



HER WORLD IN HIS
Hands

#1 INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR
VANESSA BROOKS

HER WORLD IN HIS HANDS

DEFYING THE GODS

BOOK 1

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HER WORLD IN HIS HANDS

DEFYING THE GODS SERIES BOOK 1

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CHAPTER ONE

LONG, *long ago*...

NJORD FOLLOWED the creature through the narrow opening and swum into the deep waters of Oslofjorden. It appeared to trust him after the time he'd spent swimming alongside, or behind, the ancient behemoth. He believed the animal dated back to the beginning of time, perhaps before the formation of the Gods, although as a God himself that was a sacrilege he would never repeat aloud. He sensed the sea monster's loneliness. He could have changed his appearance to one of the prehistoric creature's species, but decided it would be cruel to allow the animal to think it was no longer the last of its kind. As God of the sea, it behoved him to care for the creatures under his domain.

Njord knew where the lonely beast was heading and joined him in order to witness once again the fair maiden who somehow managed to communicate with this unique being from a bygone age.

Reaching the shore, he leapt surefootedly onto the land, despite the darkness of the night. Before his feet touched the soil, his legs emerged from the fin of the merman shape he'd

shifted into which propelled him through water with such grace and speed.

As a God he wasn't suspect to cold, but he chose to hide his naked form within a dark cloak, wishing to remain camouflaged in the shadows until the maiden he'd come to watch had communed with the creature from the deep. Soon he planned to reveal himself to her, as a man, not as a God.

He heard her light whispering steps approaching. The fresh floral scent of her perfumed the air, as intoxicating to him as any liquor. The moon emerged, casting a pale shimmering path of silver across the dark waters of the Fjord. The pale light kissed the maid's auburn curls, turning them pale copper. Her hair cascaded down her back lifting in the breeze causing tendrils to swirl behind her head in a halo of glinting licks of flame. Moonlight held her in its silvery embrace causing the young woman to glow with an otherworldliness which gave him pause, he wondered if she was indeed mortal? Despite her svelte form, she held a commanding presence standing on the edge of the jetty, arms outstretched over the inky waters of the fjord.

"Come to me my friend, come, allow me to bring you solace," her soft lilting voice flowed across the watery abyss carried on the gentle gusts of sea air even though she spoke so low. With a rising of bubbles the despairing animal rose from its watery depths. A large scaled head emerged supported by a long neck which, as he watched, arched towards her. Undaunted the ethereal young woman reached out and gently wound her pale, slender arms around the beast's thick throat.

With his superb hearing, Njord listened to her sweetly crooned words of comfort and sympathy, as she offered

affection to the ugly behemoth. The sight moved him as nothing else had done in a very long time.

The girl and beast stayed thus entwined for some silent moments before it slipped gracefully from her arms to disappear back down into the river. The girl turned and began to walk back the way she'd come.

Njord waited until she'd reached her small wooden house before he stepped forward into the bright patch of moonlight.



RECOILING, Sassa frowned at the large man suddenly blocking her path. Where had he appeared from?

“There is no need to be afeared, sweet maid. I only wish to talk with you.”

“I don’t do readings at night. Come back in daylight.” Circling him, she hastened to her small dwelling, but he was there, blocking the entrance to her home. “How did you do that?” Her heart palpitated with shock.

“The speed and stealth of a warrior,” he replied giving a shrug.

Pulling up her shawl she clasped it tight about her. Nervously glancing about for a means of escape. “What is it that you want from me?” she asked suspiciously.

Stretching out his hand he lifted a strand of her bright hair, entwining it about his finger. “Ah, Sassa, so soft and lovely like your name. ’Tis like spun copper,” he muttered to himself.

A vision swiftly filled her mind. She was intimately embracing him.

“Who are you?” Sassa insisted. Her gift projected the suspicion she knew him; there was certainly something familiar about him. “Have we met before?” With such a handsome face of strong lines marked by a dark golden beard, coupled with a regal bearing, this man could pass as a God.

Removing his hand from her hair, his finger he traced the outline of her cheek. “I do not believe so, but perhaps in another time, another place, who knows?”

She stepped backward, out of his reach. The touch of his flesh on hers instantly produced another mirage of jumbled images. Uninvoked visions always unsettled her. “You are a strange one...What is your name?”

“I’m sorry it was not my intention to scare you, beautiful maiden. I shall return in daylight and we shall talk some more.”

“Your name,” she pressed, but he’d already vanished. Sassa blinked. How could he have disappeared so quickly? Unsettled by the visit from such an extremely strange visitor she hurried inside her little house and barred her door, something she rarely felt the need to do.



NJORD ARRIVED MIDMORNING to find Sassa seated outside her dwelling. A circle of people sat on the ground waiting patiently for their turn with her. Watching from the forest, he again cloaked himself in shadows so not to be seen by humans.

With his exceptional hearing he listened intently to each of her consultations. Clarity dawned; the maid was a volva, a seer. Sassa treated each and every person with the same

courtesy. Every vision she took the trouble to explain with respect, telling her individual visions in tones of a benediction. Each visitor left her an offering by way of payment, these they placed in a large woven basket set beside her stool. Someone left her a knitted shawl, another a loaf of bread.

As her final client turned away a large man entered the glade and swaggered up to her. “People tell me you are a seer... What I want to know is this, who in this godforsaken place has the most gold and silver hidden away.”

“My gift does not work that way. I can only see what I am shown by the fates that have gifted me,” She explained in her soft melodious voice.

The man snatched Sassa’s thick braid of auburn hair which hung to her waist. He tugged her head forward to meet his snarling gaze.

“Don’t play games with me, maid, unless you have death-wish?” His spital sprayed her face.

Njord growled enraged and aspirated, placing himself between the two of them. The man’s expression of shock might have been comical had the situation been different.

“Go, and never return,” his words, laced with venom reverberated powerfully in the still air.

The man’s face changed to one of fear. The fellow clearly understood the threat Njord posed. As a God in human form, he stood seven feet tall, his physique powerful. Gently he blew into the bully’s face and watched as the man tumbled away like thistledown.

A jolt ran through him. Glancing down he saw that Sassa had placed her hand upon his arm. “Enough,” she whispered. Her sea-green eyes widened with fear as she implored.

Softening his gaze, he nodded. They stood side by side and watched narrow eyes until the man was safely out of sight.

Another featherlight touch brought him back to the present.

“Can I offer you something to eat?”

“Do you have enough to share?” he asked, aware of her lack of means.

She nodded and turned to pick up her stool. He reached for her basket and followed her inside the humble dwelling. Her small abode smelt of herbs and flowers. Directing him to a table where he could set the basket down, he did so, then seated himself upon a stool and watched as Sassa busied herself stirring a large black pot which hung over the fire. Moving to the table she took the bread from the basket and tore it in half. Setting aside one piece, she ripped the other into two chunks, placing one in front of him. Returning to the fire she collected two wooden bowls, from the mantle above, into which she ladled some of the contents from the pot into the bowls.

After she'd placed his portion before him, Njord lifted the bowl and took a breath of the fragrant stew.

“These smells delectable,” he said appreciatively. “What meat is this?”

“Rabbit and vegetables flavoured with my herbs.” The simple fare tasted as good as any meal he'd eaten before, he who supped regularly at the tables of the Gods.

She sat staring at him.

“Is something amiss? he asked.

“Um, you promised to tell me your name.”

“Njord.” He waited for the dawning in her eyes, but she simply nodded and turned her attention back to her meal.

His ego felt bruised; had she not heard of him, the great God Njord? He who was one of the principal gods of the Vanir tribe of deities! An honorary member of the Aesir gods, having been sent to them during the Aesir-Vanir War along with his son, Freyr, and his daughter, Freya.

He commanded the wind, seafarers, coasts and inland waters. God of fertility, fishing and wealth with the power to evoke storms with the ability to calm waters and quell fires. Able to grow to any size he chose, or shrink as small as he wished. Extremely wealthy and prosperous, he could grant wealth in the form of land and coin to those who invoked his aid. A venerated Norse god, he was insulted she did not react to his name and remained silent with shock.

“What do you do hereabouts?” she asked moments later.

“Why don’t you use your gift and see what that tells you?” he suggested, intrigued to see her reaction on discovering he was a God.

“Have you eaten your fill?” she asked politely.

“I have, thank you. It was delicious.”

She acknowledged his comment with a nod and a shy smile. A small dimple appeared in her cheek. He couldn’t resist and reached out to touch her face, but instead she intercepted his hand and held it between her own. In an instant her expression took on a faraway look, her clear eyes grew cloudy.

Abruptly she let go of his hand and flew to her feet, her eyes wide.



“STAY AWAY FROM THE GIANTESS!” she cried.

This was strange and not what he was expecting. “Did you not see that I am a God?”

Looking puzzled she wrinkled her forehead. “You’d already told me that.”

“No, no I haven’t,” he replied.

“Your said name is Njord.”

“Yes,” he agreed.

“Well then, Njord is God of the ocean, wealth and fertility, your symbol is a gold coin.” she stated matter-of-factly.

“This knowledge does not disconcert you?” he asked surprised.

She shook her head. “No, I have met many of Gods, each seeking to use my gift as a volva.”

Now that did surprise him, but then he realised it shouldn’t, for he knew the Gods to be notoriously secretive and competitive, playing games of one-upmanship on a regular basis.

“And did you help them?” He was interested to know.

She shrugged. “I don’t think they truly understand how my gift works. I don’t truly understand it myself.”

“So, this giantess, you think she will be a threat to me?” he asked, casting her an indulgent smile. After all, what harm could a mere giantess bring to him, the great God Njord?

“I do not see the whole picture in my visions; I see flashes from the future combined with a powerful intuition. In your case, you will betray the one you love with a beautiful giantess.”

Her stony-faced reply surprised him. There was no one he loved, not yet and he told her so.

Sassa tossed her head disdainfully. “My visions have never deceived me.”

“There is always a first time,” he teased.

Glowering at him, she pointed to the door. “I think you’d better leave.”

Pondering his next move, he concluded it might be best to go and give her time to reflect. “Very well, but first allow me a kiss to show there is no ill will between us.” He agreed.

Regarding him shyly from beneath her lashes, he noted the pink flush which tinged her pretty cheeks.

“Come Sassa, I only wish to share a single kiss, no more than that, I promise,” he cajoled.

“I am a maid,” she explained softly.

Standing he drew her to her feet, the disparity in their size moved him. She was so small and fragile. His hand cupped her cheek, his thumb swept over the bow of her lips, then he lowered his mouth to meet hers. Softly she parted under his passionate insistence allowing him entry to her mouth where his passionate press morphed into an urgent mating of tongues.

A half sigh, half moan mingled with her breath.

The taste of her became addictive and all encompassing. He who had kissed hundreds, nay thousands, of women in his charmed, immortal life, had no previous experience of a

female affecting him in such a profound way. Drawing back abruptly he left. Aspirating, he returned to safety and the world of deities he understood.



THE HEATED SUPPORT of his muscular body vanished leaving her bereft and alone; Sassa staggered and caught the table edge, steadying herself, wishing for the billionth time that her mother still lived. She so needed her advice...

The fact that she was already half in love with Njord did not surprise her, for was that not ordained by the Gods, and expected of mere mortals? The vision regarding him concerned her, for what if it were she... The one that Njord was destined to betray? Surely not? Gods did not fall in love with their subjects, did they? "Oh Mother, what would you advise me to do?" she wondered aloud. The silence stretched. Sassa laid her head on her arms and wept tears of regret and confusion, sometimes she hated her gift.

CHAPTER TWO

DETERMINED to stay away from the perplexing woman, Njord couldn't shake her from his thoughts. She filled his mind day and night. Restlessly, he wondered what she was doing and worried that the man who'd pestered and intimidated her before might have returned. A respite to his anxiousness was the echoing call from a distressed whale pod, parents and a calf. Foreign sailors had caught the calf in their nets. Arriving amidst the chaos, he discovered the vessel was indeed a whaler, and far from home. Giving a twirl of his wrist, he conjured a mighty storm.

Rising from the water until he towered above the vessel, and ripped the netting from the ships side to free the calf. Filling his lungs, Njord blew the craft back across the ocean whence it had come.

Sinking below the waves, he issued forth calming vibes, surrounding the whale pod to help them feel secure, and left them to recover from their ordeal. Shifting into the merman shape he used for swimming Njord, swam into the mouth of the fjord heading for Sassa's home shore.

HE WATCHED from the shadows as she completed her daily tasks. She collected a wooden pail and headed for the water's edge. Stealthily he followed, wrapped in his cloak of shadows. Lowering the pail, she filled it to the brim and set it aside. Glancing about her, he worried she must have detected his presence, but after perusing the area, she bent and reached for the hem of her gown, drawing it up and over her head revealing her nakedness.

He gasped at her beauty, the creamy unflawed skin of her high breasts tipped with rose pink nipples, the gold thatch betwixt her thighs, and finally her shapely legs which carried her eagerly into the clear shallows with such grace. Blood rushed directly to his cock, which swelled rapidly.

Watching her swim, he swiftly plunged in after her, transforming instantly into his merman form. Gliding over to her, he shrugged away his concealing shadows and emerged by her side. At first, she balked at seeing him there but as he splashed her playfully with his tail and frolicked in front of her, she giggled and reached to stroke his scaly fins.

Capturing her to him, she placed her hands on his broad shoulders. He bent his head to hers, their lips met. The blood rushed in his ears as he kissed her hungrily, it was as if a year had passed and not a few days since last they'd met. Finally, he tore himself from her tempting mouth.

“I am taking you to visit Asgard.”

In a flash they were inside his magnificent palace of gold and silver.

“Where am I? she asked confused, an expression of astonishment on her face.

“My palace at Nóatún. Do you like what you see?”

“Surely it is forbidden for a mortal to be here within the God’s immortal realm?” she asked sounding anxious.

He smiled indulgently. “Since I am a God, I’ve decreed you can be here.” It was time this pretty little mortal understood his power. When he wanted something, he took it, and by thunder he wanted this maid. He needed to get her out of his system. It had never been his plan to fall for a mere mortal. Once he’d had his fill of this one, he’d be able to stop obsessing over her and move on.

“Now then, what would you like to do first? Would you like a tour of the palace and then we shall eat a sumptuous feast and bathe together in the scented waters of my sunken bath?”

She looked about her shyly. “I’m not sure about the bath, but a tour would be nice.”



THE ECHOING chambers of the palace characterized a God’s need for opulence. Each and every room demonstrated Njord’s wealth and offered the luxury which Sassa had not conceived existed. Sumptuous fabrics in silver and gold adorned the windows, while frescos of naked men and women frolicking and enacting scenes of passion adorned the ceilings. Upstairs, Njord showed her bedchamber after bedchamber, finally introducing her to his own private sleeping space. A huge golden bed, adorned with gilded mermaids, each blessed with well-defined breasts leering from all four corners of the structure, filled the centre of the room. Silver covers and curtains shimmered in the light from opened doors that led onto a balcony with views across the sea. Such opulence was too much for her and she turned to hurry back towards the

stairs. The ostentatious palace overwhelmed her, and she longed to return to her cosy, humble dwelling overlooking the fjord.

Returning to the ground floor, she saw a sumptuous feast had been laid out on the terrace, enough food to feed an army. “I see you are expecting guests, I should go,” she said, trying and failing to hide the relief in her voice.

He grinned. “No one will be joining us. I promised you a feast did I not? Well, here it is, everything you might desire for your delectation. Come, try this lobster.”

Chewing her bottom lip, Sassa watched as he filled a platter with food. The more she saw of his lifestyle, the more she’d realised the chasm which existed between their two worlds. He drew her like a moth to the flame, but she feared he’d do much more than singe her wings. As a god, Njord could destroy her if she wasn’t careful. Since when had the gods ever cared about the needs and wants of mortals?

Taking the platter from him, she seated herself at the table and picked at the lobster. Finding it delicious, she began to eat with more enthusiasm.

“I expect you’re wondering how a god of the Vanir came to be living among the gods of Asgard?”

“Hmm?” She really wasn’t that interested but he proceeded to tell her of the war between the Aesir and the Vanir gods which broke out when the Aesir killed the Vanir-affiliated witch Gullveig. The Vanir burned down the wall around Asgard, but in the end neither side saw victory.

“It was then the gods tired of war, and I proposed a peace treaty, which the wise Aesir accepted. To secure the treaty, I agreed to join the Aesir as a hostage and the Aesir sent Honir

and Mimir to live with the Vanir. I am now an honoured and powerful God, highly respected and accepted in this realm.”

“How nice,” Sassa knew her reply sounded lame, but what could she say in answer to such proud bragging?

His face fell.

“And you are happy here?” she added hastily.

“Oh yes, who could not be.” He swept his arm about in an arc.

She rose to her feet. “Thank you for the delicious meal, it has been an honour to visit your palace, but I should like to return home now please.”

“So soon?” he asked with a look of disappointment.

“I really must.”

He crossed to where she stood and cupped her chin, his thumb swept across her lips in a sensuous caress.

She shivered. Why did his touch send heat flooding through her veins? He wasn't to be trusted; she didn't even like him.

And then he kissed her. It was as before, all thought fled her mind, her senses reeled and the heat flared into a furnace of desire. With sudden determination she twisted her head away. “I have to go. This is wrong.”

To his credit he stepped back and studied her for a moment.

“TOMORROW, would you travel underwater with me, into the marine world?” he offered suddenly.

No, she decided, but instead her traitorous mouth had other ideas. “I should like that.” Wondering, as she answered, why she was so weak willed when it came to him.

He pressed his mouth to hers in a brief kiss and in that moment, they were traversed to her little house.

It was cold, the fire was out. Glancing around, she shivered. It was as if they’d been gone days rather than hours. “Why is it so chilly in here?” she muttered. Her gaze alighted on the loaf of bread she’d removed from the oven that very morning, she’d left it on the table to cool, mould grew on the outer crust. “What’s happened to my bread?”

“Time in Asgard moves slower than here on Midgard, a week has passed since you were last here,” Njord explained.

“Midgard?” She frowned at the unfamiliar word.

“What you know as Earth, we call Midgard. Don’t worry, I’ll set everything to rights.” In an instant fire spluttered into life, and beside it the log basket refilled. The almost empty barrel of salted herrings bulged anew, and a fresh loaf of bread appeared on the table, filling the room with the comforting aroma of freshly baked bread. “I shall return on the morrow and we shall swim, together.”

She began to reply, but he was gone.



MAKING GOOD HIS PROMISE, Njord was there the following day and led her to the shallow shores. “Ready to become a mermaid?” he asked.

She nodded eagerly. He leant down and ran his palms firmly over her flanks and calves, turning her flesh scaly as

she morphed into a mermaid under his caressing touch. Releasing her body, he took her hand tugging her downward into the icy blue depths. Together they swam among the shoals of brightly silvered fish, then as they entered the mouth of the ocean, a school of porpoises joined them. Njord placed her hand on the dorsal fin of one and he swam beside them as the creature dipped and weaved through the water. Sassa laughed, stroking the side of the animal with her free hand.

After the school left them, he turned back into the fjord, Sassa swam beside him.

A prickling under his skin alerted him to an ancient presence and he felt the rise of the immense being beneath them. He signalled for Sassa to halt. She too sensed something and pointed downward. A dark ominous shape loomed up from the depths and moved toward her, but Sassa showed no fear, only recognition.

He sensed the delight the aquatic behemoth felt at finding her here in its domain. Despite the creatures intimidating size, she reached out, winding her arms about the thick column of its neck. He watched indulgently as the two swam together, the tenderness between them moved him deeply. Not for the first time he wondered about her heritage, could Sassa have the blood of an immortal from an ancestral predecessor?

After a while he felt his powers weakening. He couldn't retain her mermaid form much longer. As a human she would be unable to withstand the glacial cold of the arctic melt of these northern waters. It was time to return her to the shore, but she defied him and swam away to hide beneath the waves in amongst the many rocky outcrops. Frantically he searched, knowing that if he didn't find her soon, she would either drown or die of exposure. Panic gnawed his guts as his powers

dwindled and his attempts to hold her in her aquatic form weakened. Njord couldn't bear the thought of losing her and fought to maintain his grip on his diminishing powers while he grew ever more frantic searching for her among the rocks and waving sea fauna. Finally, he discovered her, unconscious, laid out upon the gritty sand floor. Short of oxygen she was obviously long past caring about playing hide and seek. He lifted her head and pressed his mouth to hers sharing his breath with her. She must not die; this woman had brought light into his world. Tense, he watched to see if filling her lungs had worked. Thankfully she stirred and his heart stuttered. With sudden clarity he knew he'd fallen for this beautiful mortal. He wanted more than an affair with her, he wanted her body and soul.



GROGGILY SASSA CAME AWAKE to find herself curled against Njord's chest, warm and safe she kept her eyes closed simply enjoying the comfort. Stretching languidly, she luxuriated in the welcome heat which seemed to have seeped deep into her very bones. Finally opening her eyes, she blinked into the darkness which shrouded them. There was no fear in her heart since she was with Njord and they both appeared to be bathing in liquid warmth. Her shoulders were supported by Njord and her head rested on the surface of the water resting between his spread knees. There was a slightly unpleasant odour which smelled like sulphur. "Where are we?" she asked dreamily.

"Inside a hot spring beneath the ground. I had to get you warm fast before you died of hypothermia due to the icy water." His tone sounded terse.

Struggling to sit up, she appreciated his help as he positioned her so that her back rested against his chest and she perched on his knee.

“What happened?” she asked befuddled. Tension seemed to emanate from him.

“You disobeyed me and put your life in danger,” he replied. “I could not keep you in your mermaid form any longer. My power to do so weakens after an hour. Your naughtiness could have cost you your life, and that is unacceptable, Sassa. There will be consequences for that little stunt.”

“I’m sure there won’t be, I feel absolutely fine,” she assured him, and twisting she planted a soft kiss on the side of his mouth.

He did not respond to her gentle overture. “I promise you there will be.”

His reply puzzled her. “Are you predicting the future?”

“I am.”

“I am the volva not you!” she teased attempting to bring levity into the situation.

He withdrew a flagon of water and insisted she drink. Handing it back to him she wrinkled her nose.

“It smells odd down here.”

“We’re very near the entrance to the underworld; we cannot linger much longer. It’s time to go.”

Before she could even reply, she found herself back inside her house. It disconcerted her the way he moved her so fast from place to place.

Njord stood before her, his massive arms folded as he regarded her solemnly.

“Earlier you seemed confused about the consequences of disobeying my commands; let me enlighten you. I do not make unnecessary demands, when I order you to do something it will be for a very good reason, and you will obey me. If like today you do not, then I shall take you over my knee and spank you until you have learnt your lesson.”

The scolding made her feel vulnerable; she was suddenly conscious of her nudity and flushed with embarrassment. “But I didn’t know ... ” she countered.

“So now you do, and shortly I’ll ensure you’ll remember the next time you think to make light of one my orders. Come here.”

Hesitating, she stepped back. “I want you to leave now.”

His brow furrowed. “I don’t think so. Come here.”

“You’re scaring me!”

“Good. You nearly died out in the sea today through sheer stupidity. How do you think I’d have felt if I’d failed to save you and you’d died?”

She hung her head. “I’m sorry, I didn’t think... I was only playing.” She felt his touch under her chin, lifting her face to meet his softened gaze. “I would never harm you, Sassa, you have become the love of my life. I will however drill into you how dangerous it is to ignore my instructions. Bad choices come with consequences and the corollary of that will be a hand spanking on your cute backside. I’m certain you won’t forget my lesson in a hurry. It will hurt, but not do you any harm. I am sure you will cry, but afterwards all shall be forgiven and we will be able to move on without any

recrimination between us.” Taking her arm, he led her behind the curtain and seated himself on the bed’s side. With a gentle tug she landed over his hard thighs, her hands braced upon the floor. Whimpering she braced herself, elbows locked and buttocks tensed.

She felt his warm hand sweep over her naked back and rest upon her buttocks.

“Relax your arse cheeks or this will hurt far more than it should,” he advised.

She tried, but failed to do as he suggested.

“Part your legs,” he commanded.

Reluctantly she did as he asked and parted her legs, embarrassed by the humiliating position.

She felt him shift beneath her and then his leg inserted itself over and between her own so she was unable to close her thighs. “Much better,” he praised.

A stinging smack landed on her bottom, shocking her with the suddenness of the blow. Emitting a cry as another landed, followed by a succession of rhythmic spanks which peppered her backside from right to left.

“Ow-wee...”

“In future you will listen when I tell you to do something and not defy me, do you understand me, Sassa?” his lecture interrupted her squeals and groans.

“Yes, yes, I promise!” she wailed. “Can we stop now that I’ve learned my lesson!” she pleaded reaching back to protect her scorching behind.

“We are nowhere near finished, naughty one,” he informed her, giving an insouciant chuckle as he imprisoned her wrists.

Infuriated, she struggled, but to no avail. Shocked by her lack of success, Sassa bucked fruitlessly. Held captive there was nothing she could do.

Her backside heated with every scorching impact and although she railed against his control, a kernel of lust grew at his dominance. A warmth suffused her from within and she realised that she was no longer afraid he would hurt her, instead she relished his dominance and found to her amazement her hips were rising to meet the punishing palm of his hand.



NJORD SENSED her fear and sent out reassuring vibes to calm her, the unexpected result was that half way through her spanking she became aroused. He smelt her arousal and was instantly hard. Shifting to ease the ache in his groin only exacerbated the situation as she bucked against his engorged length. Sucking in a ragged breath he halted the soothing vibes yet she remained aroused. Even as her tears dripped down onto his calf, her honey slipped warmly onto his thigh. The anomaly was highly intoxicating. Gritting his teeth, he fought against the urge to toss her onto the bed and make love to her. This punishment was necessary to ensure her future safety, it was important he see it through to the end. Experience told him she hadn't yet reached the point of submission and true regret. Raising his knee so her bottom was higher, he rained crisp spansks upon her upper thighs. Her shrieks of protest told him he was making headway and getting through to her.

Her pleading became interspersed with apologies and promises that she would listen to him in future. Righting her

so that she sat gingerly on his lap, she accepted his comfort, weeping into his shoulder.

“There now, all is forgiven,” he murmured, stroking the soft flesh of her inner thighs, his slow circular caresses shifted onto her Mons and cupped her sex. With a shuddering sigh she parted her legs and her tears dried. With expert fingers he brought her to a powerful culmination and held her tenderly. Lifting her onto the bed he brushed her forehead with his lips before securing her house and leaving to return to his palace in Asgard.

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CHAPTER THREE

SASSA WAS nervous about seeing him again and yet when he returned the following day, he treated her as though yesterday's spanking had never occurred. He offered to take her below the sea again but only if she promised to stay beside him and follow his commands which she quickly agreed she would do.

It had been another amazing day; a special gift she felt she could never repay. Sharing his realm under the sea while blessed with enhanced senses, allowing her to enjoy the sharp scent of sea salt, the pungent smell of fish and the enticing aroma of seaweed and underwater fauna was magical. Strong in her aquatic form, it had been wonderful to move with such ease and speed through the briny depths, swirling and turning with sinuous abandon in mermaid form had been truly liberating.

Back on land, it had only taken a moment for her feet to emerge from the fin of her tail as she rose to stand naked under Njord's heated gaze, which felt like a physical touch as it swept greedily over her body. Warmth suffused her skin under such bold perusal, and in that moment, she knew she would give herself to him. Her virginity was the only gift she had to bestow on him. It would be her way of repaying him for the

wonderful experience of allowing her to share the sea with him.

First, she heated stew for their supper which they ate in comfortable silence. Afterwards, he drew her to her feet and clasped her hand. She led the way behind the curtained off area where her bed stood, gently he pressed her back onto the covers.

The kiss they shared was just as honeyed as the first they'd shared. His masculine scent mingled with the smell of the sea, and cloaked her in a rich seductive perfume, he held her in his thrall. A hand cupped her breast pressing against her nipple which beaded tight against his palm; she let out her breath, a half sigh, half moan. Her blood heated and swept through her veins at such speed it caused her head to whirl. Pushing her hands up into his thick hair, she drew him down to her breast. He needed no further invitation and latched onto a tightly budded nipple.

The sweet tug of his mouth caused her to arch into the caress with a mewl of pleasure. She thought there could be nothing sweeter but she soon discovered she was wrong when he kissed his way down her body halting at her shadowed apex. Shifting her legs apart he settled himself, his gaze hooded as he stared down at her. "Beautiful." His deep voice held the ring of truth and she was too moved to refute him. Under his admiring gaze her flesh throbbed needily, the pulse beat ferociously between her legs.

His mouth lowered to meet the needy thrum; with a gasp she subsided weakly on the bed. *And I thought I was gifting him?* But this, *this* was yet more magic that he was bestowing on *her*! She would not argue, *could not argue*. Every sensuous touch, each lick of his tongue sent sensation curling through

her body, heating her blood until she simmered and ached to boil over. There was more, instinctively she knew there was more. Her body strained towards the *more*, abandoning all restraint. He filled her whole world as he held her body in his hands, his rasping tongue explored her crevices, sweeping her cleft from end-to-end; finishing at a certain place that quadrupled her pleasure. Sassa's eyes rolled back and she cried out in blissful surrender.

Heavy weight pressed her into the bed. Opening her eyes, she met his deep unfathomable gaze. "Ready my love?" he asked gruffly.

In answer she stretched her neck and touched his lips with hers. igniting a flame of desire that she knew instinctively would always burn bright between the two of them. A slick rounded smoothness pressed up against her opening. Penetrating slowly, his girth stretched and filled her, inch by delicious inch, a pressure, a sharp pain, then a long voluptuous slide which ebbed and flowed like the sea tides as his hips swivelled and snaked. He became harder, thicker and demanding, kissing her with thrilling urgency that mirrored the pounding shaft imbedded deep within her heated flesh. Heart hammering, she followed as he led her into a realm of decadent, luscious delight.

All restraint abandoned, he set a wickedly insidious rhythm which she gloried in, revelling in the tender violence of his lovemaking.

Sudden blinding light pierced her brain as wave after wave of indescribable pleasure overwhelmed her senses and left her annihilated. Her body replete, she surrendered her heart to her intoxicating and untamed God, Njord.

DAY AFTER DAY Njord left at dawn and returned midmorning just as the last of her visitors left. Losing her virginity had subtly altered Sassa's visions. Now she could handle inanimate objects and see into the future. She'd discovered the new phenomenon when accepting silver from a man who wished to know about sex of his unborn child. Handling the coin, she had seen a far-off time when money would be made from paper, it had been an exciting discovery. Since then, she had tested her ability on other objects, discovering that at some future point women would wear trousers and some would even cut their hair short!

Lovemaking with Njord was the highlight of her day.

Sometimes he would turn her into a mermaid again and they would join the marine life below the waterline and more often than not her ancient friend would join them. Sassa sensed the lonely beast was happier now that she could join it down in its aquatic world and was able swim and play with the gentle creature.



IT WAS LATE MORNING; Sassa was becoming concerned, where was he? Returning to her humble wooden house she stepped inside and gasped. The room before her appeared by magic to have become huge, the otherworld space shimmered with light. Njord stood backlit by a golden haze. Holding out his palm to her she scampered forward, took his hand, and he drew her to his chest.

“Sassa, will thou be my wife for all eternity?” he asked in a booming God like voice which echoed and surrounded her, filled her mind and seeped into her flesh, his words deeply

embedding into her very bones. This then was how a God asked a woman to be his.

“I am human I cannot remain with you forever,” she reminded him in a small trembling voice.

He brought an apple to her mouth. No ordinary apple this, but a glossy apple which hummed and vibrated strangely. “One bite a year of this and you will remain immortal like me. Join me, and we shall remain together, forever.”

Leaning into his arm she placed her small hand over his wrist to steady his grasp and sank her teeth into the glowing apple. Incredible sweetness suffused her tongue as she took a mouthful of the enchanted fruit. Chewing slowly to savour the phenomenal flavour, she finally swallowed. In an instant her body convulsed. All her joints and muscles seemed to tighten then stretch, her frame bowed under the ambrosian spell. The peculiar sensation left her as quickly as it came; replaced by a powerful sense of wellbeing which swept her from head to toe as she slumped against him.

His lips were on hers, fervent and demanding. Their lovemaking unlike anything she'd imagined, this then was how a God loved with all the physical and emotional pleasure magnified and enhanced. Sassa's orgasm swept through her as fierce as the glacier waters of Vettisfossen which thundered over the rocky cliffs at Jotunheimen. Afterwards, she lay mesmerized and utterly replete.



LATER, after they'd eaten, Njord tucked her into bed giving her a kiss into which he poured his heart and left her to sleep

while he went to find Odin in order to ask for permission to marry a mortal.

As soon as he arrived back in Asgard, Njord bathed in his sunken pool and changed into his ceremonial kyrtil in preparation for his visit to Odin's great palace of Valhalla.

On arrival, he was surprised to be met by the God himself, worryingly he noted Odin's grim expression.

"I wondered when you would deign to come and explain yourself," he boomed angrily.

"What has occurred to put you in such a temper?"

"You've crossed a line, Njord. You gave a mortal the fruit of immortality."

"I'm a God I can decide for myself if I wish to give a human immortality, besides she only took one bite and surely that won't last longer than a hundred years at best. I intend to take Sassa to wife and give her more of the fruit in due course."

"You overstep yourself!" Odin boomed, "Arrogant young puppy; I'm head of the Gods! I decide who is given immortality, not *you*! Njord, you've grown too big for your boots. 'Tis time you were taken down a peg or two." Odin lifted his arm and twirled his finger in the air. Njord found himself bound tight. Using his powers, he swelled and grew to giant size but his bonds only stretched with him. He was well and truly trussed.

Odin tugged his beard thoughtfully. "I cannot such blatant disrespect go unchallenged. I offer this as a fair resolution. The giantess Skadi is inconsolable over her father's death, during the war. She demands to marry a God as recompense and to keep the peace I am willing to repay her for her loss. I know

Skadi wants to marry Baldr, but he is not willing, and so I have come up with what I consider to be a fair solution. I've decreed that she can marry a God, but she will have to choose her husband from among all the Gods, without seeing any other part of them but their feet. I know you are of Vanir decent and not Aesir, under normal circumstances I wouldn't ask you take part in the line-up but since you've disobeyed the law, and thus disrespected me, I am adding you to her choice of Gods."

Njord stilled, Sassa's strange prediction that he should avoid giantesses came to mind. His heart sank, he knew he had no choice but to obey Odin's dictate. "If she selects me, does it mean I will actually have to marry this giantess?"

Odin nodded. "It does, and if we are to avoid another war with the giants, you will make every effort to keep her happy. If you do not, I shall personally kill this Sassa mortal you seem so taken with."

Njord struggled against his bonds. "You would murder an innocent?" he rasped in horror.

"Only if you do not uphold our bargain; besides who is to say Skadi will select you? Come, the others await us in the great hall."

"Wait, if she doesn't choose me, do I have your permission to marry Sassa, and make her an immortal?"

Odin patted his shoulder. "If that happens then, we shall see, Njord, much will depend on how contrite I think you are."

Njord's head fell forward in despair. His heart filled with uneasy foreboding.

Odin placed Njord in the middle of the line-up of other grim-faced Gods. It appeared that no one was happy with

Odin's plan. Cloaked with invisibility so that only their feet showed, the Gods watched anxiously as Skadi walked slowly among the row of males studying their feet. Twice she sauntered up and down between the lines of men, tapping her lip thoughtfully, until finally she halted before Njord and placed a hand upon his foot.



SASSA AWOKED, her eyes immediately turned to search the space beside her. She frowned, what was that resting on the pillow? Reaching out she discovered a gold brooch designed in the shape of an apple made from a cabochon of amber stone set in gold. With a smile of contentment curving her lips, she reached for the gift and pressed the bauble against them.

Later that day Njord appeared but remained several feet away from her. She moved towards him, arms outstretched, halting uncertainly when he held up his palm, warning her off. Warily she watched him, noting his stiff stance and furrowed brow. Something was seriously wrong.

“Tell me,” she demanded.

“I am so happy that you agreed to become my wife, but Odin is livid with me ...” his voice trailed away. His agonised expression pierced her heart, it was obvious something traumatic had happened.

“Go on,” she prompted.

“It's all my fault, I should never have given you the apple to taste without obtaining Odin's permission,” he muttered remorsefully.

A deep sense of doom shrouded her as she waited for him to continue.

“My punishment was to take part in a line up with other Gods, our identity was cloaked. A giantess has been wronged by a God who had killed her father. She approached Odin, and by way of appeasement he decreed that she could choose a God to wed, but that she must select him by seeing only his feet, and, and...”

“She chose you,” she said flatly, finishing the sentence for him.

He nodded. They stood and stared at one another and then he moved towards her. She didn’t want him to touch her, but he drew her like a magnet. She found herself in his arms clinging to him. “Can’t you defy Odin?” she asked, hating how desperate her plea sounded.

“He told me that if I don’t make an effort to make the marriage work with Skadi...”

“Yes?”

“He threatened to annihilate you.”

“Annihilate ... As in *kill me*?”

His arms tightened protectively about her. “Yes ... Sassa, I am so sorry. I’ve handled this badly and broken both our hearts, but I promise you that as soon as I can walk away from Skadi I will. I shall find you.”

“I’ll be long dead.” Bitterness flooded her heart.

“I don’t know. You ate from the tree of immortality. I did some research and discovered your grandmother had an affair with a God which might mean that you are immortal.”

She pushed away from him. “What? If I cannot have you then I don’t want to be immortal and spend forever alone!” she cried in horror. “And what do you mean my grandmother had an affair with a God, what God?”

“Breedra spent several months with the God Heimdall. Your mother may have been a result of that fling, which means when you ate from the tree of life it probably bestowed you with full immortality.”

She paled. “No, no, no, I cannot live forever... You have to do something! Ask Odin to reverse the effects, or cast a-a spell!”

“He does not have the inclination to do that,” Njord explained, shaking his head sorrowfully.

“You think I’ll live *forever*?” Tremors began in her chest. Her legs began to quake. She felt sick.

“I do,” he replied, “but I can bestow wealth, it is one of my gifts. I shall leave you with enough to keep you in comfort for perpetuity, and when I can leave Skadi I shall return to you, Sassa, and we shall spend the rest of eternity together.”

Her throat clogged with rage; how could he have been so *stupid*? She’d warned him to stay away from giantesses. “You are a God, a *God*, Njord! You are supposed to make good judgements. I warned you about giantesses, and I trusted you to make sure we could be together! I wish I’d never laid eyes on you, get away, go! Run back to your future wife; I hope she makes you thoroughly miserable!” Her voice rose to a shriek and she turned and ran from him into her house and slammed the door.

Although she knew that as a God, Njord could simply appear inside her dwelling, she hoped he would respect her

privacy, it seemed she was wrong because there he was stood in the center of the room.

“I’m heartbroken too, and so very sorry, my dear heart. Sassa, keep the Amber brooch I gave you close, through that I will always be able to find you. For a few years I dare not risk Odin’s wrath by visiting you, but after a while I am sure he will relent and I will come to you.”

“No! No! No! I will not wait around for crumbs from your table! Go away, leave me! I’ve been such a fool! Everyone knows the Gods use people for their own ends... I want you to leave before my rage evokes Loki or worse Odin. Go, Njord!” she screamed.

He vanished, leaving behind a domed-lid wooden chest. Sassa stared at it numbly, her earlier tremors turned to shivers which shook her slight frame. Staggering to the curtained bed, she collapsed there, curling into a ball. Wrapping her arms about her chest she hugged herself and rocked. A strange keening sound filled the room, it took her a while to identify the fact it was her own grief.

The following day she went and stood at the fjord edge and stared across the water; how long she stood there for she had no idea. Bringing her closed fist to her face she opened her palm and stared down at the amber brooch. Lifting her hand, she drew back her arm and threw the bauble into the water then turned back toward her house.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENT DAY...

“THE NEW YORK order has quadrupled. Since S.H.E is doing really well in the states, I think we could cut back on the advertising budget,” Paige said.

Sassa tapped her pen against her bottom lip thoughtfully. “My sources tell me to keep up the blanket advertising for at least another month then we can cut back.” No need to explain to her head of advertising that her source was in fact her own second sight.

“You’re the boss,” Paige replied cheerfully. “I’ll keep you informed. Our front investor, Nick Godden wants to meet up with you in the next few days. Would you prefer to meet him in Inverness?”

“Hmm, no, ask him to come out to the house for lunch, the day after tomorrow would be good if that suits him. I want this finalized as soon as possible. Thanks, Paige.” She clicked off Zoom and swiveled around in her desk chair to gaze out of the window. The purple heather was blooming in the Scottish Highlands, and her home office offered a fabulous view of Urquhart Castle and the mountains beyond. Situated on the

banks of Loch Ness, her manor house was her home and her solace.

After a woeful year of grieving for Njord when she'd even considered suicide, she'd finally accepted her immortality and moved into the village. The son of the local Jarl had noticed her beauty and come a courting. Sassa had agreed to marry the handsome Viking on a rebound from her relationship with Njord, and yet the union had been a surprisingly happy one. After a year she'd confessed her previous relationship with a God to him, without revealing which one. Magnar had been more than happy to receive the trunk of gold and silver coin which never seemed to run dry. They'd been blessed with three sons and a daughter. The Jarl had ordered his son across the sea to settle the land of the Picts, a country which offered a better climate and good land. Sassa and their children crossed the sea to join her husband, and here she'd remained until present day in the land now known as Scotland.

Watching her husband and children pass away had taken its toll on her, and the pain of seeing their offspring and many times removed great grandchildren grow old and die, had been a deeply wounding cross to bear.

Sassa resolved never to marry again; yet forever proved to be a long and lonely road, and she'd succumbed to matrimony twice more. Her second husband, Douglas Mackintosh had been a mistake. A conceited man, he'd disappeared under mysterious circumstances after only two years of marriage, and despite enquiries she had never discovered what had happened to him. This episode had further convinced Sassa she should avoid marriage.

Her determination lasted until the sixteenth century, when she'd met the dashing Laird, Iain McAlexander, her third and

final husband.

Sassa's many times removed great granddaughter, Fiona, had married a Fraser who owned the manor house where Sassa now lived. She'd inherited the stone manor house, Ardmachree which had remained her home to this very day.

Long ago she'd ordered a secret strong room constructed under the cellars of the old house. There the trunk of gold and silver resided, in the ancient vault secured by lock and key. As with her previous husbands, Sassa had confessed her past history, and as with each of her previous husbands, Iain had only believed her tale once he'd witnessed the magical way the trunk remained full of coin no matter how often they removed money from the chest.

With modern beliefs denying the existence of the Gods, Sassa was sometimes hard pressed to believe in her own tale. When disbelief assailed her, she would take a flash light and descend the bowels of the house to look inside the magic trunk and relive her affair with Njord. Despite three loving marriages, the Viking God still held the key to her heart; all these centuries of pain and loss yet his betrayal cut her to the quick. At least she had solace from his unknowing gift, without that one precious thing she might have given up all hope of happiness.

For many, many years her dear friend from the deep had visited her. His presence became a danger to him after several sightings brought him notoriety, and he became known as the Loch Ness Monster; a title which Sassa abhorred, it seemed such a cruel label for her gentle friend. She'd learned to commune with him telepathically on a basic level but with enough understanding so she'd been aware when his time had finally come. Luckily it was high summer, Sassa had been able

to swim out into the icy waters of Loch to be with him as he breathed his last. It had been a bittersweet loss for her. Pleased that her ancient friend was finally laid to rest, and yet his parting made her more aware than ever of her own lonely vigil.

Her company had begun long ago when her husband Iain began exporting whiskey. Iain had named the business, Scottish Highlands Enterprises. Nowadays, the company was better known for her successful women's makeup line known simply as S.H.E. The products were renown worldwide and Sassa no longer needed to delve into the perpetual supply of gold and silver within the trunk. Nowadays exchanging the treasure at her bank proved impossible, since the ancient coin would be difficult to explain, but thankfully her legitimate business ventures provided enough wealth for her charitable donations.

Sassa had acquired many homes around the world over her long life which she used to disappear to when people began to comment on her lack of aging. Establishing a legitimate business out of the country had worked well for her, giving her a reason to leave Scotland and stay away long enough for people who knew her to age and retire. Her staff would change, and she had the opportunity to return in the guise of her own granddaughter or as a niece, with the credentials which gave her sole control of the company. Sometimes Sassa altered her appearance, dyed her hair, wore glasses, changed her taste in clothes, and so far, this strategy had worked. It was always difficult for her when the time came to depart from her beloved Scotland and become a recluse, living for a number of years out of the country at one of her many remote luxurious hideaways. Thankfully she had another fifteen to twenty years this time around and she was thoroughly enjoying being back

in the manor which was the only one of her properties which felt like home.

She hadn't been back to Norway since the day she'd left to join Magnar here in the highlands all those many hundreds of years ago. Often, she'd find her thoughts drifting back to her time with Njord, she wondered if the Gods were still about? Had they needed the belief of mortals to maintain their existence? Certainly, there had been no sign of the Viking Gods since the Vikings had been absorbed into Scottish society.

Sassa's husbands had on occasion taken her over their knee as men were wont to do in past eras but for the longest passage of time it had become politically incorrect to spank a woman and she'd missed the sensuality and excitement of being overpowered by a loving husband intent on correction. It seemed inexplicable to Sassa, that when she dreamed of spanking and sex, it was of Njord she dreamed and not her former husbands. Despite the many long years which had passed since she'd last seen him, it was Njord's face she recalled clearly and not those of her three husbands who had long since faded in her memory.

In recent years consensual spanking had returned within BDSM clubs, many of which had opened up discreetly, making spanking tolerated by the more open minded. Her fallow years behind her, Sassa embraced the lifestyle and her latest venture had been to purchase just such a club in the countryside on the outskirts of Inverness. Situated within secluded grounds was a derelict castle which the previous owners had bankrupted themselves while renovating while turning it into a luxurious hotel and BDSM club. Sassa had acquired the business and finding another investor to be the face of the club, as well as her worldwide contact, began to

discreetly advertise the newly named Castle Asgard among the kinky rich. It had quickly become a resounding success. With its four helipads and secluded location, the celebrities had flocked to experience something unique.

Sassa frequented the club herself using the anonymity she had set up for guests visiting the castle. All the hired dominants were given the names of Viking Gods, while the club submissives were called Thralls. The females were named for goddesses and males named for the Viking immortals who lacked God status. The Dungeon below the hotel was called Valhalla and the club safe word was Loki, which all Thralls and visiting submissives were told to use in order to stop a scene, Loki being the Viking God of mischief.

Since opening Castle Asgard, Sassa had found a real purpose to life. She also enjoyed exploring her own sexuality within the safe boundaries of the club. There were no emotional ties in which a relationship might embroil her. Inside the Valhalla dungeon she could let go of her daily life and release her inner submissive.

It had been surprisingly easy to hire staff for the dungeon; all the Dominants were exceptionally handsome men of muscle, every one of them an alpha male. Their professionalism and firm but fair attitude towards the Thralls soon had everyone eating out of their hands. Of course, some of the dominants were sterner than others, but they managed to keep the club running smoothly and professionally. The appointed club manager was named for Thor, and it was to him that Sassa intended to approach for a spanking. There was something about the man which reminded her strongly of Njord; his had been the only Gods name which she hadn't allocated to anyone in the club.

Nowadays she regretted throwing the amber brooch he'd given her into the fjord. She would like to see him again, although it would reopen the scabs of her partially healed wounds. Even after hundreds of years she still mourned their parting of ways.

Her phone chirruped drawing her mind back to the present, it was a text message from Paige.

“Apparently the underbidder for Valhalla has been sniffing around the company asking a lot of questions about our new venture. I suggest we send out an email warning staff to be vigilant in order to forestall any bad press he/they might try to use to discredit the new business. The last thing celebrities will want is their names linked to bad press. I’ll ask Maurice to find out who the underbidder was. Nick Godden will be with you at noon, he’ll probably helicopter in.”

Sending a reply, she thanked Paige for making the necessary arrangements. The underbidder, whoever it was, must have been making quite a nuisance of themselves for her CEO to sit up and take notice. Maurice, head of their legal department, was excellent at finding and getting answers.

There was a brief knock at the door. She glanced up to see, Shona Murray, her housekeeper.

“Will you be wanting your supper in the dining room tonight?” she asked.

Sassa smiled. Most of the time she chose to eat her meals in the kitchen with her housekeeper, if she was at home, but Mrs. Murray didn't approve and insisted on asking this same question every afternoon.

“Nay, I’ll not put you to the trouble, Shona. We’ll eat in the kitchen like we normally do, thank you,” she replied

putting a gentle emphasis on the ‘normally’. The housekeeper gave a disdainful sniff and retreated, closing the door. Sassa shook her head ruefully. In all the years Shona had worked with her, she still made too much of a distinction between them. Sassa liked her and wished for a more relaxed friendship with her, rather than employer/staff stiffness that Shona Murray maintained.

She closed her laptop and left the room. There was time for a walk before the evening meal. Moving through the house towards the back, her dogs joined her. She had four, all rescued. Three Mongrels of various shapes and sizes and a retired greyhound called, Swift. Sassa liked rescuing animals and people, she had horses, ponies, goats, and cats, all saved by her over the years. There were numerous ex- battery hens and ducks scratching around the estate grounds.

Pulling on her sturdy walking shoes and weatherproof coat, she opened the backdoor and the dogs scooted around her legs and dashed out before her. Sassa grinned at their antics and followed them into the gardens. They trekked along a path that led them up and away from the loch, the footpath they took traversed her neighbor’s land. The house had stood vacant for over two years and she was still trying to decide whether or not to buy the place. She didn’t really need any more land, after all, the house on the estate was situated far from her own boundaries. Nevertheless, it might be good to protect herself even further from any prying neighbors. She set off in the direction of the house mulling her decision over.

Reaching the brow of the hill Sassa stopped to take in the view. Heather clad hills which sheltered red deer, stood beneath mountains still wearing caps of white, despite the fact it was nearing the end of May. Eagles had been known to soar in the skies above but she could see none on the wing today.

Her gaze lowered to the squat stone manor house which nestled among the craggy rocks below. It was a sturdy yet attractive building with mullioned windows and a stone arched entrance way. Smoke drifted from the central chimney which was odd. Frowning she headed down the slope to investigate.

Leaving the dogs to forage in the overgrown gardens, she went to the main entrance and tried the door. It swung open and she stepped cautiously inside the hall. "Hello?" There was no reply. Stepping into the flag stoned passageway she moved slowly into the house drawn by the sight of mellow light spilling out from an open door where she knew the parlor lay. Peering into the room she saw the source of the light came from a glowing lamp set upon a side table. A log fire crackled merrily in the hearth of the large inglenook fireplace.

"I wondered how long it would be before you turned up, I've been waiting for you," a deep voice rumbled from within a large winged back chair. Sassa froze with shock. *It simply couldn't be ...*

"Hello, Sassa."

It was him, really and truly, Njord ... but how? She stood rooted to the spot staring at him. He looked exactly the same as he had nearly a thousand years before, tall, broad chested and well-muscled. She had a hard time accepting what her eyes told her, that the man who stood before her was in fact, Njord.

"Where's your wife?" She hadn't meant to sound so peevish, yet the bitter words spilled from her lips of their own accord.

His brow furrowed. "This is how you greet me after an eternity apart?"

“And whose fault is that?” she snapped, placing her hands on her hips.

“Fate?” he shrugged.

Shaking her head in disbelief, Sassa felt the simmering rage of years bubbling in her veins. “You didn’t listen when I warned you to stay away from Giantesses. No, the almighty, Njord knew better! Well, you know what? Nothing has changed. I want you out of this house and back in Asgard with all the other useless, redundant Gods!” Her words ricocheted about the room like popcorn thrown onto a fire.

“They aren’t at Asgard, they’re in Valhalla,” he replied with irritating calm.

“Well take yourself off there then!” she demanded.

“Hmm, I thought I was one of the named Gods you weren’t employing?” He cocked his head, one brow raised in question.

“What do you mean? I-Oh! The men at my club... You mean they are...” her voice trailed off. She stared at him wide eyed.

“The real Gods? Yes.”

“*Holy shit!* Thor and the other Dominants they are *the* actual Gods? The Goddesses too?” she asked.

“Yup! It was the lucky break I’d been hoping for when you invoked their names. I’ve spent all my time since Odin gave his blessing for Skadi and I to divorce, searching for you... What happened to the brooch I gave you that would have enabled me to find you?”

“I threw it in the Fjord. I never wanted to see you again; you betrayed me!”

He shook his head solemnly. “No, you cannot call what happened a betrayal because it wasn’t deliberate. I wanted to spend eternity with you, Sassa. I still do... ”

“Well, I don’t want to spend another minute with you! You’ve condemned me to a life of immortality which is a miserable state of affairs for a human forced to lose those she loved and left to live forever alone!” she snapped bitterly.

“Sassa, Sassa, don’t worry, I’m here now. It’s clear that you’ve no idea of the life you could live with me. As a god I can show you how to enjoy immortality, you’ve no idea of the delights we can share together.”

Watching him deliver this arrogant speech, it dawned on her that Njord had no idea how much she’d changed. No longer the innocent girl he’d known who’d lacked all knowledge of the world or the people who inhabited it, she was a mature woman.

“You mistake me for the same ignorant creature you met hundreds of years ago. I have eons of harsh life experience which you lack. You who have spent the time dallying in sumptuousness fulfilling your every desire. I want no part of you and your kind... ”

“My kind?” he interrupted angrily. “*My kind?* We are Gods!”

No one believes in you anymore. You’re just another lifeform,” she said dismissively. Turning, she gave a soft snort of derision and headed back into the hallway. “I want you out of this house, and your species out of my club right now!” she called a parting shot over her shoulder.

The dogs greeted her ecstatically, as though she’d been gone hours instead of minutes, perhaps that was the greeting

Njord had been expecting from her? Fueled on righteous fury she stormed back towards Ardmachree. The magnitude of coming face to face with the man who had haunted her dreams for hundreds of years was mind shattering. She waited until she was out of sight of the house and halted, staring sightlessly over the stunning view of the Loch. Shock gradually gave way to deep longing and then to fear. Fear that he would discover her most precious secret and steal it away, or worse be livid with her and take unforgivable action. Shaking her head, Sassa immediately dismissed the thought. Njord was not unreasonable and he was no a beast. Pain of loss caught her heart in a vice like grip. No amount of reasoning on her part was able to control how she felt about him.

The age-old ache seated deep in her soul engulfed her. *Better to hold onto her rage than go down that path.* “Aaargh!”

Her cry startled the dogs who stared up at her in concern. “Come on, let’s away home,” she told them setting off after the dogs, who happily led the way.



NJORD CROSSED to the window and watched his love stride off, his overwhelming feeling one of anticlimax. He’d been prepared for her to have changed, but the level of vitriol she’d directed at him was a shock. It pained him that he’d been the cause of her suffering, the anguish of her years spent in lonely existence. His actions had been selfish. He alone was responsible for making poor choices which had rebounded, hurting the woman he loved, the knowledge cut him to the quick. He owed Sassa and he intended to make good on promises made long ago. The fact his heart had stuttered at the

sight of her was testimony to how she still affected him, even after nearly a thousand years apart. Blessed with a strong sense of smell, he knew she'd been aroused, the scent of her flowing nectar had his cock rearing, rampant and hard. Sassa would be his eventually, but for now he needed to draw on the patience he'd learned from the unhappy years of marriage to Skadi.

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CHAPTER FIVE

DEEP THRUMMING and whirring alerted her to the arrival of a helicopter. Crossing to the window she watched it lowering to the ground. The downward thrust of air flattened the grass at the edges of the helipad. A man jumped down, she took note of the fact Nick Godden was tall and broad. Sassa quickly turned and left the room, she intended to greet him in the entrance hall.

“No,” she gasped, coming face to face with her unwelcome visitor.

“Hello! Miss McAlexander, I presume? It is good to meet you at last. Nick Godden at your service.” He held out his hand.

Conscious of Shona Murray hovering nearby, she gritted her teeth and swallowed her fury at the sight of Njord standing in her hallway. How dare he masquerade as Nick Godden! Forced to take his hand, she allowed Shona to usher them both into the formal drawing room and closed the door behind her housekeeper before swinging around to face her tormentor. “What the fuck are you doing?” she hissed.

His eyebrow lifted. “Language, language!”

“Oh, stop it!” She said furiously. “What the fuck are you playing at?”

He clicked his tongue. “You invited me to lunch.”

“I invited a business partner, Nick Godden, not you... ” A horrible realisation hit her. “Oh, no, no, no,” she moaned. “Do not tell me that you are posing as Nick Godden?”

“How very perceptive of you... now down to business. I understand you want me to be the recognised face of Club Valhalla, am I correct?”

“No, I don’t want you to be the face of anything for me! What the hell are you doing here, Njord?”

A knock at the door prevented him from answering as Shona entered the room bearing a tray of appetisers which she set on the coffee table. “Can I get you something to drink, Mr. Godden,” she asked.

“When in Rome... I’ll have a Scotch, thank you,” he replied with an easy smile.

Sassa shook her head negatively when asked. She needed to keep a clear head to deal with her very unwelcome guest.

After the housekeeper had served Njord his scotch, Shona left the room and Sassa closed the door firmly behind her. The last thing she needed was an eavesdropper “Explain yourself,” she demanded, crossing to face him.

He shrugged. “I told you that I’d been searching for you for many years, well I needed an identity and Nick sounds a bit like Njord, and Godden for God, simple.”

“How did you get involved with SHE?”

“What is this, the Spanish inquisition? They were awful did you come across them at all? Barbaric lot...”

“*Shut-up, shut-up, shut-up!*” she screeched clutching her head.

He frowned. "I sense you're not a happy woman, Sassa. Perhaps you need a God in your life?"

"Do you have no conception of how much I hate you?" she snarled.

"Sassa, Sassa, we both know that's simply not true. You're my woman you always were, and you always will be. I get that you're angry with me, really I do, and you have every right to be, but eventually you'll calm down and forgive me, then we can begin the life we were always meant to have together."

A rapid knock at the door forestalled any reply to this pretty speech. Once again Shona appeared in the doorway. "Is everything all right in here?" she asked glaring at Njord suspiciously.

"Oh yes, a mere business disagreement, nothing more," he replied with an insouciant smile.

"Lunch is served," the housekeeper replied frostily. She stayed where she was, stubbornly waiting for them to leave the room.

Sassa, amused by Mrs. Murray's reaction, thanked her. She very much appreciated Shona's loyalty.

Luncheon was a civil affair where Sassa was careful not to discuss either business or her personal life. She kept the conversation strictly on her charitable works which she was passionate about, and thankfully Njord followed her lead, responding with engaging and intelligent remarks. His physical presence was distracting. His rich male aroma assailed her awakening memories she'd long since buried. After all, Njord was a God, and no mere mortal could match him especially between the sheets...



MEANWHILE, Njord watched Sassa covertly, her responses to his gentle flirting seemed to be positive. Noting her flushed neck and lowered lashes, he quickly determined she was just as affected by his presence as she had been many aeons ago.

Dessert and a cheese board followed the chicken risotto. Shona returned to inform them she'd left coffee out for them in the drawing room.

Once settled in the comfortable chairs, Njord asked her the whereabouts of the sea beast they had both become so fond of.

“Sadly, he died in my arms a few years back. I sensed he was glad to go, he'd been alone for so long, the poor dear creature,” she replied.

“I heard about Nessie, the Loch Ness Monster, I assume it was our friend which people spotted and so named?”

“Yes, it was unfortunate but as the population grew it was inevitable that someone would see him. I'm glad he died before anyone found him and stuck him in some kind of a zoo.”

Njord shuddered. “I agree, a much better outcome for him.”

They contemplated the animal's demise in silence and sipped their coffee. Njord was first to break the peace. “Regarding the Club,” he began. Holding up his palm he forestalled Sassa's attempt to interrupt him.

Glowering at him over the rim of her cup, she subsided back into her seat, bristling with indignation.

“Hear me out. I agree it would be a bad thing for your cosmetic company to be associated with a BDSM club, however upmarket, and the last thing you need is your photo plastered over the media. You don’t want people looking at your picture and your previous identities and coming up with a suspicious tale about you. Let me be the front of this venture I have not been as well-known as you over the years, and with the different fashions and facial hair trends, it has been easy for me to alter my looks. My company is also relatively new, whereas yours dates back generations.”

He ascertained she understood that what he said made sense, but she wasn’t yet ready to accept him as a part of her life. The fact his physical presence made her pulse race and her panties wet, was obviously not a reason to allow him a second chance. It had taken him hundreds of years to find her, and by hook or by crook he would find a way to lower her defences.

“I’ll give it some thought and get back to you. In the meantime, please ask the Gods to vacate their positions and I’ll get onto an agency to look at hiring more staff.” She gave him a stiff polite smile and rose to her feet, hand held out, indicating their meeting was at an end.

He could see that it infuriated her when he ignored her hand and remained seated.

“Is the chest still filling with coin?” he asked.

“It is, but since I cannot explain where the ancient gold coins came from, it would be claimed as treasure by the government and I would become suspect should I attempt to use it. You can remove it from my cellar since it is redundant to my needs. Now I really have to go. Thank you for coming.”

“*Sassa...*” he stood and before she could blink, he held her in his arms pressed up against his chest.



HER EYES CLOSED as the effects of his scent and touch of his body seared

her flesh and befuddled her brain. The feel of his hands cupping her face took her back to another time. His mouth lowered to hers, a soft sigh escaped her as their lips met. In that instance heat flared between them. It took every ounce of self will for her to push her shaking arms up between them and shove him away. “No,” she gasped, panting as though she was out of breath, “No, Njord. This ends here. You have to understand there will never be anything between us not now and not in the future. It was over hundreds of years ago, and I will not be a pawn in your sport.”

“You don’t really believe that, you can’t believe that is all you were or are to me?” he asked hoarsely.

“I refuse to be your little puppet. I don’t need you, and I won’t play your cruel and shallow games of love. Please just go. Leave!” *Yes, leave before I weaken, and you smash my heart into a trillion tiny fragments which will take me another several hundred years to put back together except there will be more pieces missing this time.*

A sudden terrifying darkness descended. She shrieked into inky blackness.

“Stay calm, Sassa, I’m here—”

“Where the devil are we?” she interrupted in panic.

“In the dungeon below the house. Hold on, I have a torch on my phone.”

A beam of light caused her to blink. “I hate the way you do that!”

“Turn on my phone?”

“No, you ass! Suddenly transporting me somewhere else... warn me next time, or better still, stop doing this to me! Why have you brought me down here anyway?”

“I don’t want a certain God to overhear what I’m about tell you.”

“Odin?”

“No.” He seated himself on the money chest and leaned towards her.

“*Loki*,” he breathed the name conspiratorially and placed a finger over her lips before she could respond by speaking his name.

“Your foolishness evoked him and that means danger to all mortals who visit the club,” he explained.

Understanding dawned. She’d set the club safe-word as, ‘Loki,’ which meant every time someone called out his name, the malevolent God could enter the club. “Oh *shit!*”

“I warned you not to swear, I won’t tell you again, this is your final warning.”

“Or what? This is not the dark ages, you neandertal! Nowadays you can’t just pick up a woman and spank her without her consent, not anymore, not in this day and age!” She sneered scornfully.

He picked her up and deposited her on his lap facing him, her legs dangling on either side of his knees.

“Really? Why are you denying your feelings for me, Sassa? We both know how we feel about each other. We’ve already had so much time stolen from us by Odin’s decree. Let’s not waste any more time. I want us to get on with our lives. I have no qualms about spanking you, with or without your consent. I’m a God after all and such niceties don’t concern me. You’re my woman and you know it, so why not simply admit the truth?” His voice held a determined edge which she recognised.

Her first and third husband had all been judicious spankers and had used a similar tone with her, but that was a different era, one where men controlled their women. It made her furious to think that after hundreds of years, Njord expected to simply waltz back into her life thinking he had the right to order her about.

“Fuck off, Njord!” Before she could blink, she found herself lifted and flipped over, landing face down on her stomach with a loud, “*Oomph!*”

The painful thwack which landed on her bottom galvanised her into action, she struggled furiously, thrashing and kicking her legs. A steady flow of spanks rained down on her benighted rear end and no amount of resistance brought her any closer to escape. Claspings his left ankle with her hands, Sassa pushed up his suit trouser leg and sank her teeth into his muscular calf muscle. There was a thunderous roar from above.

“You little witch - That’ll cost you dear!” He pushed up her tartan skirt and yanked down her tights and panties.

“*No! No! No!*” she bellowed in rage.

“If I have to paint your arse scarlet to teach you to mind me, then so be it!”

His hand felt like a board as he poured retribution down onto her rump, scalding her sensitive skin. She screeched as his palm paid homage to her tender creases between buttock and thigh. Surely, she'd never sit comfortably ever again?

“Stop! I've had enough!” she cried desperately.

“I don't think so, not if you're still capable of sounding so bad tempered,” came his depressing reply.

“What do you expect, a welcoming party?” She ground her teeth. *What does he think I'm going to do, beg him to stop? Not happening Mister, at least not until hell freezes over... The bastard!*

“Soo sassy; no, I expect honesty, simple honesty. You love me as much as I love you. I know you want me, so why prolong being apart? Isn't spending nearly two thousand years of misery separated from one another, enough? If I have to paint your pretty arse red to prove it to you, then so be it!”

“Huh! So, this spanking has nothing to do with my swearing it's all about you getting your own way, yet again!” she cried.

“It's about both. It's about you facing what you know in your heart!”

It wasn't easy for her to keep up her stoical facade for very long. Her scalded behind already felt swollen as fire danced across her flesh causing her to wince and gasp under every smack that landed. The ache in her nether regions spread. Embarrassingly, she grew wet and clamped her thighs together hoping to hide the evidence from his discerning eye. Long ago she'd given up worrying about why she was aroused by a

spanking; what concerned her now was that Njord would discover her proclivity. Tears began to trickle into her hair line, it was an anomaly that a spanking hurt and she hated it used as a punishment, but it aroused her and therefore she couldn't help but crave it. The ultimate 'catch twenty-two,' situation. Not that Njord would have a clue what that meant, not having been around to read modern literature or watch movies.

Feeling thoroughly tenderised by now, she began to plead with him in an attempt to call a halt. Her rounded nates felt thoroughly blistered. As perplexing as it was, the heat transmitted to her core causing copious amounts of arousal to slip down and slicken her thighs.

"I'm sorry I s-swore. I promise not t-to," she wailed.

"I'll hold you to your promise, and if you break it, my belt comes off," he told her, his hand stilled, resting on her hot flesh.

"Can you let me up?" she asked.

The feel of his palm as it slid down over the contour of her rear, caused her breath to still. Her mouth ran dry as fingers slipped into her drenched seam.

"Someone has a naughty secret... So wet for me," he confided with a deep chuckle.

Sassa felt her face heat with embarrassment and wriggled uncomfortably, not knowing how to reply.

Succulent noises filled the small cell like room as he pumped her drenched channel which fluttered around his flexing fingers. "I think you're in desperate need of pleasure my little one. Has it been a long time?"

Inexplicitly tears filled her eyes. *You have no idea...* but she wasn't going to tell him how long. She should call a halt to

this right now, yet she couldn't bring herself to speak. His thumb swirled over her clitoris bestowing her with such euphoric elation, she couldn't bring herself to speak. A soft mewl of pleasure escaped as he increased the tempo of his gliding fingers, increasing pressure on her needy little bud. Her body flooded with ecstatic joy and she revelled in the much-needed release which ripped through her with such exuberance, leaving her limp in the aftermath.

There was no resistance when he gathered her up against his chest. Next, she knew they were stood in a strange bedroom, she cradled in Njord's arms.

"You did it again," she grumbled without rancour.

"Sorry, I'll try and remember to warn you next time," he replied as he settled her onto the large double bed.

"Where are we?" she asked drowsily.

"My room at my manor."

"Oh."

"I'm going to make love to you, Sassa. Tell me now if you object because once I touch you, I won't be able to hold back. I've dreamt of this moment for far, far too long," his low husky voice caused her heart to lurch.

His gaze filled with longing and a glittering lust.

Arousing shivers pulsed through her body turning her pussy molten. *Oh yes, my gorgeous god, I want you.* Closing her eyes, common sense warred with emotion.

"Yes," she breathed. Emotion won.

His pupils dilated at her reply. Holding her gaze, he slowly loosened his tie.

She moved to undress.

“Stop, I wish to disrobe you.” His old-fashioned words sent a flare of desire through her. This man was her first love, he understood her, knew her past. Knew her better than any other human being, yet this was no ordinary man. No, this was a God – her God, Njord. They’d shared many magical moments, they had history together, a very long history.

Settling back against the pillows, she watched as he took his time revealing his magnificent form. The bulging biceps, the defined pectorals, the flat plane of his stomach which led her eye to his magnificent cock, now standing to attention in her honour.

She waited with baited breath as he crossed to her, lithe like a predator stalking his prey. A shiver of excitement tingled in her spine.

His palm settled on her head and he gently massaged her scalp. “Breath Sassa, relax.”

She closed her eyes. Fingers combed through her long red tresses; she gave a soft huff of pleasure. The sensation was that of a sea breeze caressing her face and hair. Her lip curled up in a small secret smile, of course, the God of the sea would make her feel this way.

Lips pressed against hers and she gave herself over to the ebb and flow of his gentle assault, his tongue advancing and retreating like waves on a beach. Efficiently, yet with a kind of reverence, he removed her clothing piece by piece. Hands and lips caressed her wherever he bared her flesh causing more tingles of delight.

The mattress sunk under his weight as he joined her on the bed. She gasped as he latched his mouth to one needy breast,

the sensation exquisite. She mewled when he switched to tormenting her other nipple, rolling and plucking the hardened bud. Swapping hand for mouth, his teeth now grazed her other aching tip, she arched into his palm. “Njord!” It felt good to call his name aloud at last. The uniquely clean and salty scent which that permeated him, tantalised her. She wound her arms about his neck and nestled into his shoulder, her lips greedily kissing her way up and along his strong jawline. His mouth descended on hers, forestalling her, yet his action didn’t disappoint, far from it, she loved the way he took control but made her feel cherished and desired as if she were the only woman in the world. Her traitorous body practically melted against him.

“You are the only woman for me. I want no other,” the soft husky words had her wondering again if he could read her mind?

His weight shifted. Snaking his way down over her body, he dropped kisses and nibbled, licking her to sooth the love bites, taking his time enjoying her as though her skin was sugar coated. She quaked beneath him. Reaching her apex, her thighs parted for him under their own volition and the feel of his tongue sinking in her crevice, rasping against her clitoris crystallized all sensation into that tiny scrap of nerve endings. Limply Sassa dropped her head back, eyes closed, and focused on his delicious ministrations.

Fingers slipped into her drenched channel and pumped, but an unexpected finger found its way between her buttocks and circled her tight rosebud. Tensing, her eyes flew wide, and she attempted to swim from beneath him.

“Hush, *søt hjerte,*”

She barely registered the fact he'd called her sweetheart in their Norwegian tongue, so shocked was she at the invasion of his finger pressing against what she considered to be forbidden territory, the ring of her private hole.

“Njord, *no!*” she objected, frantically wriggling her hips.

“Every part of you delights me... I lay claim to every part of your body. Your purpose is to relax and enjoy the pleasure I offer.”

Wellbeing flowed through her, and even though she suspected he was using his powers to pacify her, she didn't object. How could she? A tidal wave of desire of hitherto unknown proportions was driving her to the edge of reason. Tumbling headlong into bliss, she repeatedly called his name.

Floating in no-mans-land, the feel of him gliding inside her, as he filled her with his gorgeous, pulsing cock brought her back into the present. Slowly he thrust and withdrew, ebbing and flowing, sinuously stoking the walls of her slick sheath. Her arms wound about his shoulders; her fingers explored his silken skin, tracing the powerful muscles which rippled beneath.

His mouth descended, his tongue mimicked the actions of his thick pumping cock, fast crystallizing into maelstrom of passion.

“Now!”

One small word, primal and determined, held such command she couldn't fail to obey. Quaking, she unravelled.

Njord's hoarse shout drowned out her own very vocal climax.

“*Søt hjerte, jeg elsker deg veldig mye.*”

The barriers surrounding her heart lowered at the words, 'sweetheart, I love you very much.' They may have lowered, but did not disappear. She'd been abandoned by him once before and was not about to suffer the pain of another fractured heart. This time she'd be more circumspect, no longer a green girl, she was a woman of nearly a thousand years life experience, and one who knew her own mind and purpose. It would take more than a declaration of love during the throes of orgasm to convince her of his fidelity.

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CHAPTER SIX

NJORD AWOKE to find Sassa gone. Damn the woman! After the amazing night of passion which they shared, it infuriated him that she'd slipped furtively from his bed like a thief in the night.

Thor's voice echoed in his head calling to him. With a swirl of his hand, he cleansed his body and dressed, vanishing to appear inside the club beside Thor. "Problems?" He guessed, using their ancient tongue.

"Loki's been causing havoc again. I finally captured him and have him bound by magic. He insists on speaking with you. I don't have to tell you not to trust him, right?" Thor said.

"Where is the little creep?" Njord snarled.

"In Asgard, held at my palace. I have him under guard. Come on."



IN THE DUNGEONS of Thor's mighty palace, Njord and Thor confronted Loki.

The prankster God's face contorted into smouldering rage as soon as they appeared. "You'll pay for treating me this way! I was so pleased when finally, there was a venture which

included me, thinking it would be the salvation of us all, but no, you two have to take me down a peg just to prove what huge important entities you both are...”

“Loki, you will never have the brains to outwit either of us, so shut the fuck up and listen,” Thor interrupted the sly God.

The cunning creature sneered at Njord. “You don’t know how to pick your friends do you?”

Njord frowned. “You’ve never proven to be anyone’s friend other than your own. You betrayed my people during the Aesir-Vanir war without blinking an eye and you expect me to trust *you*?”

Loki spat on the ground; his spittle turned into flies which buzzed upwards into Njord’s face, he flapped his hands to disperse the foul cloud of insects.

“You know for once I thought we could all work together and that you’d included me in something, but no. The rest of you can’t cope with the fact that for once it’s my name spilling from the lips of mortals. No one calls your names or worships either of you anymore and you simply can’t abide that they call to me! My name has been called out so many times, that Odin will have no choice but to elevate me above the both of you!” His bitter words echoed about the dank space.

“You don’t fool us with your pathetic injured soul act. The facts will come to light when the vandalism stops because we have you locked away,” Thor snarled.

“Think about it muscleman, why would I sabotage the club when people are evoking me by calling my name?”

“Because you can,” Njord retaliated.

THERE WAS a sudden drop in temperature and they were plunged into darkness. A moment passed before the wall sconces flared back into life. The flickering light showed nothing but a pile of empty chains. Loki had vanished.

“Damn, I’ll bet that was Hel who came to rescue him, and for about the third time in his miserable existence... Fathers and daughters... still I like to think Þrúðr would rescue me if ever I needed her,” Thor’s voice softened as he spoke his only daughter’s name.

“I wouldn’t know. My daughters seem to hate me most of the time.” Njord shook his head ruefully.

“Well, you do have rather a habit of abandoning their mothers which might have something to do with that,” Thor said sarcastically. “The problem now is where do we go from here?”

“First and foremost is we change the safe-word at the club. I suggest we use ‘Viking’ this time. We have another problem, Sassa wants all the Gods to leave the club.”

“What!” Thor roared. “No, no, no. The Gods haven’t had so much fun or adoration in hundreds of years. They love their roles as dominants and I can tell you they won’t give ‘em up easily. I’m certainly not going anywhere!”

“Tricky...How many of the Gods has Sassa actually met?” Njord asked.

“As far as I know only me, she’s seen one or two in the background moving about. She spoke to me about us playing, doing a scene, but she never followed it up.” Thor replied.

Njord tamped down on the surge of jealousy in his gut. His mantra was, I’m not jealous, I’m territorial. His belief being

that jealousy was when you wanted something that was not yours, whereas, territorial is protecting what's already yours.

“Well then, since it's only you she met, the others can stay and we could disguise you,” he suggested.

“Hmm, how do we do that?”

“Add a tattoo, shave your head, or maybe dye your hair dark?”

“Okay, yes, I've thought of getting a tattoo. I hate the idea of shaving my head, so I'll dye my hair dark. Your task is to get Sassa under control and convince her to let us stay. I could fucking well kill Loki! He's spoiled everything for the rest of us once again!” It was well known the guileful Loki tore up the mistletoe and, under his guidance, the blind god Höd hurled it as a shaft through Balder's body. The gods sent an emissary to Hel, goddess of death; she would release Balder if all things would weep for him. All did, except one giant who turned out to be Loki in disguise which meant Balder remained in death.

Njord loathed the duplicitous Loki and decided to withhold the fact that Sassa wanted them gone, with or without Loki's pranks. He sighed, Thor was right, he needed to get his woman under his control, but how? Sassa was no longer the naive young girl he'd known before, even though she'd remained physically unchanged for hundreds of years she was now a formidable woman of wisdom with many years life experience. He had his work cut out if he was to convince her to share his life.

His cell chirruped; glancing at the cell number he frowned. Why was Paige, Sassa's C.E.O calling him? “Nick Godden... What? Calm down, Paige. yes, yes... No, she was gone when I

woke this morning. Not yet, I'll get back to you...Yes, I understand that."

"What's going on?" Thor asked.

"Sassa's missing."

"Since when?"

"No one's seen or heard from her since last night. I was the last one to see her apparently." Loki's strange words came back to him haunt him.

"Loki!" Thor exclaimed.

"It seems likely," he said grimly. "I'll tear the little shit limb from fucking limb when I catch him!"



THE CLUB WASN'T FULLY open. Only a select group of V.I.Ps had been enrolled as members and allowed to play. Thor took the decision to shut the doors, using the excuse it would now remain closed until the grand opening. This freed up all the gods enabling them to search for Sassa.

Njord questioned Mrs. Murray and the household staff at Ardmachree. All of them claimed to know nothing of their employers' whereabouts. The fact that every member of staff wanted to call the police strengthened Njord's belief that none of them were involved.

The gods searched the surrounding area along with Sassa's dogs while Njord swum the length and breadth of Loch Ness leaving no stone unturned. He even swum out to sea and scoured the ragged coast line.

They found nothing. It was as though Sassa had vanished into thin air. That night the gods congregated at Ardmachree. Mrs. Murray bustled about allocating bedrooms for them all and served them a hearty dinner in the grand dining room.

“How do we get hold of Loki, because there is no doubt in my mind, he’s behind this,” Njord asked Thor. “Maybe if we all shout his name, it will force the little prick to appear?”

Thor picked up his chicken leg and tore off a hunk of flesh, chewing thoughtfully. He swallowed and let the bone drop and clatter onto his plate. “I don’t think gods summoning him will work, but maybe if enough humans called his name he might appear.”

“How can we do that? People will think it’s a really peculiar thing to do,” Njord replied. “The last thing we want to do is cause suspicion.”

“What about pretending to make an advert for the grand opening, that way we can gather a crowd of people and tell them to yell, Loki?” Delling, the god of sunrise, sat opposite Njord, suggested.

“Not a bad idea, that could really work,” Thor mused.

“Won’t they ask why?” Njord frowned.

“Nah, if you pay people enough, they don’t ask questions. I’ll get onto an agency tomorrow at dawn and ask for extras. I’ll offer an exceptional rate, that way we’ll likely gather a huge crowd. I’ll be their director and they’ll just do as they’re asked,” Delling said. “Any chicken left in that pot?”

Thor reached for the casserole dish and handed it to him.



NJORD LEFT them in the living room and went to search the house for the third time, convinced he must have missed some secret room or tower where Sassa might have hidden herself. If he discovered that her absence was nothing more than a practical joke, he'd ensure she wouldn't sit for a month! When his searches drew a blank his fear grew exponentially and he wandered back to her office to search her desk again. This time he removed the drawers and felt about the furniture for hidey holes.

A loud ringtone caused him to jump which he tracked down to a drawer he'd already examined. The sound appeared to come from the back of the drawer and he pressed and pulled at all sides of the box shaped drawer to no avail. He picked the piece of furniture up and smashed it against the stone of the castle wall. It broke apart and a small black cell phone dropped out. Picking it up he was examining it when it rang again, pressing the button he made a, 'mmm?' sound and waited.

"Hi, I wanted to let you know I'm back. How are you?" a woman's voice asked.

"Sassa is missing. Who are you and do you know where she is?" he replied.

"Who the hell are you?" the woman hissed suspiciously.

"Nick Godden. Who are you?"

"What do you mean she's missing?" the woman asked evasively.

"Just what I said. No one has seen her since she left my bed this morning." There was silence from the other end of the phone. "I've spoken to her CEO Paige and Mrs. Murray, no one has any idea where she is... I don't know who you are but

can you shed any light on where she might have gone? She could be in danger ...”

“What kind of danger?” the woman interrupted.

“I’d rather not say over the phone... Look can we meet?”

“You’re at Ardmachree?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll pick you up tomorrow morning, 8 a.m sharp.”

“Okay, but I want to know who the hell you are?” There was no reply, the mysterious woman had hung up.

“Thor!” he called.

The god appeared clutching a towel about his middle. “Could you at least have waited until I finished my shower before summoning me!” he complained.

“How was I supposed to know where you were, besides you didn’t have to respond, it’s not as though I have any power to actually summon you.”

“By the gods, what’s happened here?” Thor stared at the broken wood scattered on the carpet.

“An unknown caller just rang on a cell which I discovered hidden in a secret compartment inside one of Sassa’s desk drawers.” Njord could tell he now had Thor’s full attention.

“Who was she?” he asked.

“I’ve no idea. She’s coming to collect me tomorrow at eight a.m. Will you cloak yourself, and follow me? Just in case this is another of Loki’s pranks.”

“You got it buddy!”

CHAPTER SEVEN

WAITING on the steps of the manor house on the following day, Njord and Thor heard a car before they saw the silver jaguar F type coupe sweep up the drive way, scattering gravel as it came to an abrupt halt before the entrance.

Thor had cloaked himself well before the car was in visual range.

Njord took his time descending the steps, and crossed to the car. Opening the passenger door, he saw a lovely young woman in sunglasses sat at the driver's wheel. She appeared to study him with interest. He was equally keen to scrutinize her.

“Get in.”

He did as she said and settled into the low front seat beside her. He felt Thor's presence in the back of the car.

Neither spoke until they had purred their way around the bends and joined the A82.

“So how do you come to know, Sassa?” he finally asked.

She swung her chin towards him and studied him. Her long golden ponytail swung across her shoulders. There was something familiar about this woman that he just couldn't quite put his finger on.

“So, *Mister* Godden, are you married?”

“I was, I’m divorced. Who are you?”

“My name’s Iona ... Any kids?”

“Yes, a few ... What’s your connection to, Sassa?”

“What’s yours?”

“Look enough games, alright? I want to know who the hell you are!”

“Who do you *think* I am?”

“I haven’t the foggiest idea, but I can tell you this, I’m getting tired of your silly questions and evasion tactics. Tell me straight, do you know where Sassa is?”

“Do you?”

“No!” I’ve told you that. This is getting old, really fast!” he growled crossly.

“Don’t I look at all familiar to you?” she asked turning to look at him again.

“Watch the fucking road, and slow down! You’re driving like a crazy woman!”

“Perhaps, like you, I don’t fear death?”

“Ah ha! Now I get it, you’re a goddess,” he guessed.

“Huh, I wish!”

Confused by the bitterness in her tone, Njord fell silent, his mind puzzled over the woman’s identity. The car suddenly swerved dangerously into the opposite lane.

“You do look like a Goddess,” he mused.

She barked out a laugh. “That is one corny pick-up line, *Mister Godden!*”

“Why do you keep doing that?”

“What?”

“Putting an emphasis on Mister... and I assure you, I’m not the least bit interested in any women other than Sassa!” he exclaimed indignantly.

“Are *you* a God?”

“What kind of question is that?” he spluttered.

“Oh, come on, daddy dearest, don’t pretend you haven’t guessed my secret by now?”

Her words shocked him into silence. Staring at her profile he realised she held a strong resemblance to Sassa. “You can’t be my daughter.”

“Why not?”

“I put a hold on my fertility when I was with her,” he blurted out his secret.

“So you *are*, Njord?” She turned and met his eye.

“I am,” he confirmed.

“Then you are my father.”

“Not possible. If I were, you’d be dead by now,” he theorised, more to himself than to her.

“Rubbish!” she cried.

“Watch the damned road!” he yelled as she took the bend dangerously fast.

“I’m immortal like you and my mother,” she replied and yanked the wheel hard right.

“*What the fuck!*” Njord roared as the car careened across the asphalt heading fast for the opposite edge and the drop on the other side.

“Brake!” he yelled, but it was too late. They overshot the road. A sickening freefall lasted what felt like hours but was in reality perhaps a few seconds before the expensive car bounced and spun before finally crashing onto the rocks below, landing upside down on the shore of Loch Ness.

Njord clambered out from under the wreckage of the car and made his way unsteadily over to where Thor stood now fully visible. He watched as his friend knelt and felt for a pulse in the girl’s neck.

Njord stood staring down at Iona’s broken body. She’d been thrown from the car and landed heavily. Her legs stuck out at odd angles and her neck appeared to be broken. “Poor girl must have been either seriously deranged, or deluded,” he said, pity in his voice.

“She was our best lead so far. What the hell is going on?” Thor ran a hand through his hair. “We don’t even know who the woman was,” he added.

They both stared down at her in bemused silence.

“Did she just move?” Njord asked.

They watched as a leg slowly shifted then straightened. Then each of her limbs began to follow suit.

“She’s alive, but how is that possible? Unless...”

“Unless she is your daughter and immortal,” Thor finished for him.

Njord dropped to his knees beside her head. The clicking and popping sounds of the woman’s bones resetting and fitting back into their sockets were clearly audible. Placing a hand on her forehead, Njord swept back the woman’s hair and placed his palm on her forehead; she was warm. He gently caressed her unblemished skin, although the nasty flesh wounds and

grazes were already healing. Blood which moments before had matted her hair dissolved as he watched. Her head slowly swivelled aligning her neck with her back. Ligaments in her spine snapped back into place.

Moments passed and then he heard a groan, Iona twitched and shifted slightly. Her eyes fluttered open.

Njord berated himself for a fool as he met her unfocused green gaze, her eyes were so like her mother's. He patted her cheek. "Come on sweetling, time to wake up."

Her eyelids slid shut.

"It will take a few minutes for her body to rebuild itself. We need to get out of here before someone spots us, or the car, and calls the police." Thor said looking up at the cliffside anxiously.

"You go now, and take the car back with you to the house. Hide it in an out building, there are plenty of barns dotted about the property. I'll follow on with ..." Njord's voice trailed off as he stared down at the young woman on the ground.

"Your daughter," Thor supplied giving his friend's shoulder an encouraging squeeze.

"Mine and Sassa's child. Why do you think she didn't tell me about the girl?" There was no reply. Glancing up he saw that both Thor and the car had vanished.

He considered transporting Iona back to Ardmachree, but quickly dismissed the idea, worried he might do her some harm if he interfered with her body's natural healing process. Hunkered down beside her, he marvelled at his daughter's bravery, however foolish the decision had been to prove her immortality this way. The reknitting of her bones and sinews

must cause her no small amount of pain, his thought reinforced by the sudden cry she gave as a particularly loud series of snapping cracks emanated from her recumbent form.

Her eyes opened but they were glazed and vacuous. Njord stroked her forehead and waited. After a while her gaze appeared to clear, her head turned to meet his questioning glance.

“How do you feel?” he asked anxiously.

“Like shit,” she said her voice husky. “I’d forgotten how much not dying actually hurts!”

“That was a damn foolish thing to do!” he admonished.

“Yes, *Daddy*. Sorry *Daddy*!” she quipped sarcastically.

“Why did you crash the car like that? What were you trying to prove?”

“I didn’t think you’d believe I was immortal without proof, and then I got angry...I suppose it was a bit over the top but perhaps now you’ll believe I’m immortal,” she said sounding petulant.

“Next time, just try talking to me calmly before taking such drastic action, okay?” He gently stroked her forehead and marvelled at that fact he and Sassa had a daughter, despite the fact he’d put a block on his fertility when he had sex with her, she’d still managed to conceive. To him that amounted to a miracle. He smiled at his offspring indulgently.

She returned his smile with a sheepish grin.

He continued to stroke her forehead; he simply wanted a reason to touch her.

“I get that you’re pissed at me. I should have been around for you when you were young. I’m sorry, Iona, if I’d known

you existed then things might have been different.” he explained giving a regretful shake of the head.

“You should have been around for my mother!” she retorted and struggled to sit up.

“Stay,” he said placing a hand on her shoulder, and transported them both back to Ardmachree.

Iona stared about the drawing room from the couch she now lay on. “Cool! How’d you do that? Can you teach me?”

“No, sorry it’s a Gods and Goddesses’ only thing,” he replied, amused by her enthusiastic reaction. “Your mother hates me doing that to her.”

THOR ARRIVED. “The car is safely stashed away in a barn. I covered it and concealed it with hay,” he told Njord.

“Shit, who are you and where did you spring from?” Iona asked startled by his sudden appearance.

“Hello, it is an honour to make your acquaintance, Iona. I am, Thor and I’m at your service.”

“No shit, *the* Thor?” she asked enthusiastically.

Thor bowed. “The very same,” he confirmed with a smug grin.

“*Wow!* Just... *Wow!*”

Njord coughed. “When you two have quite finished fangirling, I would like some questions answered.”

Frowning, she threw him a less than favourable glance.

He spoke before she could interrupt. “Iona, d’you have any idea at all where your mother could be?”

“Have you searched the house?” she asked.

“Yes, of course.”

“Are you certain? There are secret passages and places that only she and I know about.”

“I know about the room where my money chest is kept,” he told her.

“*Your* money chest?” She frowned.

“Who do you think gave it to her?”

“Oh, she never told me that... I wonder why?” she paused. “Have you searched the passages?”

“No, I didn’t know about those,” he said ruefully. “When you feel stronger you can show me, but for now I want you to rest.”

“Oh please, don’t pull the caring father card after all these years,” she sneered.

Njord bent over her until they were nose to nose. “I didn’t know you existed. If I had I swear to you I would have been there. Your mother made the decision to ditch the finder’s brooch I gave her, which meant I have spent two hundred years searching for her. Bloody stubborn woman that she is, but don’t ever think for one moment I didn’t want you. I do, never doubt for one second that I love you, my daughter.” He cupped her face and placed a chaste kiss upon her forehead.

Iona gazed up at him her eyes swimming with emotion. “I don’t know what to call you?” she asked, her voice wavering.

“Father?”

She shook her head. “Too formal. How about, Fa?”

Noting the hesitation in her voice Njord realised that despite his reassurance, his daughter still feared his rejection. “I’d be honoured if you’d call me, Fa, or Dad, even though I hate that modern word.”

She rolled her eyes. “Sooo, old fashioned! A typical Dad!”

He laughed, delighted she’d found her equilibrium. “Better not call me anything other than Nick in public though, we look the same generation, and ‘Dad,’ might cause some raised eyebrows.”

There was a gentle tap at the door and Mrs. Murray stuck her head into the room. “Och, I dinna hear ye arrive.” Her eyes widened at the sight of Iona lying prone on the couch. “Miss Iona, I had no idea you were here, dear. Shall I be fetching ye all some lunch?”

“Hi Shona, yes please that would be lovely, but just sandwiches will do, and can we have them in here? I’m not feeling so good.”

The housekeeper strode across the carpet, Njord and Thor moved back to accommodate her as she knelt beside Iona. She placed her palm on the girl’s forehead and tutted. “You should be abed, lass. You feel warm to me. Your cousin won’t like it if she returns and finds ye unwell again.”

“Now Shona, don’t fuss. I’m just tired that’s all,” she replied and patted Mrs. Murray’s arm.

The housekeeper’s gaze swivelled from Njord to Thor. “You’ll be staying the night again?”

Iona chuckled at the taciturn housekeeper’s lack of enthusiasm for the two handsome Gods.

“Now, now Mrs. Murray, play nice. These gentlemen are helping me find my cousin.”

Shona rose to her feet. "I'll fetch ye all a bite to eat, then." She nodded to the men and left the room.

"Cousins?" Njord queried, as soon as she'd gone.

She shrugged. "We couldn't very well be mother and daughter, we look about the same age.

He nodded, understanding. "Very sensible."

"I'm sorry about Shona. She was not treated well by her dearly departed husband and has become something of a man hater," Iona explained.

"Really? I'd never have guessed," Thor quipped.



IONA TOOK them on a tour of the secret passages and hidey-holes of which Njord counted six. Three led out onto the hillside while the others were simply hidden places to hide in times of danger. Sassa wasn't to be found in any of them. Njord had three of the Gods block two of the passages from the house because the tunnels were crumbling and in danger of collapse. The viable tunnel carved from granite had a secure lock inside the house to prevent intruders and they all agreed it should remain.

The gong sounded for dinner. They each went to wash up and gathered in the dining room with the other Gods.

Njord watched his daughter as she conversed with Mani, God of the moon, one of Thor's younger sons, as yet unattached. The two seemed quite taken with one another. He hoped something might come of their meeting. The only way he could see Iona being happy in love was if she fell for another immortal.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

SASSA STIRRED AND YAWNED. She must have slept deeply because she really didn't want to wake up. Reaching out an arm she stretched reaching for her phone which she always left beside her bed. Unable to locate it by touch she gave a groan of irritation and rolled onto her side cracking open one drowsy eyelid. *What the... where the hell is my bedside table?* Her eyes widened and looking about she realised she wasn't lying in her own bed. Scouting up she stared about in shock. Golden bars stretched up all around, curving above her and meeting at a central point. She was in a huge birdcage. Gazing out beyond the gilded bars she saw she was suspended in a cavernous room. Everything outside her cage appeared to be super-sized, a stool and dressing table looked to have been made for a giant...She froze, *or a giantess?*

“Where the fuck am I?”

Her words echoed in the space. Flopping back onto the pillows, she stared up at the ornate metal above her and attempted to recall how she'd got here. A fly buzzed irritatingly close to her face annoying her and she flapped a hand in an attempt to drive it away.

“Good you’re awake,” a voice boomed. Startled she squinted towards the far end of the chamber, jumping in surprise as a huge face of a woman peered in at her. She gulped. A giantess indeed.

Self-preservation kicked in and she rolled off the bed, wincing at the pain that shot through her ankle as she landed awkwardly. Quickly she scurried beneath the bed.

A loud bark of laughter caused her gilded prison to sway. Alarmed, Sassa flattened herself to the floor trembling.

She stared out at the huge blue eyes which gazed back.

“Hello Sassa, I’m Skadi, we meet at last.”

“I-I’ve told Njord, I don’t want anything to do with him, honestly, you can keep him!” she called in panic.

Again, loud raucous laughed rocked her golden coop causing a wave of nausea to choke her.

“Honey, I can assure you that neither Njord, or myself want to be together. It just didn’t work out between us, even though we tried. Why don’t you come out from under your bed and we can talk face to face? I’m sorry I scared you, but unlike the Gods I cannot adjust my size, once a giantess – always a giantess.” Skadi chuckled. “Only Odin can reduce my size,” she added.

“How do I know you won’t hurt me?” Sassa asked nervously.

“I just wanted to see the woman who had Njord tied up in knots all these years. I know he’s been to search Midgard, risking Odin’s wrath if he’d been discovered breaking the cardinal rule. I’ve been keeping track of my ex and when I knew he’d found you, I wanted see you for myself and well, I just couldn’t resist causing a little trouble for the other gods at

your strange club. The Gods attacked my people and killed my father you know,” Skadi explained.

“I did know, but what has any of that got to do with me?” Sassa asked nervously. Conversing with a giantess was somewhat nerve wracking.

The drone of an insect caught her attention and she batted her hand at the annoying fly which hummed irritatingly about her face.

“I guess nothing really, but since I know Njord loves you it amused me to take you. There is very little to do to pass the time here you know. Anyway, you’re immortal so I cannot actually harm you, I just wanted to tease you a little... *Ow*, get away you little bugger!” The fly bothering Sassa now flew directly into Skadi’s eye. The giantess reared backwards with a sharp cry.

Sassa’s world went dark with a suddenness that caused her head to spin. Within seconds she found herself standing amongst the heather on the sloping hillside above Loch Ness. “*What the...how? Where?*”

“You’re safe now, love.”

She turned to stare at the man stood at her side and blinked. *It couldn’t possibly be...* Closing her eyes to clear the image, she opened them again. He was still there. “*Douglas?*” she gasped. “But, *how?*”

“Can we skip over that for a moment; you’re going to be so mad at me when I explain, and I really want to deal with the present situation first,” he began ruefully.

“Go on.” She frowned.

“The thing is all the other Gods think that it is me causing the problems at the club, but it really isn’t. I’ve discovered

there is a fault with the electrics, they need looking at — ”

“Douglas, who are you?”

“See it was Skadi who has been tampering with the day to day running of the place. I just want my name to be invoked like all the other Gods and if you change that, I will no longer have any meaning. Odin is still adamant that no God or Goddess can visit earth unless their name is called by someone. It’s all right for Njord, the sea creatures summon his assistance all the time, but the rest of us rely entirely on our names being invoked. Before your club opened it had been hundreds of years since anyone had conjured me by name.”

“Douglas, are telling me that you’re a *God*? I refuse to discuss anything else with you until I know who the hell you really are!” her voice rose in frustration.

“Alright, okay, but promise me you’ll stay calm — “

“I am not promising anything... *Tell Me!*” she demanded taking a threatening step towards him.

Hastily moving back, he held up his palms. “Okay, okay, calm down, Sassa. Around the time you and Njord were forced to part, I had a run in with that bitch Skadi, and the bitch really hurt me! Njord could have saved me a lot of pain, I begged for his help and he laughed and swam away — ”

“DOUGLAS!” she yelled.

“Yes?”

“WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?”

He hung his head, muttering as he scuffed his foot.

“I didn’t catch that?”

He raised his head and looked directly at her. "I'm Loki, the God of mischief." he stated clearly.

She stared at him aghast. "You, *you're Loki*, but you married me as Douglas. *Why would you do that?*"

"That's what I've been trying to explain!" he rolled his eyes. "It was after Thiazi's the giant's death, that his daughter Skadi, arrived in Asgard demanding restitution for the slaying of her father. One of her many unreasonable demands was that the gods had to make her laugh, something which only I - Loki - was able to do. To accomplish this, I tied one end of a rope to the beard of a goat and the other end to my testicles, both the goat and I squealed as one pulled one way and the other pulled the other way. It hurt, but it was hilarious. Anyway, eventually I stumbled into Skadi's enormous lap, and the giantess couldn't help but laugh at the absurd spectacle. I once again came to the aid of the gods simply by being silly and outlandish, but did they appreciate me? NO! As usual *no one* appreciated my brilliance and no one thanked me!"

Sassa took a deep breath and counted to ten. "Loki," she growled warningly.

He tossed his head petulantly. "Well, to cut a long story short, I wanted to make sure you were okay, my dear, and so I came up with a sweet little plan to have revenge on both Skadi *and* Njord. I discovered where you were, and well... you know the rest." He shrugged.

Quick as a flash her palm cracked across his cheek. The slap resounded with the satisfying impact. "You complete and utter *bastard!* Why did you disappear on me like that? I searched for you for months after you went missing as Douglas! I spent a fortune trying to discover what had

happened to you, not to mention the anguish I felt imagining you suffering torture at our enemies' hands!"

"You did? Ah, that's so sweet of you. No one has cared about what happens to me before. I had no idea that I'd meant that much to you," Loki preened.

"*Aarrgh!* You were my *husband*, you oaf, what did you expect I'd do, dance a jig and move on?" she replied sarcastically.

"I don't know, maybe, after all, that's what most Goddess's would do," he agreed.

"Why does that not surprise me? Thanks for rescuing me, but forgive me if I don't invite you home for Bannocks and tea after your callous revelations. Good bye, *Douglas!*" She strode off towards home.

Loki fell into step beside her. "Aww, come on. Don't be like this, little Sassy. I need your help to get the others on board so I —"

"No, go away! I want the whole damn lot of you out of my club, and out of my life! GOT THAT?" she interrupted with a shriek of rage.

"Fine!" he yelled and vanished.

"Fine and good riddance!" she uttered vehemently under her breath, and stomped back to Ardmachree.

CHAPTER NINE

LOKI FOUND himself gripped in a strangle-hold as soon as he appeared in front of Njord who happened to be standing in the hallway of Sassa's manor house. "Where the hell is she, you slimeball?" The larger god growled.

"If you loosened your hold on his throat, he might be able to answer you," a woman suggested dryly.

The horrible gurgling noise Loki emitted diminished as Njord followed the woman's advice.

"Thanks," Loki stuttered. His eyes alighted on the young beauty and travelled the length of her lithe form with lewd interest.

Njord tightened his hold again. "Keep your filthy gaze off my daughter, you putz!" he growled. "For the last time, where is Sassa?"

"Skadi," Loki managed to choke out the single word. In a split second he was released, and took a restoring gulp of air. "Such barbarians!" he said and straightened his clothes. Flicking off an imaginary piece of lint from his trousers.

"Loki, what are you doing here and where's Njord?"

He scowled at Thor as he entered the hallway with the other gods trailing behind him. "Dear me, don't any of you

possess any manners?”

Thor took a threatening step forward.

Loki help up his hands. “Alright, calm down. I managed to get out one word while Njord attempted to throttle me and that word was, Skadi, but— ”

He stopped talking and rolled his eyes as everyone about him disappeared. “It is hardly my fault if no one stays around long enough to hear my explanation... Oh, Odin! You are needed at Skadi’s castle!” he sang out, then promptly vanished himself.



SASSA STEPPED into her entrance hall with a sigh of relief. She’d barely kicked off the muddy shoes before the dogs raced through and mobbed her with excited barks and squeals of joy.

“Thank goodness you’re all right! Where on earth have you been? Your disappearance has had us all frantic with worry!” Mrs Murray exclaimed.

“Disappearance?” she replied bewildered, she’d only been gone half a day... an ancient memory stirred, of a day she spent at Njord’s palace nearly a thousand years ago; of returning to her house to discover she’d been gone a week.

“The men have been searching for you every day since your disappearance, in fact they are out now looking for you. Iona has been out of her mind with worry!” Mrs. Murray told her.

“Iona? She’s here... where?”

“Well, I assume out with the men, searching for you again.”

“Men? What men?” A horrible thought dawned.

“The men you employ up at the hotel gym. They have been staying here ever since you went missing. Where have you been?”

Sassa hadn't told Mrs. Murray the nature of the club at the hotel. It was as she feared, Iona had met her father, but did either of them know they were father and daughter?

“Madam?”

“Hmm?” She'd missed what the housekeeper had just said.

“You'd better telephone Iona and call off the search.”

“Oh yes, of course.” She smiled absently, her mind racing.

“I'll fetch you some tea and toast. You look as though you could do with a bite to eat.”

“That would be lovely, thank you Shona.”

She moved into the drawing room where the usually tidy room showed clear signs of male guests. An abundance of discarded magazines and newspapers littered the surfaces along with half-drunk mugs of tea and coffee.

“I'm sorry I haven't had time to tidy up in here. They all left so fast while I was still clearing the kitchen from breakfast, and then you arrived home.” Mrs. Murray set a tray of down before her and began to collect up the mugs.

“Shona, leave all that, and go and put your feet up. It looks like you've been housing an army. You must be shattered!”

“Well, if, you're sure?”

“Go. I'll tidy in here and finish in the kitchen. Take a couple of days off. I can manage.” Sassa shooed her loyal housekeeper out of the room.

“I might go and spend a night at my sister’s if you’re certain?”

“I insist. Go and pack and don’t worry about a thing. The men won’t be staying here tonight, and Iona and I will manage just fine by ourselves.”

She waited until Shona had gone before she stretched out on the couch with a sigh. Picking up her tea she cupped her mug in hand and pondered her situation.

“Hello Sassa, I must say it is a pleasure to meet you at long last.”

She jerked upright; shock caused her to spill her tea in the process. Mopping at the stain with her napkin, the wet mark simply vanished before her eyes. Lifting her gaze to stare at the intruder she gasped with sudden recognition. “Odin, I presume?” There could be no mistaking the golden god like figure that stood before her so tall and bronzed.

He inclined his head affirming his identity and grinned engagingly. “You recognised me.”

Sassa shook her head. “Not really recognised. Your presence declares your high standing.”

“What a charming thing to say, I’m flattered.”

“What do you want Odin? I’m tired, and fed up with the chaos you gods have wrought in my life.”

“I am not at all surprised. I confess to feeling rather ashamed of my part in how things have turned out for you, Sassa. I’m here to help make things right. You’ve impressed me with how you coped alone for so long. I had no idea you were pregnant when I parted Njord from you. I want you to know I didn’t really consider how my decision would affect you, I was too intent on teaching Njord a lesson. He does tend

to get above himself, as you may have noticed.” His smile was gentle while his eyes shone with sympathy. “And now Skadi has behaved in a grossly unacceptable way towards you. In short, I feel I owe a boon dear girl.”

“A boon?”

“Yes, you have earned my admiration, Sassa and I want to help. So, tell me, my dear, how would have liked your life to have gone?”

“How do you mean?” she asked suspiciously.

“Budge up and I’ll explain.”

Sassa swung her legs down and watched as Odin settled beside her. He turned to face her; his arm slung casually along the back of the couch. Clearing his voice he asked, “If you could begin your meeting with Njord over again, what would you choose, to never have met him, or to meet and marry him, remaining by his side for all eternity?”

Her brow creased as she pondered his question.



“SKADI!” Njord bellowed as he strode into his former wife’s palace. “Show yourself!”

The other gods copied his yells until the halls echoed with her name. She couldn’t fail to have heard their cries and yet she didn’t appear.

Njord cursed her stubbornness and strode up the sweeping staircase, she wasn’t getting away with her behaviour not this time!

Throwing open the double doors of her boudoir, Njord stepped into the room and stopped. Thor bumped into his back and other gods into Thor so that the entrance to the chamber was blocked with gods and Njord was shoved forward. He staggered into the bedroom. Everyone fell silent at the scene before them.

Loki sat astride Skadi's back, a knife held to her throat, his face a mask of hatred.

Njord couldn't remember ever having seen Loki look more deadly, the sight chilled his bones. Giantesses lived a very long time but they were not immortal. One slice of Loki's knife and Skadi would be no more. He might be angry with his ex-wife, but he didn't hate her. She was the mother of his children, and she would always hold a special place in his heart. "Loki what is happening here?" he asked gently.

The god of mischief looked far from playful right now. Njord motioned the crowd behind him to stay back.

"Loki?" he prompted, edging further into the chamber.

The god's arm tightened about Skadi's throat. Her eyes rolled in fear and Njord sent out waves of calming to ease her panic, he saw her stance relax and turned his power onto Loki. "What has she done to warrant this?" he asked.

"She kidnapped Sassa and held her in a bird cage. I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't been able to rescue her," he replied, his grip on the giantesses throat slipped as Njord's calming technique reduced his rage.

"Is this true, Skadi?" Njord asked.

"Yes," she whispered, "but — "

Loki tightened his grip, "Bitch!" he snarled.

“Let her speak, Loki.”

“Why should I listen to you, you’re no better! You abandoned Sassa in her hour of need, for this lump of nastiness? I am descended from a giantess, but you shame *my* ancestry and *yours*, bitch!” His hand shook with rage and a bead of scarlet blood appeared on Skadi’s throat.

With startling suddenness, Njord launched himself at Loki, the blade flew from the God of Mischief’s palm and sailed through the air. Njord flashed out his arm and caught the knife handle on its decent. He lowered the blade to Skadi’s throat.

“If anyone has the right to end your miserable life it is me! Loki is right! You’re a vicious bitch! No one harms my Sassa and lives!”

The tableau froze as a flash of blinding white light filled the room and Odin appeared between himself and Skadi. To his utter astonishment Sassa also appeared but in front of the paramount God.

“Are you alright?” he asked urgently.

“I’m fine, but what on earth’s happening here?” she asked looking bewildered.

“LOKI SEEMS to have appointed himself your protector and avenging angel, but I claim the right to kill the woman who kidnapped you.” he answered his voice brusque.

“Really? How sweet of Douglas, perhaps he cared about me after all. Now be a good god and put that knife down.”

He had no time to dwell on her words because Odin intervened and the blade vanished from Njord’s fist.

Loki immediately began to rant like a maniac at Skadi. She burst into noisy tears and launched herself at Odin, who caught her. Gathering her into his arms, with head lowered, he whispered into her ear.

Thor and the rest of the gods swarmed into the room and everyone began to talk at once. Njord reached for Sassa and grabbed her in a bear hug. It felt wonderful to hold her in his arms and know that she was safe. “I’ve been frantic with worry. You have to know that I would tear whole worlds apart to save you!”

“Fa!”

He looked up and saw his daughter pushing her way through the crowd her expression anxious. He waved to attract her attention. Hurrying over, she plastered herself over her mother’s back in a hug. Looking down at his small family, he shifted his arms and gathered both women into his embrace.

“You found her, Fa!” Iona cried.

Sassa looked up, eyebrow raised in a quizzical look.

“Yes, I know that Iona is my daughter and she knows I’m her father.” He was pleased to see relief soften her gaze as she gave a satisfied nod.

MOVEMENT CAUGHT HIS EYE, Odin gently set Skadi aside. “Silence!” The head of the gods boomed.

The sudden decent of peace was startling after such noisy commotion. All eyes were now trained upon Odin.

“I am sending the majority of you back to the club on Midgard; those involved in this ridiculous feud will remain here.” He merely inclined his wrist and the mass of Gods

instantly vanished from the room. Odin and the five protagonists remained. There was a brief flash of light and Odin reduced Skadi and himself to human size. “There, now at least you can discuss your problems on equal terms. I intend to mediate since I feel partially responsible for this state of affairs. Shall we move somewhere more comfortable?” Before anyone could reply, they all found themselves standing in Sassa’s comfortable drawing room.

“Take a seat and we will begin to sort this mess out,” Odin said.

Bemused Njord and the others settled themselves onto various couches and padded armchairs.

“I had a long conversation with Sassa before we arrived at Skadi’s palace. It seems to me she is an innocent pawn in this, and I wanted to ascertain what she sees as the perfect outcome to her relationship with, Njord. Before we address that issue, I want to know how you fit into this muddle, Loki?”

“After all the fuss Njord made when he took part in the parade of God’s for Skadi to select a husband, I was curious to see Sassa, and so I went and found her. Using my disguise as a fly, I watched her and after a while I looked forward to popping down to Midgard just to check that she was all right. I kept an eye out for her. After a hundred years had passed and she continued to live, I became intrigued, finally convincing myself that I was in love with her. I became Douglas and asked for her hand in marriage. When she agreed to wed me, I felt both excitement and dread in equal measures. To my surprise life was actually good after we were married, but after a while I became irritated by her questions when I left to return to Asgard. I was running out of excuses for my repeated absences. Once again England waged war on Scotland and

things got dangerous for males so I decided it made sense to vanish and return to my previous role of protector from afar —
”

“You, you, nasty little weasel!” Sassa shrieked.

Njord placed his palm on her thigh to calm her, giving a squeeze in gentle warning. She subsided and settled for sending glowering dagger looks at Loki, who shrugged back non-apologetically.

“I intervened for you a number of times over the following years. I even saved your third husband, Iain’s life a couple of times when he got into sword skirmishes,” he told her.

“Oh, well that makes all the difference. Everything is all right then! I’m so grateful!” she retaliated sarcastically.

Loki stopped trying to explain and subsided into a sulk, throwing Sassa mournful glances. Njord ground his teeth. Sassa was his woman, and he didn’t kindly to Loki’s soulful infatuation. He wanted to punch the creepy god’s teeth down the back of his throat. Odin caught his eye and shook his head. He dragged his attention away from Loki and looked at Skadi who was chewing her lip and watching Odin anxiously.

“Go on,” Odin encouraged, Loki.

“Not much more to tell really.” He shrugged. “When Njord and the others took up their posts at Sassa’s new club, I kept my eye on Sassa as usual. I didn’t understand why things began to break or stop working, any more than the other gods did. Everyone turned against me, blaming me as usual. They all assumed it was me making mischief, so, I decided to capture the real culprit.” He pointed at Skadi.

Odin raised a brow and nodded at the now human sized giantess. “How did you get to Midgard,” he asked.

“I-I, well I — ”

“Yes?” It was clear to Njord that Odin was not prepared to let this breach of protocol go, even though he knew Odin was secretly seeing Skadi.

“She used her powers as a Goddess of her people,” Loki crowed.

“What?” Odin bellowed.

Skadi looked nervously from Odin to Njord and back. “Well?” Odin repeated, his voice cold.

“Why is that so terrible?” Sassa whispered to Njord.

“Only Gods and Goddesses with Odin’s permission can visit Midgard,” he explained. “And giants and giantesses are banned from ever visiting here.”

“Why Skadi? I don’t understand, why kidnap Sassa? Are you still in love with your ex-husband?” Odin asked.

The giantess shook her head. “No, absolutely not! How can you even think that, Daddy wolf, after what we’ve shared?” Njord and Loki exchanged shocked glances, *Daddy Wolf?*

“I was curious about her. I wanted to understand her hold over Njord, and that pervert,” she nodded at Loki.

“I object!” Loki yelled.

“You’ve had your say, now shut up and allow Skadi to explain her side of things!” Odin remonstrated.

“I was peeved at her and the hold she seemed to have over the Gods —” “You were jealous?” Odin interrupted.

“I suppose.” She grimaced. “So, I played a few harmless tricks over at Sassa’s club. Then I overheard the Gods

discussing the fact she had rejected Njord and I was curious to see the woman who had captured his heart for centuries and now rebuffed his advances.” She turned to Sassa. “I’m sorry I scared you. I just wanted to study you for a bit, I wasn’t planning on hurting you.”

“No, you just wanted to humiliate me by keeping me locked up in a parrot cage!” Sassa snapped back.

“Right, that’s enough. Seems to me this is nothing but a storm in a horn!” Odin decreed.

“Don’t you mean a storm in a teacup?” Iona said.

Odin shook his head. “No, I don’t. The English changed our saying many centuries ago.” Skadi, I am returning you to your palace in the mountains where you will stand in the corner of your bedchamber naked and await my arrival. You will be soundly thrashed for your meddling. Afterwards I will marry you, and keep you in child so you won’t have time to meddle in other people’s affairs! Do you understand me?”

Skadi blushed sheepishly, and nodded. “Yes, Daddy Wolf.”

Odin’s lip twitched. He shook his head and she vanished. “You never understood Skadi,” he said turning to Njord. “Sassa and I had a long chat and she has something to ask you.” Odin sat back in his chair and Njord faced Sassa. “Well?” he asked.

“Would you consider becoming a mortal?”

Shock that she would even ask him such a thing rendered him silent.

“Mother!” Iona cried.

“What?” Sassa looked at her daughter in surprise.

“How could you ever ask that of a god? Not even I want to become mortal!”

“You don’t?” Sassa seemed genuinely bewildered by Iona’s outburst.

“No, I don’t! I want to be with Mani, and spend time on the moon with him and get to know his two spirit children.”

Njord rose to his feet and grasped Sassa’s hand pulling her onto her feet. “This is a discussion we need to have between us, alone, but thank you, Odin. Iona, I am going to borrow your mother for a little while.”

“Good, I hope you can talk some sense into her, Fa!”

“I’ll try. Be a good girl while we’re gone.” He tapped the end of his daughter’s nose. “Please excuse us. Come Sassa!” As promised, he remembered to warn her they were leaving, before he whisked them across to his house above Loch Ness.

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CHAPTER TEN

EVEN THOUGH SASSA hated the suddenness of being conjured from one destination to another, it wasn't that which perturbed her on this occasion. Her eyes sought Njord as soon as they arrived in his living room and discovered his gaze focused determinedly on her. Heart beating rapidly, she held her ground as he padded towards her. Cupping her face in his hands he lowered his mouth to hers. Something shifted deep in her mind and the barrier she'd erected between them crumbled.

He must have sensed her surrender for his palms left her face and his arms gathered her close. She lifted and entwined her own about his neck as with a sigh she melded against him. The rigid length of his cock pressed into her soft belly. Lowering his head, his tongue parted the seam of her lips. Her pelvis gyrated seductively against his rock-hard shaft. His mouth pulled from hers and she mewled with disappointment as his palms settled on her shoulders.

“You belong with me, Sassa. At any point in time, we can decide to become mortals, but right now I want to get to know our daughter better and spend time with you. I also want to continue to help the creatures of the sea when they need my assistance. I want to know if you trust me enough to let me love you until the end of time if not before?”

“I was hurt and angry—”

“Shh, I understand that. There is no need to go over the past. All that matters is here and now... a future for us.”

“Yes,” she agreed softly.

“I think we should leave any decisions about becoming mortal until we have spent time together as a family. It is too big a step to take in a hurry.”

“I agree with you.” She nodded.

“Soon I want to take you to your club as my submissive. You can go masked so no one will recognize you, but I want your submission, Sassa.”

She frowned. “I won’t give up, S.H.E. if that’s what you’re asking. Iona and I have worked damned hard to build that company—”

“I wouldn’t dream of asking you to do such a thing! I don’t want to change anything about you...I love the strong woman you’ve become! All I ask is for your submission in my bed and at the club.”

She relaxed. “Yes, you can have that. We can visit the club when it’s closed, there is no need for masks.”

“Ah, but I want you to show me you will obey me as your dominant, even though the thought of being on public display may be abhorrent to you. It’s one of my tasks as your Dom to push you sexually.” He tapped her nose.

She chewed her bottom lip. The thought of being seen in public at the club was an unexpectedly exciting thought.

“Skadi fought me on everything, from where we lived to what we ate. It was exhausting. I just want you to relax and put your trust in me,” he explained.

Having met Skadi, Sassa could well understand that. The jealousy she'd harboured towards the giantess these many years suddenly evaporated. It was clear to see Njord and she had been thoroughly ill matched. Witnessing Njord's concern for herself, as opposed to Skadi, had been a balm to her soul; and the conversation with Odin had finally convinced her of Njord's devotion and freed the chains she'd locked around her heart.

"I wholeheartedly offer you my trust and submission. I'll come to the club and play any time you choose," she told him.

Pressing her pelvis against him, she deliberately trapped his hardened length between them.

"You seem to be in need of some tender loving care, sir," she purred with a wriggle.

He growled and threaded his fingers deep against her scalp, grasping a skein of hair he tugged her head back, his narrowed eyes glittered.

"Well since you've offered," he growled, "I want you naked, and on your knees at my feet."

Her breath caught in her throat. She didn't need to think, but shed her clothes rapidly and lowered herself to the floor.

His hand moved to his belt and released the buckle.

Hesitantly she reached for his zipper. Taking his rumbling grunt as approval she opened his trousers and placed her hand on his steely erection. Another rasping groan gave her a sense of power as she moved her hand over the velvety skin of his enormous erection. She licked her lips.

His hand stole back into her hair and tugged her head forward. A rush of liquid desire dampened her panties. She

squeezed her thighs together, rocking to ease the ache in her dampened cleft.

“None of that now, this is all about my pleasure, wench.”

“Arrogant god,” she muttered, without malice.

His answer was to roll his hips towards her.

She opened her mouth and took his girth into her mouth. *How could a man taste so good? Perhaps because he's not a man, but a god?*

Wrapping her tongue around the wide oval head she dipped the tip into the tiny slit on the top. Another sexy rumble encouraged her to explore more thoroughly, licking the underside of his jerking cock. It jumped again and he let out another guttural sound. Drawing him deeper into her mouth, her cheeks hollowed as she created suction, then released as she began to tongue the head once more.

Impatient with her games, Njord clasped her hair and held her head firmly in place while plunging his cock deep inside her mouth, setting the pace to fuck her throat. His dominance, coupled with the deep grunts of satisfaction he made, gave her deep fulfilment. It felt so good to please him. It dawned on her that she enjoyed being submissive to Njord, especially now that her anger at what she had construed as a betrayal had been finally laid to rest.

Seeing the ease with which father and daughter had conversed earlier was a salve to her heart. Often over the years she'd imagined the meeting between Njord and Iona, and she couldn't have wished for a better outcome. Witnessing the easy smiles showed her there were no tensions between father and daughter.

Now all was resolved between them she found herself wanting to submit to him but decided she wouldn't make it easy for him, after all, no man respected a door mat, *and that* she would never become.

The control he maintained while he fucked her mouth excited her, even though his girth put uncomfortable pressure on her attempts breathe. Without his rapid thrust and withdrawal method which did allow her to take a breath, she might have panicked, but it seemed Njord knew what he was about. Sassa relaxed her throat, allowing him to use her as he wished.

By now her arousal had grown intense, her pussy spasmed emptily, she was desperate for release.

“By the gods, this feels good!” he growled. “Now!” he cried, and her mouth flooded with his essence.

Swallowing rapidly, she was astonished to find his pulsing shaft kept jettisoning more and more fluid down her throat which she only just managed to accommodate.

Finally giving a satisfied sigh, his hands shifted to cup her face, his thumb brushed over her lips mouth smearing droplets of his seed into her flesh. “I love you, Sassa, I always have, and I always will.”

“I love you too, Njord.”

He helped her to her feet. “We're moving to my bedroom.”

Blinking at the sudden change of venue, she couldn't complain, since he had warned her this time around.

“On the bed with you. I can smell your arousal; you want daddy's big cock don't you little girl?”

She stared at him; her mouth gaped in surprise.

“What?” He grinned. “Did you think a crusty old ancient like me couldn’t learn modern idioms?”

She snorted. “I don’t think you quite grasp the term, *daddy*. It’s more of a lifestyle than a modern phrase. Besides, what do you mean by, ‘*crusty and old?*’”

Her hungry gaze slid over his bulging biceps and sculptured form, lingering on the impressive erection and weighty balls. *Wait, he was erect again already? Well duh, he is a god!*

“Come here,” he growled and for some reason his words caused a throb to beat in her drenched core.

He raised his head and sniffed the air. “I have a hunch my words excited you.”

Heat flushed her cheeks hotly as her feet moved to obey him. She found herself crushed in a powerful embrace. His head lowered and his lips grazed hers. “It means so much to know you finally trust me. I want you to myself. I’ve waited far too long to make you mine.” He laid her gently on the bed. The mattress dipped under his weight as he joined her.

Hovering above her, his gaze travelled her length. “By the gods, you are a beautiful woman, Sassa.”

His mouth came down on hard on hers and for several delicious moments he devoured her while his hands roamed her breasts, tugging and pinching her taut nipples until she writhed. Mewling regret when his lips left hers, she shivered at the trail his lips took; replacing his fingers with his mouth, he teased her aching breasts grazing her rosy peaks with his teeth which sent pulsing waves of lust direct to her core.

She ran her fingers through his hair.

Rearing up he caught her wrists in his hands and held them above her head as he continued to subject her nipples to the sweet torture of his mouth.

She wondered if it was possible to come from breast play alone, writhing with the delicious ache he wrought. “*Njord!*”

A dark chuckle reverberated from him.

“*Please —*”

“Please what?” he asked huskily.

“I-I need you.”

“Tell me *exactly* what you want.”

Bastard. “I need you inside me.”

Another evil chuckle. “You have to do better than that, my girl.”

Grr — I’ll kill him! “Please can I have your big cock inside me, sir.”

“Patience, after a couple of thousand years, I think a few more minutes wait won’t hurt you.”

She mewled her discontent.

Releasing her wrists, he shifted down her body until he was settled between her thighs. He lifted each of her legs in turn, so they rested over his shoulders.

The sight of him staring at her sex like a starved man caused a rush of wetness to flood her sheath. Her hand snuck between their two bodies and slipped between her sodden folds. With a husky sigh she circled her clit.

Njord scowled. She raised a cheeky eyebrow and grinned as the act elicited a low growl of displeasure. His hand shot out and he grabbed her wrist yanking it from her sex.

“Mine!” he snarled and buried his head between her thighs.

Her eyes dropped back in her head as his tongue rasped over her swollen clit.

“*Njord!*” she cried.

Fingers slipped deep into her wetness.

Her hips rose from the bed.

He plunged two fingers inside her, stroking her sweet-spot. Sweeping his tongue over her furrow he homed in on her swollen clitoris, worrying it and grazing it gently with his teeth.

“Come for me, *kván.*”

Hearing him call her wife in such a fiercely possessive tone, coupled with the indescribable pleasure he created, sent her spiralling. With his name on her lips, she convulsed.

Before the final tremors receded, he rose to his knees and tugged her parted thighs towards him, spearing her on his shaft with a satisfied grunt.

She didn't think he could ring any more pleasure from her but he soon proved her wrong.

Hips snaking and pounding into her triggered a tsunami of orgasm which rolled on and on, until with a shout, he stilled and flooded her womb with his essence. Her bliss soared and her cries carried from the open window mingling with the early evening mist.



SLEEPILY, Sassa opened her eyes, she must have slept for the window showed darkness outside while a bedside lamp cast yellow halo, giving the room a friendly glow. There was no sign of Njord. Dragging herself up on one elbow she glanced about the room. Too engrossed in Njord to look around at the décor before, she now saw that the walls were painted in a matt, rich cream, the ceiling and wood work, white. A comfortable chair sat across the room, upholstered in a soft tartan of muted earthy tones with a number of scattered stags images woven into the cloth. Matching curtains and duvet completed the soft furnishings. An old armoire built of yellowing aged yew stood on one wall and a matching chest of drawers, on the other. The room had a cosy, homely feel.

A knock at the door made her jump. “Ma, can I come in?”
Iona.

“Yes,” she called, a smile lit her face at the sight of her daughter entering the room whilst juggling a large tray which sported a steaming dish of something that smelt delicious.

“Fa thought it would be nice for you to have supper in bed.”

“He did?” She peered into the steaming dish of food. “Oh lovely, Frikadeller!”

“I told Fa that was your favourite dish and he flitted across to Denmark to fetch us some,” Iona explained. “He adores you, Ma.”

“And I adore him too!”

“I’m glad to hear it, although I’d rather hear that you *loved* me,” a deep voice replied from the doorway. Njord entered the room, carrying another tray with two more dishes containing the Danish dish of spicy meatballs in a rich sauce.

“I do love you...Um, could you find me a top, *m'eudail*?” She asked, a blush warmed her cheeks, even though Iona didn't seem at all embarrassed by her mother's nakedness; simply winking saucily at her father.

Njord, crossed to rummage in his chest of drawers. Pulling out a white cotton tee, he brought it to her and sat on the side of the bed while Sassa slipped it on.

Iona took the chair and Njord perched beside Sassa.

While they ate Iona explained that Mani had gone to the moon to tell his spirit children all about her before he took her to meet them. Apparently, they are nervous of strangers and very shy. “Uncle Loki says—”

“*Uncle?*” Njord interrupted brusquely.

“You misjudge him, Fa. Loki is really rather sweet, and don't forget technically he's still my step-father. Oh, and also, it was *him* who rescued Ma.”

“*Sweet?*” he spluttered, outraged that anyone could consider the wicked god of mischief, as sweet! “Loki is widely known for his part in the death of Baldur, Odin's son. He had him killed with a spear made from mistletoe, thrown at Baldur by the blind god, Hod. We gods became tired of Loki's nasty behaviour and chained him to a rock where a poisonous serpent dripped venom onto him! His shouts of pain caused earthquakes. Now that was a good day!”

“How horribly cruel! Well in this case you can't argue with the facts, Njord. Loki looked out for me. I think he's lonely and wants to gain your respect,” Sassa said. “Go on, Iona, what else did he say?”

“He said, forewarned is forearmed, and the children are more likely to accept me if Mani explains about my visit and

our relationship beforehand.”

“Well, that’s true.” Sassa nodded.

“*Harrumph*,” Njord grunted.

“Come on Fa, stop being an old grump ... Hey, can I be a flower girl at your wedding?”

“What wedding?” Sassa’s eyebrows shot up.

“Did you think I wasn’t going to marry you?” Njord asked.

“I haven’t had time to give it much thought.” She shrugged.

“You have to make me legitimate you know, Ma.” Iona winked.

“Hmm, well if it pleases both of you, then yes of course I’ll marry you.” She blew a kiss at Njord. “And of course, I want you as my flower girl come bridesmaid,” she told Iona.

“Oh good! Um, I have something important to tell you both, and I hope you’ll be pleased for me.” Iona shifted uneasily in her chair.

Sassa frowned, immediately anxious. “Oh, yes?”

“It’s far too soon to be thinking about marriage to Mani, young lady. Your mother and I have waited over a thousand years before tying the knot!”

Iona rolled her eyes. “Originally, you were going to marry Ma a few weeks after meeting her and since you’ve only just re-discovered each other, you haven’t known each other for a whole thousand years.” She held up her hand to silence her father who’d begun to splutter indignantly.

Sassa felt her chest swell with pride as her feisty daughter stood her ground with her overbearing, yet loving father. It

was wonderful to see them sparring verbally as if they had been together as a family from the very beginning.

“Uncle Loki taught me how to aspirate which he says proves that I’m a goddess, and Odin has confirmed it...Can you believe it? I’m a goddess!” she squealed.

Silence fell as she and Njord each absorbed her words. Njord was the first to react, leaping up he crossed to his daughter and pulled her into his arms for a hug. “Congratulations! That is wonderful news! I must arrange for you to meet your half-sister, Freya. I think the two of you will get along just fine, especially since you’re both a pair of feisty minxes. Your sister can show you the ropes, and introduce you to some of the younger goddesses.”

“Is she you, and your sister’s child?” Iona asked the question which had been bothering her quite bluntly.

“What? Oh, no, no. Humans misunderstood. I married a different Goddess named, Nerthus, but people on Midgard assumed she must have been my twin sister simply because both women had the same name.”

“Ah, I see. So, the ancient chronicles have it all wrong?”

“Exactly so!”

Sassa tuned out of their continuing conversation and gazed tenderly at the two people she loved most in the world. As far as she was concerned, as long as they were happy, she was too. She gave a happy sigh of contentment.

“Ma? Ma?”

“Hmm?”

“Are you okay with me being a goddess?”

“Of course, I’m happy for you, *m’eudail!* I do wonder why it is so important to you though?”

Iona shrugged. “I never belonged anywhere before. You know how being immortal sets you apart from everyone. I’ve been lonely, but now I’m part of a group who are the same as me and I feel accepted. It’s like discovering that I have brothers and sisters!”

Sassa hadn’t realised quite how lonely her daughter had felt. “I’m really pleased for you,” she said with a smile of pride and understanding.

“I have an emergency,” Njord suddenly injected. “A pod of dolphins caught in fishing nets. How would you both like to come and help me set them free?”

“Yes please!” they chorused.

IN THE NEXT instant Sassa found herself swimming under a warm turquoise sea alongside her family. Njord was busy attacking thick nylon ropes, ripping them apart with powerful bare hands.

Watching each of the freed dolphins’ swim rapidly to the surface to gulp in the life-saving air, Sassa reflected that her life was blessed. She welcomed a long, perhaps never-ending life, shared with her handsome and amazing, dominant god and her daughter, now a beautiful goddess.

Strange how life worked out sometimes, she mused, but one thing was certain, she wasn’t complaining. Their future was as bright as the sun, and would probably last just as long.

THE END

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*This book is lovingly dedicated
to my friend and editor, **Susan Williams**,
who sadly passed August 29, 2022.*

*Susan loved this tale and was excited to see it published,
unfortunately
she died before that happened.*



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VANESSA BROOKS - PENNING PASSION!

International best selling author **Vanessa Brooks**, lives in the heart of Sussex, England.

She is a believer in happy endings and writes romance with a capital 'R' which includes strong characters and power exchange. Her books are spicy and varied!

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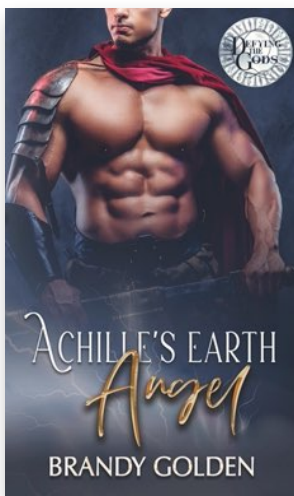
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DEFYING THE GODS: BOOK 2

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WHAT IS A SEXY GREEK GOD DOING ON HER BEACH?



When Ange Galanos returns to Ikaria to bury her father, the last thing she expects is to be attacked on her own private shores. Or for the mighty warrior Achilles to come to her rescue, at least that's who he claims to be. Ange shouldn't encourage his delusions, right? Even though her heart has other ideas.

One glance was all it took. Wrestling with one of Poseidon's errant offspring was all in a day's work for Achilles, falling in love not so much. The angelic little mortal he saved has instantly turned his world upside down. But Zeus, the king of the Olympians, has decreed no contact with the human world.

Will the penalty for defying Zeus' mandate be too high a price to pay for love?



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ACHILLES' EARTH ANGEL
DEFYING THE GODS SERIES BOOK 2

Achilles' Earth Angel

Chapter 1

The bloodcurdling scream of a woman in distress brought Achilles to his feet in a single heartbeat. “Did you hear that?” He grabbed his tunic from the ground and slipped it over his head, the smooth silk curving along his sun-glazed muscles as it slid to his upper thighs and stopped.

Hercules, who was lounging in the sun with his friend beside the river Styx, replied, “Sure I heard it. So what?” He, too, jumped up and grabbed his tunic, already knowing the inevitable before he’d asked the question.

“It sounds like a woman in trouble,” Achilles snapped, plunging into the woods as Hercules reluctantly followed.

“So why do you have to be the one to rescue her? We should just stay out of it, Achilles,” he complained, panting. “Every time you play the hero, we get ourselves into trouble with Zeus again. The last time, we had to clean every stable on Mount Olympus! Talk about a load of horse...”

“Since when do you worry about Zeus?” Achilles asked, cutting him off.

“Since he banned all contact with earth’s inhabitants,” Hercules retorted. “He got tired of the Gods always being the bad guy in most of earth’s historical records. It was only because of my mother, Alcmene, that he didn’t completely wipe the *‘ungrateful asses,’* as he put it, off the face of the planet.”

Achilles snorted and held back a branch so it wouldn't flip into Hercules' face. "You know darned well if you found another mortal and fell in love, your words would be '*Zeus be damned.*'" Achilles lightly mocked his friend, one of the few he had in the immortal world. One thing about the gods, they were temperamental and vengeful. Earth historians were right about that.

Hercules grunted, an unintelligible mutter of mixed curses and profanities. On earth he would have been the first one to come to a woman's rescue, but since losing his fourth and last wife, he hadn't felt the same. He supposed he should feel some shame for that, but it was hard to muster it up.

Living in the immortal world was boring and at times he longed for the simplicity of the mortal earth. People, for the most part, were kind and uncomplicated until you reached the hierarchies of the populations. That was when true greed for power came into play and left the rest of the mortals gasping in the wake of their often cruel retribution and disregard for life. No, the gods didn't have much of an edge on some of the rulers he'd met while he'd sojourned on earth.

"There she is," Achilles exclaimed, stopping so abruptly that Hercules slammed into his broad back.

"Ow! I think you broke my nose," he complained loudly, stepping around Achilles, his hazel eyes searching. His fingers gingerly moved his nose from side to side as he spied the couple struggling in the wash of the tide as it drained off the sands. He sighed.

Here on the Grecian isle of Ikaria, the veil was very thin between the immortal and mortal world. The woman in trouble was on the mortal side and off limits as far as Zeus was concerned.

No matter what!

Immortals were never to mix with mortals and Achilles knew this well, but he couldn't help himself when someone was in trouble. Hercules called it his "hero" complex. Not that Hercules didn't have a hero complex of his own, it was just pretty rusty at the moment.

"You know she's on the wrong side of the veil," Hercules pointed out knowing it wasn't going to make any difference. It didn't.

"It's Epaphras," Achilles shouted, dashing towards the beach where one of Poseidon's many sons was bending a young slender figure backwards over his muscled arm and trying to ravage his victim's mouth. That was odd. When did Epaphras favor boys?

"Is that a boy?" Hercules asked, still panting as he raced along beside his friend. "I thought it was a woman by the unholy scream." Maybe he needed to start exercising a bit. This sprint was turning into a workout.

Doesn't matter if it is, he obviously doesn't want the sea brat's attention either," barked Achilles in full hero mode pounding across the shifting sands.

Hercules rolled his eyes, "Zeus is going to kill us when Poseidon chews his ear off for this," he muttered to himself. Not that Zeus would actually kill them, but he could make them wish they were dead for a while.

"Get your filthy hands off of me," the boy screeched, his left hand pushing at Epaphras' chin to avoid the smacking lips trying to latch on.

"Epaphras," thundered Achilles, "let the boy go!"

When Epaphras looked up, his reddish-colored eyes annoyed at the interruption, the boy suddenly brought his knee up into a very sensitive area. His wet grip on the boy loosened as he bent forward with a groan. “A pox on you, Achilles,” he ground out in agony as he slowly slid towards the sand, holding his abused male sack.

Achilles had to give the boy credit, he had good aim. He was doubly surprised when the boy furiously continued his counter attack by bringing both fists down behind Epaphras’ head and then reaching out with a side kick in the face that completely annihilated any possibility of future resistance. The sea brat lay in the sand, a moaning mess.

“Well done,” Achilles boomed as he came to a stop behind the boy. He was caught off guard when the boy whirled towards him, sending his long hair flying about in riotous curls as whatever sort of band that had been holding it down his back slid off. Achilles’ mouth dropped open as he instantly realized that this was no boy. Standing before him, an angry scowl on her face, was a young woman more beautiful than Aphrodite herself.

“Holy mother of Zeus,” he breathed, his eyes drinking in the sky-blue eyes, the free-flowing platinum strands of hair billowing around her in the sea’s teasing breeze, and a body that would make the goddess of love herself drool.

Achilles had seen enough of earth’s changing fashions over the centuries to know that her dress was not unusual for the time. The sky-blue sleeveless knit shirt that left a slice of her belly exposed hugged her curves, leaving little to the imagination and matching her gorgeous eyes. The same-color pants were calf-length, leaving her feet encased in what they called running shoes or tennis shoes these days. Not since

Briseis in the aftermath of the Trojan War had any woman had such an immediate and lusty effect on him. He wanted her like he needed air to breathe. “Where in the name of Hades did you come from?” he blurted out.



Achilles' Earth Angel by Brandy Golden

Coming December 18, 2022

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DEFYING THE GODS: BOOK 3

OceanofPDF.com

THREE MONTHS LATER...



After a massive falling out, Shai, the God of Destiny, and Brigid, the Goddess of Fertility, agree to stay the heck away from one another despite their insane chemistry. Only life can't be that simple, even for the gods. The fates have another plan for our star-crossed lovers, and it's a bumpy ride.

When it's discovered that Shai and Brigid are responsible for the cluster-fork situation with the gods and goddesses inadvertently being dosed with destiny powder. They are taken before the Holy Counsel and sentenced to turn around the failing Suit's Division. With a handful of shady employees and no powers, it's not looking good. However, if they succeed, they will each be reinstated to their full power.

But if they fail... Well, let's just say it's a fate far worse than anything Shai and Brigid could have imagined on their own. And they are pretty creative—especially with bedroom games.

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HOW TO PLAY A PLAYER

DEFYING THE GODS SERIES BOOK 3

How to Play a Player



More Prologue... I know.

Shai and Brigid stood in the inner sanctum of the House of Holiness in front of a panel of their peers and awaited judgement. Despite their pledge to never tell a soul about their accidental dip in the eternal waters, somehow the news was leaked anyway. It was a good reminder to them both that secrets have a way of coming out no matter how hard one might try to cover their tracks.

Thus leaves our panel of gods and goddesses with the conundrum of how to appropriately punish Shai and Brigid. When dealing with destiny and more specifically the God of Destiny, caution must be used. After all, one misstep and everything could come crashing down around them.

With much deliberation, and a good deal of debate, the punishment was set.

Zeus stood and delivered the news that Shai and Brigid had been dreading.

“Shai, Egyptian God of Destiny, I hereby sentence you to serve one earth life as a human. If in that time you manage to show discipline and restraint, you will be restored to your previous power. If you do not, your sentence will remain in place until such time is determined that your powers should be restored.”

Shai gulped. “Live as a human? Zeus. Buddy. Isn’t that a bit barbaric? And who, pray tell will be the judge of whether

or not I have redeemed myself?”

Zeus shook his head. “That will be left to that fates.”

“What? The fate sisters hate me...”

Whatever else Shai might have said was immediately cut off when he disappeared in the blink of an eye.

“Where did he go?” Brigid asked shakily.

“I would imagine he’s just popped into some woman’s unborn child awaiting his nine month gestation,” Hera added smugly.

Brigid swallowed hard, utterly frozen with fear. She’d heard of such harsh punishments but never in her days had she seen them carried through.

What would they do to her? The thought nearly had her stomach emptying its contents on the white marble floors.

Brigid had faced the counsel before for smaller misnomers, but never had she been in this much trouble before.

Odin was the next to speak. “Brigid, Celtic Goddess of Womanhood and Fertility, you are sentenced to serve in the Suits department until further notice.”

Brigid blinked, her mind in a mad scramble to try and remember what the Suit’s department was. However, she continually drew a blank which didn’t assuage her fears.

“The Suit’s Department?” She squeaked.

Odin’s face broken into a wide smile. It was neither pleasant, nor comforting.

“Indeed,” he continued. “Because you and Shai took it upon yourselves to dose all of us with destiny powder. You will now be tasked with working under the fates in the Suits

department. There you will help individual humans whose destinies has gotten off track. I trust that a century or two of such work will dissuade you from any clandestine trysts in the House of Holiness ever again.”

Freya giggled behind her fan, causing Brigid to glare at the goddess. It was bad enough that Brigid was humiliated in front of everyone. But to make her a servant to the humans? Brigid almost wished that she'd been given Shai's punishment. At the very least, he wouldn't remember being a god.

She opened her mouth to protest, but her cries fell upon deaf ears. One moment she was standing in the inner sanctum of the House of Holiness, and in the next she was in an old office with at least an inch of dust on everything.

Picking up the first file she could see, Brigid dislodged some of the dust and accidentally inhaled it. Her lungs instantly began to try and expel the dust as she coughed and coughed. Tears pricked her eyes, and it seemed the more she disturbed the bigger dust bomb that she created.

Making a mad dash for the door, her hand was nearly upon it when suddenly it was wrenched open. A man in his fifties with a soiled white apron around his impressive gut and a smoking cigar at his lips. When he smiled, Brigid say that this man was in need of a serious dental intervention.

“Who are you?” She demanded in a tone that wasn't nearly as friendly as she usually was.

The man's grin widened. “I go by Roy, but you probably know me by my given name Sæhrímnir.”

Like the last puzzle piece finally falling into place, Brigid knew where she'd heard the name before.

“You were fed to Esir and Einherjar,” she said slowly.

Roy shrugged his fat shoulders. “Yeah, for centuries I was slaughtered and cooked only to be resurrected and re-slaughtered the following day. Enough was enough, ya know what I mean? So the next time they came at me with the knife, I wrestled it away from them and slaughtered Esir and Einherjar instead. Caused all kinds of havoc. Rather poor sports if you ask me. I was sentenced to the Suits Department and I’ve been here ever since.”

Brigid’s stomach dropped. “Just how long ago was that?”

Roy scratched his big belly showing Brigid fingernails that had never had a mani-pedi. Her stomach once again attempted to empty its contents on the floor.

“You sick?” Roy frowned taking a step back. “But goddess’ don’t get sick.”

“I could write volumes about what you don’t know about goddess’. However, this is neither the time or the place” Brigid countered. “Now tell me, how long have you been here?”

“Maybe two centuries?” he said, clearly not caring one way or another. “I do just enough for those fate bitches to keep off of my back.”

“Bitches?” Brigid repeated. “You can swear here?”

Roy took his cigar into his yellow and brown stained fingers and waived it at her. “I forgot about that garbage. Yeah, we aren’t in heaven anymore, but we aren’t really in hell either. It’s somewhere in between, and that means we can say whatever the fuck we want.”

Lightening skittered across the ceiling and Roy had the grace to look abashed. “Okay, maybe not whatever you want. But there is a lot of more latitude that what you are used to in the big house. Trust me, Toots. This is going to be fun.”

“This is a fate worse than death,” Brigid muttered, but Roy was already blathering on about protocols and Brigid knew she had a whole lot to learn.



The real Chapter 1: Drugs are Bad

Shai (Who, incidentally, is dead.)

I always expected to end up dead one day from my wild ways and stupid life choices. What I didn't anticipate was the rejection I received at the pearly gates. I mean, I thought they only sent murderers and televangelists down to play with the forked tongue guy in hell's flames.

It turns out they are a whole lot choosier than I would have ever dreamed of.

“I am sorry, Shai. You aren't on the list,” the sappy attendant said with a smirk over his podium. I could tell he was enjoying this far too much.

“Look, there has to be a mistake!” I wasn't begging. Men like me don't need to beg for anything. However, I was a little nervous. Hell, I even had to fight to keep the panic out of my voice. “I am not a bad guy. Can't you check the list again?”

He deliberately looked over my shoulder at the long line of people behind me before looking back at his list. With pursed lips, he went over the multiple pages of incoming dead.

“You'd think that heaven would be online,” I quipped, trying to get the guy to lighten up.

It had quite the opposite effect. “This isn't a dating app. We don't swipe right to allow someone into heaven.”

“Right,” I said, feeling the sweet starting to gather on my brow. “Of course, this isn’t a dating app.”

Glancing at his name tag I saw that his name was Steve. “Listen Steve, I just need to talk to someone in charge. There has to be a mistake that can be easily remedied.”

Steve bristled. With a mocking voice he smarted off, “Yeah, we mess up all the time. Satan was really a super nice guy. Look, I said it before. You aren’t on the list.”

I couldn’t help the instant pop-off that came out. “Um, yeah, well it would seem there might have been a mistake in the hiring. Because anyone with an iota of sense would see that I am a nice person. I don’t need your snarky attitude Steve. It’s bad enough that I’m dead. But now I have someone telling me that I can’t go to my final reward. All because of a damn list. Do your fucking job, Steve!”

In my tirade I hadn’t noticed that several of the people around me had moved back. Apparently when the lightning struck, they preferred to stay out of the strike zone.

A loud crash of thunder was paired with a flash of blinding light. Then the most excruciating pain filled me along with the smell of burnt hair. It was a good minute or two before my vision returned and I could see the white puffy clouds of perfection.

The attendant smirked. “Shai, it is obvious you aren’t heaven material.”

I took offense to that. I was heaven material. Shit, I was the best damn thing they had coming in. I had been standing in line for what seemed like forever, and I saw the losers that were there. None of them had the body or the face that I was currently sporting. I didn’t want to brag, but six foot four and

ten percent body fat. Yeah, my abs made each other jealous they were that good looking.

“Check again,” I demanded, raising my voice.

“Sweetheart,” a little old lady tapped on my shoulder. I turned around to see that she was missing a rather large chunk of her eye.

“Argh!”

Had she been behind me the whole time? That shit wasn't contagious, was it?

“You need to move along, dearie.”

I frowned at one-eye. “I have as much right to be here as you do.”

She narrowed her one eye.

“You know, drugs are bad. That's probably why you didn't make the list.”

I blinked, mostly because I could, and that one narrowed eye was freaking me the fuck out.

“Okay? Why do you think I'm on drugs?”

The old lady shook her head sympathetically. “Was it the steroids that got you? You can't lie here, mister. They know everything. Or are you a dealer? You know, they don't let drug dealers into heaven.”

Oh, hell to the no.

“I am not a drug dealer or partaker. What is the matter with you? Listen Squints, I don't do drugs, nor have I ever done drugs. I am a professional hockey player for hell's sake.”

More thunder and lightning, and Squints began to tap her foot impatiently as I stare at her one eye and wonder what the

fuck happened to the chunky one.

“What is the problem here?” A woman appeared at my side and for a moment I forgot everything. My mind went blank. The irritation at not being on the list, my frustration with Steve not allowing me in, and even my strange obsession with Squints eye situation—gone.

What filled me was the woman’s voice. It was lyrical and floated into my ears like a song. I was enchanted and turned to face her without even realizing what I was doing.

Her tall, curvy body was shown off by a white wrap dress that hugged her perfect tits and amazing hips. I felt my jaw fall open and I didn’t have the wits to shut it again. Her creamy skin was flawless, and her smile could have made any toothpaste commercial a lot of damn money.

Her eyes were bluer than the ocean and I wanted them on me. Unfortunately, they were scanning the list that Steve insisted didn’t contain my name.

“Haven’t you wasted enough of our time?” Someone else called out from further down the line.

Before I could retaliate, the woman turned those impossibly blue eyes on me.

A jolt of awareness flashed through me, and I nearly reached out to touch her. I wasn’t sure if she was real or not. I would have completely thought it was one sided. But I saw her pupils dilate. Whoever she was, she wasn’t immune to me.

“Mr. West, I am sorry. But your name isn’t on the list. If you would follow me, I can show you to where you should have been dropped off.”

Dropped off? Yeah, I didn’t think so. Frowning I said, “No, I am not going to hell. I am a good guy.”

She looked down at the form that undoubtedly outlined every shitty thing I had ever done before glancing back up at me with a brow raised in question.

“I am a reasonably well-behaved person,” I tried to amend. But then I abandoned the pretense. “Look I am not bad! I haven’t killed anybody. I pay taxes.”

“Drugs are bad!” Squints added behind me. “He said he doesn’t do drugs.”

“There you go,” I said wrapping an arm around the old lady. “Even Squints thinks there is something wrong with my eternal placement. I need a recount or a retest. Come on, please.”

I wasn’t one for begging unless it was some hot chick begging me to fuck her until she saw stars. But desperate times called for desperate measures.

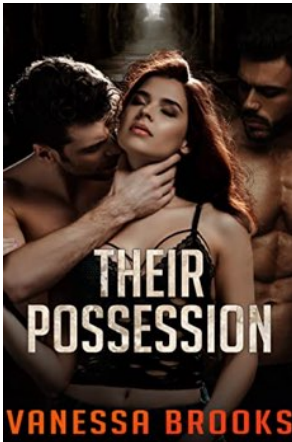
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Coming January 18, 2023

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ALSO BY VANESSA BROOKS

No man had ever laid hands on her. Now she belongs to two of them.



There are no males in the elite city built among the clouds where Alisha was born, and until today she had never expected to set eyes on a man. But then her transport crashed, leaving her stranded on the Earth's surface.

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Intelligent and resourceful but unworldly, Alisha is quickly carried off by two brothers so uncivilized she initially mistook them for wild beasts, and it isn't long before she learns the hard way that her captors will not hesitate to deal sternly with a disobedient woman.

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