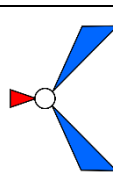


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bncdoc.id	BMN
bncdoc.author	Doherty, P C
bncdoc.year	1991
bncdoc.title	Crown in darkness.
bncdoc.info	Crown in darkness. Sample containing about 38547 words from a book (domain: imaginative)
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
Publication date	1985-1993
Text type	Written books and periodicals
David Lee's classification	W_fict_prose

<p><383/c></p>  <p>Key:</p> <p><u>Footprint</u> <u>ConEn1</u> <u>Footprint</u> <u>ConEn2</u> <u>Footprint</u> <u>ConEn3</u></p>	<p>broach the matter, <u>the English may have arranged Alexander III's death</u> but to what advantage? There are other and better <u>suspects</u>. <u>Edward is involved in France</u> and I can see no profit for him in the death of an ally. <u>Other problems obscure the issue</u>; whoever killed Alexander <u>must surely have got to the ferry first, crossed the Firth of Forth, knew the route the King was to take, carried out their plan and got away, hoping the King's companions would not discover this</u>. And done all this <u>in the blackness of night</u>? The Good God knows I would dismiss the matter as fanciful and accept that the Scottish King died of an accidental fall from his horse except <u>for what I found, those little shreds clinging to a thorn bush on Kinghorn Ness crying out 'Murder' to the world</u>. Even if there is an answer for <u>these, other questions</u> still remain beating like blood about my head. They can only be resolved at great danger to myself and so I beg you, my Lord, to order my withdrawal from this country for Satan walks here. It is a bubbling pot and soon it will boil and spill over, scalding and burning all who are near it. My life and that of Benstede are under threat from God knows whom, for people believe we are here on a secret mission connected with the succession to the Scottish throne. I beg you to keep this in mind. God save you. Written on 18th June 1286 at the Abbey of Holy Rood.' Corbett sat and studied the letter he had written. Darkness fell and he put the report away while he lay on his bed and considered its contents. There must be, he thought, some key, some crack in this mystery he could use to achieve an answer. He remembered the old adage from his studies, 'If a problem exists then a logical solution must also exist It is only a matter of time before you find it'. If you find it, Corbett added bitterly to himself. He felt he was involved in some royal masque, a diversion, a play where he was one of the mummers, blundering around in the dark to the silent laughter of an audience who always stayed in the shadows. <u>Hasty rides at midnight along windswept cliffs, a King falling into darkness, prophecies of doom</u>. Corbett reconsidered <u>the prophecies</u>. Surely, if he could find <u>this source</u> then he might find a lot more? If <u>the prophecies</u> were innocent, then who was responsible and, more importantly, who ensured other people knew about them? Corbett tried to think back, unravelling</p> <p><u>the skein of information he had gathered</u></p> <p>. <u>Someone had named the Prophet? Someone called Thomas? Thomas the Rhymer - Thomas of Learmouth</u>. Corbett swung his legs off the bed and, with a tinder, lit the room's three large candles, took out Burnell's letter and sealed it. He decided it would go as it was written while he proceeded with other matters. The abbey bells rang for vespers but Corbett waited till he heard the monks returning from the chapel, before going down to join Ranulf in the whitewashed refectory. A plain meal of bread, soup and watered wine was served while one of the brothers read from the Scriptures. Corbett sat impatiently throughout, his only consolation being the amusement he derived from Ranulf's face as he ate his simple food amidst such sanctified surroundings. Once the meal was over and the thanksgiving intoned, Corbett whispered to Ranulf to return to their chamber while he sought an interview</p>
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	<p>with the Prior. The latter readily agreed, inviting Corbett to walk with him in the silent, shadowy cloisters, taking advantage of the first soft breezes of early summer. For a while they strolled in silence before Corbett began to ask the Prior about his vocation to the monastic life, enjoying the sardonic replies and surprised to find that the Prior was both a distant kinsman to Robert Bruce and a keen herbalist, interested in medicine, with a passion for concocting samples, potions and cures. Corbett gently led the conversation on to the late King and was surprised at the outburst he drew. ‘A good, strong ruler,’ the Prior commented, ‘but as a man, well ...’ his voice trailed off, leaving the silence to be broken only by the sound of his sandalled feet pattering against the slabstones. ‘What do you mean?’ Corbett asked. ‘I mean,’ the Prior heatedly retorted, ‘he was a lecher, who forsook his duties. For ten, eleven years he was a widower with every opportunity to marry and beget a son. Instead, he pursues his lusts, marries late and then dies in pursuit of that lust, leaving Scotland without an heir.’ Corbett noted that the bitter anger deep within the Prior was about to well over and tactfully he remained silent. ‘Even here,’ the Prior continued, ‘in the Abbey of the Holy Rood, he pursued his lusts! A young noblewoman, a widow on a journey to her late husband’s grave, but the King came and saw her. He pursued her, showering her with gifts, jewels and precious cloths. Then he seduced her, not in his castle or one of his manors but here</p>
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