacked in half in front of their weeping mothers. Let us not even begin to discuss the women who are raped and forced to prostitute their bodies! Let us not even begin to discuss the sins that good people are forced into thus losing their souls! Let us not even begin to discuss His houses that are defiled, and His alters that are used for these very acts of prostitution! And this is not only in Jerusalem, but in all the lands around there.

How can a man of good soul let all this misery fall on good Christians? How can we sit knowing of the brutality of these Islamic devils on His followers? I tell you we

cannot! His Excellency Pope Urban has decreed that he who takes up his own cross and makes the great pilgrimage with arms and frees the Holy Sepulcher will have Eternal glory in the Kingdom of Heaven. His Excellency also decrees that any man who takes on this pilgrimage, or dies while on this pilgrimage, will have all their sins redeemed. His Excellency also decrees that it is not murder to kill these infidels who have betrayed Christ! All men who are able in body should take up the pilgrimage regardless of wealth, or family, or fealty. After all who do you owe the highest fealty to? It is the will of God that we wage war on these infidels and replenish the Holy Lands with good souls. God wills it!”

At this I was shocked to see so many men, both serf and noble, on their feet screaming in response, “God wills it!” I have never seen the Holy Spirit so gathered in all my life.

“God wills it!” I heard myself saying over and over again. I knew that it was not a matter of if, but when, do I begin my pilgrimage. The mead was tapped and some made merry, but I retired to my chamber to ponder the events of the evening and the words of my brother.

January 7, 1096

Rhiannon woke me today. The sun was already near its zenith.

“Too much merry making?” she jested.

I just smiled at her. “I couldn’t sleep,” I confessed. I looked deep in her young eyes. They were so bright and they always wanted to learn so much. She saw it in my face before I even said it. I will never forget seeing those bright eyes dull with sadness. With a heavy heart I had to tell her so she would hear it, and so I would hear myself say it.

“I must go.” It was hard to choke the words out at first. But once I said it they came much easier. “I must take the pilgrimage.”

I didn’t realize that Ain was outside the door.

“I thought you would.” He came in and shut the door behind him. Sitting down on my chair he told me, “Our course AElwyn took the vow too. After you left he made the regular public spectacle of himself swearing to single-handedly take Jerusalem if need be. I have no doubt he will turn his back on his vow and be excommunicated.”

“Excommunicated?” Rhiannon startled.

“Aye. A person who takes this vow but ceases his pilgrimage is immediately excommunicated. Do you really wish to go AElric?”

What a hysterical question I thought. What choice did I have? Not only in my own heart, but in my mind, and in His eyes, what choice did I really have? Truthfully, I did not want another choice.

“My path is laid before me,” I told him, “though I do not know the way.”

“Very few do know the way.” Ain assured me. “In fact, several freemen set out this very morning, a bit too hastily. But the same thing happened in Clermont.”

“What do you suggest?” I asked him.

“There is a man, Raymond, Count of Toulouse who is gathering an army in the south of France. He is a good man. He has fought the Muslims already in Spain and helped drive them back. He knows their tactics. He is an old man, and a wise one. I am

going to meet him there with whomever I can muster. It would be an honor if you came with me.”

I agreed to go with Ain. He had already begun to make preparations for our pilgrimage. Our manor supported 20 men on the pilgrimage (3 nobles and 17 freemen), and 34 others followed us. They were some of our servants and families of the freemen. Rhiannon wanted to follow as well, but this was no pilgrimage for a child.

“When do we leave,” I asked my brother.

“You have a week to get all in order.”

January 10, 1096

I am eager to take on this pilgrimage. We have six carts of provisions. We all but emptied the fletcher. By God’s grace one of our men is a cobbler. While most of us pack our weapons, he readies his tools. He says half the battle is getting there, that would be his fight he jests. I know the freemen a little better than AElwyn, but I never realized how much these simple folk laugh. An excitement permeates the manor. AElwyn is impatient and thinks that we should have been in Jerusalem already. The fact that he is our appointed leader makes me shiver.

Not everyone though shares in our enthusiasm. Rhiannon came into my room today. She had tears in her eyes and she begged me not to go. She is young. Perhaps in time she will understand that this is a pilgrimage that I cannot fail on. God wills it!

I promised her that I would bring her back a gift that she cannot even imagine. Then she really caught me off guard. She says the only treasure she wants from Jerusalem is her brothers to return safely. She ran out of my chamber and I have not seen her for the rest of the day. She is probably sitting on that fallen tree over by the brook. I am concerned for her while I am gone.

I went back to packing my personals. I grabbed my writing ink and my parchments. As I was polishing my leather cuirass and skullcap I heard what I thought was my father walking past my chamber. I looked out to see my brother AElwyn dressed in my grandfather’s hauberk He died in at Hastings. The helm was polished and the mail looked magnificent. He wore plates on his greaves. Hanging in his baldric was my father’s sword. I know that jealousy is one of the deadly sins, and I felt that demon in me today. I must talk to Ain about it. I cannot begin this pilgrimage with such a dissatisfying fervor.

January 14, 1096

Today we started our great pilgrimage to rescue the Holy Sepulcher. It was mixed with joy and sadness. Ain gave a wondrous blessing to our journey. Afterward he took his place next to me in our procession. Our father Lord AElwyn voiced his pride of his three sons, but especially his heir. I forced myself to turn my head in disgust. As I did, I saw Rhiannon. Sweet Rhiannon, as sweet as warm honey in tea. I beg to God that if I die on this pilgrimage, then at least let her have a good life.

We left to the sound of cheers and haffaus. But they were completely drowned out in my head. I could hear only the horse shoes beating the dirt road, and the sound of the leather harness creaking to pull the wooden carts. And in front of it I could hear the

sound of AElwyn's great hauberk links. I looked over at my brother Ain, undoubtedly the bravest of the three of us. He was armed only with his tattered red cross.

February 10, 1096

Today we arrived in Wessex. What started out as a small group of 20 people and six carts has turned into a small army. Almost everyday our numbers increase. One day by one, one day by ten. There are a few nobles as well, but most of the people are freemen who are answering the call. I do not know how long it will take us to reach Jerusalem, but I know if our numbers continue to grow, we shall take the city with our bare hands.

As always, AElwyn has the pretence that he is in charge of the entire gathering. Why does he not realize that there are other Lords here as well? Ain has taken up a leadership role too. He tends the people as if they are his flock. At least his leadership is caring. It is obvious that God truly has called my brother to tend to these people.

As for me, I'm happy not being the one giving orders. Instead of riding at the front like my brothers, I find myself riding among the people, sometimes even walking! I am beginning to get to know some of the freemen from our manor even better. John, the cobbler, is quite a witty man. I like his robust laugh. He laughs at everything simple and grand. He makes everyone quite merry.

A man from another manor brought along a lute. He plays it well. Sometimes as we march on we get quite loud, and I think we are obnoxious to AElwyn. He scolds me about fraternizing with the commoners, but as John the cobbler puts it, "AElwyn win can stitch his noodle an' sing a wee bit above pitch." I'm not sure what he meant by that, but it made us all laugh at AElwyn's expence.

February 25, 1096

We have finally reached our rallying point! We are in a small town in the southeast of France. I can not even begin to guess the amount of people that have gathered. The good people of this land work endlessly making sure there is enough food and provisions for the multitudes.

There is a man here I feel we can follow. He is Count Raymond of Toulouse. He is an old man. Very rarely have I seen one as old as he, but yet he walks with such vigor. He has already fought our enemies in Spain and has won against them. He knows their tactics. Count Raymond is a good God fearing person. For once in my life I feel I have someone worth following. In his entourage is another Raymond de'Aguilers. He is a man who looks after provisions and keeps records and other accounts. This Raymond is also a good person, and we have several interests that we share. I admire this man. He has a skill in organization which I must try to imitate. He confessed to me that already people are wandering all over the place and there is very little order. He proposed a few ideas as to how to keep order, ideas that I will try to follow. Other manors have their freemen and serfs all over the land. Today I will take everyone from my father's manor and move them to the outskirts of the town and set up a camp so that we are all together, and that I can find them all easily.

Through this Raymond, I have met Count Raymond. At this I must chuckle at AElwyn's expense again. AElwyn thinks he should be one of Count Raymond's top men. The Count will not even see him.

Ain has also found someone to inspire him. There is a Bishop here by the name of Ademar of Puy. This man seems to have some political weight. I realize he is a bishop, but I'm not sure of his real importance yet, but I can tell that his status is higher than usual. Ain has spoken of him once. He said that he had met the Bishop of Puy on his excursion to Clermont.

March 04, 1096

There is a man they call Peter the Hermit whom I have not met. Ain has talked about him a great deal. From what Ain says, Peter is the one who brought the news of the atrocities in the east to our ears. It seems that this multitude of people is not moving quick enough for Peter. He wants to move out immediately! A follower of his they call Walter the Penniless is close to speed us along. I've heard the argument in Count Raymond's camp as well. Count Raymond is a logical person. He wants to leave now as we all do, but he says that a proper army will not be prepared for some time. He thinks about 6 months. Six months! It seems so far away! Will there be any of our brethren left after six months, or will they have all perished to the hands of the infidels?

March 5, 1096

There is excitement throughout the area. It is more of a frenzy than anything else. Everyone is caught up in it and I must remember to keep my senses. AElwyn is adamant about leaving in 3 days. Several of our freemen are just as frenzied. Everywhere, at every time, I can hear someone inciting, "God wills it!" And I know he does, however, one does not want to stand before a dam once it begins to break. Count Raymond swears not to leave yet. He says that any attempt to leave on the greatest pilgrimage ever will only result in an unfortunate disaster. I have tried to tell this to AElwyn, but the thickheaded oaf will not listen to reason.

March 6, 1096

The world is crazy! Today I saw things and did things that I never thought were possible. First, my brother, AElwyn was subdued! Count Raymond called a meeting of the nobles. AElwyn finally got his audience. Count Raymond explained to all of us the perils of leading the expedition to Jerusalem. Somehow it sunk into AElwyn's head. Maybe it was the fact that this time reason was coming from Count Raymond instead of his little brother.

Unfortunately I also came to a reluctant understanding why AElwyn has told me repeatedly, "Do not fraternize with the commoners!"

"Damn him!" I used to think.

Today I visited our camp where I had positioned the freemen from my father's manor. When I rode into camp I heard the frenzied call again.

"God wills it!" They were all cheering. They were readying to leave in 2 days. I tried to subdue their hysteria, but I have not the rhetorical skills that Count Raymond has. Once they were somewhat silenced I tried to explain to them the dilemma about departing too early. Some were contented at hearing this, but there were some that challenged me.

“We shall ride into Jerusalem together!” I told them. I was feeling quite confident now. “And together we shall rescue every good soul. We shall put to the sword every evil ten fold for every misery they did on to our brethren. In Heaven, all glory will-“

“Lost!” screamed on of them. I knew him now. His name was Ian. His wife and children came along. “All glory will be lost because we did not make haste to save our fellow Christians! And for that we will all be sent to Hell.” At this the crowd started to frenzy again.

I didn’t know what to do. Then I did what is so unaccustomed to me. I drew my sword. “I command you!” Oh how horrible that sounds, but I said it.

“Command us to what?” retorted Ian.

“I command you to wait until I order you to leave for the great pilgrimage.” The mass looked as confused as I felt. They were not accustomed to me like this. But the die was cast and I had to continue with my ruse. “You work my father’s land and he gives you the right to live there. If you do not listen to what I say then I shall make sure you are cast off the manor. Then where will you go! Where will you live?”

“You have no right!” Ian rebuked again. “As you yourself said, It is your father’s land. Need I remind you that your brother is the heir and you are nothing more than a tenant in your brother’s home. If he will have you?”

I was angry then! Oh I wanted to strike him and it was in my right, but the Truce of God is enacted. “Now you listen to me. My father is old and will probably not live long after I return. AElwyn and I are of like mind on this issue. He is not as tolerant as I. He will not only toss you off our land, he will have you outlawed in every manor throughout Britain. Now I say this to every one of you. You will not leave in two days. For if you do, you are banished from our land! If it is still in your hearts to leave, then leave now!”

Everyone looked at each other for a few moments. Then Ian shrugged and insisted, “God will provide.” At this he gathered his family and left. I am grieved over the incident today. I don’t know how the commoners will see me now. I was beginning to really enjoy their company.

March 8, 1096

Today a great multitude of people left on their great pilgrimage. I do not know the correct number, but I will venture to say 100 thousand. Somehow in all of this, as I watched them leave and cheered for them, I saw Ian. He waved his hat and his falchion at me. I barely heard him scream over the multitude, “I’ll pray for you in Jerusalem.” His young ones looked so excited. They waved at everyone! It was their triumphant march, though I believe their battles are just beginning.

I stood next to my friend Raymond. He clapped, though it was quiet and false. “They do not have a chance,” he sighed. “Look at how many they are, but look at how untrained. There are so few who even carry a real weapon. They will be back within the month.”

I hope he is right. I hope they will be back with a month. I would rather like to see Ian again.

March 21, 1096

One of the men who left on the great pilgrimage returned today with his head hung low. At first several people gathered around him expecting to hear something. Some people wanted to hear that Jerusalem was freed. Some feared to hear that the infidels were so close and their pilgrimage had ended by sword point already.

No one, not even myself expected to hear what he had to say. He told us that the trip was too long and too hard. He said he had to return home.

He had been gone less than a full moon! Not even two weeks! What a coward he is! He must have been sent by Satan to dishearten the masses. But in Christ's glory the man was booed and harassed with dung. I heard they caught him in the next village over and stretched his neck. So be it! Once I took my first step I was resolved to stay the course, or die trying.

April 3, 1096

Supplies continue to grow. More armed men are beginning to add to our numbers again. Where before it was a mass of people running around, now it is an organized company. Nobles have their vassals arranged like I have ours. They are camped together, and different manor-holds are beginning to have particular favorites with other manors.

Raymond tells me that we will begin training within the week. He told me that I could have a choice of what I wanted. I could either lead my vassals in the field, or I could be in the Count Raymond's cavalry. I will have to ponder this in great detail. There is an element in pride in being in the Count's cavalry, but I feel that it is my responsibility to lead my manor into Jerusalem. When I say it like that it seems so easy to decide. But then I close my eyes and I see a great cavalry charge and I can imagine God smiling on us as we clean His world of the Islamic scourge. What shall I do?

April 7, 1096

Today we started training our vassals in the art of war as instructed by Count Raymond. Several of our freemen did not know which direction was right or left. It was amusing to watch them march together. I realize now Jerusalem is going to be much farther than I thought!

We only have 16 men in our unit besides my brothers and me. But there were 3 boys who will be men by the time we reach Jerusalem next year, so we train them as well. Charles, one of our freemen, is quite accomplished with a bow. He fired upon 20 apples from ranges of 30 yards. For our amusement we had him fire at an apple at nearly 60 yards. His arrow landed only inches away. AElwyn and I decided to have him enlist in one of the archer units. I will take him to meet Raymond tomorrow. I will be sad to see Charles leave our camp, but his skills with a bow will let him kill more Saracens than his rusted hammer.

April 23, 1096

Training the vassals is going well for me. They are moving well in a unit formation. They are quickly turning into soldiers. I am lucky to be working with my friend Raymond. He is a smart man. He is also quite resourceful. If ever I need to procure anything, I am able to get it. Through him, I have been able to obtain enough

white tabards to make my men look proud. They all have white tabards emblazoned with a large black raven which has become our symbol. They also all have large shields with the same.

For me I was able to find some more suitable armor. Not as nice as AElwyn's but much better than that moldy cuisse I had. Tomorrow I will take my men for a march with all their new attire. First, so I can show them off to everyone, especially my elder brother (he has been off for the past week politicking). Secondly, so they will get accustomed to walking long distances in such fineries. A few more weeks and my men will be ready.

April 24, 1096

We made our march today. I was sure to parade my unit past Count Raymond's camp, not for mine own benefit, but for the amusement. I figured AElwyn would be there doing his usual groveling. I was right. I saw him and several others just like him wallowing about Count Raymond's camp trying to further their own ambitions. When my company came through we turned the heads of many lords. I am so proud of my people. At one time they toiled the ground, coaxing the crops to grow. Now they moved as one blessed beast, marching in step and moving as one man. Although twenty-six feet pounded the earth, everyone could only hear one set of foot steps. I wanted so much to look at my elder brother to see his expression, but at the same time, I wanted him to understand that these are becoming my men, not his.

Raymond filled in the detail. He said my brother stood speechless with his mouth hanging open. Even he had never seen our men so adorned and battle ready. Of course he bragged saying that we were all his vassals and bragged about their training. I guess I made an impression on the Count as well as he inquired who we were. Raymond simply told him that they were the Ravenshaw unit, and they were trained by me. AElwyn tried to steel the glory, but from what I hear, the Count just shot him a look and quieted him. I'm sorry, but sometimes my brother disgusts me. I will have to pray tonight that I can overcome this. Pride and jealousy are not virtues that I should carry with me on my pilgrimage.

June 23, 1096

Train and drill! My men grow weary of it as do I. We are eager to get on with the great pilgrimage. We see supplies continue to flow and to pile up. Wagons have been sitting in lines several carts wide and miles long. To alleviate boredom, I've volunteered my unit to stand guard on the wagons. These are just targets for people to pillage. We have already had our fair share of people moved by the devil to steal from us.

July 1, 1096

I am not doing well today. Another week has gone by and tensions from idle minds are growing. Conrad, a fellow in my camp, became boisterous and disrespectful. He is forgetting why we are here. He is lusting after a woman that does not belong to him. After some drink he started swearing to make her his even if it meant killing the good Christian man who is coupled with her by divine sacrament. I tired to remind him

of our position, that we are God's soldiers and that we will never win this war if we are sinners. He told me to take this pilgrimage to Hell. I promptly admonished him with my horse. I ordered him tied to a tree and I beat him several times with my riding cane.

God's deeds are mysterious. Through this action I could see my men, at first disturbed by the spectacle, but by the end I could see a renewed purpose in their own spirit. The suffering of one because the draw of the devil renewed the course of the rest of my men.

This also reminded me that through this time of waiting I must even keep myself vigilant against my own sloth.

August 1, 1096

Oh what glorious news! Ain brought great tidings on his visit. We depart for Jerusalem two weeks from today on the Feast of Saint Marie. I immediately called for my soldiers to assemble to tell them the news. As I suspected, I was just a person to confirm the rumors that had already spread like a wildfire through the Aquitaine country. My men cheered in such a glorious manner that I thought we had already breached the walls of Jerusalem and laid waste to the unholy Saracen devils within them.

It has been a pleasant day! My men drilled without complaint. Their women cared for their tired muscles and washed their clothes. After the toll of the drills there was a great mass to give thanks to Almighty God for giving us this opportunity to serve him with such a glorious deed, and even to thank him for accepting us who will be martyrs in battle for Him.

Even AElwyn visited our men today and was in good mirth. He toasted our soldiers during our feast. It was the first time I ever saw him consider someone "beneath" his status. Perhaps he is not the shrew I take him for.

I'm sure the wine is just going to my head.

August 8, 1096

Raymond de'Aguilers has me busy checking on supplies again. We are a bit taxed because in our days of laziness, some of the supplies were stolen. We have set out riders in all directions to bring back salted meats for our journey.

Raymond has confided in me some of the inner workings of the Count's plans. It seems that we will not be taking the same route as the other leaders of the pilgrimage. He wishes to take an overland route while others are leaving by sea. Raymond fears that this will put us far behind the other pilgrims, but he says that the Count believes the land to be a safer route than the uncooperative seas. He also says this is a more cost effective way because he won't need to purchase vessels to carry us and our supplies. I know not how long the march to Jerusalem will be, but I am most happy I have horses.

August 14, 1096

Today is the eve of the feast of St. Marie. There is a strangeness in the air. I expected to see many campfires tonight where drunken men gather and boast about who will slay the most infidels. It has been strangely quiet since the sun past its zenith. All shops closed early and will not open tomorrow. Masses are served in all camps. Even Bishop Ademar himself made several appearances in the camps of even the lowliest

soldiers, as has Count Raymond. Our men though have not seen AElwyn, He is probably busy doing only God knows what.

Ain, on the other hand, was in the company of the Bishop. He is so proud. His Eminence, Bishop Ademar, genuinely likes my brother (which is easy to do with that one). Ain is able to talk to him and actually advise him on some occasion. I am proud of Ain. I would be surprised if he is not a bishop when he returns home. Rhiannon would be so proud if she were to see our brother right now.

Rhiannon – I have not thought of her in days, and I have not heard word from home since we arrived in Toulouse. I prey that my sisters and father are fine.

August 15, 1096

I write tonight with renewed optimism as I sit beneath a tree. There is smell of campfires in my nose. Today is the feast of St. Marie and what a glorious day it is. We marched today to win the land where the Savior was born and died.

Normally at this time, I would be turning in with a dizzy head from the wine. I would have laughed with my brothers, and sisters, and our friends throughout the day while our servants hurried about with the feastly chores. Today is no ordinary feast. We woke and went to mass. Then we feasted early and it did not last long. Bishop Ademar gave us our blessings during the feast with the captains. After wards we assembled on the main road out of Toulouse. It was the first time we all assembled. What a marvelous sight it was to see. The banners of the Bishop and the Count waived in the wind. With them were hundreds, perhaps thousands more banners flew. These belonged to individual houses and orders that united to fight under the banner of Count Raymond, all of them with one common goal.

The Count spoke, then the Bishop blessed us all. It reminded me of the day I left home a half year ago. Has it only been that long? The days of preparation seemed to age me. I am happy to be on the way now. With every step I know that I am one step closer to victorious glory, or one step closer to martyrdom. Either way, I know I am in noble cause and only good things can happen.