

"If ye do not quit thrashing around, woman, I will not be responsible for taking you."

"Taking me where?"

"Thor's hammer, I meant as a man takes a woman."

Raven didn't have to see the blush on her face—she could feel it. The man must think her bonkers to not know what he meant. She could only blame it on an overprotected childhood and a desire to start and keep her career moving.

Mortified beyond belief, she tried again to escape. Her hand brushed something hard against her thigh. Her gaze caught and then fell into dark silver spheres staring back at her.

Before she could open her mouth, his lips locked on hers, the covers disappeared, and a firm but gentle hand found and then slid under her gown. Her breath caught, held, and then released into his warm mouth as his fingers climbed higher. His tongue swirled deeper and taunted her until she reciprocated.

Wulf's foray to find and tease all her trigger points made Raven burn with need. Her hips rose off the mattress when his hand found her breast.

His mouth released hers. "Easy, Raven. There is so much more I want to do to you. I do not want to hurry and your need is reaching out to me too fast and too hot."

"Too bad, Viking. You started this, so don't complain to me if you can't keep up."

Viking, Go Home

by

Faith V. Smith

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

Viking, Go Home

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Cover Art by Nicola Martinez

The Wild Rose Press PO Box 708 Adams Basin, NY 14410-0706 Visit us at www.thewildrosepress.com

Publishing History First Faery Rose Edition, 2010

Published in the United States of America

Dedication

To my darling Rick, who could have been a Viking, and to my talented daughter, Amanda.

Also to Gini Rifkin who always loves my work, Mark Zickefoose, whose talent for fixing my computers keeps me going, and to all who were pulling for this book to be published. Also to Eloise Cornell who always waits breathlessly for my next book. To my brother Rod, thanks for believing in me. To Sarah Hansen, my wonderfully talented editor, thank you from the bottom of my heart! As always to God be the glory!

Praise for Faith V. Smith

Beware What You Wish...

Time Travel fans take note of this short, sassy, sexy and highly entertaining debut by an author to watch.

~Kathe Robin

Kensington's Soul...

A story any lover of paranormal romance would enjoy. Just keep the tissues handy for the dramatic ending. I can't wait to read the next adventure in the series."

~Larkspur, Long And Short Reviews, Rated 4

Dunbar's Curse...

Faith V. Smith writes vampire heroes to die for. But be warned ... readers who enter her paranormal world, won't want to leave!

> ~ Sue-Ellen Welfonder, USA Today bestselling author

Dunbar's Curse is a fast-paced story that takes you to an unexpected climax and delivers true love. Highly recommended. Jennifer Akers, MyShelf.com

Viking, Go Home...

Faith V. Smith's creative solution to bringing a strong modern woman and a Viking warrior together for their 'happily-ever-after' is uniquely satisfying

~Eliza March author of Hot Highland Fling

A very cleaver storyline sets this fast paced time/travel apart from others.

~Gini Rifkin author of The Dragon And The Rose.

Chapter One

House of Thorrason Norseland 1016

Wulfgar Thorrason unlaced his braies and prepared to mount the auburn-haired beauty in his bed. It had been several sennights since he rode away to settle a dispute at the edge of his property. His kinsmen had received his return with jubilation and a feast. After feeding the gnawing hunger in his belly with roasted meat, vegetables, and nuts, he'd quenched his thirst with an abundance of mead.

Weary from his travels and drunk as the next man, he'd fallen facedown on his bed to awaken with a bedmate. Now his morning shaft begged to find haven in the woman's softness.

As he prepared to do just that, the room darkened and all around him the world went still. The woman on the bed froze with her arms out in a beckoning manner, the lustful smile on her red lips now etched in a frozen parody.

Wulf, as he was known to his friends (what few he claimed), laced his pants and lunged for his double-edged sword on a trunk at the foot of the bed. Before he could follow through on his instinct to kill whatever evil spirit dared enter his longhouse, a shimmer of color appeared and then formed into a tall, buxom silver-haired blonde.

Her features were refined, her brows an arch of color above emerald green eyes that glared at him. Sunrise-pink lips sat below a dainty nose and her chin tilted up at a slant.

"Who are you?" His voice rasped through the

room. A tone that usually scattered friend and foe alike did not even make the woman flinch.

"I am Catriona, princess of the Norseland faeries. You are to remain silent. Your lustful ways have created havoc amongst the mortal realm and faery kingdom. I have irate fathers threatening to punish all of your kind because of you. The last bit of my patience was used up when you seduced my niece and left her crying."

"But, I—"

"Silence! I have passed sentence on you, and I am here to see it is carried out. From this moment on, until you learn that lust is not love, you will be banned from your homeland."

"What? Surely you jest. Why should I believe a wench who says she is a faery princess?"

"Believe me or not, Viking, you will learn what true love is, or die far from home."

Again, he tried to reach his sword, but with a wave of the woman's hand, his arm dropped to his side. His body went rigid, and the world caved in around him. One moment, he stood inside his bedchamber—the next he was spinning rapidly through space.

"Heed my words well, Thorasson, or you shall never see your homeland again."

Raven Harrison grabbed her digital camera and slung its cord around her neck, stuck her cell phone in the back pocket of her jeans, and grabbed a backpack filled with her wallet and a thermos of soup before snagging her car keys. She had about an hour of daylight left to get pictures of one of the ancient gravesites near her home.

Nana Bella had raved about the mausoleum with etchings of medieval times engraved on the outside. It was her goal to get a few quick shots, load them on her laptop, and then enlarge them. She wanted to study the pictures in hope they would reawaken her creative side. Caroline, her editor, would kill her if she missed her latest deadline.

The cemetery came into sight, and she pulled in close to the fenced off area. The seat belt strap sang as it was released and gravitated back to its anchor. A second later Raven stood in the brisk almost-winter Michigan weather, looking up at the six-foot obstruction to her goal. Nana had omitted telling her about the fence. The backpack hit the grass, and she grabbed the wire and began to climb.

Her sneakers made a soft *thud* when she landed on the other side. A well-used path headed to the right and she followed it. After conversing a curve, she stopped in amazement. Row after row of ancient headstones greeted her.

Where to start was the question.

Never one to procrastinate, Raven unslung her camera and began snapping shots as fast as she could. Inside the cemetery the trees stood close together. Their almost-bare branches lent an eerie air to an already spooky atmosphere.

Gathering her courage she moved between the markers and got her bearings. She scanned the landscape looking for the mausoleum she'd come to find. Straight ahead, atop a hill, the bronze-colored stone glistened in the rapidly failing sunlight. The wind picked up and sent a shiver across her spine.

Too bad she had to leave her backpack outside the fence. Soup would do a lot to take the sudden chill from her bones. She tugged the sleeves of her sweater farther down over her wrists in an effort to cover some of the exposed skin on the top of her hands.

The camera's cost had set her back royally. She didn't want to drop it.

Black clouds formed on the horizon and began to push rapidly to where she stood. If she wasn't mistaken there was also a bit of mist in the air.

She took the rise at a fast trot. Better to get the

pictures before the weather turned worse.

Once in position, Raven clicked away, trying to cover as many angles as possible of the building. She eased around the side of the granite, and the wind began to howl with a gale force shriek.

Saints alive. The weatherman hadn't mentioned anything about stormy weather. Small branches, separated from the tall oak trees, twirled in a mad dervish. She ducked one flying object but a second one gave her a glancing and painful blow on the side of her head. Before Raven could stow the camera back around her neck and get her hands up to cover her face and head, another limb, bigger this time, spiraled right at her.

Stars exploded inside her closed eyelids before her knees gave way, and she hit the ground, a second before everything went black.

Wulf squinted his eyes against the driving rain. He raised his forearm and deflected debris from the storm. Wherever Catriona had sent him, he knew it was not home.

Nay, this place with its memories of the dead waxed much warmer than his native land. Still he was grateful for the braies covering his lower limbs and the infernal organ that led to his troubles.

"Ouch."

The faint cry caused him to start for a moment. He'd thought he was alone.

He cursed the wind and rain obscuring his vision, and suddenly the wind died. He wasted no time on wondering why but instead focused his gaze on a mound of color near a building. Tree twigs crackled and broke under his bare feet as he strode forward.

The mound stirred and then gained its footing. In its place, a woman stood. A quite damp and beautiful woman.

He cursed the lust begging his manhood to stir.

If he didn't need to marry and sire an heir, someday, he would almost wish to be impotent. Now with the prospect he might never see Thor House again, he needed to bridle any emotion below his waist.

Still, 'twould be harder than he thought as he got closer. The wet and busty siren finally glanced his way, and lips bare of any artifice opened in a delightful oval. Strong white teeth greeted him. A good sign if he were looking for a bride—which he was not. Strands of hair rained water down onto the front of her already drenched shirt. The material was not something he had ever seen before: bulky but caressing at the same time over her ample breasts.

Some type of man's garment, again material he had not seen, covered her shapely thighs and legs pulling his attention to the center of her womanhood.

"Hey, I don't know who you are but it's rude to stare like that."

Wulf's gaze reluctantly returned to her face. Eyes, blue and icy like the fjord in his village, glared at him.

"Forgive me, I have never seen a woman dressed the way you are."

"Are you putting me on?" She grasped, twisted, and wrung out her hair.

"I am not sure what you mean, but I speak the truth. Wulfgar Thorrason does not lie."

"Oh please...where did you come up with a name like that?" Again she wrung out water.

Wulf did not have a notion of what to say. Never before had a woman ridiculed him or doubted his word. The wenches and jarls' daughters all hung on his every sentence with sly looks and grasping hands—hoping to woo him into their beds, or in some cases wedlock.

"Tis a name given to me by my father." His tone grew harsh thinking of Magnus, his father, who

was also the jarl of their village until his death. What he would say to his only son if he were still alive? His father believed in power, honor, and love. The first one Wulf had in abundance, but he was sadly lacking in honor and love. Oftentimes, he had taken what women offered him without caring if he left them with a part of himself. Only by the grace of the Christian God his father had revered that he did not have an abundance of children running free.

"You're kidding, aren't you?" The woman flung her hair behind her head and looked him fully in the eyes, piercing him with her icy blue gaze.

"Nay, if you mean I am lying to you. Tis true, I

was given that name at birth."

"I suppose you also developed your mode of dressing from your father?" The quizzical look in her eyes held curiosity.

"'Tis the way the men in my homeland dress. Of course, normally, I have on a tunic and vest, as well as my boots."

"So, where is home?"

"Norseland." Wulf moved a bit closer to the woman, maybe the wench would be able to tell him where and what year it was.

Blue eyes stared and then blinked. "Oh, you mean Norway?"

"I'm not sure what it is called now. I just know when I left home, my land was called Norseland."

"Look, I don't know where you came from or if you hit your head during the storm, but I've gotta go." Raven stepped back from the giant man standing in front of her. Ever since she'd come to after the tree branch beaned her, she wondered if she had a concussion. This sexy and almost-naked man was crazy. Just her luck. Running around in the cold air with barely a stitch on and spouting nonsense about homeland. She wished the behemoth would go away. Her head was splitting, and she wanted to get home.

"Please, I need to ask you something."

"Make it quick." No way could she stand to look at him much longer. Her pulse skittered with more than the effects of the freak storm. His eyes were so light, they shone silver. His hair rippled, a dark cloud of coal. A strong jaw and full lips—extremely kissable lips—only turned him into the equivalent of a hot hunk of sensual granite. Which meant he belonged to someone else. No way would he be unattached.

"I need to know what year it is." The man's voice rasped along her spine. She wondered if he would sound that way after making love. His tone also carried a hint of confusion.

"Well"—Raven looked down at her wristwatch— "when I left home a couple of hours ago, it was October 16, 2010."

The man's previously tanned face turned the shade of one of the gray headstones. His eyes widened, and he took several deep breaths. The force of the air entering and leaving his body showcased his broad and almost smooth chest.

"Tis impossible. Surely the princess wouldn't send me to the future? Not even a faery could have that much magic, could they?"

She watched the disbelief in his dilated pupils, heard it in his words, but the man was crazy. There was no such thing as time travel. Sure, she saw it in movies, read about it in romances, but get real. Still...as inspiration, he was more than enough to get her author juices flowing—not to mention her feminine side.

"Look, I think you probably need to see a doctor. Maybe you have a concussion or something." Raven drew a bit closer to Wulf or whatever his name was. "I can call someone who can help you."

He looked down at her from his impressive over six-foot-four advantage.

"I do not need a healer if that is what you mean.

Faith V. Smith

I be not sure what a concussion is, but I do know I be in a time not my own."

Raven resisted the urge to hum the tune to one of the old sci-fi television series.

"Okay, well then, maybe I can give you a lift? You know back to where you live?"

As she watched, he seemed to grow in height. "I told you, I am from Norseland, and I was born in the year 976."

"Look, buddy, I'm sorry, but I think you're off your rocker. Besides, if you were from that time period, how come you can speak and understand English?"

"I do not know, maybe Catriona made it so I could understand. Look, I told you, woman, I am a Viking."

"And I have two words for you, Viking: go home."

Chapter Two

Before Wulf could gather his words to reply, a sound like metal hitting rock bounced off the building near them.

The woman jerked and squeaked, then grabbed his arm.

"Someone's shooting," she hissed. "We have to get out of here."

For one so much smaller than he, her grasp was strong. He allowed her to pull him down the hill, as more sounds echoed all around them.

"Hurry up, do you want to get killed?"

She towed him along until they reached some type of wire fencing. The woman grabbed the wire and began to climb rapidly to the top.

"Get a move on, will you? Those are bullets not popcorn coming our way."

Another round of sound and the dirt in front of his feet bucked up.

"God help us!" Her voice conveyed the urgency he was beginning to feel, and Wulf followed the woman's lead and began to climb, all the time wondering what else could go wrong.

Once over the side, she moved to a large metal object. He jumped back with alarm when she opened it up and climbed in.

She growled at him. "What are you waiting on, an engraved invitation? We have to go."

Wulf copied her prior movements and tried to fold his body into the small area.

"Shut the door, Viking."

He looked and then found what looked like a lever. He grasped it and then pulled it forward—

enclosing himself inside with, as much as it hurt to admit, his rescuer.

"Whew, looks like we made it." Raven's heartbeat began to slow somewhat, but her hands still trembled. "I have no earthly idea why someone was shooting at us, but I'm definitely calling the police."

Raven looked over at her passenger. Wulf's face still had not regained his previously tanned color. The man's hands gripped his thighs in such a way, if he wasn't built like he was, he'd leave bruises. For pity's sake, she wasn't driving all that fast. You'd think the man had never been in a car before.

Well he said he was born in 976. She shushed the tiny voice in her head. Time travel was a myth. He probably just didn't like female drivers... Still—

"Hey, you okay?"

"What is this thing?" His words were uttered through clenched teeth.

"What?" The man was more loony than she'd originally thought or a good actor. Or maybe he's telling the truth.

"This thing we are riding in."

"It's a car. Haven't you ever seen one before?"

"We do not travel this way in my time."

Raven gritted her teeth. "Look, you have to understand, what you're telling me about being from the past is totally crazy to me."

"As it is to me. I wish to return home, but I cannot." The Viking's voice held anger as well as regret.

"Okay, so let's say you're for real. Maybe I can help."

"I thank you, but Princess—"

"Whoa, princess? That's the second time you mentioned this princess. I think we need to talk. I'm going to hit a drive-through and pick up some food, and then we'll go to my place. I need to call the police about what happened, but after we eat, you

can tell me your story."

"You would open your home to me?"

"Well, if what you're telling me is true, you don't know any one else in this century." Raven would weigh the pros and cons of having the seductive and hot bod in her house at a later time. For now, the man could use some help one way or the other.

"I do not even know your name."

A quick glance reiterated she needed to keep her eyes on the road. His silver eyes glowed with frustration and probably homesickness. Poor thing. She'd bet whatever caused him, if it was true, to be sent to the future had not been his fault. Poor baby.

"I'm Raven. Raven Harrison."

"Your father named you after a bird?

"Actually, my mother did. She used to do a lot of bird watching."

Apparently Wulf's curiosity was satisfied for the time being. He remained quiet as she rolled through a fast-food restaurant and ordered hamburgers, fries, and shakes.

Not long after that, she pulled into the circular drive of her home. Being an author had been a second job at first, but now with the revenue from her books, she'd put down a down payment on her first real home away from her childhood home.

After putting the car in park and turning off the ignition, she opened the door and got out. Raven walked around to the passenger side and opened the door for Wulf, who held the bags with their food. She retrieved the cardboard holder with the shakes.

"You about ready to eat?"

His puzzled stare went from her to the bags and then back again. "You eat parchment?"

Raven's laughter brought a slight smile to his lips.

"No, silly, the food is inside the bags." Unable to resist, she touched him lightly on the arm and couldn't help but enjoy the feel of taut muscle under her fingertips.

The man was built like a brick house.

She stepped back as Wulf finally managed to unwedge his body from the car. He stood silent while she closed the car door, and she motioned for him to follow her up the walkway.

One minute later they stood inside the entryway. After bolting the door, she started toward the kitchen.

"Let's eat."

When she turned after taking the bags from him and putting the food on the old farm-style table, she almost stepped on his bare feet.

Funny, Raven had failed to notice he didn't wear any type of footwear. She gave his scrumptious body a once-over and noticed the gold bands he wore on each massive forearm.

"What are those for?"

Wulf glanced down and then his gaze speared hers. "They are bands with my family crest."

"I see...a hammer for Thor?"

"Yea, but for Thorrason not the god of thunder." The slight grin he gave her revealed even and extremely white teeth.

"Come on, sit down. I'm starved." Raven yanked out a chair and promptly sat. Her hopefully short-term house guest did the same. She took a burger out of the bag, dumped it and a large order of fries onto a paper plate, and slid it across the table.

Not sure if Wulf knew what a straw was or how to use it, she prepped his shake and pushed it within hand's reach.

His eyes followed her as she took a bite of burger and crunched on a fry. He did the same. When she took a sip of her chocolate shake, he mimicked her move again, like he really had no clue as to how to eat junk food.

"This is good; I like it."

Raven hid a grin when he picked up a napkin

and dotted the catsup off his lips.

"I'm glad. When we finish eating, I need to call about the shooting at the cemetery, but after that I really want to talk to you about where you came from. Now tell me about the pendant you wear. Is it a family heirloom?"

Suddenly the tantalizing taste of meat tasted like ashes to Wulf. What if she still didn't believe him? And if she did, what then? Catriona's words he needed to learn love in order to return home made no sense to him. He'd cared for all the women he'd taken to bed. And there had been many. Raven would think him a womanizer. Why it should matter to Wulf, he did not know, but it did.

"Earth to Wulf. Did you hear me?"

"Yes, I am sorry. Of course, we shall talk about my home. My mother gave me the pendant when I became a jarl."

After gathering and tossing the remains of their meal, he followed Raven into a room she called a den. She motioned for him to sit. If he were not so beholden to her for a place to lay his head tonight, or if he were not dazzled by the now dry waves of blonde hair drifting over her breasts and the soft blue of her eyes, he would order her to stop treating him like a hunting dog to be commanded.

Once he did as she asked, he shrugged his shoulders. "You may ask your questions." He prayed his rescuer would believe him. Until he could figure out how to get home, he could not afford to make her think him more crazy than she already did. Thor's hammer, he certainly did not want to leave—just yet. Something about Raven called to him. He wasn't sure in what way, but it was more than lust that caught his interest.

The smile Raven shot his way bordered on irritated. Who did he think he was? Oh yeah, right, a Viking.

"Thank you, I believe I'll start with, what did you do to make someone mad enough to banish you from your home?"

"I uh...I was..." Wulf's words trailed off.

Yep, he was a bit perturbed. Good. He'd had her in a tizzy ever since they met. It was his turn now.

"You what?"

"I was accused of rutting too much."

Raven bit her lip until she tasted the salty tang of blood. Oh my Lord, the man got banished because he couldn't keep his pants up.

Well...maybe it wasn't all his fault. The women were probably all over him. He was more than a bit cute, he was hunk city with all the chocolate in the world thrown in for good measure.

"I see. So did you?"

"Did I what?"

The blaze of color turning his cheeks a deeper bronze was actually endearing, but she wasn't ready to let him off the hot seat. And she still needed to find out if his story was true.

"Have sex with all those women?"

This time Wulf's face turned a rich crimson.

"Ye should not be talking that way. Ye are a woman."

His statement threw her for a moment and then she laughed.

"Look. Viking warrior or whatever, this is 2010. Women not only talk that way but they actually participate."

Shock lanced through his eyes, turning them almost black.

"Do you participate that way?"

Heat scalded her cheeks. "That is none of your business, Mr. Thorrason."

"'Tis Jarl Thorrason. And you asked me, so I'm asking you."

Raven cleared her throat. "Well, I think this conversation is finished. Why don't I show you where

the bathroom is..." Her words trailed off at his look of confusion.

"It's a place you can take a bath and take care of any *personal needs*."

Her guest stood up when she did, and followed when she moved out of the kitchen and to the bathroom. He flinched but did not say a word when she turned on the light. He moved closer when she pulled back the sliding door to the walk-in shower and turned a knob.

"How did you do that?"

"You mean make the water come on?"

"Yea, I do not think you would be part of witchcraft, but how?"

The man was either an expert in reenactment skills, or as she truly began to believe, a visitor from the past.

"Water is channeled through underground pipes. There is a heater that warms the water when you turn one knob and then there is also a knob that makes the water run cold."

"Do you think I could try it?"

"Of course. Just let me check this and I'll leave..." Raven's words disappeared in a throat suddenly gone dry. Wulf, the split second she'd turned to test the water temp, stripped off his pants. His bottom half was just as impressive as his top portion.

In fact, the male portion of him, even unaroused, was way more imposing than she could have imagined.

She brought her gaze back to his face, and cringed at the smirk on his sensual lips.

"So you see, sometimes, I was the hunted instead of the hunter."

"So, you're telling me you just allowed yourself to be led to the slaughter...or should that be bedroom?"

"I may have allowed myself to be led to the

bedchamber, but I assure you once there 'twas I who did the leading."

Raven would have—should have—knocked the sensual smirk off his lips, but instead decided to do the prudent thing and retreat.

Moments later, she pulled a flannel gown from her clothes bureau and prepared for bed. She couldn't get the scene in the bathroom out of her mind. Sure, his chest had looked just fine in the *kitchen*. Well, actually, a bit more than fine. Muscular and probably warm if she'd dared to touch his bronze skin, but combined with a full frontal sans braies, Wulf oozed testosterone until her knees almost buckled. Something she would definitely have to guard against if he stayed.

Stayed? That would be pure lunacy on her part. The man was a walking advertisement for sex. She certainly didn't need him in her life, and she positively did not want him anywhere near her bed.

Raven snorted out loud. Maybe if she said it enough, she might believe it. But that was the least of her worries. Somewhere between the cemetery and the shower, she'd found herself warming to him, not just the physical perfection of Wulf, but his smile, his accent, and his old-world charm.

Just her luck to pick up a stray that could be endearing, obstinate, and would make a great sex toy.

Whoa. Don't go there, girlfriend.

The man was just staying the night, and then she'd find him a nice hotel until she decided if he should be committed. Or, if he spoke the truth, she'd help him find his way back home.

Once in bed, she flicked off the bedside lamp and settled under the covers. Ten minutes later, she still lay awake. The Viking's movements in the adjacent guest room filtered in through every nook and cranny. Why didn't he go to sleep? She was more than ready for a good night's sleep after today. She

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frowned. Crackers, what with listening to Wulf and doing a more than adequate fill of looking at his drool-worthy body, she'd forgotten to call the police about the shooting at the cemetery. First thing in the morning, she'd fix that mistake.

Wulf's muffled exclamations on finding and exploring new objects finally ended, and Raven took advantage of the quiet and closed her eyes.

A creaking noise woke her sometime later. She punched her pillow and tried to go back to sleep. Wulf undoubtedly suffered from insomnia. Raven turned on her back and stared straight into the eyes of a masked man.

Chapter Three

"Who are—" Her question was cut off by the pillow smothering her face. She struggled to pull it off but the man caught her hands with one of his. Her nose closed up, and her throat did the same as the oxygen she needed to breathe was denied.

Raven's lids closed and behind them, dark spots formed. She tried to lift a leg to knee her assailant in the groin, but couldn't. So not fair. She didn't want to die in bed taken out by her own pillow.

Her frantic gasps for air slowed and so did her movements. She fought her way through the Lord's Prayer when a crash against the bedroom wall coincided with the pillow being tossed aside. Before she could gather the strength or the breath to fight off a new attacker, two hands grasped her arms and tugged her upward.

"Woman, be you all right?" Wulf's tone smacked of apprehension and drizzled fear.

"I'm fine, Wulf. Thanks to you. If you hadn't..."

For the first time since he'd rescued her, she looked around. "Where is—"

"Do not worry about him, he will be no trouble for a while."

"That's good to know." She clasped one of his arms with her hand.

"Thank you for saving me."

"You do not need to thank me. You opened your home to me. I thank you."

Raven had one brief moment to stare into Wulf's eyes before he brought his lips down on hers.

His kiss practically scalded her with its steam. His hands should be declared lethal, except the feelings his touch invoked deep inside her were anything but deadly. She felt alive, treasured, and yet fearful at the same time. His tongue teased and coaxed hers to play, before he removed his mouth all too quickly. His arms slid around her body, bringing them so tightly together she feared she would lose her breath once again.

"I do not like this time. Men should not attack women. Twould not be tolerated in my homeland."

The more she heard the truth in his tone, the more she tended to believe he might be from another time. As much as she would like to ask him more questions, there was an unconscious assailant on her bedroom floor, and she needed to call the police.

"Wulf, I need to get up and call the police." Raven eased from his embrace and swung her legs over the side of the bed. When her feet touched the floor, she staggered. A large arm encircled her waist, and she leaned against the Viking as she moved to the kitchen where she'd left her backpack. She unearthed her cell phone and punched in 9-1-1.

Raven slumped down on the couch in her den and rested her head against the back. The police had come and gone, taking with them her intruder and her sanity.

Officer Hamilton looked like she'd lost her mind when she told him about the incident at the cemetery. Even though Wulf had backed her up, Hamilton had acted like she was the little woman who'd allowed her imagination to get the best of her. All she'd gotten from him was they would "check it out." The other officer, a Detective Giles, seemed concerned, so maybe he would do something besides mouth platitudes.

Bully for them, maybe someone would take a potshot at the officers and then they would believe her.

And, just maybe, the break-in had nothing to do

with the earlier incident. She sure hoped so. Her deadline was imminent in her mind. If she didn't get a move on it, Caroline, her editor, would be calling.

Now she had an overgrown Viking with her for an indefinite length of time. She could take him to a hotel, but after tonight's episode, she rather liked having a man in the house.

Raven's body bounced slightly when Wulf sat down beside her.

"'Twould be best if you tried to get some sleep." His gruff tone sounded compassionate, but no way could she go back in her room for what was left of the night.

Violated did not touch the way she felt. She'd been so proud of her new home. And now it felt tainted.

"I don't think I can sleep. Maybe I'll curl up here and just rest."

"If you be afraid, you could sleep in the room you gave to me. I'll stand guard so no one else gets inside."

His words comforted as nothing else could. She'd been on her own for so long, it would truly be a gift to have someone else take over—even for one night.

"That is so sweet of you. I don't know what to say."

"Just say yes, Raven. Sleep will put you in a stronger mind. Or at least 'tis what my mother used to say."

She forced her eyes to stay open; the events of the day were catching up to her, but she wanted to talk to Wulf.

"Is your mother still alive?"

"Nay, she passed to the other side after my father passed to Valhalla."

"I'm sorry. I lost my parents also." She leaned back against the arm Wulf slid across her upper back.

"Who has been looking out for you?"

Instead of jumping on him for assuming she couldn't look out for herself, she caught his hand and squeezed it.

"Thank you for caring, but women in my time are able to look after themselves."

"How?" His disbelief seemed real.

"Well, I write books and make money that way. Some women work in factories, some as nurses, and so on and so on. There are a lot of opportunities. Women even serve in the military."

"What is this military?"

"It's like Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force." Raven twirled a piece of hair between her fingers and scrunched up her face. "Warriors. They are warriors who protect our country."

"Women do this?"

"Yes, you have a problem with that?" Prepared to smack him if he went all macho, she waited for his answer.

"No, I am highly respectful of lady warriors. The Valkyries of Valhalla choose the warriors they feel are truly heroic."

"Oh, okay, just wanted to make sure you weren't a chauvinist pig."

Wulf's look of outrage caused giggles to erupt from Raven.

"I don't mean a real pig, it's a figure of speech."

"Good, I would not be wanting to be called a pig."

Raven laughed again and then with an almost tender look in his eyes, Wulf caressed her face.

"You need to sleep."

A yawn caught her unaware. "I guess I should, but I'm..."

"Sleep. I'll watch."

"Thank you, Wulf. I don't know why, I just met you, but I trust you."

"Go to sleep, woman." His gruff words were the last thing Raven heard before she succumbed to his

order.

Wulf watched the woman he now held in his arms. He liked how she felt nestled next to him. Her breasts, as they rose and fell in slumber, teased his skin even through her sleeping garment.

Faint shadows rested below her lower lashes. He wondered if she was as fearless as she acted. His thumb touched her brow and traveled a path down her cheekbone to rest against her lower lip. He bit back a groan as he smoothed the slight pout adorning it.

His honor, previously hidden, reared its head. Raven had been through enough today. He should put her to bed and then leave her. And he would in a moment. For now, Wulf wanted to revel in the knowledge that this woman did not fawn over him, or play games. She said what she meant, and if he wasn't mistaken, Raven wanted him as much as he wanted her. Yet, he wondered if what he felt was just lust, or could it be the emotion Catriona called love?

Chapter Four

Raven awoke and tried to move her legs. The weight pinning them down did not budge. With her eyes still closed she wiggled a bit to her left and then right. Surely she couldn't have wrapped the covers so tightly around her body they wouldn't come undone.

A grunt in her left ear startled her, and then a large arm draped itself across her chest. Her eyes flew open, and she turned her head to look at the sleeping man lying next to her.

Mother, Mary, and Joseph. How did she end up in bed with Wulf?

She tried to slow her rapidly accelerating breaths so she could think. Finally, the night's events came back to her. Wulf's promise to protect her while she slept had been kept, but she didn't remember going to bed.

Oh Lord, did she still have her gown on?

Raven slipped one hand under the cover tucked up to her neck, and breathed a sigh of relief when she felt flannel. Oh, thank God! Of course if she had any sense, she would be bemoaning the fact the handsome Viking could sleep next to her and not try something.

Bad girl! Bad girl! Just be thankful. She could end up pregnant, since she really doubted the birth control they used in Wulf's time would be effective, and with no date life, she wasn't on anything either. Not that she needed to be on something. And although her fans might think she knew a lot about what went on in the bedroom, Raven still maintained her virgin status.

Okay, time to try getting up again. Putting action to her thoughts, she wiggled to get her legs our from under the massive tree trunks Wulf called legs.

"If ye do not quit thrashing around, woman, I will not be responsible for taking you."

"Taking me where?"

"Thor's hammer, I meant as a man takes a woman."

Raven didn't have to see the blush on her face—she could feel it. The man must think her bonkers to not know what he meant. She could only blame it on an overprotected childhood and a desire to start and keep her career moving.

Mortified beyond belief, she tried again to escape. Her hand brushed something hard against her thigh. Her gaze caught and then fell into dark silver spheres staring back at her.

Before she could open her mouth, his lips locked on hers, the covers disappeared, and a firm but gentle hand found and then slid under her gown. Her breath caught, held, and then released into his warm mouth as his fingers climbed higher. His tongue swirled deeper and taunted her until she reciprocated.

Wulf's foray to find and tease all her trigger points made Raven burn with need. Her hips rose off the mattress when his hand found her breast.

His mouth released hers. "Easy, Raven. There is so much more I want to do to you. I do not want to hurry and your need is reaching out to me too fast and too hot."

"Too bad, Viking. You started this, so don't complain to me if you can't keep up."

His snort almost brought a smile to her lips, but his hand found and then caressed her womanhood. A whimper escaped to be caught in mid-air by Wulf as he tasted her lips again.

Raven pushed against his hand and a spiral of

need built and then rose higher and higher. Just as she was ready to fall off the precipice of desire, the doorbell rang.

Wulf jumped and withdrew his hand, followed by the warmth of his body.

Shoot, she'd forgotten he didn't know what a doorbell was. Wait, back up the book. When had she truly started believing he was a time traveler?

The bell rang again before Raven could answer her own question.

"It's okay, someone's at the door. I'll be back in a minute." She tried to put him at ease, but he still looked a bit shell-shocked.

After leaving the bed, she smoothed her gown down her body, grabbed a robe, and answered the door.

"Are you Mrs. Harrison?"

"Actually, it's Ms."

"Don't matter, I have a special delivery for you. Sign here."

The boy grabbed his electronic clipboard back after she scribbled her name and took off down the sidewalk.

Raven closed the door against the early morning chill, moved to the kitchen, and sat down. She slid a finger under the large manila envelope, shook it, and watched as a single sheet of paper fell slipped out.

You have something I want. Meet me at the cemetery tomorrow night at dusk. Bring your camera. My associate failed to do what he was told last night, but I won't fail. If you do not meet me, then the next time I go after someone, it will be your boyfriend.

Her fingers trembled as she worried the edges of the paper. First the gunshots, then the attack on her, and now this. She should go to the police, but they probably wouldn't be any help. They seemed more interested in getting the heck back to the station last night and not her problem.

Still, she should at least let them know about

the note. Yeah, sure, then the entire PD would be spouting the local author's imagination was in overdrive. If they only knew what she wrote, then maybe they'd be more eager to help.

She balled the note up in her hand and tossed it in the trashcan near the counter. No, she'd handle this herself. She just wished she knew this person was and why they wanted her camera.

Only one way to find out.

Raven backtracked to the bedroom and went to the dresser to get her digital. Thank God the camera survived the trials of the afternoon. Wulf lay on his side with his elbow cradling his head.

"Is there anything wrong?"

She inhaled and then exhaled before replying, all the time plugging her camera into her laptop.

"No, everything's fine. I uh, just have some work to do."

The pictures loaded on the screen, and Raven enlarged and then studied each one. The first group was from a book signing earlier in the month, the second batch from the cemetery.

There was nothing to see in the shots she took leading up to the mausoleum, but one picture jumped at her. Grainy in contrast, but she could make out a man standing over another man lying on the ground. What looked like a gun pointed down toward the body.

Oh my gosh. This was it. It had to be. But she had no idea who the guy was. Maybe if she enlarged the picture more?

No, she still couldn't get a good look at his face nor could she see the other man's face.

What should she do? Now that she actually had evidence of a crime, if she went to the police, the man could make good on his threat to harm Wulf.

Her heart stalled and then started again. No. No way would she place him in danger. Beside the fact, he would probably be great in bed, yeah like she didn't already know that fact, she was beginning to care for the Viking.

"Raven?"

She pulled her mind back to the here and now and not what if.

"Yeah."

"Are you sure nothing is wrong?"

She forced a smile on her lips and then turned toward Wulf. "I'm positive."

"Good, now come back to bed."

As much as she wanted to, as much as her body would love to be seduced by his, she couldn't. Not until she had a concrete plan. She couldn't just go to the cemetery, hand over the camera, and hope the man wouldn't finish the job of killing her.

"No, I need to—"

"Raven, did I do something wrong?"

How could she tell him he'd done everything right? So right, she was afraid to go back to bed with him. To have him make delicious love to her and then be killed. Leaving her to grieve over something that was barely started.

"No, Wulf. You were great. I just don't think it's a good idea for us to be together that way."

Wulf tossed the sheet back and stood up. What had changed? Raven had wanted him earlier, been eager with the desire he shared. Something must have happened between the time she answered the door and she played with the little metal box with a humming noise.

"I don't understand." She eased out from under the hand he placed on her shoulder.

"There's nothing to understand. You are from another time. Anything between us would never work out. It's best to understand that now and not complicate things."

Wulf wasn't sure if what he felt was love, but his heart ached from the pain of what felt like a jagged sword thrust within its depths. For the first time in his life, since he came into his manhood, he cared, deeply cared, for someone.

How or why did not matter. It would not ease the band of iron pressing against his upper chest. What should he do? Leave? He didn't know if Catriona would even hear him if he called. Would she believe he now knew the difference between love and exercising his lust?

Before he could decide to try to talk to Raven once more, the little box she kept by the bed began to blast out noise.

Raven picked it up and placed it against her ear. He wasn't sure what she heard but at least the infernal racket stopped.

"No, I'll be there. Yes, I'm sure. I just forgot." She turned toward him, and her lips pulled up into a grimace before she spoke again.

"Give me an hour, there's something I have to do first."

Chapter Five

Wulf stood like a frustrated child while Raven poked and prodded the pants she'd told him to put on. The tough material rubbed his legs, but the under-clothing she said he had to wear felt soft against his deflated manhood. Not even stripping off in front of her in the small cubicle they were in caused even a spark of desire to shoot through him.

He felt like a piece of meat to be cooked and it did not sit well.

"Okay, now put this on and we'll get you some shoes."

"I do not see the need for all of this."

"Of course you don't, but I told you I have to go to a book signing. I can't just leave you at home."

"I be not a child, Raven. I can stay by myself."

The look she gave him as she smoothed out the short-sleeved apparel did not convey agreement at all.

"Please, just bear with me. It won't take more than a couple of hours and then we'll grab something to eat."

The thought of something to quiet the rumblings in his belly kept him quiet.

Earlier, once Raven stopped talking on the little box, she'd whirled like a devil. Dashing to and fro and then the water came on in the bathing room. No time to break their morning fast, and by the way the sun looked when they arrived at the shop, noon had long come and gone.

He kept silent and followed her into a larger room and then to a place where shoes sat all over. Peering closer, he examined shoes he'd never seen before. Before he knew it, a man rushed over and began to measure Wulf's bare feet.

"Tsk, tsk. The man has feet the size of a horse. I'm not sure if I have anything to fit."

Again he kept silent and remained still. The urge to tap the little man who insulted him was strong, but Raven would probably think him a barbarian as well as a child.

After having his feet crammed into several pairs of leather boots, Raven and the man settled on a pair of canvas-like shoes with laces.

Before he could say anything or knock the smug look off of the little toad's face, Raven tugged him away, flashed the hard little square called plastic she was so fond of, and then they were back in the car.

Raven dotted the i in her last name with more emphasis than necessary. She forced a smile as she handed the book back to her fan.

Her smile, however, disappeared as she scanned the large room for a glimpse of Wulf. The man had attracted every female in the room from infant to senior since they had arrived. She wanted to kill him, but truthfully, he'd done nothing to encourage the herds of drooling women. He almost looked desperate when she'd taken her seat to start the book signing and left him all alone.

The poor man, he could probably drop a fly with an axe or sword at fifty paces, but his face had turned almost green. Green was a color she could empathize with. Never in her life had she ever been jealous over a man, but when it came to Mr. Viking extraordinaire, she was ready to pour boiling oil over her fans.

Because his butt looked like a million bucks in the pair of skin-hugging jeans. And just because the pullover shirt brought into play all the rippling pecs and muscles in his upper body and arms, that was no reason to want to kidnap Wulf and escape back to her house with him before having her way for hours with Mr. Hot-and-Sexy.

No, no reason at all, except she wanted him so badly she could taste him, not to mention, she could feel her body's responses to him with peaked nipples and a subtle but definite wetness between her thighs.

Finally! She spotted Wulf at the back of the milling crowd. He glanced her way at almost the same time she saw him. The expression on his face looked a bit frantic. As he began to make his way toward the front of the room, he was stopped time and time again. Pieces of paper, even lipstick-stained tissues were thrust at him.

Raven started to rise from her seat but another fan stuck her book on the table.

"Here you go, my dear."

Raven tamped down her irritation. "How would you like this made out?"

"Just put it to Mixxy. And you know, my dear, I wouldn't worry about your young man."

Raven jerked her gaze upward. The elderly woman's blue eyes twinkled.

"He's not—"

"Honey, take it from someone who's seen a lot of this world, and buried three loving husbands. That man has eyes only for you."

"How can you be sure?"

"Well, I've been waiting for almost thirty minutes to get this far in line, and I've watched him as the women mobbed him. All the time, they were flirting, he was looking at you."

Raven's mouth fell open. "Oh...I didn't know."

"You do now, so sign my book and get the heck out of here. Take him home, bed him, and be grateful he's a one-woman man.

She autographed two more copies of her latest book before Wulf finally made it to the table. His group of followers only a step or two behind.

Should she stake her claim or not? As she made up her mind, one brazen hussy patted his butt.

Oh, hell no!

Raven slid one hand into the front of Wulf's jeans and tugged him forward before she stood up. She casually removed her hand, ran it down the side of his thigh, and then inched it around to his fanny.

"Hi hon, you about ready to go home?"

Bless Wulf's heart, he didn't even look shocked.

"Aye, I can't wait to get out of here with you."

Since he was behaving so well and saying all the right things, she lightly caressed his buttocks. Her reward, a singeing stare from his sizzling silver eyes.

"And if you don't be stopping what you are doing, we might have to finish our talk from this morning."

Raven knew her face was red—it burned—but the looks the women gave her were full of envy, and for a woman who always felt lacking when it came to the male population, she couldn't help but preen just a bit.

"Anything you say, darling."

Never in all the history of her book signings had she broken down her exhibits, and packed up promotional material so quickly. Of course, it helped there were no books left over for her to take home.

Lillian, her agent, and Maxine, her publicist, barely had time to say goodbye before Wulf almost pulled her out the door.

"What's the matter, Wulf, didn't you enjoy all the attention?"

"No, I did not. The women of your time are brazen. Only the trollops and bed wenches in my time behave that way in public."

"Well, you didn't seem to mind *that* much." She couldn't resist a jab at his expense. The man caused her concentration to go on strike during the signing.

It was a miracle she hadn't signed his name

instead of her own.

"Fie, woman, no man wants to be poked and prodded and to be looked over like a side of beef."

"Hmm...is that what you did with the women you bedded?"

His face changed expressions, going from outrage to confusion, and then a blank stare, so fast she would have missed it if she hadn't been looking.

"Methinks you are right. Could be the reason Catriona thought I needed a lesson."

Wulf caught Raven's arm as they moved to her car. He walked her around to the driver's side and then waited for her to unlock the door before opening it for her. Well, in a lot of ways, the man was a gentleman, and maybe this faery princess was off the mark a bit.

Once they were both seated and buckled up, she asked the question screaming in her mind.

"So, have you learned your lesson?"

"If you mean do I know the difference between love and lust, yes I do. $\,$

She glanced his way before turning the key in the ignition.

"Care to explain?"

Wulf was not sure if he could tell Raven in words how he knew and why he knew. He just knew it had something to do with her. The way she stood up to him, the way she welcomed his kisses and touch, the way she smiled when he did something strange for her time period.

"I be not sure I can, but I be sure that if I had not met you, I would still be puzzling it out in my head."

Her blue eyes went wide for a moment, and for the first time since they had met, his little... No, when did she become his Raven? Wulf was at a loss for words.

When the silence stretched on, she finally shook her head. "Alrighty then...I guess we should get you something to eat before we head back home." Her hands clenched the turning wheel in the car, and she pulled out onto the street.

All during the time they stopped for food and waited to pick it up, she avoided looking his way.

He clenched his own fists. He wanted to see her eyes. Could she tell from his words that he cared about her? Did she know he found her the most desirable woman he had ever met?

No. Because he be too much of a coward to tell her. What good would it do? Sooner or later, Catriona would send him back to his time, and Raven would dwell in a future he would never visit again. His bones would be nothing but dust in a grave before the year 2010 arrived and she would be left, if he was blessed, with a memory of him. But did he have the right to make her hurt (if she cared for him) for an indefinite amount of time?

And did he have the right to bed her only to leave her possibly with child? There was no way he could know when or if he might be jerked back to Norseland, but he could not take that chance. The thought of a child he might never see would shatter his already aching heart.

Somehow, somewhere, he'd fallen hard for the little writer.

"We're home. Are you going to sit there all afternoon or come in?"

Wrapped up in his thoughts, he had not realized they arrived back at her home, nor did he even know when Raven left the car. Now as he looked at her through the glass on his side, he wondered what he was going to do. How would he keep his hands from touching her, his lips from kissing her, and his traitorous body from claiming what he knew should be his?

He gathered his thoughts, harnessed his courage, and rebuked his body. "Sorry, aye, I be getting out."

Wulf ignored the slight smile she passed his way and sidestepped the hand she put out to him.

"I guess we can watch a movie if you like after we eat." Her hesitant words made him want to gather her to him, but he did not. So despondent over what he couldn't or wouldn't do, he didn't even ask what a movie was.

Seated at the kitchen table, Raven slapped a couple of pieces of pizza on a paper plate and handed it to Wulf. The man had not uttered a word for over thirty minutes, except for the few brief words when they arrived home. Not at all like the inquisitive wonder she was becoming to care about way more than she should.

Still, they couldn't just not talk to one another—he could be here for a long time. Of course, she could put him up at a hotel, but her heart just wasn't in it.

"Okay, out with it. You seemed fine earlier today, and now you've clammed up like a hooker in church. What's wrong?"

His silver eyes darkened to almost black as he finished chewing the bite of pizza in his mouth, and then wiped his lips on a napkin.

"You mean besides my being here in the wrong century with you? Adrift from all I know, destined to maybe never seeing my homeland again?"

Hurt slapped Raven in the face and then traveled inside to attack her heart. Sure, the man had a right to be agitated, but his angst at being in the wrong century included her. The woman who had taken him in, the woman he'd kissed senseless, the woman who didn't understand why he couldn't love her the way she was beginning to love him.

Whoa, don't go there, you know this can't happen. You've already had this conversation with yourself.

"Look Wulf, I'm sorry. I can't tell you I understand how you feel, but try to understand how

I feel. I thought we were beginning to be friends, maybe a bit more, and now you berate and ignore me like I was a stranger."

"What would you rather I do? Take you to bed and give you a babe? For that could happen and then when Catriona whirls me back to my time, you will be left alone."

Well, what they said about great minds and all that drivel was on the mark. They both had been thinking about his leaving. Raven wondered if Wulf would miss her when he left. She doubted it. He had so many women wanting his body, and she'd be just an inconsequential memory.

The rest of their meal turned into a silent struggle to eat and not look at one another. Not what she wanted, or planned, but she wasn't sure she could or wanted to change Wulf's mind.

When Wulf didn't break the silence, and her courage failed her too much to do it either, Raven pushed back her chair and began to collect the remains of their half-eaten meal. The Viking must be stressed. He'd left food on his plate, something she had not seen since he first became her house guest.

"Look, I'm going to grab a shower. You know how to turn on the television set, right?"

"Aye! I be not ignorant."

"Fine, then find something to watch."

Tears blurred her eyes at his harsh words as Raven made her way into her bedroom. His words hurt. And even though he might be upset himself, it still didn't give him the right to bite the hand that was feeding, clothing, and bedding him down.

Whoops, bedding was not the best word to use. It brought up all kinds of delicious and forbidden thoughts. She stripped off her clothes and headed to the bathroom. The shrill piping of her cell phone from the den disrupted her thoughts.

She spun around just as the bedroom door

Viking, Go Home

opened.

Chapter Six

Wulf stood in the doorway. The look on his face changed from stony-eyed angst to a smoldering silver fire.

Shocked at his sudden appearance, the gown she still held in her hands fell to her feet.

The Viking's expression burned hotter as he took a step forward. His action spurred Raven into motion. She grabbed the gown and anchored the material to her body. Her hands trembled from more than being startled.

She waited to see what Wulf's next move would be.

Raven didn't have to wait long.

The Viking surged forward as if he were in battle, caught her body in his arms, and pulled her close.

"Woman, you would try the patience of a saint, and I be not one."

Wulf's lips captured Raven's, and he basked in the welcome he received. The image of her naked body burned in his mind and shaft. Thor's hammer, he knew she was a buxom wench, but never would he have thought her body would be the enticement most men could only dream of.

And thank the Valkyries she did not deny entrance to his lips or tongue. He removed one of his hands from around her waist and pulled the material she used as a shield away from her luscious body. Now, both his hands cupped and lightly tested the weight of her impressive breasts.

His action spurred a groan from Raven, which he captured and returned to her with foraging sweeps of his tongue.

With such bounty before him, Wulf hesitated to leave the nectar of her rosy peaks, but he craved to explore the treasure hidden within the blonde hair between her thighs.

Nay, 'twas not all he wanted to do, but for now he would satisfy his curiosity if the silken pelt was as soft as his quick glance told him it would be.

Raven moaned when Wulf's hand slid down the outside of her thigh, and then up the inside. His fingertips were a bit calloused, but his touch was gentle as well as seductive.

His thumb found and trapped the core of her desire and her knees buckled. Raven found herself on the floor with Wulf lying almost on top of her. A discordant sound coming from his shirt pocket broke her lust-filled thoughts.

"Raven, what are you doing? I need to talk to you right now!"

For a moment, she thought she'd lost her mind until she spied her cell phone riding almost out of Wulf's shirt.

Caroline! Oh, pish! That was the reason Wulf came into her bedroom in the first place. She made a grab for the phone before it slid onto the floor and stuck it to her ear—all the time telling her body to shut up as it screamed for more.

"Wulf, get off of me." Her whisper met with an icy glare and then a subtle but definite look of hurt.

Raven gained her feet right after the Viking did. "Raven!"

"I'm here, Caroline, what is it?"

"Your deadline's been moved up. What took you so long to come to the phone? And who is the guy that answered it in the first place?"

She didn't have to see her editor's face to know her brows were pulled up in a frown, or her nose was tilted slightly up in the air as she waited for an answer. "Well..."

"Well what?"

"Wulf is a friend, he needed a place to stay."

Her words sounded just as defensive as she felt.

"Oh, and is this the same guy that stirred up all kinds of sin-filled thoughts at the book signing?"

"I guess it was too much to expect that Lillian and Maxine would keep their mouths shut."

"Honey, he brought in a crowd you haven't seen in a bit."

Raven wanted to slap-kick Caroline. So what? Sales had been down just a bit, but in today's economy, that was to be expected.

"I think you should keep him around, at least until your next book goes best-seller. Which reminds me..."

Okay, finally the reason Caroline really called for.

"I need your book finished in the next two weeks."

Raven watched with a sinking heart and unsatisfied body as Wulf strode from her room. Should she call him back? His face pretty much said it all. He was incensed and hurt. But what else could she do?

She had to take this call and if she examined her feelings closer, she knew, as much as she wanted him, it was better this way. She had bigger fish to fry than bedding a Viking, even if her body still wept from wanting him. The best thing she could do for Wulf would be to make sure whoever was targeting her did not get a chance to take it out on him. And she needed to finish writing her freaking book before Caroline had a conniption fit.

"Are you listening, Raven?"

"Yes, I heard you loud and clear. I'll get the book to you. Now, if there's nothing else, I have something I need to do."

Her editor's husky laugh came through the cell

phone. "I just bet you do. Just make sure Mr. Hunkof-Sin doesn't destroy your concentration. I need the manuscript in two weeks."

"Don't worry, you'll have it." It might be rude, but Raven closed her cell phone without giving her editor a chance to say anything else.

Against her heart's cry for her to do something different, Raven closed the door Wulf left open when he stalked out and took her shower. Only when her body was safely shrouded with flannel, all the makeup off her face from the afternoon, and her hair pulled up in a tight and hurtful knot on top of her head did she leave her room.

The den was dark, no sounds of the television. He must have gone to his room. Her slippered foot tapped as she tried to decide whether to go back and hide in her room or beard the Viking in his cave.

Honor won out over cowardice. She owed him an apology. Yes, she did need to talk to Caroline, but there were better ways she could have handled the situation.

Her steps were slow as she walked to the guest room, her hand hesitant as she finally tapped on the door.

Silence met her knock. Raven waited a full thirty seconds and repeated her action. Still nothing.

"Wulf? Are you awake? I want to talk to you."

Nothing. She was ready to turn around and go back to her room when she heard a slight grunt and then a harsh, clipped voice. "Leave me be, Raven. I want no more of your talking or anything else."

Pain shot through her heart, but she remained silent as she retraced her steps. Only when she was safely inside her room with the door locked, did she give in to the tears burning her eyes.

Chapter Seven

Wulf punched his pillow, rolled over, and closed his eyes, but nothing helped. He'd been awake for what seemed like hours. He wanted to kick his own arse for snapping at Raven. Why did he not try to talk to her? He knew why, but did not want to admit his shaft had overcome his mind.

His first glimpse of her total nudity had turned his legs into storm-tossed twigs. His manhood had worked fine, standing up like a sword, and nothing Wulf did would stop the lust making it harder than a ship's mast.

When she'd turned into his embrace and returned his kiss, he forgot about handing her the little box she talked into. He did not recall his decision to not touch Raven, nor his troublesome thoughts about leaving her.

All he could think about was touching her, making her his, never allowing her out of his arms again. Living in this time was very different than his. At home, all he would have to do was claim her before witnesses and he could bed her all he wanted. She would be his. Here, women held jobs, walked around in men's clothing, and did what they wanted.

Yet, they still needed to be revered. They were the givers of life to children. And the Christian God help him, he wanted children for the first time in his life. He wanted to hold a child that belonged to him and Raven.

His eyes burned from the emotion tugging at his heart. If this be love, then Catriona had gotten her revenge. His heart ached with the knowledge that he could not make Raven his wife. Even if she were of a like mind, and even if there were a way for her to return home with him, he could never ask her to leave the life she was used to.

Nay, Raven's halt of their lovemaking was for the best. Now, he would need to keep his love and lust in control.

On that thought, he rolled over onto his stomach in an effort to quiet the lust attacking his shaft.

Raven crept through the house and hoped Wulf was a heavy sleeper. She'd not seen any sign of him when she got up to make coffee. Even after getting dressed, silence still reigned in the guest room.

Whether or not he was indeed asleep, or plain ignoring her, she was grateful. After tossing and turning for most of the night, she'd retrieved the note and decided to take it and the picture she'd printed out from the cemetery to the police station. Maybe someone there could help her.

"Yes, I'd like to speak to Sergeant Giles please." Raven placed the note on the counter and waited.

"Sorry, ma'am, he's out on patrol. Maybe someone else could help you." The officer at the front desk gave her a slight smile and went back to pushing paperwork to the side of the desk.

"Possibly, who would I talk to about a—" Before she could get the word "threat" out, chaos broke loose in the station. A man in handcuffs started yelling and then began head butting the officer escorting him.

Several men in blue jumped in to try and subdue the prisoner. Raven opened her mouth to ask the officer at the desk who she could talk to, but he too dove into the fracas.

What should she do? Wait? Leave? What? The prisoner himself helped make up her mind when he grabbed a letter opener off one of the desks and started slicing the air with it.

Too much of a chicken to go home and face Wulf's cold demeanor, Raven decided to go to the bookstore and stock up on some of her favorite authors. Just maybe she'd be alive to enjoy the vampire romances. Besides, she was so not in the mood to meet her book deadline. She also needed to make a stop at the grocery store. So far all she'd offered Wulf to eat was fast food. Tonight she would cook for him, and with the extra stuff she'd thrown in her cart, maybe he wouldn't starve if she didn't make it home tonight.

Now, several hours later, she inserted her key in the front door lock and juggled two bags of groceries as well as a carton of cola.

Before she could push the door open, it was snatched backward.

"Where have you been?" Wulf's snarl caused Raven to jump back, almost dropping the groceries.

"I had some things to do."

"You did not tell me you would be leaving." This time his tone smacked of a little boy's pout.

"If you'll step back so I can get in, I might tell you what I was doing." Raven blew a lock of hair out of her eyes and then stepped over the threshold when Wulf moved.

"And just so you know," she intoned over her shoulder as she made for the kitchen, "I don't have to tell you when I leave."

"'Tis rude and you know it."

"Fine, you want to fight about me not leaving a note, let's do it, but I'd like to know why you stormed out last night."

"I will not talk about that with you." Wulf's lips tightened into a straight, uncompromising line.

"Fine, then I don't want to talk to you."

Raven began to put up the groceries, turning her back on the Viking male who needed an attitude adjustment.

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When she turned back around, he was gone. "Fine, arrogant piece of medieval pig."

Raven chopped onions and peppers to add to the ground beef simmering on the stove. She hoped Wulf liked chili, and she hoped he started talking to her. Silence pretty much had been her companion since their earlier heated discussion. Another *thwack*, *thwack* with her knife and she tossed the green, white, and red pieces into the skillet to cook with the meat.

The can opener swirled, and she poured in a can of tomatoes and stirred the spicy mixture. Before she opened the fridge to get the salad fixings, she stepped into the hallway. Not a sound reached her from Wulf's room. The man was good and steamed. Her anger over his words dissipated right after he stormed away—leaving behind a crushing ache in her heart.

Yes, she knew what she was doing was for the best, for Wulf's sake, but it still bit big time. She finished the final touches on the salad, tasted the chili to make sure all the spices were blended, and then got down plates and bowls. Not much for cooking unless she had to, her lifestyle commanded fast food more times than not, Raven opted to pick up a dessert at the grocery store. Brownies with cream cheese icing should go far, she hoped, to sweeten the Viking's attitude.

Twenty minutes later, she stood outside his doorway and knocked. "Wulf, it's time to eat."

"I not be hungry."

"Please, I know you are upset with me, but can't we talk over dinner?" Raven knew her words held a plea within them, but she didn't much care if she sounded like she was begging. Dusk was only about two hours off, and she wanted to spend some time with Wulf. There were things he needed to know if something happened to her. Of course, she was an

idiot for going back to the cemetery in the first place, but she couldn't take a chance on another break-in with Wulf as the target.

The door opened quietly, a good sign, but the scowl on his handsome face prepared her for the battle ahead. She'd be blessed if she could get him to listen to anything she had to say.

"Great, thanks for coming out."

His grunt didn't help her confidence as he slid past her, keeping a good foot of distance between their bodies. Sheesh, when the man pouted, he pouted all the way.

Once they were seated with plates of salad and bowls of chili decorating the place mats, Raven tried once again to break though his rotten mood. "Wulf, look I know I said I wasn't going to talk about last night. Yes, it did not turn out like I wanted it to, but you have to understand, I have to work. It's just me, and if I can't make a living, I have no one else to help."

She watched his strong jaw clench as he chewed a forkful of salad and then waited until he swallowed. His silver gaze speared her like he'd speared a piece of tomato out of his salad.

"Well, aren't you going to say anything?"

Wulf finished the tomato, laid his fork down, and picked up the can of cola. His Adam's apple worked as he downed a good bit of the liquid before he set the can down.

"I'm sorry." The apology came out in a gruff tone, but the metallic cast to his beautiful eyes had softened.

Raven felt the burn start in the back of her eyes. She did not want to cry, but she never expected him to say he was sorry. Not at all sure what she thought might happen, she could only return his look before she could open her mouth to reply.

"I'm sorry too. I know if I were you, I'd be scared out of my mind being so far from all I know. You are

so brave, and I should have been more understanding."

"'Tis probably not easy on you either." The halfsmile on his lips warmed her insides.

"No, but I'm learning to cope. Although, having you barge into my bedroom last night was a bit hard to handle."

Wulf's laughter filled the kitchen and went straight to Raven's heart. In the short time since they had met, this was the first time he actually laughed out loud.

"What's so funny, Viking?"

When he controlled his amusement, he finally answered her question.

"You may think me seeing you in your birthing suit was hard, but it cannot compare to the hardness I experienced."

Heat blossomed in her cheeks and climbed toward her forehead, almost scalding her skin. She remembered the hardness of his body, the masculine weight of his arousal as he lay over her body on the floor. Truth be known, she wanted that hardness inside her. Embedded so deeply he could never leave.

"I, uh, guess I should say I'm sorry again. Just so you know, I ached also."

Wulf stood up and then rounded the table where he crouched down next to Rayen.

"Then why did you tell the woman on your talking box I was just a friend?"

Raven thought long and hard about her words. If she allowed him to know her heart, then both she and him would be hurt when he left. Not to mention, the simple fact she might not be around. Stupid, stupid, not to have waited around for Sergeant Giles. Now it was too late to do anything.

"Because that is all we can ever be. I'm sure you know that already. Without knowing how long you will be here, it would be foolish to try and make this relationship more than it is." "And what is it?"

"Two people who met and will be parting sometime."

The words cut her almost as much as the look on Wulf's face. The hurt in his eyes turned them a molten silver before he wiped all expression from his gaze.

"You be right, there is nothing for you or me in this time. Catriona could call me back at any given moment. 'Tis best we do not engage in anything other than acquaintances."

The monotone of his sentences made her wonder if Wulf told the truth. Did it matter? He was right as was she. Nothing could be between them.

"Good, I'm glad we have an understanding. Now, I'm going to clean up in here and then I have to go out."

"Out? 'Tis almost night."

"Well, women in this time do go out without an escort, so while I clean, there are a few things you need to know."

Wulf watched Raven drive off. Her explanation she needed to run an errand did not sit well with him. He might be from another time, but he was well versed in knowing when someone was up to something. She would not look him in the eyes when he asked her where she was going, and she almost swooned when he asked if he could go with her. The sun was just beginning to set when he stepped out onto the front of Raven's house. His movements were agitated as he stomped back and forth.

He didn't know why, but he had a bad feeling about her leaving. Her directions on what to do if something happened to her were almost frantic. That he could live in her house as long as he needed to. If he needed any money or groceries, he should go to her agent and she would take care of it. As if she didn't think she would get back home safely.

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Thor's hammer, he should have insisted that he go with her.

A purring sound came down the drive and what he now knew was a car came to a stop. One of the policemen who came and took away the offal who attacked Raven climbed out of the metal box.

"Is Ms. Harrison here?" He asked the question at the same time he stuck his hand out to shake Wulf's.

"No, Raven left just a few moments ago."

The man looked at his watch and then up at the darkening sky. "We need to get to the cemetery."

Chapter Eight

"What's wrong?" Wulf's heart accelerated with the tight, near-anxious look on the man's face.

"If I'm right, Ms. Harrison could be in danger."

This time his heart skipped several beats before it settled back into a somewhat booming rhythm.

"Let's go."

"Sir, it could be dangerous, you need to stay here. Besides the note made reference..." His words trailed off as he looked up at Wulf.

"The note?"

"The one she received yesterday morning. The same one she left at the police station today."

Wulf did not know what to say or think. Raven had not trusted him enough to tell him about the note.

"What did the note say?" His question came out more as a demand than an inquiry. The man who turned to get back in his car, paused before answering.

"A note pretty much threatening your life, taking credit for the break-in here, the night before last, and the threat implied Ms. Harrison needed to bring her camera and come alone."

The explanation told Wulf why Raven had acted in some of the ways she had earlier.

"Why would the note writer involve me? I have only been here for a few days."

"Well, you were at the cemetery when the shots were fired, and you were here when they tried to kill Ms. Harrison. Undoubtedly they are using you to force her to do what they want."

Rage tore a path through Wulf's head and then

body. His fists clenched and unclenched with the desire to kill. He'd heard of Vikings becoming berserkers in the midst of battle, but he'd always kept that part locked up. Raven being in danger was the key to unleashing that curse.

"We have to get there and protect her," he growled.

"I agree, but you need to stay here. It will only muddy the waters if the man sees you."

"We will make sure he does not see me, for I will not be left behind." He didn't know if the man saw the determination in his expression or just didn't want to waste time arguing, but he nodded his head.

"All right, get in. We'll go up the back entrance to the cemetery. Tell me again where you first heard the shots."

Wulf closed the door to the car. "Near a tall building on a hill."

"Sound's like the Tanner family mausoleum."

He didn't care how they got there as long as they got there before something happened to Raven.

Raven cautiously walked up the hill to the mausoleum. Before she left home, she'd stuck a knife inside the cuff of her boot, and made sure her pepper spray was stashed securely inside her waistband, hidden by her jacket.

On the drive over she'd come to the decision, the creep threatening her and Wulf would not go unscathed if he tried anything. With the lack of police assistance, she was on her own.

Which is your own fault. Shut up! she told the voice inside her head. No way could she bring Wulf into this mess. No matter if he never forgave her for freezing him out. She was doing it for his own good.

The sky hung like a dark specter over her head. Only one decorative light worked on the path. The weak beam did nothing to penetrate the darkness, or to make her feel even a bit safer.

"That's far enough." A rough voice came from a few feet ahead just as Raven finished the climb.

"Look, I'm here. I've got the camera, and I just want to get this over with." Raven hoped her voice sounded stronger than the rest of her body felt.

"That's good. I see you also came alone." This time the voice evolved into a face and body.

"I followed your directions."

"Yes, you did. Now hand me the camera."

Raven unhooked the camera from around her neck, but didn't put it in the man's outstretched hand.

"If I give it to you, what reassurance do I have you won't try to hurt Wulf?"

"Wulf...ah yes, the boyfriend. Well, if I were you, I would be more worried about yourself."

His tone of voice struck a chord of terror inside her trembling body. She should have thought this through some more. What if he didn't just let her go?

Duh? She'd already thought of that scenario, and she'd come prepared. If she died, at least the world would know what happened. She eased her hand slightly to the pocket of her jacket and pressed. The soft whirl of the mini recorder reassured her at least her death would be on record, and the scumbag would not go free.

"Look, I don't even know you, so let's just get this over with. You can go your way and I'll go mine."

"I don't think so. Sooner or later, you will hear about the embezzling going on at Masterson and Dean. Of course, if my partner had not caught me, then I wouldn't have had to kill him." He paused as if considering something. "I should have used a knife, like tonight, but then I wouldn't have been able to shoot at you and your friend."

The man stepped farther out from the shadow of the building. His tall frame dwarfed hers, and the deep blue of his eyes carried only menace. He swiped a lock of brown hair away from his face.

"So you see, it doesn't matter if you know me now, and please don't take it personally, but I do have to kill you."

Raven's heart stopped for a moment, until she realized she didn't want to die. Not here, not now.

"I'll make it easy. Just a quick stab to your heart and it'll be over. I already have a grave ready for you. The one I dug for my partner is plenty big enough for two. And the good thing is, the headstone belongs to someone else. No way will the police associate it with your death, if they ever find out about your early demise."

"I don't suppose you would believe me if I said I wouldn't tell anyone."

His laugh rasped across her spine. Evil did not describe the tone.

"Hardly, and I would not rule out the possibility you've already uploaded the photos to your computer. Besides, I have found I like killing. Too bad your friend did not come with you."

"Yeah, well, if he had you wouldn't stand a chance."

"What a shame we won't find out."

Raven waited as he moved closer. Her body, although, she remained upright, still readied itself to defend herself. He moved closer.

Come on, you arrogant oaf. Let's see you take me out without a fight.

The knife he carried gleamed for just a moment as the moon chose to come out and then run and hide.

It was enough she could see he held it in the downward position to strike. Her pepper spray caressed her palm, and she eased off the safety so she could spray the son-of-a—

The knife slashed down so quickly, Raven could do nothing but stand there for all of one second. She brought up the can of spray, spritzed the man good, and then slammed him with her camera.

He went down like a rock. She refused the strong urge to kick him in the family jewels. He looked as if he was out like a light. Probably broke her camera in the bargain.

"Ms. Harrison?"

Raven turned to fight a possible new threat. Her relief escaped in a breath of air.

"Raven?" Wulf's question did all kinds of marvelous things to her body. He sounded like he cared. How and why he was here (not to mention Detective Giles) didn't matter. She was saved, the bad guy could go to jail, and hopefully, just maybe, she and Wulf could sort out what type of relationship they might hope to have while he remained in her time.

"Are you all right?"

"Yes, Detective, but how did you find me?"

"You forgot the note from Mr. Dean."

"Who?"

"The man you took out on your own. We got here to hear most of the conversation but I didn't want to startle the man, so we waited." Giles' explanation sounded plausible, but for the life of her she still didn't know Dean from a squirrel in her front yard.

Wulf moved close to Raven. "You never answered me. Are you all right?" His concern touched her heart deep inside. The frown that marred his handsome face worried her.

"I'm fine, Wulf. Now that we've caught the bad guy."

Detective Giles broke in. "From where I'm standing, Ms. Harrison, you did all the work yourself."

For some reason, the detective's smile and approval made Raven uncomfortable. His words certainly did nothing to erase the storm cloud gathering on Wulf's countenance.

"I got lucky, and the pepper spray did most of

the work."

She moved a bit closer to the Viking. "So what happens now, does the guy go to jail for murder?"

"Yes, we got a tip from his partner, Noel James, a few weeks ago. Too bad Mr. James decided to take on Waters himself. He had a wife and child."

"That's horrible." Raven's voice shook with the realization she could have been in the grave with the dead man.

"So, I guess now the family can at least know what happened."

"Yes. Thanks to you." Detective Giles handcuffed Dean and then shook hands with both her and Wulf.

"I'll follow you back to your house and maybe you can put this all behind you."

"Yes, ah, I have the pictures of him standing over a body; they're not that clear, but you are welcome to them."

"Great, that should help make this even more of an airtight case."

Chapter Nine

Wulf listened to Raven and the policeman exchange pleasantries after they arrived back at her house. He remained silent. The core of fear that assaulted him when the detective told him about Raven's secretive meeting still trapped him in its grip, but it was only half of what he felt.

After watching the knife almost strike Raven, he began to think fear was not strong enough to describe the emotion shaking his insides. Terror, panic, dread caused his hands to tremble.

The other emotions were self-loathing and rage. He should have been there to protect Raven. He should have been there to kill the man who attacked her. Instead, he stood by like a stone while she saved herself.

He was a warrior, a man, a jarl of his own people and yet he did nothing to help the woman he loved. *Loved?* His heart stuttered with the acknowledgment. When it happened, he didn't know, but he was certain of it when he thought Raven would be lost to him.

He clenched his fists until they ached. She was already lost to him. Catriona would never favor him with love. With all he had done in the past, she would probably flaunt his deeds and then send him back to the past so fast, he would not even get to say goodbye.

"Well, I think we're finished, Ms. Harrison. You two have a good night."

"Thanks, and you have a safe one." Raven waved. "Come on, Wulf. I am so glad to be home!" Her joy melted some of his morass but not enough.

Once inside, she moved toward the kitchen. He lagged behind. If he had any sense about him, he would just take her in his arms, make love to her, and then cherish the memory.

The old Wulf would have, but the man he was now would honor their agreement.

"Hey, you coming? I've got a bottle of champagne somewhere in one of these cabinets, and I plan on popping the cork. I am so glad this is over!"

Only after he held a glass of the unfamiliar bubbly liquid and they had drank to the fact Raven was alive, did he finally voice the briar rubbing him raw.

"Raven, why did you not tell me about the note?"
Raven took another sip of champagne and thought long and hard over what she could say.

"I, uh, didn't tell you because I was afraid you would get—"

"Do not tell me you feared I would be hurt!" His roar almost deafened her.

"Wulf, you are just a man, and you don't even have the weapons you carried back in your time."

"Did you not think I could protect you without a weapon? I learned also to fight with my hands, my body."

Raven took one peek at his smoldering gaze and looked away.

"Look at me, Raven. To deny me the chance to protect you is to doubt me as a man."

Snapping her head up to glare at him, she commanded, "Wait just one minute. What I did has nothing to do with you being a man. It was doing what was prudent."

"Truly? You actually believe going out to confront a man who has tried to kill you before was wise?" Wulf shoved away from the table and stalked around the kitchen.

Raven took another sip of champagne before setting the glass on the table. "Look, I never thought

about it hurting your feelings. I'm sorry."

"An apology does not make it right. You could have been killed." His words slashed an arc of anger deep inside Raven.

She did it to protect him. No matter the man was stupid and did not realize what could have happened. Waters could have used a gun like he did before. Wulf was no more equipped to handle that type of weaponry...well, than she was. Oh Lord, no wonder he thought she didn't think him man enough.

All the time they had been together, she'd been protecting him. It probably did something to his male psyche.

Raven stood up and moved toward Wulf. She placed a hand on his arm to prevent him from pacing. He shook it off.

"Look, I said I was sorry. I just didn't think. I care about you and didn't want you to get hurt."

A deep breath escaped his lips. "Did you not think I felt the same way? In my time, we protect our women. For you to stop me from doing that makes me feel useless, Raven."

"But this is not your time. Women can protect themselves here, and even though it's sweet you want to take care of me, it's not always going to happen. You're going back to your time. We just don't know when."

"I can—"

"Yes, you can protect me while you're here, but I need to be aware myself of what can happen. Lord knows, I hope I never have another experience like I've had for the last couple of days, present company excluded, but if God forbid I have to protect myself, then I can't wait on you or anyone else to do it. Do you understand?"

"Aye, you do not want or need me to protect you."

"That's not what I said and you know it."

Wulf's eyes darkened, and the growl he pulsed into the air caused Raven to step back.

"By not telling me what was going on, you did just that."

Now her dander was up. "You know, I don't care. I've tried to placate your oversized ego. Tried to make you feel at home away from home, and I've tried to keep in mind, no matter how much I want you physically, it's not going to happen." She followed her words with one step forward and then another. "So, how about this. If you don't like what's going on, then just bloody well leave!"

She wasn't sure who was more surprised at her ultimatum, her or Wulf. Regardless, he didn't leave her long in wondering what he would do.

"I believe that would be for the best. I will be leaving come morning."

For the life of her, Raven couldn't stop the words from running out of her mouth. "Why wait until morning. Why not go now?"

"If 'tis what you wish." Wulf's silver gleam dulled. She didn't want to know what emotion caused it, she told herself, she didn't care.

"Yes, 'tis what I wish," she mimicked. "Viking, go home!" The yell punctuating her sentence was totally not Raven's normal behavior, but the words she mumbled under her breath said it all, "Before I lose my freaking mind as well as my heart."

Wulf let himself out the front door and started walking. The night had grown colder since they got home from the cemetery. Storm clouds gathered far off, but would move into the area before dawn from the way it looked. He should have changed back into his braies and left the clothing Raven brought him with her.

He didn't want or need anything from the woman.

Liar!

He wanted what he couldn't have. His shoulders slumped just a bit. He really had no idea where to go. Without the plastic Raven used as coin, he'd have to sleep where he could find a spot. Funny how being in this century had spoiled him just a bit with the creature comforts.

He would miss the wondrous miracle of inside baths. Although, he would not miss Raven's constant harping. Her mother had named her aptly. The cawing and screeching had worn out his welcome in his opinion.

Women! You do what you think they want and still land in a mess. 'Twas a dark day or night when he found himself falling head over sword for Raven. Sure he could talk himself into believing 'twas not love, but sooner or later the truth would come out.

Wulf stopped for a moment. His direction had taken him away from what Raven called streets toward a copse of trees and what looked like a meadow. With the night heralding rain, he would find shelter under or in a tree until morning. After that, he was uncertain where he would go.

Once settled against a tree trunk, he closed his eyes. Only then would he allow himself to think about what his life would be like without Raven. Surely, Catriona had it right. Love was a vast cry from just dipping his shaft into any willing body. For the most part, he forgot the women he bedded come the next morning. He'd not even taken Raven completely and all he could think about was how he loved lying by her side and just watching her sleep.

'Twas a veritable grave he'd dug for himself.

A slight sound woke Wulf from his light sleep. He opened his eyes to the iridescent glow of lights. Before he could gain his feet, one light, a rich purple, separated from the other colors and floated toward him.

His heart faltered for a moment until he realized the light began to spin into the shape of a woman.

Catriona!

What he had hoped for had come to pass, but now he was not sure he wanted it.

"Well, Viking, this isn't where I thought I would find you."

Wulf decided to show no fear of the faery princess.

"And just where did you think I would be? It is not as if I knew anyone in this age when you popped me to the future."

Catriona's eyes darkened to a darker shade of emerald. Her brows pulled into a frown, and her lips opened to emit a shrill, but thank the Gods short, essence of sound.

"Do not displease me, Wulfgar. I had hoped to keep this to a pleasant conversation."

"Pleasant? Is that possible?" Wulf growled back.

For some reason his question amused her. Catriona's laughter resembled tinkling bells in the wind.

"Yes, now if you would refrain from speaking, I will tell you why I'm here."

He kept his lips tightly closed. The allure of saying something she would probably turn him into a frog for was strong. Wulf nodded his head.

"Good. I will admit when I sent you to this year, I truly felt you would die in this time. I did not see how you would ever separate the meaning of love and lust." Catriona smiled.

"To say it was a unexpected surprise would not even state the obvious, but I am pleased with what has conspired. You indeed know the difference, and your restraint in not taking Raven to bed as you wanted is admirable."

Catriona waved her hand and plucked a silk scarf from the air before dusting off a tree stump near where Wulf sat. "I also know you lost your heart to her early on but the emotion only fermented your brain when she was almost killed."

Wulf's air ejected when he opened his mouth to speak." How do you know this?"

Catriona lifted one shoulder in an elegant shrug. "I'm of the Fey, we know more than mortals do. I also know you left her because she didn't need your help."

"'Tis not true."

"I sense a lie, Viking. You were exceedingly upset. What I don't understand is why."

Wulf drew his brows together in a scowl. "Why? Because 'tis my place to look after Raven."

"Well, that is something that will have to change if you love her."

"You make no sense, Princess. What love we have will do neither of us any good when you send me home."

"As you say, but I could return you to your home and send Raven with you."

"You would do this?" His heart jumped at the thought he could keep her, but it quickly faded to a onerous beat. He would not ask Raven to return to his time. Even if she willed it so, he would not take her away from what she knew.

"Aye, but you pretty much ruined your chances with her, unless you go back and talk to her. Male pride should not stand in the way of true love."

He eyed Catriona with skepticism. "And you know this because?"

"Let us just say, male faeries can be stubborn also. Now get going and call for me when you have the answer."

Before Wulf could say anything else, Catriona surprised him when she leaned over, kissed him on the cheek, and then disappeared.

Strange she be, woman or faerie. He ignored the slight chill slithering up his back as he listened to the tinkling sound of laughter. At least she had given him something to think about. Should he stay

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here in the present or go home? Should he go by himself or ask Raven to go with him?

Chapter Ten

Raven ran back the way she'd come. She'd waited and waited for Wulf to come back. After all, he didn't really know anyone here but her. Surely he would return before it got too late.

After several hours crawled by, she'd rode around trying to find him. Ready to give up, a flash of light near a wooded area caught her attention. Leaving her car, she'd crept toward the still-shimmering mist and found Wulf.

Wulf and a beautiful woman!

She couldn't hear their conversation but she certainly did not miss the kiss. So much for worrying about him being somewhere cold and alone.

Tears blurred her vision as she made it back to her car and climbed in. She was right to tell him to go home. It seemed his hurt feelings had been soothed.

The Viking was out of her life and that was a good thing!

Is it?

Shut up! she mouthed back to her inner voice. She didn't need a stinking man in her life. She had and would continue to make it on her own.

A few minutes later, she pulled into her driveway. A couple of moments more and she locked the front door behind her.

She allowed her body to slide down the hard wood until she huddled on the floor. Only then did she give in to the heartache tearing her soul apart.

A while later she scrubbed away the last of her crying jag with her knuckles. Life had to go on and she would survive. She'd been fine before she met Wulf, and she would again. It might take a bit of time, but...

"Raven." Her name on Wulf's lips caused her to sit up straight. The pounding on her front door galvanized her into action.

What did he want?

"Raven!"

"Go away, Wulf." She was proud her voice did not quake.

"I need to talk to you. Now, woman. Open the door."

The command in his voice set off warning bells inside Raven. Something had his back up, but what? He should be happy. If the woman she spied him with was the elusive Catriona, then he should be yelling his joy.

"There is nothing to talk about. You don't need me, so go home."

A full minute of silence passed between them before Wulf growled, "You have no idea what you speak of, Raven. Now open this damn door before I break it down."

Afraid he would do exactly what he threatened, and hurt himself in the bargain, Raven unbolted the door.

Before she could tell him to go away again, she was caught in a pair of arms that almost squeezed the daylights out of her.

"I can't breathe, Wulf. Let go."

"I be sorry, Raven, but I have tidings."

Once his arms released their hold, Raven stepped back over the threshold. Wulf followed her into the house.

"I don't suppose this has anything to do with the blonde kissing you, does it?"

His facial features looked stunned, but he recovered quickly. "You saw her?"

"Yes."

"Good. Did you hear what she said?

"No. I got there in time to see her kiss you."

"'Twas strange, that kiss. I don't know why she did so."

"Are you sure? From where I watched, it looked as if she was more than taken with you. It makes me wonder if she banished you for an entirely different reason than you told me. Perhaps she was jealous?"

Wulf's laughter was unwelcome.

Raven drew herself up to her full height. "I don't find anything funny about any of this, Wulf. I told you to go home, and I meant it."

"Tis not what ye think. Catriona kissed me on the cheek."

"Yeah, right!"

"'Tis true, I want no other woman kissing me but you, Raven. Now listen to what I'm trying to tell you. Princess Catriona says I may return home. She also said you could come with me."

"Yeah, like I'm into threesomes. I don't think so."

"Threesome?" Wulf's brows drew together for a moment. "There is and would never be a threesome. I love only you, Raven. "Don't you love me?"

His question threw her off stride. Yes, she did love him, but his entire fabrication that she could go with him was ludicrous.

"Even if I do, what makes you think I want to go back to medieval times or beyond? I have a life here. Maybe I don't want to give it up."

"Raven, I love you. I want you to go with me, but if you will not, then I will stay here."

Raven forced her weak legs to head for the den. She found a perch on the sofa and then took several deep breaths.

"I can't let you do that. You have responsibilities back home."

"But I cannot—"

A bright light filled the room. Raven shuttered her eyes to keep them from hurting. When she reopened them, the blonde stood in the room.

Having only seen her profile before, she wasn't prepared for the beauty the Princess Catriona radiated. No wonder Wulf was in awe of the faery.

"Enough, mortal woman. I have listened to you and Wulfgar battle back and forth until it hurts my ears."

She moved closer to Raven. "You have done what I feared no woman would be able to do—make the Viking fall in love with you."

Raven opened her mouth but shut it at a wave of the princess' hand.

"And now that I have made all right in your worlds, you argue about where you are to live. I will settle this once and for all. You will exist in both times. I will give you the key to go back and forth between Wulfgar's home and yours."

Wulf opened his mouth to speak, but the princess waved him to silence.

"But you both must stop this badgering and admit you love one another. This was the reason for Wulf being sent forward in time in the first place. He has learned his lesson. Now, little Sparrow, what do you say?"

"It's Raven, not Sparrow, and I say, thank you, Princess."

"Wulfgar?"

"I also offer my thanks, Princess. And if Raven is in agreement, we would be honored to have you at our wedding."

Raven nodded. "Yes, of course. We both would love that."

"Fine, then take this and when you wish to return to either time, all you have to do is place your hand on the key and then think of where you want to be." Catriona's smile slashed white as she held out a golden chain to Wulf. She then did the same to Raven.

"This way, maybe you both won't argue so

much."

Before they could thank her, the princess was gone. The only thing left of her visit was a whisper of sound. "I expect the nuptials to be soon."

Raven stood by Wulf's side as they exchanged vows before his people. She accepted the armband that matched his and then the sword he held out to her. She in turn gave him his finger ring as he gave her hers. Together they turned to face the men and women, who raised their voices in a cry of jubilation over their jarl's wedding.

She and Wulf would entertain with a feast before being put to bed in his chamber with orders not to be disturbed until the next evening. Wulf had consented to her request they not have to undress for the bedding ceremony. Their plans were simple: once alone, they both would return to Raven's time for a wedding held in front of her friends and where they could take photos without risking being accused of being in league with the devil.

Hours later, Wulf stood with Raven inside her house. The more modern wedding dress she'd exchanged for her medieval finery puddled on the floor by her bed.

"Raven, I know not why I was blessed to find you, but woman if I don't bed you soon, I will die from want."

Raven laughed out loud at the words he had uttered repeatedly from the moment they escaped to the future, during their second wedding, and reception.

"Well, then, what are you waiting for, Viking?"

If was if her words turned a lever on inside Wulf. His eyes became mere slits of silver, and one hand caught her head and then his lips captured hers.

His tongue sought and then forged forward to

seek the warmth inside Raven's mouth. He welcomed her moan of desire and trapped it deep inside his soul. He released her head, ran his hands down the side of her undergarment, and began to unsnap the satin material. Her more than ample breasts fell into his palms. He caressed their fullness, tweaked their hard peaks, and exulted in the fact Raven was his.

He continued his caresses and then released Raven's lips, and bent to take one of the tips into his mouth. His tongue laved and nipped until the nipple stood tall and firm. Raven gripped him at the waist and he caught her hips in his hands, and lifted her so her womanhood pressed against his blood-filled shaft.

"Raven, I need you."

"And I need you."

Wulf pulled her closer and walked backward to the bed. He nibbled a trail of fire down her throat before laying her gently down on the turned down cover.

Raven pulled him closer, not wanting to lose the feel of him against her, yet she wanted to be naked against his body. To feel the hardness of Wulf against her center. To experience that same hardness deep inside her. "You have on too many clothes, Wulf. Take them off."

The swiftness of his response shocked Raven, but only for a moment. She welcomed the brush of his chest against her sensitive breasts, the hardness of his need against her desire-drenched sex. Her hands clenched and then caressed his broad back. Each circuit slid closer to the firm surface of his buttocks.

Wulf's murmurings in his own language teased her ears before his tongue swirled the inner shell and then traced a path to her lips. Once again she was drowning in the heat of his kiss. She loved it, and him. Yet her body yearned for more. She reluctantly left the enticement of his backside and slid her hands between their bodies, where she caressed the hot length of his manhood and with the other hand cupped the firm bag holding his family jewels.

"Raven, you will unman me if you do not stop."

"Just a few minutes longer. I have wanted to touch you for what seems like forever."

His soft laughter turned into a husky groan. "Enough, wife. Tis not the time to tease me. I have been full to bursting since I saw you soaking wet in the cemetery and then naked in this very room. I cannot wait any longer."

"Then don't. I'm as anxious as you to make this marriage a real one."

Wulf stepped up his caresses to Raven's breasts as he suckled and nipped his way down her body. A kiss to the inside of both thighs and she whimpered like a puppy. Her cry just made him harder.

He kissed the object of his desire before moving back up her body. This time he wasted no time in touching her soft flesh. He needed to be inside Raven before he lost it like an untried lad.

Wulf nudged her legs open a bit more and then grasped her thighs, pulling her forward until the head of his shaft touched the opening to her drenched channel. He lifted her hips a bit more and then pushed forward. The first grasp of her sex almost had him shooting his lust right then and there. He gritted his teeth. He would not allow himself pleasure until he gave Raven hers.

Raven felt the first touch of his manhood against her feminine opening. A second later, his thumb brushed against the hidden nub nestled just above. Spirals of heat shot through her. A flick, a pinch, a caress, and the bands of desire wove tighter and tighter until she felt as if her body would explode with pleasure. And then it did, rocketing her higher and higher until she fell back to consciousness with

Wulf looking down at her.

"I love you, Raven."

Before she could return her love to him, he pushed forward and took her virginal status with him. A brief flash of pain, and then she experienced what it felt like to make love to a man almost possessed with desire. It took just a moment for her to pick up the rhythm but when she did, Wulf met her even stronger in his thrusts.

Again her body tightened and her hips began to lift off the mattress as she pushed forward seeking the pinnacle of fulfilled desire once again. This time, Wulf's eyes closed as she felt herself falling into the trembling vortex of their combined climaxes.

A while later, she awoke with her head on Wulf's shoulder. The grin he bestowed on her when she dared to look up set up a heat that burned her cheeks.

"I love that you blush, and I love that I be the first man to taste the desire of your body."

Her face heated more, and she could feel the blush cover her breasts as he stared first at her face and then her body.

"You are embarrassing me."

"Why? What we did together was a gift. In all my adulthood I have never felt the way I did when I took what you so freely gave me, Raven."

"Well, I've never felt that way either if it helps. I thought I could imagine what a man and woman felt when I write love scenes in my books, but nothing prepared me for what we did. It'll take me just a bit of time to get used to it."

Wulf tenderly palmed her face with his hand. "Did I hurt you?"

"No, I think you made me so hot that I forgot I'd never been with a man before." She returned his caresses, then moved her hand to slide down the thick column of his throat, and then allowed her palm to rest against his heart.

"I don't know why it took a man from the past to make me believe in love, but I'm truly happy Catriona sent you here."

"Even if her reason for doing so makes me a rutting stag?" His question, although asked with the slightest smile on his lips, seemed to be of the utmost importance to her new husband.

"Well, since that took place in another century, long before I was born, then it is not something we need to worry about. Of course, I expect nothing but faithfulness from you now." Her statement sounded even to her ears as a plea for confirmation he would do just that.

"You never have to fear my straying from your bed. I have all I ever need with you."

Her sign of relief stirred the slight covering of hair on his chest. "Good, now, I guess we should work out some sort of schedule about being here and being in your time. I can't take my computer to your home, it could mess up all types of things for the future."

"What if you write during the day here in your time and then come home to my time for supper?"

Raven sat up in bed. "That could work. As long as we keep your chamber locked, no one should know I'm gone. I'll leave you a message, that way you won't worry."

"Yes, that would be good. And there will be times when the snow is so deep around the longhouse and the village, that no one will venture out. I would welcome the chance to come here with you."

She laughed out loud. "You just don't want to give up a hot shower or the television."

"Yea, you are right. I have grown used to the creature comforts your home offers. I'm also rather fond of what you call fast food."

His nose nuzzled her neck before his lips bit her ear.

Viking, Go Home

"Ouch, what did you do that for?"

"You are too sassy for a new wife."

"Sassy? I'll show you sassy. Fool with me, Viking, and I won't order your favorite pizza for dinner."

"You win, but only because all this time traveling has confused my belly."

"Oh, poor baby." Raven rolled away from Wulf, jumped off the bed, and then headed for the shower.

"Behave or I won't save you any hot water." Her effort to close the door against her fast-moving husband went awry. Instead she found her arms full of aroused Norseman ready to plunder and pillage.

"I believe you need a lesson in how a wife acts. Now, start the water and we will see who cries 'hold' first."

Raven grasped his manhood in her hand and led him toward the shower. "I believe I will just begin like I plan to go on and lead you around by the—"

A light slap to her rear and she let go of his heated flesh. "Don't do that again, Wulf, I'm warning you."

"And what will you do if I do, wife?"

"I'll...think of something, when you least suspect it."

His laughter echoed against the bathroom tile and flung itself back to bathe Raven in its caress. She loved it when he laughed. She loved him.

"Wulf?"

The seriousness of her gaze stopped his laughter.

"What is it, my Raven?"

"You don't think Catriona would ever take back her gift, do you? I mean keep us apart?"

He caught her tense body close to his. "No, I do not think she will do so. I do not know her well, but she seemed to be happy for us at the wedding."

"She was there? I didn't see her."

"All I saw was a mist of colors. I'm surprised she

even came. My intent to let her know when we were to be wed was almost forgotten with all the attention given to us when we returned to my homeland."

"Oh, good. I guess I just wanted to make sure. I never thought I would ever marry, let alone be married to someone like you. I don't want to live in fear that something could go wrong."

"Put your mind at rest. Nothing but death will ever separate us. Now, get in that shower. I want to see if I can make you moan while under the water."

Raven did as he asked, and it wasn't until much, much later they sat at the table gorging on pizza. "So you're okay with not being at your home all the time?"

"Yes, wife, let me assure you again. Whether we be here or in the past, it does not matter. For wherever you are is where I'll be home." Faith started her journey to publication when she joined the Romance board at iVillage.com, where she has long since become a community leader. She has written book reviews for Bridges magazine, MyShelf.com and, for the past six years, Romantic Times Book Reviews. She also pens a column for a local magazine. Her path veered into editing and marketing for a small press before she joined The Wild Rose Press staff. Her dream of having her own work published is a blessing and an honor. Faith resides in the South with her daughter Amanda, memories of her now-angel husband Rick, and a special zoo crew of furry babies.

Other books by Faith V. Smith:
"Beware What You Wish"

Kensington's Soul

Dunbar's Curse

To my readers:

I want to thank each and every one of you for embracing both my time travels and my vampire series. If you loved Catriona in "Viking, Go Home," then you will be happy to know my editor has twisted my arm to write her story.

Faery Princess Catriona goes wings to toes with Derek, a Special Ops Marine in...

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