

A Hero's Welcome

Hayden Braeburn

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A soft clinking to his left grabbed Garrett's attention. When he turned toward the sound, he found the old school pineapple grenade of the insurgents, pin pulled and no time to think. With a whispered prayer, he smothered it with his body, shielding his team from the blast. Just as his torso exploded into searing pain, the world went dark.

He opened his eyes to a sparkling golden ceiling. Where was he? Squinting against the glare, he counted hundreds of tiles. No, not tiles. Golden shields? He bolted to a sitting position, expecting pain and found none. Shit. Pain meant life. He didn't regret his act, fully aware he had saved lives, but now he was dead. Or, maybe he was drugged. Pain medication could take away pain and cause hallucinations, couldn't it?

He leaned back on his elbows against the cold marble floor, taking in his surroundings. Wherever he was seemed to be built entirely from dark wood, save for the floor and ceiling. Down a massive corridor, he found what appeared to be a banquet hall of sorts, long wooden tables with benches and chairs surrounding them. Something about it was familiar, but he didn't know why.

He heard her before he saw her. The only other person in the room, she was dressed in leather armor and carrying a spear. Finally all the pieces fell into place. He was in Valhalla, a Valkyrie coming toward him, her blonde hair in intricate braids, her face indescribably beautiful. He was to become a member of the Einherjar. He shook his head. Not only was he dead, he was headed to Valhalla? He might have been raised Lutheran in Minnesota, but he knew the old tales. He shook his head. No, those were myths, not truth. Valhalla, Valkyries? He squeezed his eyes shut, opened them again. Nope, he was still on a white marble floor staring up at a Valkyrie. Drugs. He had to be on some kick-ass drugs.

“Sergeant Garrett Poulsen, son of Oliver and Marietta Poulsen, grandson of Stefan and Brenna Poulsen, come with me.” Her voice was softer than he expected, her Scandinavian accent

evident.

Make that fucking amazing drugs. This woman, this Valkyrie, was breathtaking. He might be dead, or think he was dead, or whatever, but parts of his body didn't care. Just looking at her, he wanted her. He scrambled to his feet. "How do you know who I am?"

"I have been watching you for years. I have watched you fight, I have watched you command." Her blue eyes flashed for a moment before she looked away. "Today I watched you die."

Playing along with his dream, or fantasy, or delusion, he asked, "Haven't you watched many men die? Brought them all to this great hall, to Odin?"

"Ja. Men dette er annerledes." At his puzzled look, she translated, "Yes, but this is different."

"How is this different?"

"You. You make it different. I have watched you when I shouldn't have, when you..." She trailed off, an indiscernible look marring her perfect features. *Kjære Odin hjelpe meg, jeg vil ha denne mannen,*" she whispered, the words obviously not meant for Garrett.

When she what? He strained to hear her as she muttered in Norwegian. Of course it would be Norwegian. He wished he'd paid more attention to Grandma Poulsen when she'd tried to teach him the language. He spoke passable Spanish and fluent French, but it had never occurred to him he'd need Norwegian. Something about Odin helping her. Right, that was helpful. *"Engelsk?"* he asked, using one of the maybe seventeen words he remembered.

At her nod, he asked, "Am I dead?" Unless he was having the most lucid dream in history, he was dead, being led to Odin by a gorgeous Valkyrie.

"A brilliant warrior, dying to save his men, fighting heroically before his sacrifice." She crossed to him then, taking his right hand in her left. "You are chosen."

"I'm not all that," he protested, making a face. "I made a decision." He cast a

contemplative look at the floor before he amended, "I'd make it again."

"Does that not make you a hero? Knowing you would die, yet making the decision?"

Going for broke—hell, he was dead—Garrett told her, "I would die more happily if I had a kiss from you, beautiful Valkyrie."

She stood stock still for a moment, the internal war within her evident. Garrett shifted on his feet. He had nowhere better to be for a long time and this woman was a fantasy brought to life. Or death. Whatever. He sent a silent thank you to Odin for building his Valkyries like centerfolds as he waited. Sex had been the furthest thing from his mind when he had jumped on that grenade, but looking at her he could think of little else.

Unbelievably, she dropped her spear with a clatter and pressed to her toes as she wrapped her arms around his neck. His mouth found hers in the next instant, hot and hungry. He might be dead, but his body had never felt more alive. She tugged at his hair and he pulled her even closer. He devoured her, demanding entrance, his lips and tongue claiming ownership. His hands traveled down the curves of her body, settling on her hips. This woman was his own personal fantasy encased in leather. Dead or not, he wanted her naked and panting beneath him.

One minute he was kissing this amazing creature in a hall, the next he was pressed into warm furs on a soft bed. This being dead thing had some perks. Or, more likely, his Valkyrie could teleport. Focusing instead on the woman in his arms, he unlaced her armor, revealing the perfection beneath. And perfect she was, all smooth ivory skin and lush curves. His cock had never been harder, but he didn't want to rush.

"Jeg er din," she said before shaking her head and switching to English, "I am yours."

He liked the sound of that. Bracing himself on his forearms, he covered her, fusing their mouths together once more. She came alive beneath him, her arms finding their way around his neck, her fingers running through his hair. He trailed his mouth down her neck, her collarbone,

finally swirling his tongue around her right nipple before sucking it into his mouth. He teased its twin with the tips of his fingers as he suckled, giving attention to both before continuing his slow tour of his Valkyrie.

She jackknifed off the bed when he found his way to her pussy, teasing her with slow swipes of his tongue. Her taste was addictive, her words unintelligible, and he couldn't get enough. He held her down with one arm as he feasted on her, slipping two fingers into her hot, wet core. He crooked his fingers, drawing them over her g-spot as he sucked her clit into his mouth.

She screamed and shattered, spasms racking her entire body. He rode her through the orgasm, amazed. She was so responsive and he wanted to watch her when she came the next time. He pulled away just long enough to shuck his uniform, before finding his way between her splayed legs once again.

“Come here to me, my hero,” she beckoned. Her lips were swollen with his kisses, her wheat-colored hair coming free of its braids. It was as if she had been made for him, and he had no plans of denying her request. He took her mouth again as he buried himself within her. She tightened her legs around his waist, driving him deeper. Garrett gritted his teeth. She was so hot, so tight, he was afraid he wouldn't last long as he tunneled in and out. Determined to pull another orgasm from her, he drove into her relentlessly, deepening the kiss as he did, his tongue mimicking his cock. She clawed at his back and he felt the muscles surrounding him flutter. She was close. He slid a hand between their joined bodies, toying with her clit as he plunged into the sweetest pussy he'd ever taken. When she broke, it was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen. Every muscle in her body seized, her face a mask of pleasure as she let out a scream. Watching her was too much, but feeling her clamp on his cock sent him over the edge. He poured into her, loving the lyrical words he couldn't begin to understand falling from her lips.

They stayed entwined a long while, until he softened and slid free of her. Even then, he was loathe to move. After a soft kiss he asked, "What now?"

Her eyes still glassy from multiple climaxes, she looked confused for a moment before answering. "Now, you wait."

"Wait?"

"For Ragnarok." She looked at him like he was an idiot for asking.

He smiled then. "I can think of a few things we can do while we wait for the end of the world, my Valkyrie."

She snaked a hand between them, circling his hardening shaft. "Oh, yes, let's find something to do while we wait."