



VALDIMIRE

— AND THE VIKING CURSE —

DARWIN BELOAT

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Dedicated to

I would like to dedicate this book to my best friend Nikki Miller. Without her help and encouragement I wouldn't have finished this remarkable book.

About the Author

Darwin Beloit is a gifted healer and retired chiropractor of 40 yrs. He is also a gym rat, loves to exercise, lifting weights, surfing, running and biking. He has frequented toastmasters for twelve years where he worked on his public speaking skills. He likes animals and spends his time feeding the turtles in the pond behind his house. He currently resides in Bethesda Maryland.

Prologue

It all began a long time ago during the worship of the arrival of the full moon when mortals flexibly combated with the supernatural to acquire dominant power, refuting their predestined fate by the gods and deciding their own will. There lived a clan of adventurers and noble savages somewhere in Northern Europe who raided, traded, and worked as mercenaries and multiplied through the act of building new colonies from conquered territories. They were warriors and seafarers, who created routes to the south through the Baltic and Norwegian Seas, and formed independent habitations through their navigating skills. There, amongst these strong and highly resilient men, ruled a more intrepid dynasty of feudal overlords, who were in all rank superior but reigned with the rest of the clan under its control.

Their fame spread around, and beyond their European territories, as they were revered as the highest authority, rulers from other different tribes sojourned to pay homage and sought for advice cum support from them. Soon rose a progeny from this lineage who, like his ancestors, exhibited an extraordinary wit and took the lead as a trailblazer. A mortal, whose destiny led him far away from his kin and ancestral land. To an unknown habitat where he took great risks, withstanding time's test to restore the lost glory of his Viking forefathers. His name was Valdimire, the

son of Leif Erikson, the son of Erik the Red, lord over the Vikings.



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Chapter One

Dawn approached with the sun rising rapidly from the east, cloaking the fog massing the horizon. Cocks crowed the acceptance of the day's task with pride, and pigs ferreted the muddy areas where trashy leftovers were thrown, scrambling the baskets for grubs and causing more dishevelment. The waters ran slow and still as high above, the mountains that surrounded the creek that has now been transformed into a larger habitation revealed its vastness and superiority to the hills a few miles away from it.

"Your lordship," a guard from the royal court prostrated in salutation. "They are here."

"Make haste, sound the alarm, and make provision for their welcome. There shall be a banquet tonight. Go! "

The crowd stood in silence, listening to the rhythm of the horn that was being blown from the royal court of the clan's overlord. Soon, the meaning is deciphered following the expression of the guard on duty in the tower house. They had all waited in anticipation to receive the news though they knew sooner or later it would be revealed. Exactly five weeks ago, a message that troubled the entire citizens of Greenland was received by the overlord, Erik the Red of a plan from his rival, Harald Hardrada, to besiege and invade his territory. His throne and power of

authority were being threatened by a former leader of his imperial guard who had established himself as the king of Skye, a Vikings territory. Leif, the first son, and heir to the throne took the responsibility of taking up the battle, and for what seemed like unending days, the people lived with fear but waited with high hopes.

Natives and citizens rampaged the streets of Greenland to the harbor outside the walls of the city to welcome their returning heroes. The city had an old wall fortified and paved with hard rocks gotten from the mountains surrounding it after the earliest battle it won from invaders. Its gate was built with thick fetters of iron that shrieked during closure and was never entirely open unless under a royal command to admit ships and vessels after conquest into the inner harbor or to let out warships during battle. As the first long ship rowed into sight from a bending corner, a shrill voice from a young lass let out a cry of ecstasy, pointing towards the direction of the rowing ships. An uproar of singing ensued from the lips of the observers though they knew it would take a few more minutes for the warships to get to the harbour. What had begun as a mundane day was gradually turning into an eventful and exciting day for the citizens as each person expressed their joy by finding a partner to relate their observations to; the old men recalled their experiences in the battlefields before the waning of their strength and agility as fighters, while their counterparts busied themselves with such trivial discourse as what fighter wore his armour best and who was the bravest. For their part, the children out of impatience from waiting for so long started running around, while some others pointed and picked pebbles from the shore. Finally, the warships sailed its troops gradually past the cheerful spectators. The first long ship had some distinctive features from the others trailing behind it as it was meant only to accommodate members of the royal household. A flag of rich purple and white flew freely in the air atop the mast; it had a bold star drawn in the middle and the outer part of the

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vessel was emblazoned with the seal of honor that bore both the star and the head of a roaring lion that signified the ultimate power of the ruling dynasty. The second flag was the same as the single flags that flew in the trailing vessels; it represented the hallmark of high sea piracy. It was made of white, with the head of a skeleton and bones drawn in the middle. Its mast tapered farther above the skillfully built decks of the long ship into the sky.

"Release the anchor!" Cried a crew chief in the first long ship that had slowed down its pace.

"Ay, release the anchor." echoed one of the natives before the ships finally halted.

"Master, master..." Cried a member of the throng as Leif, accompanied by his soldiers, made his way through the narrow spacing they provided for him to pass. He walked with an aura of authority that commanded respect from his subordinates. He was stout and dark-skinned with an oval face that exposed his facial masculinity. He wore a winged iron helmet made as a mask with mail. His chest was covered with a silvery armour the exact with his shield. Round his waist rested a steel belt that bore the sheath of his sword and held the folds of his skirt. He threw gallant steps that made his long flowing cape swerve from side to side in the wind.

"Rejoice, people of Greenland, for we bring great news." He said raising the tusk in his hand.

The restless citizens would do anything to hear him speak in detail, but as tradition demanded, he would first speak to his father so on they followed with songs of appraisal till he got to the court.

"Father," He said, kneeling before Erik.

"What news, my son?"

"Your servant bows, your lordship. We camped round the entire kingdom of Skye, and for fifteen days, besieged the kingdom. On the morning after, we received information about a

lapse in their guard's watch and invaded the kingdom. Starting from the highest to the lowest, we emptied the city off of men, old and young, and took the spoils of the land, your lordship."

"And what about Harald and his accomplices? Erik asked with raised brows.

"Your lordship," a trace of dissatisfaction at the topic lingering hovered over Leif's face, but it was momentary. "We had a personal tilt on the edge of the south field, and he fell off the cliff." He had avoided the imagination of the gory sight of Harald's bloodied face begging for mercy before he slipped down the pharaonic cliff all through his journey back home. Still, he realized somehow, that he was under an obligation to provide every detail of the battle to his father and the statesmen.

"That was a huge mistake, Leif." Erik barked, "The plan was to bring him down here clogged in chains for all to witness his death and not for you to let him fall off a cliff."

Leif couldn't stand the disappointment of being called a failure by his father in front of everyone. Too much had happened to him within the space of a few weeks, and he had come to know about details that had long been kept and protected as secrets by his father. He struggled to act normal and succeeded.

"I trailed Harald down the cliff and confirmed him dead. Harald Hardrada is no more in existence, your lordship." He watched his father's eyes glint with satisfaction and wondered if he really knew him.

"Well done, my son!" Erik patted him slightly on the back with his fur staff, "Go prepare, a banquet is set in your favour, and it begins soon."

"Your lordship." Leif bowed and exited through the east wind of the palace, feeling rather subdued.



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The town grew extremely quiet with no one in sight; lights were out, the doors of living homes and business places were closed, shut out of the normal nocturnal activities they carried out daily. Sounds of celebration filled the atmosphere; mild tunes from the orchestra and boisterous laughter from the different hierarchy of citizens echoed in the ballroom. The Vikings were classified under three hierarchy - the Jarls which comprised of the aristocratic held high positions and served directly under the ruler, the Karls were free peasants, they owned farms and engaged in daily businesses, the Thralls were the lowest and served as slaves to the Karls and Jarls - but for the sake of the course at hand, the King laid low the strict rules to accommodate all his citizens. The higher class assumed the front position, the middle followed behind, while the thrall stood at the back, taking a glimpse of what was happening at the front.

"What troubles you, my son? Why wear such pale countenance? Enquired Thjodhild, his mother in a whisper.

"Nothing, mother. Shall you live a life of heartache bothering how the sons of your youth fare? Come now, mother, I am a man, heir to the throne and leader of the imperial army." Leif retorted.

"Oh!" She gasped, holding her chest. "Indeed, my son, indeed, you are all you claim you are and more like your father." She rolled her eyes towards Erik's direction.

"Trust me, mother, you worry too much."

"You know where I'd be when you need me, son."

For a moment, Leif felt like divulging all he knew and possibly cry on his mother's shoulder, but he was a man now, and men, the leaders of the great army didn't cry for any reason, so he held back his emotions and distracted himself with the events of the ceremony.

"Hold still the King speaks!" Echoed the royal chamberlain.

"Subject and people of Greenland, I greet you." He paused to see the reaction of the crowd and continued when the court yard became silent." The mountain top is soon reached by a snail when trouble looms, drastic measures calls for drastic decisions, but we know the blood of bravery runs in our veins, and we are no coward. For weeks, our night sleep was snatched, leaving us in continuous anxiety for both ours and the safety of our brothers, husbands, and the sons of Greenland who for our sakes went into the war field to combat and take the spoils of our enemy, Harald Hardrada. All thanks be to Odin, the god of battle who gave us victory!"

"All thanks be to Odin!" Exclaimed everyone.

"And now, it is with great pleasure I announce to you the downfall of Harald Hardrada and the recovery of Skye as a fiefdom under the authority of the Rurik dynasty of the Vikings."

"Long live the Rurik dynasties. Long live Erik the Red." Chanted the room as they bowed before Erik.

When the chanting intensified, like a cue for the ritual to be performed, he rose from his throne and sauntered majestically to the middle of the palace ballroom where there was an opening in the roof and raising his head to the exposed night sky, he parted his hands and legs ajar and began moving his lips in incantations

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with his eyes closed. He picked up a glass of wine sitting on a stool covered in red material by the side of the circle he stood in and raised it aloft his head. Up above the night sky, a mist of cloud shrouding the moon gave way, and it released all its effulgence on Erik's face. The glass in his hands shook as the liquid evaporated gradually, bringing out green fumes till it emptied out completely. Immediately the last drop disappeared; the bright light shining over his face became dimmed, saved from the supply emanating from the candles that hung on the walls around. He walked back to the podium upon which his throne sat and still standing up, he picked his glass of wine and lifting it, he said, "Now the long-awaited moment comes for us to make merry over our victory, we make a toast to peace and unity!"

"To peace and unity!" Recited the voices in the room with glasses that rang in a toast.

"Let the banquet begin!" Erik declared.

Somewhere a few miles away from the royal court, a figure wearing a long black cloak stood under the shade of a dark tree looking towards the direction of the royal court where the entire kingdom had emptied into. It carried a long wooden staff that had the head of live shrubs and was slightly bent. It reached its hand deep into its cloak and brought out a crystal ball that started rolling in its hand.

"Ay, I see him standing with a glass raised."

"My turn, my turn. Hand me the eye, the eye you hag." She hit Gaenoi's head with her rod wreathed with snakes.

"Ouch... You know those things sting," Gaenoi handed the eye to Kaenii while rubbing the spot she was hit on her head.

"They celebrate; they celebrate the victory of the beginning of their end,"

"Hahaha... Victory of their end. "Repeated Loniiadei, the third witch.

Again, Kaenii used her rod on Loniiadei, "Stop laughing stupidly, stir the portion!"

"I stir, I stir." She snatched the eye from Kaenii and fixed it hurriedly. "Blood, I smell fresh blood," she sniffed into the pot of death. "Just one sip sister, just one and I..."

"You talk too much, think of how to get a head for exchange," Kaenii commanded.

"Leif, where is the prince? I don't see Leif there, where is he?" Gaenoi jumped up and around the cave in a fury.

"Hush... You wake the sleeping Serpent. Stir the portion."

"Stir the portion, stir portion. You keep telling me to stir the portion, Kaenii." She pushed the turning stick to Kaenii, "You stir the portion, and I rest for a while." Gaenoi stooped, and a black cat climbed into her hands.

"Rest? Century after century, from whence does that come in the underworld? Night and day, good and bad, work and play; all's one. Witches like us know not the word rest." Kaenii grunted absentmindedly.

"Put the Serpent back to sleep; its time hasn't come. The poor cat works too hard to be disturbed from rest." Loniiadei, the third and smallest among the witches, said.

"Enjoy Erik," Kaenii looked into the boiling pot, a wry smile playing on her cheeks, "Enjoy while it lasts."

