

Chapter 8

“Now, now Aslaug, let's be reasonable,” Gabriel said, sitting next to the Shieldmaiden. “I was just trying to keep you from being hurt, that's all. Besides, it was Michael's idea, anyway.” The angel was looking at a very *pissed off* filly.

“When I get out of this, I'm gonna shove your wings down your throat!” the Shieldmaiden hissed, trying once more to break out of the bonds that held her.

“This is a mess.” Gabriel muttered, looking at the filly. He just knew that Michael was going to get him in trouble again. “Look, if I let you go, will you promise not to hurt me? I can't leave for at least a few seconds once the bonds are released.”

“That's all I wanted to hear ...” the filly replied, a murderous grin crossing her muzzle.

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Torvald felt the static electricity around them fade and he could see where they were. “Don't open your eyes, Sweetheart.” he said, sitting up.

“Too late.” his mate replied. Her first questions came right away. “Where are we and how did we get here?” Victoria was looking at a beautiful alpine meadow, alive with flowers in bloom everywhere.

“Uh ... we're in Christopher's home, I think.” the berserker said, standing up and straightening his clothes. He reached out and helped his wife to her feet. “Over there ...” he said, pointing to a table with a lion and a wolf sitting at it.

The couple walked the short distance to the spot where Christopher and Odin were sitting. As they drew closer, Victoria could see that the table was covered with fresh fruit and glasses of liquid, possibly wine by the color of it.

“Please, sit down.” the lion beckoned, pointing to a pair of chairs. As they sat down, the lion, who was dressed in a loud camp shirt with cars and surfboards on it, introduced himself to the tigress.

“Victoria, I am the one that Torvald once called 'WhiteChrist' but you may call me Christopher. This distinguished old fur with me is Odin.” he said, gesturing to the one-eyed wolf.

“It is nice to meet the mate of Torvald. I am honored.” Odin said, giving the tigress a slight bow.

Christopher looked at Victoria and said, “I am sorry that we brought you here so unannounced. We needed to talk with Torvald and you were still holding him too close. We couldn't bring him here alone without possibly harming you.”

“Oh ... uh ... that's OK, I guess ...” she said. “I ... uh ... didn't have any plans or ... anything ...” The tigress just sat there, not knowing what to say or do.

“Please! Relax, Victoria. You are our welcome guest here! Please eat and drink while we talk.” The lion said, giving her a big smile. Christopher then turned to face the stallion.

“Torvald, we observed what happened and we are very ashamed of the Archangels interference in your quest. Michael was trying to give you strength and courage which you did not need. What he did not know was that Odin blocked his attempt. You probably still have a headache from that.”

Torvald nodded, being acutely aware of a banging headache that he had. “So what you're saying is I did that by myself?” the stallion asked, slightly wide-eyed by now.

“No, not exactly.” the lion replied. “Your loving mate gave you strength because she loves you with a kind of love that transcends time itself. Victoria channeled that love through you so she wouldn't lose you.”

Christopher sipped his wine before he continued. “Your fear that you had to face was eventually having to leave her. As long as you feared losing her, you could not do our bidding. When you saw her standing beside you, facing down Surt, you knew that she would always be beside you.”

Odin looked over at the tigress and spoke. “You were an innocent bystander, pulled into this by the actions of others. You were never meant to face Surt, even though you did. Because you *were* mortal, we had to intervene on your behalf. You would have surely been destroyed merely by being in his realm.”

The wolf looked a bit uncomfortable about what he had to tell the tigress next. “To save you from being destroyed, it was agreed upon by the gods to give you immortality. That and stirring your genetic warrior past just a bit. Without those things, you would have never left his realm alive.”

Victoria nodded her head as she thought this over. "So that's why I was driven to try and destroy Surt ... It was my love for my husband that made me stand up for what I held dearest."

"When it comes down to it, you couldn't have killed him. Surt is destruction personified." Christopher said, looking quite serious. "We don't even possess the power to destroy him. Besides, he is ... necessary."

The lion then looked at his guests with a smile. "Enough about evil and such. Let's eat and drink to Torvald being ready to do our work. Odin brought this *incredible* wine to go with the fruit." The wolf was smiling at that remark.

"But what about the angels that interfered?" Victoria asked. "Will they be punished for their deeds?"

A smile crossed Christopher's face as he replied, "Yeah, they *will* get punished."

###

"I don't know, Gabriel. It looks like you're gonna be in a world of hurt when you let her go." Michael commented, sitting beside the smaller feline. They were both facing the filly right now and she was still looking a hole through the smaller Archangel.

"Can't you help me out here?" Gabriel asked, looking just a little pale by now. "I'm starting to weaken ... Michael, I can't hold her much longer."

"I would help you out but I'm already in trouble by now for interfering with Torvald. I have to say that something didn't feel right, like that strength boost was deflected somehow." Michael replied, getting more comfortable in his chair. "I say just let her loose and take your lumps. She can't kill you, if that's what you're afraid of."

"Just let me pummel you for an hour or two ..." the filly suggested, looking at the archangel with a look of death on her face. "I *promise* I won't pull your wings off."

Loke chimed in from his perch on the arm of the couch. "That is a promise I think she won't keep." he commented, shaking his head at the situation. "I'm pretty sure she'll rip them off real quick. It won't hurt too much ..." The weasel was fighting back a smile as he watched on.

“See! That's what I'm afraid of!” Gabriel said to the other angel. “Do you know how long that'll take to heal?” He swallowed real hard and shook his head. “I'm toast ...”

“Well, looks like it's time for me to leave.” Michael said, closing his eyes. After a few seconds, he opened them again to see that he had not left. “What the devil ...?” he said, trying to leave once more but failing. He looked up at the ceiling and shouted “This isn't funny! Hey! Do you hear me? Boss? Christopher?!?”

An evil smile began to spread across Aslaug's muzzle as she stood up from her chair ...

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As the whiteness faded back into scenery, Torvald and Victoria looked around to see that they had been returned to their back yard. Torvald picked up his weaponry while his mate went inside to see what time it was. By the clock on the mantle, the two of them had been gone less than 15 minutes.

“If I hadn't been there, I wouldn't have believed a word of it.” Victoria commented, closing the patio door behind the stallion. “That was just ... unreal. The evil that I felt there in Surt's realm ...” The tigress shuddered at the thought.

“I'm just glad that's over with.” Torvald said, hanging his Dane axe up. He took a moment to wipe down his Franciscas before putting them in the holder he had made for them. He was putting his broad sword away when Victoria came back into the family room.

“Look at this!” she said, holding her paw out. “I cut it on a broken mayonnaise jar but when I ran water over it to clean it up, there's no cut!”

“You're immortal now.” Torvald stated. “We'll always be together here on earth. When we're done with our work here, both of us will be going to the other side together. That's what we were told.”

“This is going to take some getting used to.” the tigress said, drying the fur on her paw. She was looking at the stallion when she noticed something. “Tor, you'd better look in the mirror.”

The berserker looked in the mirror to see that he now had some gray hairs around his muzzle and in his mane. “I guess my complaints about not fitting in didn't go unanswered.” Torvald commented. The giant fur

was smiling as he looked at his new appearance. "It makes me look distinguished, don't you think?" he asked, still mugging in the mirror.

"Yeah, it makes you look an appropriate age to be my husband." Victoria replied, walking over and holding the berserker tightly. She was beginning to cry tears of joy as she said "You'll always be my husband."

###

"911 emergency." the dispatcher said, sipping her coffee. It had been a long, hectic afternoon and she was watching the clock on the wall. 24 more minutes until the end of her shift.

"Slow down! I can't make out what you're saying." she said to the person on the other end. She hated these frantic callers. It usually took forever to get them to calm down. "Just take a deep breath and calm down. Repeat what you just told me *slowly*." She listened to the caller again.

"What's going on next door? Hold on ... she's got what and ... hold it, you're getting frantic again! Calm down!" The dispatcher heard the person on the other end take a few deep breaths before the caller spoke to her again.

"OK, she's got a wing. What kind of wing ... you know, like a chicken wing? An airplane wing?" the dispatcher asked, writing notes on her pad. "It's a *what kind* of wing? *How big* is it?" she asked, ceasing to write notes by now.

"It's *that* big, eh?" the dispatcher said, writing down the address on the display. "And she's doing *what* with it?" She listened for a minute before she said "I'll see if I can have a unit drive by there. Just stay inside, I wouldn't want you to get hurt. OK, thank you for calling."

The dispatcher terminated the call and rubbed her forehead. She hated these types of calls. Looking around for the shift supervisor, she motioned him over. Once he was within speaking range, she told her supervisor about the call.

"Listen Bob, I got this call just now. A femme swears that her neighbor, this crazy blond filly, has a 4 foot long white bird's wing and she's beating the hell out of two felines with it. Ya think it's a crank? I have the address for the phone call ..."

"Naw, ignore it. The femme's probably been hittin' the sauce too early." her supervisor suggested, taking a look at the number on the pad. "Ya

know, tell ya what. I'll have a cruiser go by and check on her ... see if she's been drinking or something”

###

Torvald and Victoria were relaxing in the family room, enjoying some Lynyrd Skynyrd on the CD player. As the first CD finished and the changer was switching CD's, A voice rang out in the room;

“Torvald Svensen, It is time. Prepare yourself.”

The giant fur smiled as he stood and helped his mate to stand. “They are calling me. I will be home soon, my love. The other femme's numbers are by the phone if you need them.” He gave his wife a long kiss and hugged her tightly. “I'll be home soon.” He stepped back from her a few steps and the room around him went white ...

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It was a few moments before the berserker realized that he was somewhere that was all white. Floor, ceiling, everything was white. He looked around to see a familiar form standing in the distance. As he walked nearer to the form, the figure turned and headed his way.

“It is good to see you, Berserker.” the Shieldmaiden said, extending her paw. They gripped each other's arms in a Norse pawshake.

“I am glad to be here, doing something that has meaning.” the giant fur replied as he looked around. “Is it just the two of us this time?” he asked, looking over at the filly.

“No, the others will be along shortly.” she said, smiling at the berserker.