



*Bale-fyre* is a Middle English term for a funeral or sacrificial fire, often tied to witchcraft, so it's fitting that the prologue opens steeped in ritual. We're dropped straight into a world where myth and reality overlap, as a coven summons Cailleach, the winter hag of Scottish and Irish lore, in Ireland, 1711. The atmosphere is immediate and convincing with secret rites, whispered danger, and then the arrival of Draven, an unmistakable threat. Within a few pages, the stakes are clear and we're already aligned with the witches.

Fantasy prologues often drown in lore, but this one avoids that trap. It moves with pace and purpose, more like the cold-open of a prestige TV drama than a block of exposition. It hooks, rather than explains.

The main story shifts to the present day and introduces Kenna. At first, it seems we're settling into a slower, contemporary opening, but the narrative snaps into tension almost immediately. The early reveal she faces is vivid, unsettling, and sharply drawn, the kind of scene that lingers because it's handled with restraint rather than spectacle.

It soon becomes clear that Draven of 1711 is also Draven of 2019 and beyond. His introductory chapter is short, direct, and propulsive, pushing the pace forward and raising questions not about *what* he intends, he tells us that plainly, but *how* he plans to achieve it.

As the story unfolds, we occupy the role of informed observer. The author uses this vantage point well, giving us moments of reflection that deepen the emotional beats and allow flashbacks to enrich the prologue rather than repeat it. The past becomes a living thread, shaping the present without overwhelming it.

When Kenna's path finally intersects with Draven's, there's a brief sense of relief, tension released simply because the narrative strands have finally met. But that relief is short-lived. We know more than Kenna does, and the book leans into that dramatic irony with almost pantomime pleasure. You can practically hear the "He's behind you" in the background.

As the plot tightens, the characters deepen. The dynamic between hunter and hunted becomes almost cruel in its inevitability, like a cat toying too long with a mouse. One of the strongest turns comes when Kenna begins to catch up with what we already know. Her dawning realisation, that she's entangled in something far darker than the everyday troubles of her age, feels natural.

The build toward the climax is solid and confident, but the payoff still manages to surprise. The ending doesn't unfold quite the way the breadcrumbs suggest, and the shift in focus gives the final act real dramatic weight. It turns out we didn't know everything after all.

This is a richly written story rooted in a coming-of-age arc, where Kenna's discovery of the hidden world mirrors the way someone her age begins to grasp the real one. That grounding gives the drama real weight so that when the shocks arrive, they hit like a ship suddenly thrown against a high wave.

The compact cast works in the book's favour. The good characters are instantly sympathetic, their rough edges only making them more believable, while the villain's stride in ready-made for boos and hisses. I came away feeling I knew them well - the survivors, anyway.

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