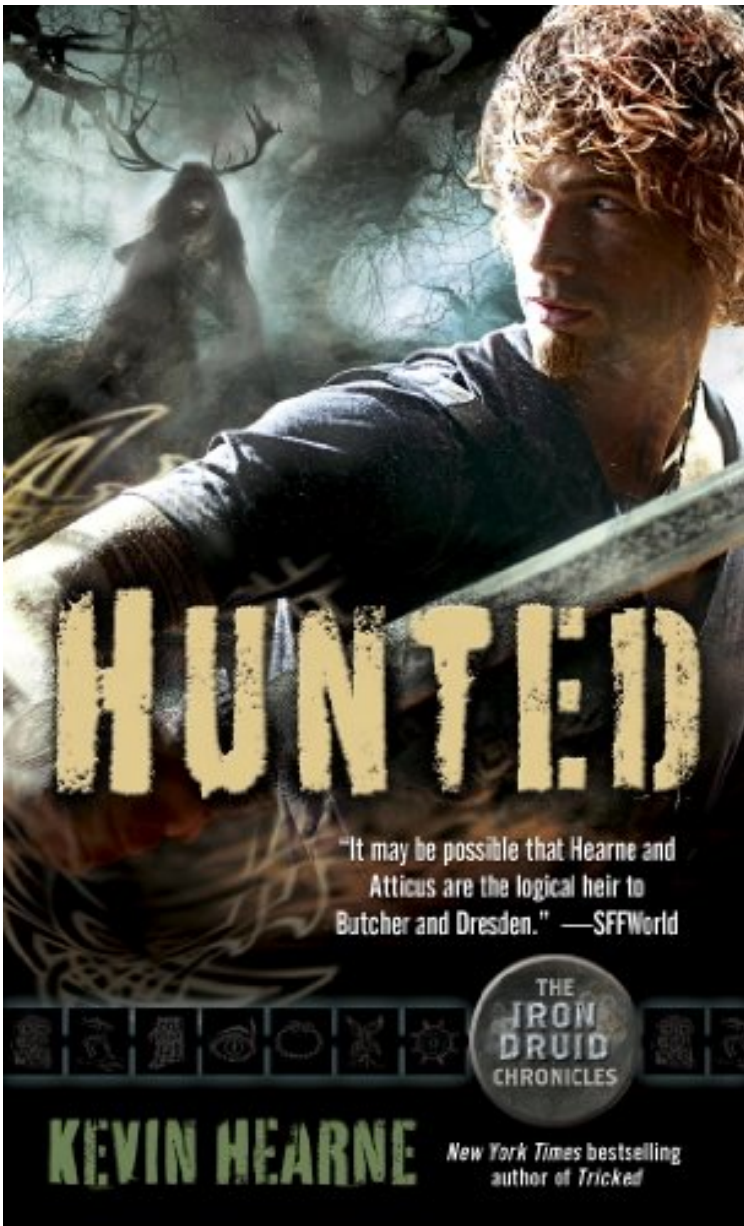


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Hunted: The Iron Druid Chronicles, Book Six



Par Kevin Hearne

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurNEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER This ebook edition includes a special preview of Kevin Hearnes upcoming novelA Plague of Giants.For a two-thousand-year-old Druid, Atticus OSullivan is a pretty fast runner. Good thing, because hes being chased by not one but two goddesses of the huntArtemis and Dianafor messing with one of their own. Dodging their slings and arrows, Atticus, Granuaile, and his wolfhound Oberon are making a mad dash across modern-day Europe to seek help from a friend of the Tuatha D Danann. His usual magical option of shifting planes is blocked, so instead of playing hide-and-

seek, the game plan is . . . run like hell. Crashing the pantheon marathon is the Norse god Loki. Killing Atticus is the only loose end he needs to tie up before unleashing RagnarokAKA the Apocalypse. Atticus and Granuaile have to outfox the Olympians and contain the god of mischief if they want to go on living and still have a world to live in. Includes Kevin Hearnes novella Two Ravens and One Crow in the back of the book. Dont miss any of Kevin Hearnes phenomenal Iron Druid Chronicles novels: HOUNDED | HEXED | HAMMERED | TRICKED | TRAPPED | HUNTED | SHATTERED | STAKED. Praise for Kevin Hearne It may be possible that Hearne and Atticus are the logical heir to Butcher and Dresden. SFFWorld An exciting mix of comedy, action, and mythology . . . [Atticus] is one of the best main characters currently present in the urban fantasy genre. Fantasy Book Critic, on Tricked Superb . . . eminently readable . . . plenty of quips and zap-pow-bang fighting. Publishers Weekly (starred review), on Hounded Praise for Hunted Hunted is the best by far! . . . Storytelling doesnt get much better than this, folks. The author has caught lightning (pun intended) in a bottle and he keeps doing it again, and again. If you havent caught on to the joy that is the Iron Druid Chronicles, you should remedy that, post-haste. My Bookish Ways Hunted is everything youve come to expect from an Iron Druid book, and then some. I give Hunted [a] five out of five. Roqoo Depot A fun, action packed book that delivers some great sequences, and some superb narrative with some great humour. The Founding Fields Hunted is filled with everything I love about the series. Snark runs rampant, action is non-stop, the world building is phenomenal, and the characters are ones that you would love to sit down and have a drink with. Mad Hatter Reads Hunted is an adrenaline-filled read with tons of action, fantastic mythology and some real twists. The epilogue has me itching to get my hands on the next in the series. Vampire Book Club Extrait Chapter 1 Its odd how when you feel safe you cant think of that thing it was you kept meaning to do, but when youre running for your life you suddenly remember the entire list of things you never got around to doing. I always wanted to get blindly drunk with a mustachioed man, take him back to his place, do a few extra shots just this side of severe liver damage, and then shave off half his mustache when he passed out. I would then install surveillance equipment before I left so that I could properly appreciate his reaction (and his hangover) when he woke up. And of course I would surveil him from a black windowless van parked somewhere along his street. There would be a wisecracking computer science graduate from MIT in the van with me who almost but not quite went all the way once with a mousy physics major who dumped him because he didnt accelerate her particles. I cant remember when I thought that one up and added it to my list. It was probably after I saw True Lies. It was never particularly high up on my list, for obvious reasons, but the memory came back to me, fully fantasized in Technicolor, once I was running for my life in Romania. Our minds are mysteries. Somewhere behind me, the Morrigan was fighting off two goddesses of the hunt. Artemis and Diana had decided that I needed killing, and the Morrigan had pledged to protect me from such violent death. Oberon ran on my left and Granuaile on my right; all around me, the forest quaked silently with the pandemonium of Faunus, disrupting Druidic tethers to Tr na ng. I could not shift away to safety. All I could do was run and curse the ancient GrecoRomans. Unlike the Irish and the Norse and many other cultures the GrecoRomans did not imagine their gods as eternally youthful but vulnerable to violent death. Oh, they had nectar and ambrosia to keep their skin wrinkle-free and their bodies in prime shape, changing their blood to ichor, and that was similar to the magical food and drink available to other pantheons, but that wasnt the end of it. They could regenerate completely, which essentially gifted them with true immortality, so that even if you shredded them like machaca and ate them with guacamole and warm tortillas, theyd just re-spawn in a brand-new body on Olympus and keep coming after you hence the reason why Prometheus never died, in spite of having his liver eaten every day by a vulture who oddly never sought variety in his diet. That didnt mean a fella couldnt beat them. Aside from the fact that they can be slain by other immortals, the Olympians have to exist in time like everyone else. Id tossed Bacchus onto an island of slow time in Tr na ng, and the Olympians took it personally so personally that theyd rather kill me than get Bacchus back. I didnt think for a moment I could do the same to the huntresses. They were far more adept in combat, for one thing, and theyd be watching each others back while doing their best to shoot me in mine. Where are we going? Granuaile asked. Roughly north for now. Situations fluid. Oberon said. The Morrigan had taken both arrows in her shield and told us to run. I almost did too, Oberon, Granuaile said. She could hear his voice now that she was a full Druid. I should have been ducking or tackling Atticus or almost anything else, but instead I was just trying my damndest not to pee. Well have to take a potty break later, I said. Distance is key right now. And Im guessing stealth isnt? This is going to be an easy trail to follow the way were moving through the forest. Well get crafty when we have the space to do so. The Morrigans raspy voice entered my head. It wasnt my favorite habit of hers, but it was convenient at the

moment. Her tone was exultant. Here is a battle worthy of remembrance! How I wish there were witnesses and a bard like Amergin to put it down in song! Morrigan Listen, Siodhachan. I can keep them from pursuing you for some while. But they will hunt again soon enough. They will? What about you? I am better than they. But not immortal. My end is near; I have seen it. But what an end it will be! I slowed down and looked back. Granuaile and Oberon paused too. You're going to die? Don't stop running, you fool! Run and listen and do not sleep. You know how to stave off the need to sleep, don't you? Yes. Prevent the buildup of adenosine in the brain and enough with the modern words. You know. Now you must either find one of the Old Ways to Tr na nGone that isn't guarded or make your way to the forest of Herne the Hunter. The forest of Herne? You mean Windsor Forest? That's a hell of a run across Europe. You can always die instead, the Morrigan pointed out. No thanks. But Windsor is not much of a wilderness anymore. It's more like a groomed park. People drink tea there. They might even play croquet. That's not a forest. It will suffice. Herne is there. He will defend it. And he will bring friends. And, Siodhachan, remember that Gaia loves us more than she loves the Olympians. They have given her nothing in all their long lives. Even now they traumatize her with pandemonium. I am unbinding their chariots; they will be afoot for some while until their smith gods can make them anew. Take advantage and give yourself as much of a lead as possible. Something didn't compute. Morrigan, if you saw this coming, why didn't you warn me? You were with your woman. My woman? If I tried to call Granuaile that, I would promptly lose some teeth. She's not mine. You can't possess anyone. I have learned that lesson very well. Fine, then what does that have to do with this ridiculous fight with the Olympians? We could have avoided it all. No. It was always going to come. Delaying would do no good. Are you kidding? That's what living is. Delaying death. Let's get you some Prozac. Hush. I have for you what modern people call a lovely parting gift. I shuddered to think what the Morrigan considered lovely, so I simply said, A parting gift? In Tr na nG there is a Time Island with the following address. A vision appeared in my head of a short stone obelisk etched with Ogham script. Do you see it? Yes, but record it well in your memory. Circle the island. On the side facing upstream, look closely at the tree line and you will see someone there you might wish to retrieve. If you do, ask Goibhniu for help. Morrigan. Why? Because I am trapped and this is the only way out. And because you have chosen, and you have chosen well. I cannot fault her. I lost a step or two as the import of her words sank in. Granuaile shot a worried glance at me and I shook my head once, reassuring her that nothing was wrong. But . . . Morrigan, you never said anything. Would it have mattered? Would you have ever chosen me? I don't know. But I didn't get a chance. Every day was a chance, Siodhachan. Two thousand years of days. If you were interested, you had ample opportunity to express it. I understand. I frighten you. I frighten everyone, and that is a fact I cannot escape, however I may wish otherwise. Well . . . yeah. You're fighting off two Olympians right now and having this conversation. That's frightening. They came prepared. Their fabrics are synthetic. I cannot bind them. And they are very skilled, trying to wound my right side and affect my magic. Morrigan, just get out of there. You saved me and we have a lead now. No. This is the choice I have made. It is only recently I have tried to change in earnest. I mean since you slew Aengus and discovered that somehow change has become impossible for me. I cannot make friends. I cannot be gentle except under the most extraordinary circumstances. My nature will not allow it. All I can do is terrify, seduce, and choose the slain. Is that not strange? Long ago I was merely a Druid like you and could do whatever I wished. But once I became a goddess, certain expectations came with the power. Call them chains, rather. I didn't notice them until I tried to break free. My nature now is no longer my own to do with as I please. I can be only what my people want me to be. I'm sorry. I didn't know. I tell you so that you may grow wiser. It is a hidden law of godhood, and woe unto she who finds it. I have been trying to deny its reality, but it has asserted itself too often to be anything but the truth. Yet I have some comfort now. You do? Here is my victory, Siodhachan: I am permitted to do battle, and I do not need a reason. Still, I usually have one, and that reason can be whatever I wish. So today I do not fight for glory or honor or bloodlust or vengeance. I fight for . . . something else. I understand. But say it anyway. For the win. Love. Morrigan, I felt as if something popped softly in my head, like the release of tension when a taut cord is cut. Or a binding. There was a sudden emptiness, and an overwhelming sense of vertigo caused me to stumble over a root and execute a graceless face plant. Morrigan? The silence in my head pointed to only one conclusion. Our mental bond had been like the soft electric hum of kitchen appliances or computers that you never notice until they stop. During a rather painful ritual that had regenerated an ear I'd lost to a demon, she'd slipped in the binding that allowed her to speak to me telepathically. It was gone now. Atticus, what happened? Granuaile helped me to my feet and gasped when she saw my face. Are you hurt? Why are you crying? She let go of my arm and then had to grab it again when I swayed on my feet, still a bit dizzy. The

Morrigan is dead, I said. Chapter 2 Think you can carry your staff in your mouth as a horse? I asked, to forestall any questions about what happened. I rubbed away my tears with the heel of my palm. Granuaile understood and didn't press the issue, though her voice sounded hollowed out by shock. I suppose I could. Good. Leave your clothes here. I began to strip and tried to clear my head of its dizziness by taking several deep breaths. We really need to make time. Well hoof it and recharge from the earth as we go. Granuaile peeled off her shirt. The Morrigan said the Old Ways would be collapsed or guarded, she said, recalling what the goddess had said to us before we took off running. Are we going to fight our way through and use one of those? I think we'll be running all the way to England. Or to France, anyway, then we'll swim the channel. Were seriously running there from Romania? That's right. We can't take a train or boost a car or something? No. You heard what the Morrigan said. The only way she saw us survive is running the whole way. That doesn't make sense. When it comes to our survival, I don't want to bet against the Morrigan's visions. She tends I mean, tended to be accurate on matters of life and death. I'm not trying to argue the truth of what she said. I just want to understand why it's true. I shrugged. I don't know the answer yet. We'll find out as we go. My guess is that we'll have to figure out everything on the run. Once divested of our clothing, with our weapons lying on the ground in front of us, we shifted to our hooved forms a stag and a chestnut mare and picked up our weapons in our mouths. Oberon said. I didn't have a reply for that, but Granuaile must have, because Oberon followed that up with an outraged She obviously said he did, for he continued, He picked up one of Granuaile's thigh holsters, where she kept three leaf-bladed throwing knives. The one-sided banter continued as we began to run, and I was grateful for it. Someone I had thought of as eternal had abruptly ended, and it rocked me. I couldn't have summoned a single playful riposte to Oberon's comments. There was simply too much else for me to deal with, not least of which was figuring out how we would continue to survive. Once out of the foothills of the Apuseni Mountains, we were able to pour on the speed, skirting along the edge of a small plateau and then, descending out of the wilderness, running across flat cultivated lands. We bore northwest to avoid crossing more hills and slowing down. We kept to the vineyards and alfalfa and cereal crops and avoided the villages. We swam across two rivers and crossed into Hungary by running south of Oradea as the sun set. Through Oberon, I relayed to Granuaile what the Morrigan had said the bits about getting to Hernes forest, anyway. Her question to me: Our best chance was in simple speed, unless we could somehow find an Old Way to Tr na ng that wasn't monitored. I had no doubt that those would all be watched. The people behind planning this wanted to make sure they got us, and they wouldn't be able to if we could get to Tr na ng and then shift to another plane entirely. The Romans had done the same thing to the ancient Druids when they tried to wipe us out with the help of vampires and the Roman goddess Minerva. Step one had been to burn all the sacred groves on the continent, which were the only tethers to Tr na ng at the time; step two was to guard all the Old Ways; and step three was to use Minerva's aid to see through our camouflage. I'd managed to escape them by running north beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire. I would not be surprised to learn that Minerva had advised Pan, Faunus, and the huntresses how to hunt us now. But I had never tried to run across Europe before. I'd hiked it once and stayed in youth hostels and put little patches on my backpack because I thought it was a funny disguise, but I took my time doing that, and climbing up mountains was an experience to be savored. I rather thought dealing with mountains now would do nothing but slow us down, and, besides, I didn't want to telegraph our intended destination. To get to the Strait of Dover directly, we could simply run north of west and hit it. But that route would present us not only with several mountain ranges but plenty of well-paved cities like Budapest and Vienna. We needed misdirection and the ability to keep in touch with the earth at all times. That's why I took a sharp turn north at the Hungarian border: Once we crossed the Carpathians, we could stick to flattish land or, at the worst, low rolling hills all the way to France. While we moved northwest through Poland and Germany, we'd keep them thinking we were headed for Sweden via Denmark. To get the best possible route, however, avoiding the majority of villages while also minimizing our exposure to survivalists in the woods awaiting the apocalypse, I would need to consult elementals along the way. Using my Latin headspace, I reached out to the Carpathian elemental, who was dominant across several human political borders that were meaningless to Gaia. // Druids run / Need guidance / Avoid people and cities if possible // After some back and forth with Carpathia, we settled on a route that would take us north through rural areas of Hungary and Slovakia until we reached the proper Carpathian Mountains. With a plan in place and an hour of trail behind us, I had time to feel, and much of that feeling leaked out of my eyes as I ran. I had spent nearly my entire life worshipping the Morrigan, and, in recent years, more than that. She was the darkness for me, an unexpectedly beautiful harbinger of doom and pain who forced me to struggle, who

pushed me to improve myself. She was a necessary balance to Brighid, not something merely to be feared but to be treasured. As Brighid brought light and craft and poetry to our lives, the Morrigan brought an edge, a tangible sharpness to my existence by sharing hers with me. Revue de presse Praise for Hunted Hunted is the best by far! . . . Storytelling doesnt get much better than this, folks. The author has caught lightning (pun intended) in a bottle and he keeps doing it again, and again. If you havent caught on to the joy that is the Iron Druid Chronicles, you should remedy that, post-haste. My Bookish Ways Hunted is everything youve come to expect from an Iron Druid book, and then some. I give Hunted [a] five out of five. Roqoo Depot A fun, action packed book that delivers some great sequences, and some superb narrative with some great humour. The Founding Fields Hunted is filled with everything I love about the series. Snark runs rampant, action is non-stop, the world building is phenomenal, and the characters are ones that you would love to sit down and have a drink with. Mad Hatter Reads Hunted is an adrenaline-filled read with tons of action, fantastic mythology and some real twists. The epilogue has me itching to get my hands on the next in the series. Vampire Book Club Praise for Kevin Hearne An exciting mix of comedy, action, and mythology . . . [Atticus] is one of the best main characters currently present in the urban fantasy genre. Fantasy Book Critic, on Tricked Superb . . . eminently readable . . . plenty of quips and zap-pow-bang fighting. Publishers Weekly (starred review), on Hounded