

MANDA SCOTT
BOUDICA

'A powerful novel alive with love, deceit, wisdom and the heroics of humanity.'

JEAN AUEL

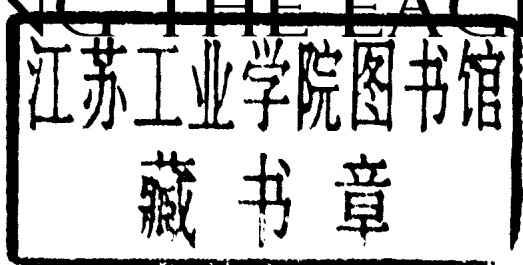


DREAMING THE EAGLE

MANDA SCOTT

BOUDICA

DREAMING THE EAGLE



BANTAM PRESS

LONDON • NEW YORK • TORONTO • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND

TRANSWORLD PUBLISHERS
61–63 Uxbridge Road, London W5 5SA
a division of The Random House Group Ltd

RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA (PTY) LTD
20 Alfred Street, Milsons Point, Sydney,
New South Wales 2061, Australia

RANDOM HOUSE NEW ZEALAND LTD
18 Poland Road, Glenfield, Auckland 10, New Zealand

RANDOM HOUSE SOUTH AFRICA (PTY) LTD
Endulini, 5a Jubilee Road, Parktown 2193, South Africa

Published 2003 by Bantam Press
a division of Transworld Publishers

Copyright © Manda Scott 2003
Maps copyright © David Atkinson 2003
Design by Julia Lloyd

The right of Manda Scott to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All the characters in this book are fictitious, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.
ISBNs 0593 051637 (cased)
0593 048784 (tpb)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Typeset in 11/13½pt Sabon by
Falcon Oast Graphic Art Ltd.

Printed in Great Britain by
Mackays of Chatham plc, Chatham, Kent

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

BOUDICA

DREAMING THE EAGLE

www.booksattransworld.co.uk

Also by Manda Scott

HEN'S TEETH

NIGHT MARES

STRONGER THAN DEATH

NO GOOD DEED

For Robin and Elaine, with love

CONTENTS

	Acknowledgements	9
	<i>Western Europe, AD 32</i>	10
	Prologue: Autumn AD 32	13
I:	Spring–Autumn AD 33	17
	<i>Tribal Britain, AD 32</i>	18
II:	Winter–Spring AD 37	145
	<i>Cunobelin's Dun</i>	146
III:	Spring AD 39–Spring AD 40	281
	<i>Gaul, Belgica and the Germanies, AD 39</i>	282
IV:	Late Summer–Autumn AD 43	447
	<i>Routes of Invasion, AD 43</i>	448
	Epilogue	532
	Author's Note	535
	Names and Their Pronunciations	539
	Bibliography	541

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

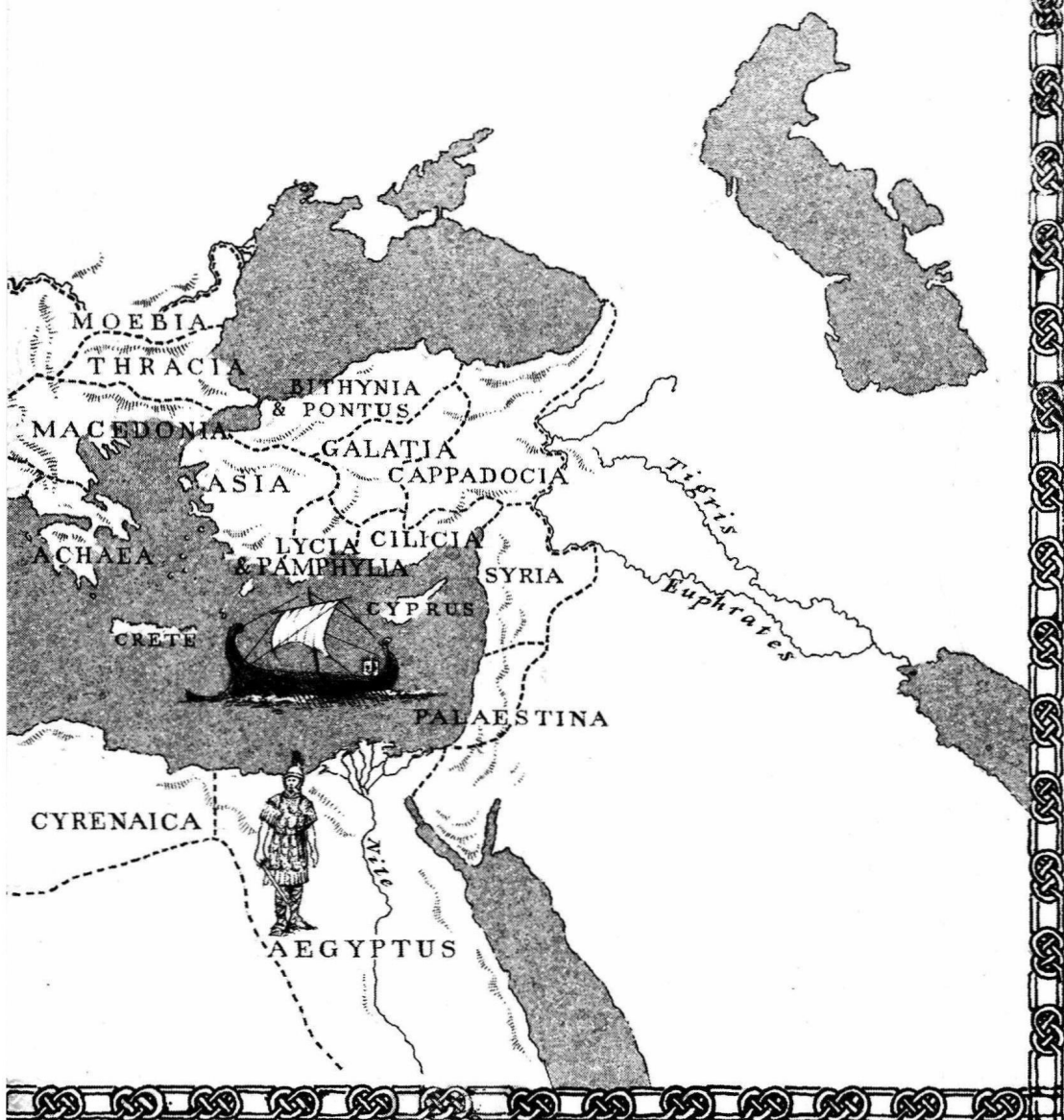
ANY WORK OF THIS NATURE REQUIRES AN EXTRAORDINARY AMOUNT OF background material. I would like to thank the following for their expert advice and assistance: Dr Gilly Carr, Dr Jon Coe, Philip Crummy, Dr J. D. Hill, Professor Lawrence Keppie and Owen Thompson, all of whom gave freely of their time and expertise, and those members of the Brit-arch internet mailing list who so often supplied answers to mundane questions. Most especial thanks to H. J. P. ('Douglas') Arnold, astronomer and formerly Primus Pilus in the Legio Secunda Augusta re-enactment group, who provided continual support and invaluable comments throughout. As is always the case, any technical faults are entirely mine, as is the interpretation of the facts supplied.

Thanks also to Jane Judd, my agent, and Selina Walker at Transworld for having faith from the beginning and to Kate Miciak and Nita Taublib at Bantam US for their support and enthusiasm.

Particular thanks to Leo, who introduced me to the dreaming, and to Carol, Hillary, Eliot and Ken, amongst others, who showed me how to live it.



WESTERN EUROPE, AD 32



PROLOGUE
AUTUMN AD 32



THE ATTACK CAME IN THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN. THE GIRL WOKE to the stench of burning thatch and the sound of her mother screaming. Outside, in the clearing beyond the hut, she heard her father's response, and the clash of iron on bronze. Another man shouted – not her father – and she was up, throwing off the hides, reaching back into the dark behind the sleeping place for her skinning knife or, better, her axe. She found neither. Her mother screamed again, differently. The girl scrabbled frantically, feeling the fire scorch her skin and the sliding ache of fear that was the threat of a sword-cut to the spine. Her fingers closed on a haft of worn wood, running down to the curve of a grip she knew from hours of oil and polish and the awe of youth; her father's boar spear. She jerked it free, turning and pulling the leather cover from the blade in one move. A wash of pre-dawn light hit her eyes as the door-skin was ripped from its hangings and replaced as rapidly by a shadow. The bulk of a body filled the doorway. Dawn light flickered on a sword blade. Close by, her father screamed her name. '*Breaca!*'

She heard him and stepped out of the dark. The warrior in the doorway grinned, showing few teeth, and lunged forward. His blade caught the sunlight and twisted it, blinding them both. Without thinking, she did as she had practised, in her mind, in the safety of the lower horse paddocks, and once in the forest beyond.

She lunged in return, putting the weight of her shoulders, the twist of her back and the straightening kick of both legs into the thrust of the weapon. She aimed for the one pale segment of skin she could see. The spear blade bit and sank into the notch of his throat at the place where the tunic stopped and the helmet had not yet begun. Blood sluiced brightly downwards. The man choked and stopped. The sword that sought her life came slicing on, carried by the speed of his lunge. She wrenched sideways, too slowly, and felt the sting of it carve between her fingers. She let go of the spear. The man toppled over, angled away from her by the weight of the haft. The doorway brightened and darkened again. Her father was there.

‘Breaca? Gods, Breaca—’ He, too, stopped. The man on the floor pushed a hand beneath his side and tried to rise. Her father’s hammer sang down and stopped him, for ever. He brought his arms up and round her, holding her close, smoothing her cheek, running his big, broad smith’s fingers through her hair. ‘You killed him? My warrior, my best girl. You killed him. Gods, that was good. I could not bear to lose you both—’

He was rocking her back and forth, as he had when she was a small child. He smelled of blood and stomach acid. She pushed her arms down his front to make sure that he was whole and found that he was. She tried to squirm free, to look at the rest of him. He leaned in closer and his breathing changed and she felt wet warmth slide down her neck to the wing of her shoulder and from there down the flat plane of her chest. She let him hold her, then, while he wept, and didn’t ask him why her mother had not come in with him to find her. Her mother, who carried his child.

The stomach acid was her mother’s. She lay near the doorway and she, too, carried a spear in her hand. She had used it once to good effect but they had been two against her one and the child she carried within had slowed her turn. The slice of the blade had opened her from chest-bone to hips, spilling out all that had been inside. Breaca crouched down beside her. The tentative light of the new day brought colour where before there had been none. She reached down to the small, crinkled thing lying at her mother’s side and turned it over. Her father was behind her. ‘It would have been a boy,’ she said.

‘I know.’ He let his hand rest on her shoulder. His fingers were

still. His weeping had stopped. He knelt down and hugged her, fiercely. His chin pressed on her head and the burr of his voice rocked through her neck to her chest as he spoke. 'What need have I of another son when I have a daughter who can face an armed warrior and live?'

His voice was warm and there was pride in the wretched grief and she had not the strength to tell him that she had acted out of instinct, not courage or a warrior's heart.

Her mother had been leader of the Eceni, firstborn of the royal line, and she was honoured in death as she had been in life. Her body was bound in fine linen and hides, closing the child back into her abdomen. A platform was built of hazel and elm and the body raised onto it, lifting her closer to the gods and out of reach of wolf and bear. The three dead warriors of the Coritani, who had broken the laws of the gods in killing a woman in childbirth, and of the elders in killing the leader of a neighbouring tribe without fair battle, were stripped and dragged to the forest to feed whatever found them first. Breaca was given the sword from the one she had killed. She didn't want it. She gave it to her father, who broke it across his forging block and said he would make her a better one, full sized, for when she was grown. In its stead, Airmid, one of the older girls, gave her a crow's feather with the quill dyed red and bound round with blue horsehair, the mark of a kill. Her father showed her how to braid her hair at the sides, as the warriors do for battle, with the feather hanging free at her temple.

In the late morning, Eburovic, warrior and smith of the Eceni, took his daughter to the river to wash her clean of the blood of battle and bind the cut on her hand and then walked her back to the roundhouse to the care of Macha, her mother's sister, the mother of Bán, his first and only living son.

