

11.12.2021

You step into the Jarl's house.

It's huge—appropriate for the chief—but even so, it's crowded with people. You can't even see past the door.

Despite the crowd, no one is making a sound.

Yrsa comes to meet you at the door.

YOU: Yrsa, what is all this?

YRSA: ...The Jarl...

She stops. You've never seen Yrsa struggle to say anything.

YRSA: The Jarl has passed on.

What?

YOU: The Jarl...is dead?

The crowd parts. You see the body.

His expression is too peaceful. He could almost be sleeping, except for the gaping white slash in his throat.

Dizziness washes over you. You grit your teeth and try to pull yourself together.

YOU: Someone explain this to me.

Yrsa pushes a girl forward. Revna, the Jarl's ward. Her expression is defiant, but you can see her hands shaking.

YRSA: Tell them what happened.

Revna speaks like she's forcing every word out.

REVNA: He was complaining how the winter had been so long and so cold. He said...

Revna's lip trembles before she gathers herself again.

REVNA: He said that since we had survived such an unnatural winter, we should take the time to savor what we had left.

He wanted to see if the ice had melted enough to go out on the boats again. So we went out to the harbor.

He had always loved the sea. No, you can't think about him now. You force your attention back to Revna's words.

YOU: And?

REVNA: Then, something came towards us over the water.

REVNA: It was shaped like a man, but its eyes were just...empty. And its feet didn't touch the water. It smelled...it smelled like rotting meat.

Revna's eyes are big and lost for a moment. Then, her whole face hardens like stone.

REVNA: He told me to hide. It attacked him. And then, he died.

The hairs on the back of your neck are standing up.

This can't be, and yet it must be, because you know this prophecy.

At the end of the winter that lasted three seasons, amongst war across Midgard, an undead crosses the sea to you.

Ragnarok.

Ragnarok is here.