

Anglo Saxon Boy

The messenger arrived just as the sun was rising over the hills. Most people on the farm were still asleep, but not Magnus – he had decided to go hunting in the woods that day. He was leaving home with a spear in his hand and the housecarls following closely behind.

Magnus glanced around. He was riding through a narrow, forested valley, steep slopes on both sides. As he looked, Magnus caught a glimpse of shadowy shapes moving swiftly between the towering trees. Suddenly, he heard a thrumming noise, and an arrow thwacked into the throat of a man just ahead of him. The man toppled off his horse, blood spurting from the wound.

“AMBUSH!” Hakon, who was the leader of the housecarls, yelled. Arrows tore into Magnus’s men and some of their horses. He heard arrows thumping into the housecarls’ shields and Hakon shouting. Within seconds, waves of warriors charged down the slopes screaming war cries. Gisli’s men. Magnus barely had time to draw his sword before they reached him.

Two ran past him, both carrying spears and round shields bearing the image of a double-headed eagle. The first wicked warrior jabbed his spear upwards, and Magnus deflected the blade with his shield. Before he could recover, the second thrust at him, ramming his spear hard into the shield, knocking Magnus clean off his horse. Luckily, and with great agility, he landed on the muddy track, and rolled aside just before the first man’s spear spiralled stabbed into the ground where his head had been.

Magnus scrambled to his feeble feet, still clutching his sword and shield. The two warriors stood together now, facing him, one holding his spear high as if he were about to throw it, the other keeping his low for another thrust. The chaos of battle swirled around the three of them, blades rising and falling, shapes moving, men shouting. In an instant, Magnus leapt forward, screaming as loudly as he could, and crashed his shield into the warrior on his left, pushing him back. As he had been taught, he swung his sword at the other man too. At last, silence.

A wave of triumph washed over Magnus. At that moment, he looked at the death and destruction that surrounded him. Disbelief swallowed him. Lives had been brutally stolen, although all was not lost. He had victory in this battle, but the war was not over.