



VELDA THE
AWESOMEST
VIKING

To my Viking pals in P4 at Raploch Primary,
Stirling, and Mrs Hann – D.M.

For Harriet and all the Little Vikings
in Viking House! – R.M.

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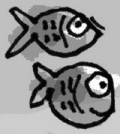
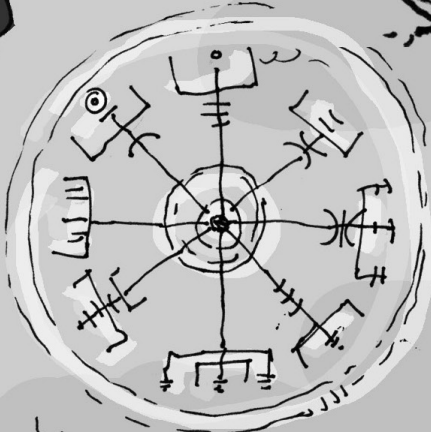
and the Voyage of DEADLY DOOM

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ICELAND

Islands of
Deadly Doom





Chapter 1

It was the Dark Ages, when kings and queens went stumbling around their pitch-black castles shouting, “Help! Where am I? Who turned out the lights?”

The Vikings spread terror across the seas thanks to their fearsome dragonships and their even more fearsome **BELCHING**.

The most feared of all the Viking dragonships was the *Valkyrie* – a sleek, sturdy vessel with a sail of red-and-white stripes. The *Valkyrie* was crewed only by women, whose belching was so terrifying it could frighten mermen half to death.

The captain was a tall, blonde-haired woman called Freya. She was the noisiest and stinkiest belcher of all. Like most captains, she liked to gaze out to sea a lot with her hands on her hips, giving loud, hearty laughs, as you would if you were living a life of adventure and scaring people silly.

One day, as the *Valkyrie* was sailing the great Northern Sea, Freya turned to her helmswoman, Brunhilda of Barfhelm, and said, "Set sail for the Island of Certain Death!"

"OORAH!" cried her crew.

"OORAH!" echoed the youngest and newest crew member, Velda of Indgar. The tiny girl with thick red hair poking out from under a too-big helmet pumped her fist with glee. "YES! Certain death, *finally!*"

Velda rummaged around in her pack before festooning herself with leafy camouflage (for

sneaking purposes), coils of rope and a grappling hook (for climbing-somewhere-you-probably-weren't-meant-to-be purposes), and last but most definitely not least, weapons (for terrifying-people-until-they-cried purposes).

She leapt in front of Freya, whirling a gigantic axe around her head. "I am SOOOOOO ready for certain death, Boss!"



Freya gave another of her hearty laughs. “You don’t have to worry, Velda.”

Velda sliced the air with her axe. “Worry?! Are you kidding? This is exactly why I joined your crew. This is my chance to be a *real* Viking.”

“You *are* a real Viking,” said Freya. “That’s why I took you aboard.”

“Yeah, but girls were never allowed to do any of the fun Viking-y stuff back home in Indgar. It was always ‘Don’t yell so much, Velda!’, ‘Practise your weaving, Velda!’, ‘Stop trying to kill people you don’t like, Velda!’ Then they tried to confiscate my axe. That was the last straw.” And it really was, for Velda had chopped the wheel off the village hay wagon in a fit of anger, sending Indgar’s entire winter supply tumbling into the fjord. Velda didn’t run from *anyone*, but she’d just happened to decide

on a life at sea at the exact moment she'd been chased
by angry villagers with torches and pitchforks.



Freya sat Velda down on a bench, placing a hand on her shoulder. “You know, some things aren’t always what they seem.”

“What does that mean?”

“You’ll see,” smiled Freya. “We’re not your average Viking crew here on the *Valkyrie*.”

They really weren’t. Their legendary feats were spoken of far and wide: how they’d battled the Kraken of Corrievreckan, taken on the Terrible Trolls of Tromsø, and even stolen into the great hall of the Dwarf-Lords and nicked their famous golden underpants.

Velda reckoned the Island of Certain Death would be a picnic for this crew – and she was itching to prove she was Viking enough to be one of them.

Chapter 2

The Island of Certain Death soon came into sight, but it wasn't quite what Velda had been expecting. There were no doom-laden skies, no ominous cracks of lightning, not even a mangy fire-breathing dragon or two. The Island of Certain Death was instead perfectly picturesque, with lush green trees edging a sandy white beach and a neat pier. At the head of the pier stood a gateway to a wooden fort.

"You stay here, Velda," said Freya as she strode off up the gangplank. "Guard the ship and look after our old and sick."

“WHAT?! Why me?!” Velda protested. “I’ve been practising my double-swoop-underarm-axe throw specially!”

But no matter how much she wanted to, Velda couldn’t disobey an order from her captain. Instead, she had to watch as Freya and the rest of the crew paraded off the boat, smiling and laughing (and belching, obviously). She couldn’t help but notice that they weren’t very well armed for facing certain death.



They carried no swords or spears, just small cloth bundles tucked under their arms.

"AAAARGGH!" Velda screamed with rage, then swung her axe and sunk it into one of the colourful shields that lined the side of the longship.

THWOCK!

"Something ails you?" asked Henna of Greenland. The *Valkyrie's* oldest crew member, Henna had been a legendary fighter in her day, and still carried her



long, curved Inuit bow. Now the only thing she was legendary for was her cabbagey farts.

“It’s not *fair*!” growled Velda.

“I once got trapped on a deserted island with only a reindeer for company,” Henna said, staring out to sea. “I had to drink its wee. That also wasn’t fair.”

“What did the reindeer drink?” asked Velda, curious.

“My wee,” replied the old woman.

“You know what else isn’t fair?” chirped Nissa of Coldfjord, the only other crew member left behind. Nissa’s Viking helmet perched on top of a thick wad of bandages. Velda had heard a story from the crew that she’d been nibbled by a polar bear, but thought they might have been joking with her.

“What?” Velda snapped.

Nissa opened her mouth to speak, but then a confused look came over her face. “Oh, er... I’ve forgotten.” She scratched her bandaged head. “Sorry, sometimes it happens when I’m in the middle of a... a... a...”

“Sentence?”

“Hmm?” Nissa’s attention wandered. “Ooh, look! Doesn’t that cloud look like an enormous bottom?”

Before Velda could throw herself overboard in frustration, the sound of a blood-curdling scream echoed from inside the fort.

“AAAAIIIIIEEE!”

“Great Thor! The crew’s in danger!” cried Velda. Without the slightest hesitation, she straightened her helmet, pulled her axe from the splintered shield, and leapt over the side of the ship.