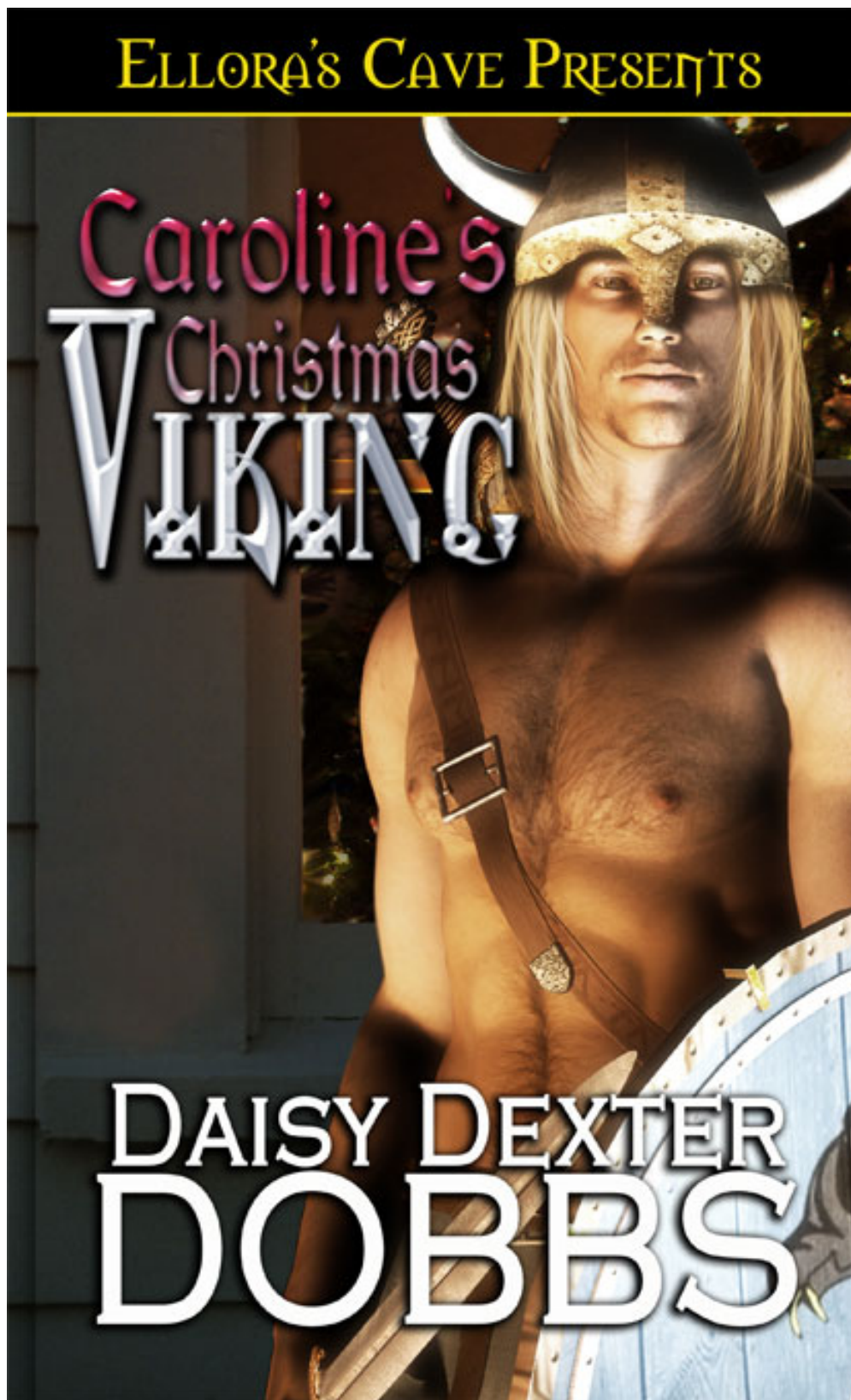


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

Caroline's
Christmas
VIKING

DAISY DEXTER
DOBBS



An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Caroline's Christmas Viking

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CAROLINE'S CHRISTMAS VIKING

Daisy Dexter Dobbs

Chapter One

My Dearest Caroline,

Although it's been many years since we last sat together over mugs of hot chocolate and spoke of hopes and dreams, and the future, I'm certain you'll remember the charm enclosed here.

I told you then that one day it would be yours. It is the most precious possession I own. More valuable than any amount of money. This amulet has been passed down through the women of our family for generations. Its magic will work only once every fifty years. Keep it near your heart. Though your mind may be cluttered and uncertain, your heart will know the right wish to make when it's time. Trust your heart, my dear.

You've suffered much heartache, but I do hope you haven't lost your faith in the power of love and magic, for it is, indeed, real and true. Believe me, Caroline, I know.

With all my love until we meet again in the great hereafter,

Auntie Helga

Caroline McNulty read the letter aloud for the third time, erupting in a new wave of thunderous sobs. Sent from Norway, the package arrived in Chicago a week before Christmas — the second Christmas she'd spend alone because her cheating rat bastard of a husband left her for a younger, slimmer model a year ago. On Christmas Eve.

After reading a document from the executor of her great aunt's estate, Caroline took the tiny golden Viking trinket and its fine chain from the box and studied it.

She remembered Helga regaling her with romantic accounts of love and fairytale-like happily-ever-afters. Caroline listened with rapt attention, gobbling up legends of enchantment and strong, handsome Vikings. Especially during those special times

when her great aunt brought out the little charm in the form of a Viking and spoke of Norse folklore. Family legend said the magical charm had been given to the matriarch of a Viking king by Odin, the most powerful of Norse gods.

Of course, now Caroline knew the fascinating tales were simply make believe.

Her fanciful great aunt may have been naïve enough to believe in myths, Viking love charms, Norse gods and the rest of that paranormal gibberish, but Caroline knew better.

She knew firsthand that life was a bitch and fairytales were meant for wide-eyed children.

As she opened another small envelope in the package, she found a long braided lock of hair. Caroline fondly recalled the ever-present plaited coil of white-blonde hair affixed to the top of Helga's head. As a child she'd wished she could have flaxen locks instead of her stark black hair. While Caroline had the tall, large-boned, full-bodied physique of her mother's Scandinavian side of the family, she got the black hair and midnight-blue eyes from her father's side. The Black Irish, as her paternal grandmother had called it. Both sides shared the pale, easily sunburned skin.

And Caroline could never forget her great aunt's kind, pale blue eyes that seemed to hold the secrets and wisdom of the ages. She remembered Helga instructing her to look deep into her eyes, saying that if she gazed hard enough Caroline would see her true love.

"Tell me what you see, dear."

Caroline would squint, focusing all of her concentration on Helga's eyes. "Ooh, I think I see a Viking, Auntie Helga!"

"And what does he look like?"

"He's very tall and handsome, with long hair, lots of muscles and a sword and shield."

"Sounds like Erik the Red," Helga had said.

And Caroline shook her head from side to side. “No, Auntie Helga, my Viking has blond hair. He must be Erik the Blond!” Then they giggled and hugged.

Gullible little Caroline had actually convinced herself that she had spied her true love in Auntie Helga’s eyes.

Carefully stuffing everything back into the envelope, Caroline smiled when her dog, Thursday, came sniffing around. “Sorry, Thursday. Nothing here to eat, boy.” She massaged the back of his ears, getting a big juicy face lick in return. At least her faithful dog would be with her for Christmas.

She was about to place Helga’s package in a drawer and hesitated. It was almost as if she heard, or was it *felt*, the little Viking charm calling to her. That was beyond ridiculous. Pure wishful thinking. The lure of recapturing the innocence of her childhood.

And yet...

After all, her favorite relative had made a special point to set her *magic talisman* aside for her great niece. And then to write a loving letter in her own hand, shaky as it was at ninety-five and riddled with arthritis. Not wearing the charm would be like a slap in the face to Auntie Helga, and Caroline couldn’t do that.

She took the chain out of the box and held the gleaming amulet in the palm of her hand. The Viking’s detail was amazing—the textured fur of his tunic, the horned Brunhilda helmet, the sword, his muscles—all meticulously crafted in metal. The color reminded Caroline of rich deep butterscotch. Funny, she didn’t remember the charm being gold. She could swear it had been silver. Knowing Auntie Helga’s zealous efforts to extol the virtues of magic to everyone she knew, Caroline wouldn’t be a bit surprised if this charm was simply one of many the old woman kept tucked away in a box. She’d probably left instructions for her executor to dole out miniature Vikings to each relative and friend, complete with her mystical tale of supernatural powers and one-time use. The thought made Caroline chuckle.

She slipped the chain over her head. It was the perfect length. The Viking fell just next to her heart.

* * * * *

The day before Christmas Eve was clear and sunny, until Caroline left the office and the heavens opened. She blustered a string of curses while scraping ice and snow from the windshield. Once behind the wheel, she reached for the glove compartment, licking her lips in anticipation of sinking her teeth into a chocolate bar, knowing the sensation of rich velvet creaminess melting on her tongue would soothe her ice-savaged psyche.

When she popped open the glove box and reached inside, Caroline grew cold at the ghastly realization that the cupboard was bare.

"No. No! *Nooooooooo!*"

Leaning forward and banging the heel of her hand against the steering wheel, she felt the tiny Viking amulet press against her breast. "Yeah, lot of good you've done me, you little golden twerp." She rolled her eyes. "Jeez. Now I'm not only talking to myself, I'm talking to a goddamned dime-a-dozen charm around my neck too."

And then she smiled...no, grinned, when her thoughts turned to the chocolate stash in her nightstand. Yes, she could hang on until she got home and ripped into the cookies and candy. She drooled at the thought...literally drooled.

"Caroline, you're one sick chick," she told herself through wicked laughter as she swiped a tissue across her chin. "I guess that's what happens when you go for a whole year without getting laid." Not that sex with her ex-husband Herbert had been anything spectacular, but it beat the standing Saturday-night trysts with her trusty four-speed vibrator. Well...on second thought...

After crawling through bumper-to-bumper traffic, snarled by throngs of last-minute holiday shoppers, Caroline finally pulled into her driveway. She heard her best buddy, Thursday, whimpering as she put her key into the door. She'd never been a dog person until he came into her life. It wasn't love at first sight. Thursday was foisted on

her by Herbert a few months before their divorce. On a Thursday to be exact—the day of the week named after the Norse god, Thor, son of Odin. With all the imagination and creativity of a thumbtack, he'd named the dog Ruff. That changed the day after Herbert, an English professor, left her for a perky little college student.

Herbert found the motley midnight-black mutt shivering and huddled next to the trashcans in the alley one morning and brought him inside. Caroline's first memory of the sizeable creature was watching him lift his leg and pee on the side of her suede sofa. "Do you have any idea what dog pee does to suede?" she'd asked the dog. Not getting an answer, she posed the question to Herbert who didn't answer either.

She only tolerated the animal because Herbert—whom she hadn't yet realized was a lowdown cheating walking scumbag sonuvabitch—said *Ruff* reminded him of the dog he'd had as a boy and lost to a car accident. Shit. How could she throw the beast out—Ruff, not Herbert—after hearing a story like that?

Herbert demanded custody of Ruff when they divorced, which was fine with Caroline. When he moved out, he said he'd be back for the dog once he was settled. That was twelve months ago and she hadn't seen him since.

And then a funny thing happened.

Caroline and the dog got to know each other. And they actually got to be friends, really bonded.

"Do you know why I love you so much, Thursday?" she'd asked him. "Because you listen when I need to talk. You watch my favorite old movies without making fun of them and don't look at me like I'm a moron when I cry at the happy parts. You never come home drunk and obnoxious. And, most important, because you don't care if I'm not a just-out-of-her-teens size five."

"I swear," Caroline said now as she turned the doorknob and opened the front door, "if I'd known at twenty what I know at thirty-eight, I would have opted for a dog instead of a husband." Yes, Thursday was her little sweetie pie. Her loving, adorable, attentive pal.

Stepping inside, Caroline could swear her eyeballs popped out of her head and dangled on springs as she viewed the catastrophe before her. She zeroed in on remnants of the bag of chocolate sandwich cookies that trailed from the living room to her bedroom. And then she saw the candy bar wrappers.

"My chocolate! Thursday!" Clutching her hand to her breast, she screeched, "You goddamn flea-ridden, piss-pawed excuse for a dog. How could you do this to me? I *needed* that chocolate today!" A quick scan of the floor revealed that he'd also christened the plush ivory carpet with dog vomit. Dark, crisp, scattered patches of mustard yellow with black cookie crumbs and chunks of regurgitated chocolate embedded in the midst of it all. If that weren't bad enough, the dumb dog who was probably on a sugar high had toppled the Christmas tree, leaving her treasured family heirloom ornaments resting in splotches of puke.

After hearing Caroline's anguished cry and glimpsing her crazed expression, Thursday hastily skulked off, tail between his legs, to some hidden corner.

"Yeah, you'd *better* hide, you fiend, because at this very moment I am planning your demise."

Grumbling, she gingerly sidestepped the barf as though the blotches were a minefield and padded into the bedroom. Her shoulders slumped as she bellowed a gargantuan groan. Not only had Thursday vomited on her bedspread, but he'd deposited a nasty clump of poop on the carpet. And there wasn't a single uneaten cookie or piece of chocolate left anywhere in sight.

"Damn it, Thursday! Damn it, damn it, damn it!"

How in the world he'd managed to open the drawer of her nightstand was beyond her. And how he could devour that economy size bag of double-crème-filled cookies and all the candy without leaving any for her made her see red. Knowing chocolate can be toxic to dogs, she supposed she should be relieved that he barfed it all out. But at the moment...

As Caroline churned out another round of profanity, there was a knock at the front door.

Shit. Now what?

She wasn't going to answer it...but what if it was some kid selling chocolate bars for school or scouts or something? There was more knocking and then the doorbell rang. Desperately in need of chocolate, she dragged her frazzled nerves across the room and opened the door.

Uttering a gasp of astonishment, Caroline's hand flew to her chest, pressing against the golden charm, which suddenly grew warm.

Standing across her threshold was a living, breathing golden-haired, half-naked hunk of a man in full Viking regalia.

Chapter Two

"I sorry to bothering you," the tall, astoundingly handsome man said in broken English. "But I be locked."

Gawking at the towering presence filling her doorway, it took Caroline a long moment before she was capable of speech. Sun-bronzed skin, thick golden hair that fell to his shoulders, powerfully built arms, broad pecs, powerful thighs, striking blue eyes... He was Erik the Blond, her childhood fantasy come to life.

"What?" she eked out breathlessly, wholly aware that her pussy was creaming.

"English not so good, my pardon I beg," he said. "No keys to house or auto car."

Caroline's fingers twisted the charm inside her blouse, unable to focus on his words because she was too busy salivating. The big stranger had a sword sheathed across his back and carried a round shield. He was so breathtaking she felt a tremor zing to her clit and then her dribbling pussy clenched.

"Erik the Blond," she whispered in awe.

The man grinned and nodded. "You knowing my name!"

She blinked hard. The guy's name was *Erik the Blond*? No. Uh-uh. Totally impossible. Her frown slowly morphed into a smile. Finally she laughed.

"I get it. My great aunt set this up, didn't she?"

"Not understand. I play." He clapped his hand against his chest. "I need to play," he said earnestly.

Caroline looked him up and down, uttering a throaty chuckle. "Oh, I just bet you do, big guy, but not with me you don't." She started to close the door, but the Viking's hand caught it.

"Please. Help Erik play."

His mouth was sensitive, his jaw strong. Lust, pure and potent, coiled deep in Caroline's belly. Unable to drag her gaze from his mesmerizing eyes, she was so turned on by this walking, talking embodiment of her fantasies that she could barely breathe.

"Yes," she said, "this would fit perfectly with Auntie's sense of humor. She put something in her will about sending a Viking to poor lonely Caroline for Christmas. Is that it? Well look, buster, I'm not *that* lonely. So you can take your phony accent and your animal pelts and your horned helmet and your big sword..." For some ungodly reason Caroline chose that particular moment to drop her gaze to the man's crotch. And damned if her pussy didn't gush. It had definitely been too long since she'd been laid. She sucked in a deep breath. "And you can just get out of here. The last thing I need in my life now is some big, overgrown muscled —

Erik touched his fingers to her cheek and Caroline gasped. He cupped her chin. "Why you lonely?" he asked. "You so beauty." He looked so sincere, so caring, so fucking hot as he said it that she wanted to rip those pelts off of him with her teeth and feast on him.

As his thumb stroked her cheek, Caroline suddenly wanted to rush into his arms, wailing like a baby against his broad chest about how unfair life had been and how it sucked to be without someone to love at Christmas and how she was thankful for her four-speed vibrator but yearned to feel a flesh and blood cock inside her again. And then she wanted Erik the Blond to respond by uttering a manly grunt, mercilessly impaling her with his rugged Viking cock and fucking her senseless.

She swallowed hard. Absently fingering the charm, her thoughts raced as her panties moistened. Yup, the big muscled hunk of her doorstep was probably a high-class male escort—which was a nice name for *prostitute*—hired by her great aunt's executor. *Erik the Blond* here was probably Helga's final parting gift to her great niece, to keep her from feeling alone and abandoned at Christmas. Caroline looked the hunk of prime beef up and down slowly, amazed at how suitable he looked in the realistic

Viking getup. Her heart skipped a beat as she took in the stubborn jaw, the sexy mouth and the glimmer in his eyes.

Why not? What could it hurt? She craved the delicious heat of a hard, strong body covering hers—the erotic friction of a cock sliding deep in a slow, grinding rhythm. Caroline's belly churned in excitement and uncertainty. No decent woman would ever conceive of doing what she intended to do. But, dammit, she could be bold and brazen and devil-may-care just this once. After all, men satisfied themselves with prostitutes all the time, didn't they? And her great aunt certainly wouldn't engage anyone for the job who hadn't thoroughly been checked out beforehand. She should graciously accept Helga's generosity and indulge. She appraised him once again. Yup, fucking a Viking would be much more satisfying than chomping on a few measly pieces of chocolate.

"How much did my aunt's estate pay you? And how long do I get to keep you?" The Viking cocked his head and stared. "Well?" Folding her arms across her chest, Caroline tapped her toe against the carpet.

He shook his head, as if to clear it. "How long you get me?"

She nodded. "Yeah. How many hours? One, two?" He gave her that strange look again. "Sheesh. This would be a whole lot easier if they sent a guy who could speak English."

"Sorry. I bad English." He nodded. "I must play fast. Understand?"

"So it's one hour?" She pointed to her watch.

The Viking glanced at the time and nodded. "Yes. Play one hour."

"Then I guess we'd better get down to business. I need to jump in the shower first. And I insist on you using a condom, no matter how clean you are, got that?" Without waiting for an answer, Caroline snagged his arm, pulled him through the doorway then pushed the door shut. "I'm sorry about the mess, um...and the smell, but my dog got into the chocolate and," she gestured with her hand, "this is the result." She shrugged and sighed.

At that moment the big mutt, head hung low and limbs shaking, braved a tentative path into the living room. "This is Thursday, the wretched hound responsible for all of this." Caroline laughed.

The Viking held out a hand and Thursday sniffed it. After sniffing the stranger's crotch and butt, the dog seemed satisfied. With nary a growl, he planted himself next to the Viking's long leg.

"Thor's Day," Erik the Blond said, petting the dog. Lapping up the attention, Thursday lavishly swiped his tongue across the Viking's thigh. A similar gesture to what Caroline had in mind, actually. "Good Viking name." Erik's grin stole her breath away and sent her hormones into a frenzy of sexual longing.

"Yes." Caroline returned the smile and just stood there ogling the eye candy for a long moment. "Uh...anyway...my bedroom's in worse shape than the living room, so we can't do it in there. I have an extra room with a futon, so we can use that instead." She looked up at the Viking, who was scanning the disaster her living room had become.

"Thor's Day?" He pointed to the mess. Caroline closed her eyes and nodded. When she opened them again, the Viking was waving a chastising finger at her dog. "Very not nice, Thor's Day." The dog dropped on his back, baring his belly in submission, again mirroring an action at the forefront of Caroline's thoughts.

"I've never done anything like this before," she said, licking her lips nervously. "Have sex with a paid male escort, I mean. In fact..." she felt her cheeks burn, "to be quite honest, I'm sort of rusty. I haven't had sex in more than a year since Herbert left me for one of his adolescent college students. And I'm not really experienced in anything, um...advanced. He wasn't open to anything very imaginative in the bedroom. Pretty much straight missionary-style sex, if you know what I mean." Caroline gestured with one hand flat on top of the other.

Erik gaped at her. "Sex?"

Caroline's shoulder hiked in a shrug and she nodded. "Naturally I wouldn't be telling you all this personal stuff about my sex life if you weren't a professional," she offered. "I just thought it might help if you knew the whole situation before we get to the sex part."

He straightened, elevating one eyebrow and clapping a hand to his chest as he frowned. "You want me sex?"

Caroline gulped. He looked so fierce, so imposing when he frowned, and his size and deliberate manner were intimidating. But sexy as hell. "Sure, why not? I mean, as long as you made the trip and got all costumed up for it. May as well, right?"

"Sex!" The Viking grinned and nodded. He was all white teeth and wolfish charm. "I understand." He scooped Caroline up into his arms as if she weighed no more than the Viking charm at her breast. Then he kissed her, plundering her mouth with his tongue. Lord, the man knew how to kiss! They must teach them all sorts of special carnal techniques at male escort school.

Once the kiss broke he strode across the room, sidestepping the putrid little piles of dog barf as he cradled her in his arms. Caroline pointed to the spare room. "In there," she said, surprised at how husky her voice had become. "I'll get the futon ready and jump in the shower." He grinned down at her and then kissed her again.

"Erik, you have to put me down," she said after the kiss. "It's okay if I call you Erik, isn't it? I mean, your real name doesn't matter since this is supposed to be my Christmas fantasy, right? Anyway, it's better if I just think of you as Erik the Blond because...well, after all, I'll never see you again after today." He just grinned again, without making a move to put her down. "Down, Erik." She pointed to the floor. "Me down."

"Ahhh, yes, down." Erik set Caroline on her feet then gently pushed her to the floor, straddling her.

Caroline gasped as her hand flew against his chest. "No! I meant..." She groaned and then Erik's mouth opened over hers in ravenous demand. His taste was so

appetizing it scattered her senses. "Wait!" she said as soon as they came up for air. It was getting awfully hard to think because those professional kisses of his had such a drugging effect. "Me dirty. Understand?"

"Dirty sex?" Erik jiggled his eyebrows playfully.

Desire radiated deep in her belly as she imagined all sorts of deliciously naughty scenarios. "No! Oh for chrissakes, Erik. I feel like we're playing *me Tarzan you Jane*. How am I supposed to make you understand?"

"Not understand." Erik glowered. "You not Tarzan. Me not Jane. I be Erik. You be who name?"

She touched her breast. "I be...I mean, I *am* Caroline McNulty. Didn't they include that information in your work order...or whatever the escort service calls it?" Erik gave her a blank look and her gaze slipped from his face to his chest where she glimpsed one flat, crinkled nipple. She wanted to lick it. Nibble it. And she wanted him to do the same to her. A growl threatened to escape as her mouth went dry, imagining his tongue flicking hard across her nipple...and his teeth tugging until she begged for mercy. Then her gaze slipped further south to the Viking's mighty nether regions, and she wondered if his cock was as bold and impressive as the rest of him.

That's when his generous erection pressed against her. If she'd known a Viking song of joy, she would have belted it out just then.

Oh for chrissakes! What had happened to her? She used to be a nice, normal, proper woman who never even gave so much as a passing thought to strange men's cocks or exploring their broad, massive chests with her tongue outside of her favorite masturbation fantasies. She'd been a chaste and suitable wife who'd never allowed herself to lust after other men during the whole eighteen years she and the unfaithful ratfink had been married.

That was then.

Now her need for him obliterated everything else. Her clothes scratched against her hot skin, her breasts felt heavy and tight, her clit throbbed and she was unabashedly lusting after a paid escort with a colossal cock.

"Caroline," he said with that gorgeous smile. "Good name. I like."

"Great. Now let me up."

"Up?" She nodded. "Dirty sex up?"

Caroline dissolved into laughter. "Erik, I have absolutely no clue what you mean, but, frankly, it sounds good and I have a feeling I'd probably like it." She scooted out from under him and rose to her feet as images of raw, sweaty vertical sex danced in her mind. Reclining on his side, Erik levered himself up on one elbow and propped his head on his fist. He gazed at her as if she were a hot fudge sundae and even if he *was* trained to do that, it still made her feel like a Viking queen. After opening the futon, she stood in the doorway and held up a finger. "I'll be right back." She walked out of the room and then popped her head back in and smiled. "Don't go anywhere."

"I phone?" Erik said, pointing to the telephone on a small table.

"You need to make a call?" He nodded. "Sure, go right ahead."

It was insane, this overwhelming need she had to feel the Viking fill her pussy. Her desire for hot, rigid Viking flesh had escalated from a smoldering burn to an aching, aggressive heat. It was murder to walk away from him at that moment, but after the rotten day she'd had, she felt dirty and grimy. Besides, she certainly couldn't have him peel off her clothes to find sturdy white cotton underwear. No, if Auntie Helga went to the trouble to send her a sexy, bought-and-paid-for Viking stud, then Caroline wanted everything about her hour with the guy to be perfect. That meant she had to be clean and wearing... What? Jeez, she didn't even own anything sexy anymore.

Except for that silly outfit Herbert bought her when he started going through his midlife crisis. Other than prancing back into the room buck naked—and she just didn't have the guts for that—that was her only choice. She may as well wear the inane getup.

At least it was sexy...she hoped. Anyway, what difference did it make? After all, she was never going to see the Viking again.

She dug the outfit out of the deepest recess of her closet and headed for the shower.

* * * * *

Caroline took a deep breath before returning to her spare room. As soon as he saw her, Erik's eyes popped.

And as soon as she saw him, *her* eyes popped.

"Caroline!" He leapt to his feet, completely naked except for the round shield positioned in front of his Viking family jewels. "You be Mrs. Julenissen." And then he grinned.

"I don't know who she is, God help her, but I'm supposed to be Mrs. Santa Claus." She patted the white fur-trimmed red velvet panties and matching push-up bra.

"Claus." He nodded. "Yes, is same."

"I'm sorry," she shrugged, "it's the only semi-provocative outfit I own."

"No be sorry." In a low, sexy rumble, he said, "You be so beauty. Much sexy." His smile was different now. Hungry. Expectant. So fucking hot that it made Caroline's toes curl, which wasn't evident because of the matching fur-trimmed stiletto-heeled boots she teetered on—the ones with the turned-up elfin toes with the jingle bells attached at the ends.

She didn't even want to think about the single silver bells positioned at each nipple or the jingly cluster sewn over her butt.

Until Erik flicked the bells at her breasts.

One jingle and her nipples puckered. Caroline moaned and his grin turned almost feral.

Erik snapped one bell. "Have happy sex." His grin was slow and suggestive, wicked. "Then we go play." He advanced on her until his legs were on either side of

hers, his shield pushed snug against her belly and one big hand cupping her ass. He seemed fascinated by the full curviness of her behind, kneading and stroking her ass as her pussy trickled in response to his touch.

"Whatever you say. You're the expert. Or should I say *sexpert*." She laughed and then let her head drop back and looked up at him. He was so tall, at least six-six. She felt like a sprite next to him. There was nothing more delicious for a plus-sized woman than to feel positively diminutive next to a brawny man. "Just how big are you, anyway?"

"Big." He tossed his shield aside and ground his cock against her.

If both of his hands weren't in plain sight, she would have sworn it was his fist. She swallowed hard, enjoying the firm pressure at her belly. It was obvious this escort service employed only the cream of the crop—the ones with fantasy-sized cocks.

Caroline backed up a bit and looked down. She got an eyeful of hot male flesh, fully aroused and gorgeous. "Oh my great sainted aunt! You're enormous!" Anticipation leaving her weak at the knees, she clutched his chest. The other hand curled over his biceps. Before she knew what she was doing, her hands traveled down his back and grabbed his ass. Those buns of his were of truly mythical quality.

Auntie Helga may have been ninety-five, but she clearly knew how to pick a stud. A smile tickled at Caroline's lips when she pictured the old woman scrutinizing a stack of photos and selecting the perfect Viking.

"I want be sex with you now." Erik looked stern and mighty as he nudged Caroline toward the futon. "Hit you inside with cock hard." He nudged harder. "Make you melt under my flaming eyes."

Just listening to him had Caroline practically ready to come. When the back of her knees hit the edge of the futon, he gave her a shove. He straddled her then tugged the cups of her fur-trimmed bra down, exposing her breasts. The look in his eyes and the raw groan rumbling deep in his chest delighted Caroline to no end.

"Plenty." Erik squeezed her generous breasts. "Big beauty. Much loving you breasts." He slipped his hands beneath her, unhooked her bra and snatched it from her chest, tossing it aside with a jingle. Caroline felt hot, flushed and completely exposed under his unwavering stare. Erik lowered his head and nipped playfully at one taut nipple, curling his tongue around the sensitive tip and then sucking it into his mouth as he massaged her other breast. He teased and nibbled and licked and tugged until she was sure she'd go out of her mind.

"Oh, Erik, that feels so good. You just can't imagine —"

"Off," he said, yanking at her panties, the ones with the bells that were digging into the top of her ass now. "I fuck Caroline now." His gaze was intent, taunting, sexy.

Each word of broken English he uttered and every movement he made set her clit aquiver. Raising her butt from the futon, Caroline tugged the panties down until Erik grabbed them, yanking them to her ankles. And then, dear God, he lowered his head to her pussy and drew in a deep breath through his nostrils.

"So much nice. Pretty black," he said, stroking her pussy curls. A moan of pleasure reverberated in the back of her throat. In all the years they'd been married, Herbert had never placed his face in the vicinity of her crotch.

Caroline's hips rose from the surface abruptly when Erik parted her pussy lips and jammed two thick fingers inside, pressing, pushing and playing within the sensitive hollow. His gaze never left her face as he finger-fucked her. She could only imagine what he saw there because, Lord knows, she was beyond being coy at this point. Shivers rhythmically pulsed down her spine, exploding in her drenched pussy. The heated friction he created sent her already heightened senses soaring. Their gazes locked, a cry escaped her lips as her cunt hungrily clenched his thrusting fingers.

Erik's warm smile and growling sounds of enjoyment as he pleased her boosted Caroline's joy quotient to a new level. It was when he withdrew his fingers and sucked them, taking her taste, her wetness into his mouth and then uttering a growl of pleasure

when he said, "Caroline be sweet, juicy woman. So good taste," that Caroline's body stiffened and then quaked with the most intense orgasm she could remember.

Lost in the sensuality of the moment and charming cadence of his admiring words, she was only vaguely aware when Erik opened a condom packet with his teeth and sat back on his heels to roll it on. Her pussy was still quaking with aftershocks when he lifted her hips, nudging the thick head of his cock into her folds with a soft, insistent pressure. And then, with the vitality of a mighty Viking, he drove his cock into her, hard and swift.

Caroline sucked in a startled breath as her body adjusted to the vigorous invasion. "Oh! Erik..." She grabbed him, feeling the muscles in his strong back flex with each thrust as amazing sensations coursed through her body. He more than filled her as the stretch of her inner muscles adjusted to his length and thickness. She pumped her hips, arriving at a delicious rhythm and taking him deeper, until her cunt tightened around him and they both groaned.

Her hand stroked his abs then moved down to cup his sac. She fondled his balls, his inner thighs, raking her fingers from his groin to his ass and back again before resting over the blond thatch of curls haloing his cock.

"Ahh...yes. Good," Erik grunted. "Caroline make excellent sex."

Caroline relished the feel of her Viking's idyllic masculine body, something she'd never had the pleasure to encounter before. God knows that Herbert's soft, flabby physique couldn't begin to compare. Erik was hard and firm in all the right places and supple where it counted. And then there was the man's phenomenal technique! She'd be amazed if Erik hadn't been at the head of his sex classes.

"It's easy," she answered with a throaty resonance, giving his balls another squeeze. She paused to catch her breath after his cock hammered again. "I guess when you have sex with a skilled professional, the response just comes naturally."

With a deep, wicked thrust, Erik's cock hit her G-spot, just like he had a map. Caroline shrieked with pleasure as he took aim and drove into her again, meeting his

mark a second time. And then he swirled the tip of his cock at the nucleus of the spot until she found herself caught up in a lingering moan of rapture. Until that moment, Caroline figured they'd simply neglected to equip her with one of those spots when she was created. Of course, that's before she'd encountered a man who lettered in sex.

Yes, she could die in his capable arms right this very minute and be happy, knowing that she'd been treated to the ultimate in bliss. She never imagined sex could be like this. Never dreamed feeling this way was possible.

Skimming his hands up Caroline's hips, past her waist and over her ribs, Erik lingered at her breasts, squeezing and playing with them as he rammed into her. Caroline rose to his erotic touch, sighing, moaning and succumbing to the sweet feeling of a man's strong but gentle hands loving her as his cock claimed her cunt. He slowed his rhythm long enough to fold his body over hers until his lips were a mere breath away.

"You beauty make my heart melt, Caroline," he whispered just before capturing her mouth in a lusty kiss. Erik's words and gestures seemed so heartfelt, so sincere, they nearly brought tears to her eyes. His tongue mimicked the movements of his cock as he drove into her deeper, harder, angling his body for maximum friction and pleasure. The exquisite penetration triggered a surge of emotion from deep within her. It was getting terribly hard to remember that Erik was only a paid escort, superbly trained in the art of satisfying a woman—that he didn't really mean any of what he said. But she didn't want to think about that. Not now during one of the most perfect, glorious moments of her life.

"You're my very own Erik the Blond," Caroline said, her voice low and throaty. "All mine. Every delicious, scintillating, magnificent inch of you...just for tonight." She slid her hands over his torso, exploring the unyielding muscle beneath her fingertips. "Just for this one, glorious night," she whispered, vowing to imprint the moment on her mind forever.

Erik sat upright again, smiling down at her while his hips flexed over hers with an urgent fierceness that left her breathless. "Not just tonight," he said, fondling her breasts. "I always be Erik the Blond for Caroline. Love make sex to Caroline many time."

"God help me," Caroline said through a husky chuckle, "if I could afford it I'd take you up on it. Every Saturday night, at least." Something akin to a tornado whirled inside of her as he pinched her nipples and fucked her even harder with his remarkable cock. Whatever was coming had such power and intensity that it almost frightened her. Gasping, she clutched at his biceps, digging her fingers in hard.

"Relax. Be happy," he managed through a series of grunts with a reassuring smile. "I take you visit Valhalla." An instant later, Erik the Blond finished her off with one final wicked thrust of his cock.

Vibrations, raw and powerful, slammed through Caroline as her pussy milked his hot flesh. "Oh. My. God!" she screamed in wild, convulsing pleasure, loud and strong enough to bring Thursday galloping into the room and barking his head off. And then Erik roared as he came and joined Caroline in the triumphant bliss of Viking heaven.

Chapter Three

Nestled in a corner with a rawhide bone, Thursday was calm and quiet again. Caroline smiled at her canine protector and then at the man who had just turned her world upside down in the best possible way.

She figured she may as well become a nun after this because why bother having sex with any other man ever again? Once you've been fucked by prime, well-schooled Viking cock, there's just no going back. No possible comparison. Yes, the memory of tonight's scintillating sex would have to last her a lifetime.

"Thank you, Erik," she said as he tugged her close and wrapped an arm around her shoulder. "It was a beautiful, sexy fantasy. You're worth every cent they pay you." She rested her head on his chest, pretending that Erik had enjoyed their sex together even a tenth as much as Caroline had. She hadn't expected him to stay long enough to snuggle. The extra time in her Viking's arms made the entire experience faultless. She'd have to find out the name of the escort service and send them a letter praising Erik's thoughtful, considerate performance.

"Thank *you*," he said, kissing her forehead and then grasping her breast, squeezing it gently before he kissed the crinkling nipple. "Make Erik cock so happy. Now I must be play." Feathering a kiss across Caroline's lips, Erik got up and gathered his Viking outfit, slipping into it as Caroline watched in fascination.

So he was off to play with someone else now. She sighed as she eyed his cock, still sizeable in its semi-limp state. Her ex-husband had never looked like *that* even when he'd been erect. There'd been so little time that she didn't even get a chance to taste Erik's cock. Her mouth watered with the desire to sample his masculine flavor, to slide his shaft past her lips, her tongue. To savor the tang of his cum. Well, at least she'd had him for this brief, magical interlude. That skilled, sensuous mouth, the exquisitely

satisfying cock, the cataclysmic orgasms... Erik was every orgasmic fantasy she'd ever had rolled into one perfect-fuck package – the only minor flaw being that he was a male prostitute.

She jumped when the telephone rang.

"You want who?" she said into the receiver. "Erik Tryggvason?" She looked at Erik who smiled and thumbed his chest. She held the phone out and he took it, speaking to the man on the other end...probably the dispatcher from his escort service saying Erik was running overtime. Her sigh was louder than she'd anticipated as she padded into her bedroom and threw on a pair of jeans and a T-shirt.

"Lock man come now," Erik told her when she returned. She followed him into the living room.

"Who?" She cocked her head, trying to decipher what he was talking about now.

Erik shook his head in seeming frustration. "Locksmith," he corrected as he opened the front door and motioned to the house next door – the one that had been for sale for the past few months. Caroline peeked around the hulk of male flesh, noting the *for sale* sign was gone. "Erik house." He proudly slapped his hand against his chest.

A jiggle of panic zigzagged up Caroline's spine.

"Your house?" He nodded and she broke out in goose bumps. "You're my new neighbor? I have a Viking for a neighbor?" She must be hallucinating. Yes, the stress of Thursday defiling her chocolate cache, followed by sizzling hot, mind-boggling sex with Erik the Blond had simply been too much to bear. Maybe she'd fainted and was dreaming all of this and didn't realize it. A quick pinch to her arm dissolved that theory.

Erik nodded. "Neighbor."

"You mean you're not a male prostitute? You're not a paid escort?"

Erik frowned. "You be prostitute?"

"No! You are...aren't you?"

"No." He roared with laughter. "Funny joke. You make Erik laugh."

Suddenly Caroline found it difficult to breathe. She heard a strangled sort of *gack* sound sputter from her lips.

"Be happy. We be neighbor now. Make much sex all the time." He chucked her chin. "I be last Viking in play for childrens. Christmas play. Lock out. No key drive auto. Need go theater. Help Erik, please."

That was the most he'd said at one time since the Viking first appeared on her doorstep.

Excruciating realization dawned with an icy chill. "The Christmas play at the community theater," Caroline said, recalling the ad in the paper and the posted flyers. "*The Last Viking*. You came here because you're locked out and need a lift to the theater?" Suddenly feeling crowded by his proximity, she took an involuntary step backward.

A bright grin spread across Erik's features. "Yes. Need a lift." He nodded. "Keys inside house. I sorry. Never so stupid to do this before." Then he grabbed Caroline and kissed her. "But I so happy we sex together."

"Happy? Hah! Well of course you're happy, you imposter! After you pretend to be my Christmas Viking and drag me off for a cavalier roll in the hay. Of all the audacity!" She shoved him hard enough to elicit an *ooph* and catch Erik off balance so that he slipped off the icy front door stoop and fell backwards onto the frosty grass next to the walkway.

Caroline gasped as Erik's head clunked against the ground and his Brunhilda helmet skidded across the frozen lawn while he lay spread-eagle. "Oh my God! Erik, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean for that to happen. Are you all—" In her haste to rush to his side, she slipped on the same patch of ice he had and went sailing, landing on top of Erik with enough force to knock the wind out of them both.

Erik bellowed a groan. Not a sexy kind of groan, but more of a you-crushed-my-balls-and-I'm-fucking-dying kind of groan. And because of that, Caroline was relatively

certain that the foreign chatter that followed meant something other than *Don't worry, Caroline, I'm all right.*

As soon as she could move, Caroline rolled off of Erik and knelt next to him. "I am so sorry, Erik." The only sign that he was alive was the pained grimace etched across his handsome features. "Should I call a doctor?"

Opening his eyes, Erik did his best to crack a smile. "No. I strong. Not cry, Caroline." He reached up and wiped the tears from her cheek with his thumb. She hadn't even realized she'd been crying. "I okay. Have to be play now. Help Erik. Yes?"

"Yes, of course." Once she got to her feet, she extended her hand and tugged Erik into a sitting position. He struggled not to show pain. The sour brine of humiliation and embarrassment spurting through her cells all but pickled her insides. Erik finally stood on his feet and gave Caroline a half-hearted thumbs-up sign.

She slipped into the house for her keys. When she returned, Erik followed her to her car, doing his best to make baby steps resemble a manly stride. As the Viking folded his impressive bulk into the passenger seat of the small car, Caroline watched his muscles bunch and cord.

"You must be freezing," she said, eying the pelts of wet fur covering just a portion of his gorgeous made-for-fucking body. "It has to be twenty-something outside."

Erik gave a nonchalant shake of his head. "I am used to cold. I come from —"

"No, don't tell me." Caroline raised her hand. "Let me guess. You're from Norway, right?"

"Yes!" He beamed a perfect white-toothed smile.

"Naturally." Caroline sighed.

"How you know this?"

"It just fits." She rolled her eyes.

"You be cold," Erik said, pointing to her breasts and grinning.

Caroline looked down at the beading nipples poking through her T-shirt. In all the commotion she'd forgotten a coat.

"Keep your eyes on the road," she said, although she was the one doing the driving. "Just forget that anything sexual happened between us because, trust me, Erik, it is *never* going to happen again. Got that?"

"Want Erik suck pretty teats, make warm again?"

Caroline socked him in the arm, determined to ignore the sudden crackle of desire. "In the first place, I'm not a cow. I don't have teats. You mean tits."

"Big tits," Erik said, pinching a rigid nipple and squeezing her breast.

So fucking aroused she could barely drive, Caroline slapped his hand away. "In the second place, the word is breasts." And, God, how she wanted his mouth on them again.

"You love Erik cock."

Sucking in an audible gasp, Caroline nearly ran the car off the road. "What!?"

"Please, not feel shame. Erik love you posse too."

"Pussy," Caroline corrected and then thumped the heel of her hand against her forehead. "Jeez, what am I saying? I don't want to talk about tits or cocks or pussies, Erik."

"We make excellent sex."

"Or sex! Oh, good grief. Look, Erik, I am not that kind of woman."

"What kind?"

"The kind that...Erik, I don't even know you. I thought you were a—"

He grasped Caroline's right hand and pumped. "How you do? I Erik. You neighbor." He grinned. "Now you know me."

"Erik, you are positively incorrigible."

He frowned and shook his head. "Not know this word. It mean handsome? Big cock? Sexy man?" He jiggled his eyebrows devilishly.

"Stop. Just stop right there. This conversation is finished."

Sure, it was flattering to have someone who resembled a Norse god coming on to her. But Erik wasn't flirting because he thought she was beautiful or nice or smart. It was because he'd found an easy lay. A lonely woman who'd dragged him in off the street and jumped his bones. The guy probably figured she was the neighborhood slut or a cheap hooker who just happened to live next door. And she couldn't blame him one bit.

It wasn't as if she was some perky-breasted eighteen-year old, and she certainly wasn't a lithe little thing, either. She was thirty-eight and shopped for her clothes in the plus size section.

"Why Caroline angry Erik?" He rubbed her thigh, trailing his fingers up until they rested atop her well-fucked pussy. "I not make you excellent sex?"

Excellent? Shit. It was fucking stupendous. Breathtaking. Spectacular!

Caroline lifted his hand from her crotch and plopped it in his lap. After opening and closing her mouth a few times without uttering a word, she snapped it shut and looked straight ahead as she drove.

As Caroline pulled up to the community theater, Erik turned to her. "Thank you. You eat me. Yes?"

For about the tenth time that night, she gasped. "I will do no such thing! That does it, Erik. Get out of this car." He didn't move. He had the nerve to just sit there grinning at her. "How dare you suggest that I suck your —"

Erik gestured as if shoveling food into his mouth with a fork. "Supper," he said. "You, me, eat. Food."

"Oh," Caroline said in the tiniest voice she'd ever heard herself utter. Could she possibly be any more of a moron?

Head thrown back, Erik roared with laughter. It was a beautiful sound and he was a beautiful man and, Lord help her, she *did* want to eat him!

"Are you asking me to have dinner with you?"

"Yes." He nodded. "Then we be no clothes and do excellent sex. Yes?"

"Get out of the car, Erik. Now."

* * * * *

Clutching the charm around her neck, Caroline woke up smiling. Erik had starred in her dreams and she'd even experienced a spectacular, dream-induced orgasm while asleep. The only thing spoiling it was waking up in an empty bed when she'd much rather be cozying up to the arrogant Viking. That, of course, was impossible now. She could never face the man again. She'd have to put her house up for sale and move. Far away. Maybe all the way to Norway.

Christmas Eve morning was about as jolly as she'd expected. Wearing her grubbiest jeans and rattiest sweatshirt, Caroline had been scrubbing and scouring since she got up. As she cleaned Thursday's rancid mess, cursing him every step of the way, the mutt was smart enough to steer clear.

Caroline absently fingered the charm nestled against her breast and, perplexed, shook her head. She'd removed the chain before slipping into the Mrs. Claus outfit last night and then put it on again before going to sleep. What had her baffled was that the charm was now back to the silver color she remembered from her childhood. There was no trace of the gleaming gold, and she was clueless as to why. Maybe it was due to some weird chemical reaction with her skin or cologne.

Still lost in thought when the doorbell rang, Caroline ignored it. She wasn't in the mood for witty repartee with the sexy Viking next door. And then she heard a familiar voice...one she hadn't heard for exactly twelve months.

Shit.

Caroline answered the door and almost burst out laughing at the irony of it all. The only thing worse than everything else that had already happened was standing on the other side of her threshold.

"Hello, Caroline."

"Herbert, what in the hell are you doing here?" She glared at her louse of an ex-husband. "Lose your bouncy little teeny-bopper? Well, she's not here, so goodbye." She started to slam the door but he caught it.

"Now, Caroline, that's no way to talk. Bunny's right here." He turned and beckoned towards the bushes. "Come on, it's okay, honey. She won't bite."

"Don't count on it," Caroline mumbled as she anchored her arms across her chest.

A very pregnant girl waddled up the walk, sidling next to Herbert. Caroline made a conscious effort not to let her jaw drop. She had no idea the nearly adolescent home-wrecker was pregnant.

The girl raised her hand, wiggled her fingers and grinned. "Hi, Mrs. Conlon. I'm Bunny." She traced the enormous bulge in her middle with her other hand as she spoke.

Mrs. Conlon. Caroline cringed at the words coming from the post-kindergartener who was technically young enough to be her daughter. "It's Ms. McNulty," she said. "I took back my maiden name after the divorce." Herbert and Caroline exchanged polar glares.

"Where's Ruff?" Herbert asked.

"Thursday," Caroline corrected.

"What are you talking about? It's Friday."

"Thursday. I changed his name to Thursday."

Herbert screwed his features. "Why in God's name would you name Ruff after a day of the week?"

"Actually, he's named for Thor, the Norse god of thunder."

"Then why not just name him Thor?"

Caroline tsked. "Because you brought him home on a Thursday, the day of the week named after Thor. Thor's day."

"Caroline, that's the most asinine, ridiculous thing I've ever heard."

She looked at the watermelon in Bunny's stomach and smiled. "Not as ridiculous as some things, Herbert."

"Look, Caroline, I don't have time for games. I'm here for Ruff."

"You're what?" That threw her. Sure, Thursday had violated her chocolate stash and ruined her carpet, but Caroline still loved him fiercely and wasn't about to give him up to the jerk who couldn't be bothered to visit the dog for the past twelve months.

Herbert fell into that all-too-familiar stance of exasperation he did so well. Thumbs looped in his pants pockets, weight resting on one leg and a dimpled smirk. She used to think that smirk was adorable. Now she wanted to rip it right off of his male-menopausal face.

"I've come for my dog. Where is he?"

"Gone. He ran away." Thursday, the idiot, chose that moment to bark from somewhere in the depths of the house and Caroline rolled her eyes.

Scowling, Herbert pushed the door open and stepped inside. "Jesus. What the hell happened in here?" He scanned the room with an expression of disbelief and disgust.

"Oh, that." Caroline shrugged. "Thursday had a little mishap."

Bunny stuck her fresh, apple-cheeked face into the room, breathing in an audible exclamation. "Eeeeew, yuck!" She popped her gum and blew a bubble. "Gee, Herbie, I thought you said he was a good dog."

"Herbert, you can't just waltz in here and take Thursday away from me."

"I most certainly can. According to the court, Ruff is mine, remember?"

"But you haven't even bothered to see him since you walked out last Christmas Eve." The memory iced Caroline's spine and she stiffened.

"Since when did you become such a big fan of Ruff's? I thought you didn't want anything to do with him?"

"That was before."

"Before what?"

"Before you abandoned him and I had to watch him cry every day for two months until the poor thing finally realized you weren't coming back."

Herbert huffed. "Don't be ridiculous, Caroline. Dogs don't cry. They're just dumb animals."

"If Thursday's so dumb, how did he figure out how to open my nightstand drawer and find my chocolate, hmm?" She braced her fists against her hips, jutting her jaw proudly.

"Still hording chocolate, huh?" Herbert looked her up and down with a sneer that made Caroline painfully aware of every extra pound on her frame. "I knew you'd never lose the weight."

Caroline pinned him with a frigid glare. "I could come back with a crack about knowing your hair would never grow back either...but that was before I spotted the hair plugs." She eyed his dotted scalp and laughed. "It'll take more than a hair transplant to beat middle age, *Herbie*."

"I have everything I need." He pulled the pregnant moppet close, kissing the top of her head. "Don't I, baby?" he said to Bunny, who cooed in response.

He returned his attention to his ex-wife. "Let's not make this ugly. Don't force me to file a lawsuit, Caroline."

Oh God! Caroline felt the hot rush of tears rising to the surface and squelched them. The last thing she wanted was to have Little Miss PG Teen America and her heartless hair-plugged ex see her crumple into a sniveling heap.

"I wasn't ready to take the dog before," Herbert said. "The baby's due anytime. I want Ruff to be there when it arrives. That way he and the baby will have a chance to bond right away. Plus, he'll be good company for Bunny and the baby while I'm at work."

"Please, Herbert...I'm begging you. Don't take him away from me." Caroline couldn't stop the sob that escaped.

"You're making this more difficult than it has to be, Caroline." Herbert tugged at his collar and stretched his neck. "Come on, Ruff. Time to go," he called, before giving a shrill whistle. "Ruff! Here, boy. Let's go."

"No! Thor's Day stay Caroline!"

Gasping at the sound of Erik's booming voice, Caroline whipped her head around. She almost peed in her pants when, in full Viking regalia, he strode into the room from the kitchen, Thursday trotting at his side. She fought the urge to run to the mirror before she remembered that a little primping couldn't change the sad fact that she looked like a dishrag.

"Who the fuck is that?" Herbert squawked through a drop-jawed, bug-eyed expression.

"Yeah. Wow. Who *is* that?" the pregnant moppet said longingly as she watched the glorious half-naked Viking strut his stuff.

Caroline was speechless. It took her a minute to realize that Erik must have come in the back door, which she'd left open because of her repeated trips to the trashcan while cleaning Thursday's mess.

Erik kept his eyes on Caroline, issuing the same warm, reassuring smile he'd offered her the day before. "I be Erik the Blond," he announced, flexing his impressive muscles and clapping the shield against his chest. Boldly seizing Caroline into his arms and bending her backwards, he swooped over her and took her mouth in a ravenous, passionate kiss.

"Oh...Erik," Caroline whispered when their lips parted. He smiled down at her and winked. Even in the midst of all this turmoil, she felt that familiar tickle as her pussy quivered.

"Caroline be my woman," Erik announced. "I be Caroline's lover." He stood tall and defiant, tugging Caroline close to his side and wrapping a protective arm around her. "I here for Caroline never be lonely again."

It had to be the most romantic moment in Caroline's entire life. And, oh God, how she wished to hell she wasn't dressed like a scrubwoman and didn't reek of dog puke.

"Holy shit," Bunny breathed. The inordinately large wad of bubble gum fell out of her mouth. Herbert bent to retrieve it for her because her belly was so big. "That was, like, super sexy." She unwrapped a fresh stick of bubblegum and popped it in her mouth.

"Bunny!" Herbert chastised, yanking her arm.

"Oops." Bunny's hand flew to her mouth and she giggled and then turned her attention to Thursday, uttering a round of disgustingly sappy baby talk.

"Come on, Ruffy-Puffy-Duffy. Good wittle doggie-woggie."

"Thursday doesn't respond to baby talk," Caroline pointed out. "He hates it."

"Aw, woo don't wike baby talk, wittle Ruffy?"

When Bunny started smooching the air, Caroline wanted to smack her right back to the college dorm where she belonged. Unfortunately, Thursday chose that point in time to make a complete fool out of her by doing his look-how-cute-and-adorable-I-can-be routine in answer to Bunny's continuing prattle of baby babble. It was that inferior male brain of his. If Thursday had been a female, he would have been savvy enough to squat and pee right on the pregnant pubescent's sneakers.

With a reproving tsk, Erik yanked on the dog's collar. "Thor's Day be good. Act like man," he admonished with gentle firmness. Thursday licked his chops and then sat obediently at Erik's knee. Caroline was amazed. It appeared that her Viking lover had plenty of skills outside the bedroom too.

"Hey, Herbie. What if we call him Ruff Thursday? Isn't that just *so* cute?"

"Will you *please* knock it off, Bunny," Herbert said, clearly irritated.

Offering a clueless shrug, Bunny blew another bubble. "Uh-oh. Guess I made another oopsie."

"You not be good man, Herbert," Erik said, taking a step forward and jabbing a menacing finger toward Herbert. "Make Caroline pain in heart." He thumped his chest. "You go now."

"Are you threatening me?" Herbert spat. "Is he threatening me?" he repeated to Caroline. "Because I'll sue Mr. Fancy Pants here in the blink of an eye if he so much as lays a finger on me."

"No." Placing one hand against Erik's chest, Caroline held the other out to Herbert, stop-sign fashion. "He's just trying to protect me, Herbert." She turned to Erik and smiled. "Thank you, my wonderful Viking lover, but I have to let Thursday go." A fat tear trickled down her cheek. "Legally he belongs to Herbert, even though Herbert is a—"

"Son of a jackass," Erik offered through an arresting sneer that could send the bravest of men running for cover. "A rotten buster."

"Bastard," Caroline corrected, and Erik nodded in agreement.

"Viking lover," Herbert mumbled under his breath with a chuckle. "That's really rich. Muscleheads like him don't take overweight matrons—especially ones who smell like they just rolled through puke—as lovers. Unless they're paid to. What did you do, rent yourself a stud for a little Christmas whoopee?" He chuckled again. "The guy is probably gay. All those male model types are."

"Oh, Herbie." Bunny frowned. "That was a terrible thing to say to Mrs. Conlon. And I really don't think Mr. Blond is gay." She smiled at the Viking, fluttering her lashes.

"Thank you, Bunny," Caroline said kindly. "But you're the only Mrs. Conlon now, dear." Damn if she didn't actually feel sorry for the little homewrecker.

Erik closed the distance between Herbert and himself with a couple of long strides. Everyone gasped as he grabbed the smaller man by the shirt and lifted him off the floor. "You listen, squeaking pipe..." He turned to Caroline with a quizzical expression. "That right?"

Glancing from Erik to the dangling Herbert and back again, Caroline cleared her throat. "Um...I think you mean *pipsqueak*," she offered.

"Pipsqueak," Erik bellowed into Herbert's ashen face.

"Put me down this instant, you crude behemoth," Herbert blustered.

Erik held tight. "Caroline beauty. Not old. Not fat. Not need pay money for sex. Understand? Maybe she smell of retching, but still be beauty to me."

Caroline and Bunny dissolved into audible sighs at the same time.

"You right," Erik added. "I be gay." He proudly clapped his chest with his other hand and Caroline nearly fainted.

"You're gay?" she said, shoulders slumping.

"Yes." Erik grinned and nodded as he set Herbert back on his feet. "Big gay."

Caroline groaned. Maybe all wasn't lost. After all, he could be bisexual.

"What did I tell you?" Herbert said with a smug snicker. "He's a queer."

Erik looked at Caroline. "What *queer* mean?"

"Homosexual. That you like to have sex with men," Caroline said dejectedly.

Erik looked stunned. "No! Erik not homosexual. Erik be gay!" He shook his head in frustration. "Gay. Happy. Joy." He drew Caroline into his arms again and kissed her tenderly, zapping an electrified charge straight to her clit. "I be gay for Caroline to be my woman. Understand now?" he said, directing the question to Herbert.

Caroline's cheeks hurt from smiling so wide. She took one look at Herbert's dazed expression and her grin grew even wider. "Oh, I think he understands perfectly now, Erik."

Herbert dug into his pocket, pulling out his cell phone. "I'm going to have you arrested for assault and battery, you big ox."

Erik laughed. "I think no." He snatched the phone from Herbert. "I know you teach university. I teach university too."

Herbert, Bunny and Caroline all slanted Erik bewildered looks. Even Thursday cocked his head.

"What are you talking about?" Herbert said.

"You English professor, yes?" Herbert nodded and Erik grinned. "I Scandinavian Studies professor."

"You're what?" the three chorused in disbelief.

"Bullshit," Herbert said, crossing his arms over his chest. "How can you teach college-level courses? You can't even speak English. And you sure as hell aren't a professor at the university because I'd know about it."

"I have best university teacher for English," Erik said. "Begin teach new term after snow," Erik explained, looking to Caroline for guidance.

"The spring term?" she said.

Erik nodded. "Spring. I speak good English for teach spring term."

"Ridiculous." Herbert huffed a humorless chortle. "I'm the best English professor there."

"No. Einarr Johannesen best."

"Professor Johannesen?" Erik had Herbert's full attention now. "The chair of the university's English department?" he said incredulously.

"I be Einarr cousin." Erik arched an eyebrow, clearly enjoying Herbert's dismay.

"Well, I'll be damned," Caroline said as Herbert went ashen again.

"Einarr best friend long time. Maybe I tell Einarr you be rotten buster. *Bastard*," he corrected before Caroline could chime in. "You go now, take child bride. Thor's Day stay Caroline. Maybe Erik not tell Einarr."

"That's blackmail," Herbert spat.

"Not know this blackmail word. But sound good. Go." Erik pointed to the door.

With a nervous swipe of his tongue across his lips, Herbert stood stock still, evidently deep in thought. "Maybe Ruff would rather be with me," he said to Caroline.

"Have you considered that? If you really love him, you want him to be happy and well cared for, right?" Herbert knew the right buttons to push to make her feel selfish and guilty. "I'll make you a deal if you promise to keep your caveman off my back."

Caroline blanched. What if Thursday really *would* be happier with Herbert and Bunny and their baby? He wouldn't have to spend the days alone while Caroline was at the office. Maybe Herbert was right. "What do you want, Herbert?"

"Let the dog choose. Leave the decision up to Ruff. We'll both call him and whoever he comes to keeps him." Herbert glanced up at Erik, who transmitted a seething glare. "But, remember, if I win then you see to it that loverboy keeps his mouth shut about me to my department head."

"Not good to deal with devil," Erik said, shaking his head.

"It's a deal," Caroline said quickly.

Caroline and Herbert positioned themselves at the far end of the living room while Erik held Thursday by the collar.

Removing his hand from his pants pocket, Herbert raked his fingers through his hair before squatting and patting his knee. "Come on, Ruff. Come on, boy," he called.

"No cheat! You wait Erik count!" Erik admonished. The Viking got on one knee and, placing his hand against his heart, he whispered something in Thursday's ear while stroking the dog. Thursday responded by licking his face. "En. To. Tre. Go!" Erik counted in Norwegian before releasing the dog and giving him a pat on the rump.

Caroline bent low and clapped her hands. "Thursday, you want to stay with me, don't you, boy? Come on, sweetie." She patted her knees. "Come to Mama."

Herbert whistled. "Ruff! Here, boy."

Tail wagging and tongue lolling, Thursday looked from Caroline to Herbert and back again before padding forward and making a beeline for Caroline. Her heart leapt with joy. But when Thursday was a foot away from her Herbert extended his hand toward the dog and snapped his fingers.

Thursday cocked his head, sniffed and flashed Caroline a gleeful canine grin before licking her ex-husband's hand, jumping up on him and baptizing Herbert's face with slurpy licks.

"Good boy," Herbert said triumphantly as he roughoused with the dog.

Caroline sucked in a tortured gasp. "Oh, Thursday," she whimpered, sounding like someone who'd just lost her best friend. The dog turned, slanting her a questioning look.

Rising to his feet, Herbert wrapped two fingers under Thursday's collar and yanked hard. Thursday looked at Caroline a moment longer and then turned, following Herbert.

"I won fair and square." Herbert jabbed an accusatory finger toward Caroline as he stood near the front door and reached for the doorknob. "You'd better live up to your part of the bargain." He opened the door and Thursday merrily pranced alongside Herbert as he and Bunny left the house.

Caroline's heart splintered into a million shards.

Chapter Four

"I've lost him. I've lost Thursday forever."

Erik wrapped his arm around Caroline, squeezing her close and whispering soothing Norwegian words in her ear as she stared out the window. "Caroline not worry. Thor's Day come back. I know. I promise."

When Herbert's car pulled away from the curb, she released the curtain, letting it fall back into place. Caroline collapsed into tears. Then she started to laugh through her sobs when she realized she hadn't been nearly this upset when Herbert walked out a year ago.

"Sad. I know." Erik continued to soothe her. "But Caroline not cry. Not lose Thor's Day."

"Thank you so much for trying to help me, Erik," she managed through her tears. "I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't been here supporting me. I will never, ever forget it." She took in a deep breath and heard a ruckus outside. Peering out the window, she saw Herbert's car stopped in the middle of the street half a block from the house.

"Thor's Day much bark," Erik said.

And then came the raised voices of Bunny and Herbert. The passenger-side door of the car opened and Thursday sprang out. Barking like a rabid animal, he headed for the house. Herbert sprinted after him with Bunny waddling behind them both.

Caroline hauled the door open and Thursday jumped at her so hard she fell to the floor—right in the midst of the caked-on dog barf. Thursday licked her face and wagged his stubby tail so fast it seemed to be electrified. She started to laugh and cry at the same time and then she heard Bunny screeching something.

"He cheated! Herbie cheated."

"Shut up, Bunny!" Herbert said, jerking her arm.

Glaring at her husband, Bunny yanked her arm free. "When Thursday realized we were leaving without you," she said to Caroline, "he put up a fit trying to get out of the car. He like totally clawed up the leather interior."

"God damn it!" Herbert pounded the doorjamb.

"Herbie's got a chocolate bar in his pocket. He rubbed it on his fingers and hair. That's why Thursday came to him instead of you. I wasn't going to say anything, but I felt so bad for you and —"

Erik threw his head back in laughter. "Cheating son of a jackass."

Herbert took a step toward Caroline. "This is your fault, Caroline. You brainwashed my dog somehow." He reached for the dog's collar and Thursday bared his teeth, looking for all the world like a devil-dog from hell. His growl was so menacing it sent chills up Caroline's spine. It must have had a similar effect on Herbert because he took a few steps back.

"Oh, Thursday, you really do love me, don't you?" Caroline gave him a hug and he slobbered a lick across her face.

"Time you go," Erik said, giving Herbert a light shove.

"Ohmigod, ohmigod, ohmigod," Bunny cried before Herbert had a chance to respond to Erik.

"Now what, big mouth?" Herbert growled.

Bunny clutched her big belly. "Herbie, you better get me to the hospital. I think the baby's coming!"

"Now? You have to do it now?"

"Dammit, Herbert, stop your fucking whining and get me to the fucking hospital. *Now!*"

Caroline had to bite the inside of her cheek to keep from laughing. Erik took her hand then and squeezed. She looked up and saw the corner of his mouth twitch.

"Fine," Herbert said to Caroline as he put his arm around Bunny. "Keep the damned dog. He's more trouble than he's worth." And then he said to Thursday, "You had your chance, Ruff. I'm getting a puppy to replace you."

"Looks like I'm not the only one being replaced by a younger model, Thursday," Caroline said with a wink.

"Herbert!" Bunny growled.

Herbert patted Erik's arm. "No hard feelings, okay, buddy?"

Erik glared at him, energetic fury in the depths of his eyes. "Never say I be you buddy. I be watch you." He pointed two fingers at his eyes and then turned them toward Herbert. "Be good or I tell Einarr you bad devil. Okay, *buddy*?"

Herbert nodded and the pregnant moppet started to wail again.

"You better get Bunny to the hospital before she spits the kid out on the front lawn," Caroline said.

Herbert heaved a sigh. "Yeah, I guess so."

"See ya, Mrs. Conlon," Bunny called over her shoulder.

"Good luck with the baby, Bunny," Caroline said. "Both of them." And then the door closed and they were gone.

"See?" Erik said. "I promise Thor's Day be back."

Caroline gazed at his handsome face, her spirits lifted, her hopes renewed. "Yes, you did. What made you so certain?"

"I tell Thor's Day I make big steak and give beer and much chocolate. I tell him in Norwegian so he understand Erik."

"But he doesn't understand Norwegian."

Erik nodded confidently. "His name is from Norse god. He understand plenty."

Taking in his smug expression, Caroline threw her head back in laughter.

"But that not all," he continued. "Erik make heart wish." He placed his hand inside the fur-pelt tunic.

"You made a wish that Thursday could stay with me? Oh, Erik, that's so sweet. Thank y—" The words lodged in Caroline's throat and she gasped when she saw what Erik held in the palm of his hand.

"Erik...what...how..."

"Heart wish," he said, fingering a small silver Viking charm and smiling. It was exactly like Caroline's amulet except that it was a female form.

"I don't understand. Where did you get this?"

"Rungnir Johannesen. Father of Einarr's father."

"No." Caroline felt her knees go weak. "That's the name of the man my great aunt Helga married when she returned to Norway twenty years ago." She sucked in a deep breath, blowing it out slowly. "They were childhood sweethearts. After her husband and Rungnir's wife died, they found each other again. And then Rungnir died last year." She blinked hard. "Same man?"

"Same." Erik nodded, looking almost as shaken as Caroline felt. "Helga be Mrs. Johannesen. Great uncle wife. He die. She die. Now they happy in Valhalla together."

Caroline stared at Erik for a moment. And then she reached inside the neck of her sweatshirt, drawing out the chain with her Viking charm. She held it out to Erik without a word.

Now it was Erik's turn to gasp. "Who give you?"

"Helga. My great aunt."

"How long you have?"

"It arrived a few days ago."

Erik rubbed her charm between his thumb and finger. "Color...was silver, then gold, now silver again?"

Caroline nodded. "Yes," she whispered. "How did you know?"

"When turn silver again?"

"This morning."

"When heart wish made, color change." With a boisterous shout of elation, Erik scooped Caroline into the air, swinging her around. Thursday joined in the jubilation, bouncing up and down and happily yapping. And then Erik brought Caroline back to her feet, holding her at arm's length, gazing into her eyes with an intensity she hadn't glimpsed before.

"Aunt, Uncle make happy plan for Erik and Caroline. See?" He spoke slowly, plainly doing his best to make her understand. When Caroline frowned, trying to comprehend what he meant, Erik sighed in frustration. "Viking magic," he said. "I be you heart wish!" he said through a bright smile as he thumped his chest. And at that instant, Caroline knew he spoke the truth. No doubt about it, he *was* the wish her heart had made. The embodiment of all her dreams and fantasies. "I be Caroline true love. Caroline be Erik true love."

It was impossible. It couldn't be. But then... Caroline remembered the vision she'd seen in Auntie Helga's eyes so long ago. Of course it was Erik. Her own Erik the Blond. And he had unselfishly used up his single heart wish to ensure she'd be able to keep her beloved dog. The realization brought tears to her eyes. Her head still spinning with thoughts of magic and sacrifice, Erik kissed her with such passionate force that she thought she'd launch into a quaking orgasm right there in the middle of the puke-spattered living room.

"Time for bath. True love smell like floor." He pinched his nose and motioned to the rug. Caroline cringed. "I give Caroline sex bath, yes?"

"Oh, yes," she said, tingling madly at the suggestion. "That sounds perfect." She headed for her bedroom and Erik followed.

"Then you come Erik house. No smell there. Big bed. Not need Mrs. Julenissen clothes with bells. Erik like Caroline nuked." He jiggled his eyebrows.

"Nuked, huh?" Caroline laughed. "Sounds like a cross between nude and naked."

"Naked," Erik corrected himself. "Yes." He tugged Thursday close and clapped the dog's rump. "For *Julekveld* supper I make you steak, beer and chocolate."

Fortunately Caroline had cleaned up her bedroom the night before and, while a faint odor lingered, it was clean and presentable.

"Do you have another play performance today?" she asked, stripping out of her jeans. Erik's gaze fixed on her as she wriggled out of her clothes, sliding over her ample curves in swift, satisfied appraisal. Her whole body went on alert.

He nodded. "One in morning before I come here. One in night for *Julekveld*. Eh..." he searched for the right words. "Christmas Eve," he explained. "You come see Erik play?"

"I'd love to."

"First, Erik and Caroline play," he said, his voice a husky timbre as he lifted the hem of her sweatshirt, dragging the garment from her body. He smiled when he saw her naked, unencumbered breasts and immediately buried his face between the mounds. He popped back up abruptly, wrinkling his nose, and led Caroline to the master bathroom. "Bath first."

The small shower stall felt deliciously crowded with Erik's broad frame filling it. He positioned Caroline under the warm spray and turned her slowly, watching the water sluice down her curves. And then he soaped her body, massaging the lather over each peak and valley and groaning with pleasure as he traced a path from her nipples down to her hungry pussy. All the while she could feel the hard, insistent nudge of his cock making its presence known.

The best part was when he stood behind her and held her flush against his body as he creamed the soap over her breasts, belly and pussy. His hips moved in a slow, sensuous motion, grinding his wet cock into the small of her back and then sliding the rigid shaft lower, up and down along her ass and then sandwiching it between the folds. A moment later his fingers explored her ass, and Caroline shivered. She'd never felt a man's hands there before and had no idea the sensation would be so erotic. Then Erik slipped his fingers into her pussy. He caressed Caroline, rocking them both in a circle as he fucked her with his broad fingers.

Enveloped in a sweet daze of need, her moans echoed off the shower walls, giving the sound a mystical aura. Still positioned behind her, Erik kept his thumb inside her, twirling it as his fingers clamped around her pussy. He shifted her body with just the use of his hand until the small circular motion nearly drove Caroline mad. And when Erik's fingers found her clit, abrading the engorged pearl, she gasped. Her thighs tensed as the ecstasy seized her loins and waves of rich, rippling pleasure sent her spiraling into orgasmic bliss.

It was awhile before the power of speech returned and when it did, Caroline said, "Erik, that was exquisite. Like nothing else I've ever experienced."

"I not finished," he said, bracing the weak-kneed Caroline as he turned her toward him. "Caroline body like smorgasbord to Erik. Mmm. So many good bites." He nibbled on her earlobe then trailed a sultry path of kisses to her mouth, nibbling and tugging on her bottom lip. "Now time for dessert. I take soap off and eat pretty pussy." With a languid lick of his lips as he gazed into Caroline's eyes, Erik promptly got to work, showering the soap from her skin.

Being rendered speechless by Erik's bold pronouncement wasn't a problem because there wasn't a hint of protest trekking through her thoughts anyway. At the moment she couldn't imagine one single thing that would be a better Christmas present. Her eyes were transfixed on his exquisite muscled torso and she savored the glide of his fingers as she watched rivulets of water trickle down his chest. Enticing blazing-hot fantasies tripped through her mind. If she closed her eyes, she could envision the two of them in days of old, when Vikings roamed the earth and the seas, standing beneath a waterfall in their own secret alcove, blissfully fucking as they pledged their true love.

True love. Yes, as hard as it was to believe, she could feel it. She hadn't even known Erik for an entire day and yet...it felt as if she'd known him all of her life. As if they were destined for one another. Soul mates. She wanted to savor every moment because there was a part of her that was afraid it was all a wonderful, mystical dream and that Erik wouldn't be there when she awoke from it.

Once Erik rinsed the last bit of lather from Caroline, he lowered to his knees in front of her. His hands were on her thighs, palms splayed, and he licked his lips. The sensation of sweet hot pressure grew between her legs as he approached her pussy like a lion stalking its prey. Not quite certain what to expect as his head drew close, Caroline's breath caught, only to be released in a trembling whoosh as he buried his face in her pussy. She felt the heat of his tongue darting between her folds and sashaying across the ultra-sensitive, engorged pearl. His talented mouth plundered every bit of slick territory it could reach.

"Oh!" Caroline gasped before she heard herself muttering strange guttural hums and murmurs of pleasure. As if on autopilot, she fisted his long wet locks and began to writhe and grind her pelvis up against his him. Her primed body shook in carnal anticipation and Erik held her firm so she wouldn't slip and fall. The man may not have attended escort school, but he sure as hell knew exactly how to pleasure a woman to the extent that every nerve ending in her body prickled with delight.

She whimpered through ragged puffs as he pulled back, gazed up into her eyes and smiled. "I love to taste Caroline nectar. Sweet. So good." The tingling tremors increased and she felt sure she was about to detonate. Erik took Caroline's hands and positioned them on his shoulders. "Caroline hold Erik good now so not fall." He spread her legs a bit more and glanced up again, gifting her with a bright grin and a languorous lick of his sensual lips. "Caroline ready be happy now?"

"I've never been more ready for anything in my life," she said with a throaty giggle. The sound of her cavalier chuckle was abruptly choked off when Erik opened his mouth and competently scouted around her dripping pussy with his tongue and teeth. Beacons of fire erupted everywhere tongue met flesh. When he took her throbbing, swollen clit between his lips and sucked and then nibbled the bud with his teeth, Caroline's internal universe crackled and sparked like a firecracker. In the midst of his wicked, fiercely carnal kiss, her legs wobbled and earthquake-like sensations shot north

and south until every cell in her system shuddered. She heard herself scream out Erik's name as he tenderly lapped at the juice of her wild orgasmic surge.

True, Erik may not have mastered the English language yet, but damn if her magical Viking didn't know *exactly* what he was talking about when he asked, *Caroline ready be happy now?* Because Caroline honestly couldn't imagine being one single iota happier than she was at this exact moment.

Chapter Five

"I make Caroline big happy, yes?"

"That, my darling Viking, is an understatement," she purred, still basking in the pleasurable afterglow of Erik's erotic gift. Caroline traced her fingers along his body, starting at his square jaw, loitering on his firm pecs and working down to his groin. She swallowed hard as she eyed his cock and the thatch of golden curls surrounding it. Slipping her fingers beneath the sac, she felt his balls draw up tight. Erik sucked in a sharp breath that developed into a growl when she stroked the sensitive patch of skin between his balls and ass.

It was going to take her a while to come to terms with how deliciously substantial the man was, from his towering height to his perfectly honed physique to his thick, ramrod-straight cock. And she was still absorbing the surprising bit of news that her magical Viking was actually a professor at the same university as Herbert.

Caroline sank her teeth into her bottom lip as she eyed the droplets of water clinging to his considerable physical attributes. Talk about a smorgasbord! No doubt about it, Professor Erik Tryggvason was designed to delight, excite and satisfy the female of the species.

"*Understatement*," Erik repeated, breathing hard. "That mean happy?"

"Oh yes." She laughed and trailed a line of kisses across his impressive pecs. "Big, *big* happy. And now," she clutched his biceps with one hand and his cock with the other, eliciting a raw groan from Erik, "it's my Viking's turn to get *big* happy." Bracing her hands on either side of his body, she eased herself to her knees, licking and nibbling as she went down. She ached all over from the desire to taste him, to capture his cock between her lips and feel its heat pulsing against her tongue.

As she knelt, Caroline swirled her fingertips through his thick curls before grasping his shaft firmly with one hand and his ass cheek with the other. Relishing in the spicy tang of his arousal, she wasted no time paying homage to her Viking's proud cock. Skimming him with her tongue in a long slow glide that made him moan with pleasure, she finished the sensual swoop by lapping a drop of pearly liquid at the tip.

"Mmm...succulent...salty...creamy." She licked her lips and went back to lavishing his sock.

"Ahh...Caroline...my beauty Caroline..." Erik said, threading his fingers through her wet hair. He stiffened when she took his cock into her mouth, her cheeks compressing his girth as she sucked.

She engaged in another round of licking and lapping, tasting the warm pre-cum dripping on her tongue, and then she raked his engorged flesh with her teeth. A shiver of ripe excitement shot through Caroline as a jagged groan erupted from somewhere deep within Erik's chest. Whispering her name, he fisted her hair and pressed her close.

Astounded at how much pleasure it gave her to lavish attention on Erik's cock with her mouth, Caroline couldn't help but remember what a drudge it had been to give Herbert blowjobs. He'd never been a giving lover. It was all about his satisfaction. She'd done it purely out of a sense of duty and obligation and had never achieved any real enjoyment or satisfaction from what she considered a necessary chore. Making love to her Viking's beautiful cock with her tongue, her lips, her teeth and her throat was a radically different, wholly delightful experience. And knowing that she was giving Erik such pleasure delighted her beyond measure.

As Erik's muscles tensed and she felt the primal surge of his pelvis forcing his cock further into the recesses of her suckling mouth, Caroline knew he was close to coming.

"So good. I ready," he grunted, slipping his cock out to avoid ejaculating in her mouth.

"That's good because I'm ready too," she countered, rolling his balls between her palms and watching the head of his cock bob. "Ready to make my Christmas Viking a

very happy man.” And then she claimed his wet throbbing flesh with her mouth again. Just watching the ecstasy in his eyes and knowing she was responsible for putting it there made her pussy clench and spasm.

A wicked combination of nibbles and spiraling licks had Caroline wringing rough shouts of pleasure from Erik’s throat. Taking the fullness of his cock deeply then, she rejoiced with him as he raised his head and roared a primeval cry of joy. Ribbons of hot cum spurted down the back of her throat and Caroline shuddered as shocks of piercing pleasure arced through her. Savoring the taste of his sweet-tart cum as the first wave of her orgasm pummeled through her, Caroline felt almost delirious from pleasure. She was baffled and elated beyond belief that she could actually come without stimulation to her clit. That was a first – but she suspected it wouldn’t be the last time.

At least, not as long as the big Viking was part of her life.

“You make Erik ecstasy,” he said as soon he had his wits about him again. “Best Christmas stocking ever.” He drew her into his arms and held tight as he kissed her.

After toweling each other off, they dressed and went next door to Erik’s house, Thursday in tow. While Caroline and Thursday settled in the modern Scandinavian-style living room, Erik prepared mugs of hot buttered rum. He brought out a couple of English-Norwegian phrase books and dictionaries and they passed the next couple of hours practicing each other’s native tongues. Tortured pronunciation and hilarious twists of the tongue as they each struggled with the foreign words filled the room with gales of laughter.

By the time they attended the Christmas Eve play together, Caroline and Erik had gotten to know each other much better. While children and their parents sat mesmerized, Erik did his Viking gig on stage – and Caroline thoroughly enjoyed every second of his hammy performance. The kids in the audience as well as the ones on stage seemed enthralled by the giant of a man dressed in Viking garb. *Enthralled*. Yes, that’s exactly how she felt about him too. And Erik got the biggest ovation when the production had ended.

What an immensely different holiday this had turned out to be from the lonely, depressing one Caroline had envisioned. Never in her wildest dreams could she have imagined sharing Christmas Eve with a Viking lover.

Once they returned to Erik's place, he insisted that Caroline relax as he busied himself in the kitchen preparing steak, salad and potatoes for dinner.

"Erik not forget Thor's Day," he said, presenting the buoyant mutt with a whopping big steak, a bowl with some beer and a chocolate kiss. He and Caroline laughed as Thursday's eyes rolled up into the back of his head with pleasure as he devoured the promised treat.

After dinner, Erik presented Caroline with a cordial glass of clear liquid. "Aquavit," he said. "Norwegian liquor." He linked arms with her for a continental toast and sipped as they gazed into each other's eyes. The pleasant flavor reminded Caroline of caraway seeds. "Take aquavit to bed." Erik took her by the hand and led her into his bedroom. The bed was massive and Caroline's pussy drooled as she pictured the two of them romping and rolling around. "Get nuked now. *Naked*," he corrected himself with a laugh.

Hours later, after fucking like lions in heat, Caroline's raw pussy trembled with the most exquisite combination of pain and pleasure imaginable.

But Erik wasn't finished executing his scintillating Viking magic just yet. Positioning Caroline as easily as if she were a rag doll, he posed her so that she was on her knees. Kneeling behind her, he played with her breasts, her cunt and her ass, smoothing his hands over the surface of her butt cheeks, squeezing them and trailing his fingers up and down the length of her crack. Caroline gave a little yelp when he spread her cheeks and then slicked his hot, wet tongue up the crevice. Now *that* was certainly a new sensation.

"Nice ass," Erik said, kneading her butt cheeks. "Like Nordic moon. Caroline sweet all over."

Caroline couldn't help but laugh. "You've got a pretty nice ass yourself, Erik."

“Good. I glad Caroline love Erik nice ass and giant Viking cock.”

Caroline’s appreciative laughter was cut short when she sucked in a sharp gasp as the head of his cock nestled into the crack of her ass and nudged forward until it met with resistance from the muscles ringing her anus. Her buttocks tensed beneath his splayed palms, but she didn’t shrink back.

“Is okay?” Erik asked, advancing his cock slowly.

Caroline’s mind spun with a proliferation of thoughts. Confusion, wonder, a bit of shy reticence. She was on the verge of braving into bold new territory with her Viking lover. “I haven’t done this before, Erik. I’m...not sure what to expect.”

“I stay gentle,” he said, leaning his body over her and trailing kisses along the small of her back. “Be some hurt. Then much excellent ecstasy. Trust Erik.”

“I do trust you, Erik. I do.” She moaned. “Do it.”

“I make wet first.” She watched him reach over to the nightstand and open a drawer, withdrawing a small jar. He unscrewed it and slathered some of the contents on his sheathed cock. Then he was behind her again, positioning the head of his shaft at her small opening. Erik pushed gently, then with more pressure. “Caroline relax now,” he instructed. With another push, her muscles eased, allowing him entrance and he tenderly eased part of his cock into her anus.

The sensation was incredible. There was pain and discomfort at first, but then the awareness of acute pleasure obliterated any distress or embarrassment. Before she realized what was happening, Caroline heard herself erupt in an impassioned moan and then cry out, “Fill me, Erik. Do it. I want to feel all of you inside me.” She wiggled against him, trying to seat his cock to the hilt.

“No. Not first time.” He stilled her movements. “Caroline too tight. We do more each day. Make more easy. Understand?”

The weighty sensation of Erik’s cock partway up her ass was intoxicating. “Yes. I understand,” she panted. Logically she knew that if she forced it she’d be sore as hell

for days afterwards, but at that moment her lusty libido was warring with rationality and reason.

Erik kept himself partially buried in her ass, moving his hips so she could feel him flex inside of her. He reached beneath her, grasping one of her breasts with one hand and tweaking the nipple while the fingers of his other hand shoved up her dripping cunt. The delicious impression of being packed in both holes at once was most extraordinary.

"Mmm...so juicy for Erik," he said. Caroline couldn't respond because she was all but crazed with passion, panting and moaning and growling. "Caroline." Erik's voice spilled out in a raw grunt as he finger-fucked her, eliciting slurpy sucking sounds from her pussy. "Play with breast. Erik watch."

It was a night for firsts because Caroline had never played with herself in front of Herbert. But in the next instant she anchored herself and reached for her breast, pinching the nipple and tugging it, adding to the exotic mix of sensations already whirling deep in her belly. She practically went out of her mind when Erik's hand left her pussy and swiped savagely over her tender, swollen clit.

"Too much," Caroline breathed. "Dear God, Erik...too much pleasure... I feel like I'm going to shatter."

Erik grunted. "So...tight...Caroline. Cock to explode from sex."

Caroline could tell he was struggling not to ram his cock fully into her ass just as mightily as she was trying not to buck against him, driving him deeper.

Erik was such a giving, not to mention *gifted*, lover that she found herself fighting off tears of appreciative joy as they made love.

"Mighty Odin!" Erik roared as he shot his cum, bracing Caroline's bucking hips as she writhed. Soon her moans ripened into growls of supremely satisfied completion. Once again she and her Viking lover were whisked away to Valhalla on a journey of carnal perfection.

They collapsed in a sweaty, depleted heap, perfuming the air with the sweet scent of musky sex. They lay silently, tangled together for what could have been minutes or hours. As long as she was in her Viking's arms, time had no meaning for Caroline.

Erik had just opened the final packet in his long strip of condoms and rolled it onto his cock when he kissed her lovingly and said, "True love, you Erik heart wish. Caroline stay Erik forever. Yes?"

Hard tingles of excitement she could barely contain rocked through Caroline. With the language difference she couldn't be sure she understood what he was saying. Could it really be possible that he'd fallen in love with her so quickly? She realized it was feasible because she knew in her gut, in her soul, in her heart that she was in love with Erik.

"Are you asking me to..." she started but wasn't quite sure how to finish.

"Be Mr. and Mrs. Tryggvason." He brushed a kiss across her lips. "Be love forever. I never be son of jackass like Herbert." Caroline laughed at that and then she cried. And then she laughed again.

She wrapped her arms around the Viking's neck. "Take off the condom, Erik. I want to feel your hot Viking flesh buried deep inside of me where it belongs when I give you my answer." She watched his cock jerk in expectation and felt her juices glide down her thigh. "Fuck me, Erik. Oh, please...fuck me."

Fingers fumbling in anticipation, Erik discarded the condom and then, with a low guttural growl, he plunged his marble-hard cock into Caroline's pussy. As he drove into her, he plucked at her nipples, persuading them into rigid peaks. Raging streaks of hot pleasure throbbed to her clit each time his fingers squeezed against a nipple.

"I...love...you," Erik said slowly, distinctly as he hammered hard into her pussy.

"I love you too," Caroline whispered through happy tears. "God, yes, Erik," she continued, jerking with untold pleasure as he pinched her clitoris with unexpected force. Her head tipped back and a hoarse cry tore from her throat. "I want to be with you forever," she managed through ragged breaths as he slammed into her again. She

squirmed against him, relishing the sensation of being pinned, impaled. Fucked. Loved and cherished.

Erik's final thrust was almost savage as he slammed his cock into her without mercy. Caroline moaned as her internal muscles tightened around the solid shaft, grasping it, drawing it even deeper until one feathery touch of her fingers against his balls triggered a potent ejaculation. At the feel of his cum bathing her depths, flurries of erotic delight stormed through Caroline with all the force of a Chicago blizzard. Swathed in the superb undulating waves of shared orgasm, their chorused moans were so loud they nearly drowned out the instrumental music from the Christmas CD playing in the background.

As Erik bent over Caroline's still quaking body, emptying himself of the last of his seed, the Viking charm around his neck clinked against the one Caroline wore.

With a bright spark of blue light, almost like an arc of electricity, the charms and their chains disappeared from their necks.

Spent after an immensely gratifying orgasm, Caroline and Erik gasped in astonishment.

"Oh my God...what just happened?" she said, feeling her heart skip a beat. "Where did our charms go?"

Erik clapped his chest, examined Caroline's, then patted the mattress and pillows, searching for the missing amulets. "I not know."

The pair erupted in another gasp as they spied a bright glow through the doorway, followed by a thunderous noise.

And that's when Thursday started barking his head off.

"It is blaedhorn...Viking blasting horn," Erik said, wide eyed.

"It's coming from the living room," Caroline whispered as she sat up tentatively. Erik leapt from the bed and shrugged into a pair of jeans while Caroline grabbed his T-shirt and pulled it over her head.

"You stay. I go," he said, creeping ahead and grabbing a hockey stick from behind the door while pushing Caroline back.

"Uh-uh. No way." Caroline seized the waistband of his jeans and held tight. "I just found you, Erik. If there's some alien ship out there and it sucks you in, I want to go with you."

Pausing, Erik turned to her, slanting a befuddled look. "I not go Mars."

Caroline chuckled and punched his arm. "For chrissakes, don't make me laugh now. This is serious! Let's go."

The light was fading just as they tiptoed around the corner into the living room. Thursday was at the far corner of the room, barking at the ceiling. Before the last glimmer of light died away, Erik and Caroline watched two white feathers float down from the ceiling just above the spot where Thursday stood.

"A bird must have gotten in here," Caroline said.

Erik shook his head. "Bird no can make light."

"You have a point there."

They padded cautiously toward Thursday who was quieting now.

"I don't remember seeing the little Christmas tree before," Caroline said, gesturing to the tiny tree atop an end table next to the sofa. "It's cute." She reached out to touch it and Erik stilled her hand.

"Not be Erik tree," he said, gulping. "Caroline...look!" They gazed at the tree and then at each other, jaws dropping in awe.

There on the tree hung both Viking charms together, on one single chain. A small card rested in the little branches next to the talismans.

"You've made your heart wishes," Caroline read aloud, her voice wavering. "And have found your true loves. The charms will work their magic again fifty years from now. Pass them on to those most deserving. Until then, the magic will live in your

hearts. Merry Christmas, dear children." She paused and clutched her chest, breathing rapidly. "Ohmigod...Erik..."

Erik took the card and read the rest. "Love, Auntie Helga and Uncle Rungnir." He turned to Caroline and a slow grin took hold. "Not bird, Caroline. Not man from Mars. It be angels."

"Oh, Erik...our very own angels from Valhalla." He nodded and Caroline touched one of the feathers. "Christmas magic," she breathed.

"Caroline be best magic gift." Erik put his arm around her shoulder and tugged her close before bending to give her a kiss. "And Erik the Blond be best gift for Caroline."

The church bells chimed. It was midnight. Christmas Day.

"*Gledelig Jul*. Merry Christmas, true love," Erik said, enfolding her in a firm embrace.

"Merry Christmas, my heart wish," Caroline answered as he lifted her into his strong arms and carried her back to the bedroom. "My magical Christmas Viking," she added in a soft whisper against his ear. "This time, wear your Viking helmet, okay?"

About the Author

Imagine frantically trying to file your way out of a locked bathroom door with a teeny nail file, dressed in nothing but a too-small towel while you're waiting for a real estate agent and a family with three small kids to arrive for a showing of your house.

Okay, now picture the contents of a box of just-delivered sex toys (purely for research purposes, you understand) strewn on the bed just outside the same locked bathroom door.

Welcome to the madcap real world of award-winning author Daisy Dexter Dobbs.

With her works hailed as the best in screwball romantic comedy, Daisy firmly believes in the healing power of love and laughter, although she's quick to disavow any notion that the often hilarious foibles and mishaps that frequently happen to befall her have any connection whatsoever with the zany predicaments of the characters in her romantic comedy novels.

Uh-huh. Right.

A Chicago native, Daisy now lives in the Pacific Northwest. She is happily married to her high school sweetheart, and has one child.

Daisy welcomes mail from readers. You can write to her c/o Ellora's Cave Publishing at 1056 Home Avenue, Akron OH 44310-3502.

Also by Daisy Dexter Dobbs

Polly's Perilous Pleasures



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