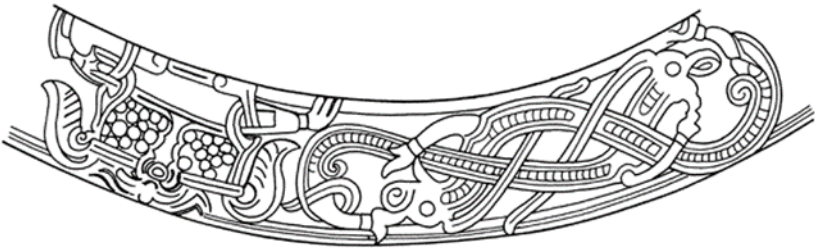


NORSE POND



By GJ Donahue



Lydia Farnsworth slowly opened her eyes and squinted. The bright overhead lights hurt. Everything hurt. She tried to lift her right hand to feel her head and her hand didn't move. Glancing down at the handcuff fastened to the side rail of the hospital bed she was lying in didn't make sense either.

She could hear a woman's voice but couldn't understand what was being said. Lydia's mind was foggy along with her hearing. 'Did I have a stroke?' she said to herself. 'Where's my husband Ross? He should be here standing next to me.'

The inaudible female voice continued. There was an angry tone to it but the words... Lydia opened her eyes wider. A woman stood at the foot of the bed and continued to babble in Lydia's direction. She finally had enough.

"Lady, will you shut the hell up! You are giving me a freakin' headache!"

The woman stopped talking for a moment. She leaned over Lydia inches away from her face and without turning, yelled,

"Captain!"

The door opened and Lydia saw a uniformed police officer in the hall. The curtain was pulled all the way back. Another woman stood at the foot of the bed. A gold badge hung from her belt. As the babbling lady turned, she too had a badge on her belt.

"Lydia, I'm Captain Anne Carr. You will have to excuse Detective Mairead Mulroney. She has a heavy Irish Brogue and when she is upset or angry, it tends to get worse the longer she talks."

"She's a fookin loonitick Captain! A fookin witch don't ya know! Blood all over her. Some bleedin' ritual she done out der somewhere!"

The Captain turned sharply and pointed toward door.

"Mairead, off with you now. Go cool off and grab a cup of coffee."

"And have me a shot of Jameson in it." Detective Mulroney mumbled as she nudged the door open giving the police officer a shoulder check muttering, 'Outa my way you blue penguin!'

The door closed and Captain Carr pulled a chair beside the bed and sat down facing Lydia.

"Captain. I don't know what happened and this... handcuffed to the bed? Am I under arrest?"

"Mrs. Farnsworth. Think of it as a precaution that's all. Do you recall anything? How you got here and what happened to you?"

Lydia leaned back and closed her eyes trying to recall anything. All she knows right now is her ribs hurt her left leg is in pain and she is handcuffed to a hospital bed.

"Nothing. Was I in a car accident or something? Did I pass out at the wheel and kill someone? Please don't tell me that's what happened! Where's my husband? Is he outside in the hall?"

"We don't know the whereabouts of your husband, Ross Farnsworth is it?"

Lydia nodded. She looked across the room and saw her reflection. Her face was covered with cuts and a bandage with

dried blood across her cheek. She sat up and pulled the sheet off to assess any other damage. She was covered with cuts everywhere and her leg was in a cast.

“Where’s my fucking husband! What is going on?”

Captain Carr reached into her jacket pocket and pulled out a small plastic bag and held it in front of Lydia. She recognized the contents. It was a delicate nautical silver chain with a ring on it. The ring was off white with swirls of red green and blue hues. It was mounted on a silver ring with a spattering of dried brown red blood. Lydia felt her neck.

“That’s mine! That was my wedding ring. Ross had it specially made out of fossilized walrus tusk. Where did you find it?”

“It was inside on the floor of a green 1951 Ford pickup truck. It was hanging from a rusted floorboard.”

“Did your husband have one also?”

Lydia nodded.

Detective Mulroney burst through the door with a larger clear plastic bag with a red ‘Evidence’ tag on it and threw it at Lydia,

“You fookin witch! Did his ring look like this one?”

Lydia glanced at the contents in the bag the detective tossed onto her lap. Inside was a pale bloody arm torn at the elbow with the hand still intact.

The detective pushed the curtains aside and pointed to the hand, tapping the plastic in some sick motion.

"Is that your husbands ring? Is that your husband's hand? Is that his arm you fookin witch! What did you do?"

Lydia picked up the bag and grabbed it tightly, tears rolling down her eyes. Detective Mulroney leaned over spraying spit as she yelled.

"You witch! You fooking witch!"

Lydia, with all her strength, took the bagged arm and slammed it across the detectives face so hard she fell backward taking the monitor stand with her. She sat on the floor glaring up at Lydia. Captain Carr stood up and pushed the chair back.

"Mairead! Get your sorry Irish ass out of here! You are off the case and on two weeks suspension! Now go!"

Mairead wiped the blood tricking from her nose and stood up. She handed the Captain her badge and gun. Before she left she turned to Lydia,

"I found you in that truck in the woods with blood all over the passenger seat. I found that arm clinging onto the outside of the passenger door. You are a fookin witch and I'll prove it. One more thing..."

Lydia looked up wiping the angry tears from her face,

"What is that, you asshole?"

"Your husbands got a good right arm and that hurt like hell."

Lydia screamed and threw the bag at the detective's head.

Captain Carr walked toward the door, picked up the evidence bag and handed it to the uniformed police officer in the hall,

"Do not let anyone in this room, especially Detective Mulroney without my permission, got it?"

The officer nodded and left the room. Anne Carr regained her composure and waited for things to calm down. She moved chair next to the bed and sat down.

"Listen Mr.'s Farnsworth. That was totally uncalled for. I apologize for my detective's behavior, however, we have a serious crime here and I am just trying to get the facts straight. I am not accusing you of this horrible crime. I am just trying to find out what I can."

"Call me Lydia."

"Call me Anne. Let's try to work through this. You are not under arrest but if you request a lawyer then I would have to place you under arrest."

"No... that's okay. Actually, your detective jogged my memory in an unconventional way. Shitty bedside mAnneers though."

The two women grinned in silence.

"Anne, what day is this?"

"Saturday, October 13th. You have been here in an induced coma for a week. We found you in the old truck on Sunday the 8th. Well Detective Mulroney found you by accident on an old logging road. She was trying to catch up with some kids on ATV's tagging the trees on state and private property."

Lydia laid back and closed her eyes trying to think. Her mind was still foggy and she is hurting all over.

"Whose truck were you in? The plates were so old that they were not even in the vehicle registry anymore."

"That was Hel's truck."

"Hel? Who is he?"

"She."

"She? Lydia, are you okay? Do you want to rest?"

"No let's keep going. Hel. That's what the old lady told me and Ross to call her. Short for Helga."

There's was an awkward silence as the thought of Ross's arm was visualized again. Anne gave Lydia a few moments.

"Shit shit shit! It's been almost two weeks ago that this nightmare began on the shores of Norse Pond."

"Lydia, there is no Norse Pond anywhere in New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont or upstate New York. You mumbled Norse Pond over and over again when we first found you. "

"But there is a Norse Pond! I tell you there is!"

Captain Carr stared out the window as she spoke,

"Okay, Lydia. In the meantime, we will call this 'place' Norse Pond as we can try to put all the pieces together."

Anne pulled a key out of her jacket and removed the handcuffs. Lydia thanked her with a nod and rubbed her sore wrist.

"Okay. It started in our living room in Sudbury..."

Ross just walked in the door from another late night at the office. He sat back in his leather recliner and loosened his tie. I brought him in a beer and sat on the arm of the recliner. We started our usual word play...

'Hello Ward...'

'June. How was your day?'

'The Senior Living Centre was busy again. Remember Mr.'s Celia? You know the skinny old feisty woman who claims to have been in the movies? You know, the one that wears really dark lipstick and clip on pearl earrings at each meal and then sneaks outside for a nonfilter Camel?'

'The one with the raspy voice that hits up on the eligible widowers at the elder farm?'

'Senior Living Centre! Stop calling it an elder farm.'

'Okay, Nurse Ratshit.'

'Well anyway, Mrs. Celia gave me a phone number of a dear old friend of hers that operates a bed and breakfast in the mountains on the shores of a private pond.'

'So, you are planning a wedding Anniversary getaway at this bed and breakfast? When were you going to let me know?'

'I just did. Anyways, Helga Skoll only opens her home eight weekends a year from September through October and only one couple each weekend. So I called Hel and...'

'Hel?'

'That's what she calls herself. She has this weekend available so I booked it. Now wait. Let me finish before you say no. She gave me a list of things she needs that she cannot grow or raise herself and if we pick up everything on her list and bring it with us, we can stay the weekend for free. It's not much, mostly canned goods and some fresh vegetables she can't grow, some Mason jars for her canning, yarn for knitting and a pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes.'

'Cigarettes?'

'I guess that is her once a year vice, along with a bottle of whiskey for medicinal purposes.'

'Right... Medicinal.'

'Anyways, I already packed and we leave tonight and we will stay overnight in Rutland Vermont then travel east into New Hampshire. I wrote the directions and what to expect when we arrive. I'll tell you along the way. Get changed. We are roughing it this weekend. She has no electricity just an old rotary phone for emergencies. There is no cellphone service either.'

'So we are going shopping for this old lady?'

'She likes to be called Hel. I already picked everything up. Now Ward go get changed. We leave shortly.'

'That's my June. Always ready. So where is this place?'

'Up north. Someplace called Norse Pond and located near the very tip of New Hampshire, and just a stone's throw from the US / Canadian border. The shoreline of Norse Pond is restricted access to everyone because it is protected by US and Canadian governments. Only a small parcel of land on the shore has been owned by her Scandinavian family even before the

revolutionary war. The dark depth of this Norse Pond is protected by a tall fence on both of the country's borders in this higher elevation mountain pond.

Access to Norse Pond is via the East Inlet logging road to a private road marked 'Viking Sword's Edge' to nearly the end. Drive three miles then a left at the fence. We are supposed to park our car next to an old rusted pickup truck. There will be an opening in the fence behind it and a small red wagon to help us carry everything down a one mile footpath to the cottage. Hel said the rocky path is all downhill but coming out it is all up hill. She was specific in telling us to not attempt to enter through the fence after sundown. This was very important.'

Captain Carr interrupted,

"Lydia, driving to Rutland Vermont and then over to the New Hampshire Canadian border would be more than six hours driving when you could drive from Sudbury directly to at least Pittsburg new Hampshire near the border in under three hours?"

'Well, that's what Ross said. I have relatives in Rutland but Ross decided that we should cut our travel time and visit on the way back if we had time. If we had time...

Anyway, Ross being an archeologist by trade always felt that the destination is more important than the journey. You know... He likes to just 'dig' in. We drove to Pittsburg and found a lodge to spend the night. Sat by their fireplace and had a few drinks with other people. No one we asked ever heard of Norse Pond, except one old geyser sitting at the bar who waved me over.'

'Lady. You look smart. No one up here will admit that they heard of Norse Pond. Nothing good will become of it. I advise you to turn around at daybreak and go home.'

He waved to the bartender for another drink and one for me. Ross fell asleep in front of the fireplace. I wanted to know more.

'But my husband and I are going to stay at Helga Sk...'

'Hel! Even more reason not to go poking your head where you shouldn't be.'

He took a sip of his drink and pushed mine toward me without looking.

'I suppose she gave you a shopping list?'

'Yes she did.'

'Directions and a little red wagon behind the fence?'

'In fact yes she did. She sounded very pleasant.'

'Pleasant? You have no idea.'

The old man leaned back and touched his face. A few moments later he faced me and I saw it. A terrible scar across one side of his face. He had an eyepatch over his left eye. He leaned over and dropped something in my drink. I thought it was an ice cube but looked at the bottom of my drink. It was a glass eye staring up at me.

'It was six years ago when I went shopping for Hel. That weekend cost me my eye. Don't go lady. There are things going on up there that no one needs to know.'

'But...'

Someone tapped my shoulder. It scared the crap out of me.

'No one needs to know what?'

It was my husband. The old man changed his tune when I introduced him to Ross.

'An archeologist? Well then you might find Norse Pond interesting but don't go out at night. Keep watch on Hel. When the whiskey bottle is almost empty by Saturday night keep an eye on her.'

He picked up my drink and swirled the eyeball around before he drank it dropping the glass eye in his hand and pushing it back in his eye socket.

'Get it? Keep an eye on Hel.'

He laughed loudly. The bartender made circular motions with his Index finger. The old man wobbled away from the bar. The bartender leaned over and whispered to Ross and me,

'There is no Norse Pond. Don't listen to him. He is three sheets to the wind. He lost his eye in a logging accident. He tells all sorts of tales to visitors from out of town.'

The next morning we were up early and headed out. By midmorning we followed Viking Sword Road, found the old rusted truck near the fence and found ourselves heading down the rocky path loaded with backpacks and an old red wagon full of supplies for Helga Skoll.

The cool crisp breeze from the water blew the dried leaves around our feet as we stood at the end of the path. My husband dropped the handle of the wagon with a thud. An old woman stood up from the garden next to an old rustic wooden house. Ross was frozen in place staring at the structure as Helga walked up to greet us.

I wrapped my arms around Ross and hugged him. It was a perfect place for our Anniversary.

Hel looked me up and down and hugged me like a long lost daughter. Her steel blue eyes turned toward Ross, who was staring at the old moss covered house.

'You must be the Archeologist Mr.'s Celia told me about. That is why I gave you my number Lydia. I knew your husband would be surprised at what he would see. Come Lydia, let's go to the kitchen and go over my list of supplies you brought.'

'What about Ross?'

'Oh dearie. Leave him be. He has much to explore with his keen eye for details. Watch...'

'Ross, the architecture is Viking Medieval. It has been in my family for generations. Go ahead now. Have a look around. The family plot is over to the left near the pond.'

We carried the supplies into the house and looked through the contents. I helped pile the Mason jars in the root cellar and returned to find Hel sitting outside lighting a cigarette and pouring some whiskey into a clay cup. She motioned me to sit on the steps with her and presented another clay cup for me with a shot of whiskey. We looked out toward the pond. I listened quietly as Hel took a long drawn from her cigarette exhaling with a smile.

'My husband Jorgen, rest his soul, did not approve of these. I treat myself to one pack a year for the last six years since he left me. The last thing he did was to shore up the roof so we could get through another winter.'

'Sorry for your loss. How did he die?'

'Die? No dearie. He left me. That's what we say. He left me. You see our family history goes way back, hundreds of years and we don't believe that you die, you just leave and enter Valhalla. I know that Christianity has a Heaven. My ancestors realized that different people have different beliefs. Today there are about one thousand people that still believe in the old Nordic religion. I am one of those people.'

First I thought she was getting dementia right before my eyes or Maireadbe buzzed from the whiskey, but I found her stories were intoxicating. I learned that she makes her own dishware as everything I saw in the kitchen was evidence of handmade items. Utensils were made of wood with carvings in the handle she called runes. She put her cigarette out halfway and stood up looking toward the direction where Ross was approaching.

'Kind warrior, could you return the wagon to the fence and we will prepare a meal for your return. Do not stray from the rocky path as there is danger in the woods.'

Ross knelt, bowed and held one hand to his heart winking at me as he spoke.

'I will go on this quest and return to a warm fire and perhaps some mead as you tell us of your ancestry as this warrior is quite interested.'

Hel smiled and curtsied. I was loving this whole journey.

Detective Mulroney entered the room and tapped Captain Carr on the shoulder.

"Captain. The blood in the trook is not human. It is animal blood. She did a fookin animal sacrifice, the witch she did."

Detective Mulroney glared at Lydia. Captain Carr glared at her.

“Get out. You were suspended remember? Take a vacation up north. Go up to Pittsburg New Hampshire for a few days.”

The Captain winked at detective Mairead Mulroney. Anne Carr turned back toward Lydia.

“So you are at the cottage at Norse Pond with your husband and staying with Helga ‘Hel’ Skoll. What happened next?”

So while Ross took the wagon back on his ‘quest’ Hel showed me a clay bowl with a stick in it explaining that the mead she makes comes from caked ancient yeast in the bowl passed down in her family. She adds honey from her hives and different berries to flavor it like raspberries, elderberries, hawthorn berries, cherries, sour cherries strawberries, crabapple and rose hips.

“Lydia. Remember we are trying to find out what happened to you and your husband. What you are telling me is interesting but please help me.”

‘I am helping you by helping myself remember everything that happened in the order I remember. I get sidetracked but there might be some stone unturned that Mairead be of importance. That’s it! It was the stone wall that revealed something to Ross. Something bad.’

Lydia shivered.

After Ross returned we had some lunch which consisted of vegetables and some dried wild boar meat and fermented cheese. Hel said we will drink mead after the sun goes down

and the windows are covered. She was damn serious about not being outside at night.

Ross and I took a long walk along the shore and came across an edge of a wall sticking out of the soil. Ross traced the visible part of the wall and then found another short wall connected to it, barely visible. We could see a rectangular outline jutting into Norse Pond visible below the crystal clear cold water. Nearby there were some old grave markers with runes carved into them.

'Ross, as an archeologist do you think all of this is kind of odd? Viking cottage, runes and a foundation? You did go to Newfoundland to look at Viking ruins a few years back. What do you think?'

'I don't know. The foundation is about the size of a Viking long house and the runes on the markers. I cannot determine if these are real relics or an elaborate hoax. If it is a hoax, the people who did this are not sloppy. They know their shit. Let's see what Helga tells us tonight. Good tale teller you said?'

'Yes. She sounds sincere or crazy.'

Ross looked on the ground and saw a piece of metal jutting out of the ground. He knelt down and carefully dug around it and pulled up a hand axe. The handle was missing. It was old looking. He brought it back with us to show Helga later tonight.

The three of us watched the sunset on the steps as the moon rose over the Norse Pond. It was blue. I remember that because Helga stepped outside to cover the windows and the light of the moon lit up half her face. Yes it was a deep blue color.

Ross stepped outside to help her cover the last window and that's when Hel seemed aggravated. She looked a little angry

and grabbed Ross by the chin and whispered to him before he walked in through the door. He looked concerned.

Hel came in through the door and smiled at me. I found this rather odd how her demeanor changed as she brought over a wooden pail with a ladle and poured some dark liquid into three clay mugs. She handed them out and knelt near the fire rearranging the logs.

'Sit and let us enjoy some mead together. I will tell you a tale and Ross will understand. Please, sit by the fire with me and drink. 'Skoal!' We raised our mugs and sipped quietly. I never saw Ross look so concerned, occasionally staring at Hel and back at the roaring fire.

I noticed that the whisky bottle on the counter was almost empty and then outside the howling and scratching at the door. I think I was getting drunk from the mead by the second ladle full. It was like sitting at a campfire telling scary stories when you were a kid.

"Ross take a look around the room and tell Lydia what you see."

"We'll, I would rather not. Why don't YOU tell us."

Then Hel turned sideways from the fire and a sliver of moonlight hit the side of her face from a crack in the roof. She snapped back.

"I said Tell Lydia what you see!"

Ross looked at his mug and closed his eyes.

"I see Viking shields of past warriors along the rafters. I see a sword laying across the mantle and spears with iron tips over in the corner. I see a wolf's head mounted on the stone wall above the fireplace, I saw something else..."

“What did you see?”

There was more howling and scratching at the door.

“I see next to your whisky bottle is the hand axe head I found in the dirt near the remains of a Viking long house outside. I saw in the clear shallow water at the bottom of the long house bones, swords, skeletons and shields of warriors from the past.”

“What else did you see?”

“Please Helga. You are scaring Lydia.”

She looked evil. The reflection of the fire in her eyes. The blue streak of light on her face. The scratching outside the door.

“As she should be. What else did you see? Tell her now!”

Ross looked up and stared into Hel’s eyes.

“I see the goddess of the Viking underworld Hel. I see her half blue face. I see her holding a hand axe and slashing and slaughtering for revenge. I see what is outside the door waiting for us. I see the Norse Pond is the gateway to the Underworld.”

I dropped my mug and it shattered on the stone floor.

“What else do you see?”

Helga stood up and took the sword from the mantle and held its tip in the fire. She turned back staring at Ross and snapped,

“Tell her!”

"I see your brother Fenrir the wolf is outside waiting for us to run. But I also see a drunk old woman with a sword in her hand who will try to kill us right here in the house."

"You are a warrior Ross but it will be of no use to you here."

Hel handled the heavy sword in one hand and lunged the glowing tip at Ross. I couldn't figure out how this old woman had the strength to...'

"Lydia! Enough with your crazy story! Tell me what happened at your 'Norse Pond' and what happened to your husband."

"Captain, I am telling you the truth, however farfetched you think it is! Please hear me out."

Ross pushed the sword aside knocking her off balance. He grabbed me by the hand and opened the door. There it was. The biggest fucking wolf I ever saw growling at us ready to pounce. Then Hel yelled out something in a language I never heard of and the wolf bowed and ran off.

Ross grabbed the axe head and dove at Hel hitting her across the wrist. The sword fell out of her hand. Ross knocked her down and told me to run. Run as fast as I could and he will be right behind me. I glanced at the open door hoping the wolf wasn't there. I ran. I ran up the rocky path toward the fence. I heard the rustle of leaves as this huge wolf ran alongside the path growling and snapping at me.

"It didn't attack you?"

Lydia felt her neck.

"I dunno. It kept glaring at my neck, my necklace and it never touched the rocky path. I kept running and it kept pace running

alongside me. When I stopped to catch my breath it stopped too, never touching the rocks on the path. Then I heard Ross scream my name from the distance telling me to run. I stepped off the path and that's when..."

"When what?"

"The wolf took a swipe at me and grabbed my leg. I fell and crawled back onto the path and laid there. It sat waiting and then Ross yelled to keep running. The wolf turned and started running down the hill toward him. The wolf knocked him down and I yelled to him to stay on the path. It was terrible. I could hear Ross screaming and then I heard Hel scream out in that language.

The wolf ran off again. I went back down and helped Ross stand up. His ankle was bleeding but he was able to walk with my help. We finally made it to the fence and our car was gone. Just the old truck and the red wagon. Ross was still clutching the hand axe head he slashed Helga or Hel with. The wolf was running up the hill at us again. Ross yelled out 'Fenrir!' and the wolf stopped a foot away from us. I could smell its foul breath.

Ross held the axe head in his hand. The moon was reflecting light off of it. He told me to slowly step off the path and get in the old truck and see if it will start. I slipped through the fence and found the keys over the visor. It must have been ten times I tried and it finally started. I turned the headlights on and could see Ross was walking backwards slowly as the wolf moved slowly toward him staring at the axe.

As soon as he stepped off the path and ran through the opening in the fence the wolf lunged at him again. Ross tried to open the truck passenger door but it was rusted shut. I opened the window and tried to help. Ross kept slashing at the wolf and then there was blood everywhere. I had to wipe my eyes to see.

In the headlights I saw the wolf dragging Ross down the hill and he was yelling to me to getaway. In a panic, I backed the truck up and drove as fast as I could. That's all I remember, Captain Carr. That's all I remember."

Lydia started to weep uncontrollably.

The uniformed officer stepped into the room,

"Captain. Phone call. Its Detective Mulroney. Terrible connection but she wanted to let you know they found him."

"Found who?"

"Captain, the phone is down the hall. She is on a landline."

Ann Carr walked down the hall as she heard Lydia weeping behind her. She picked up the phone and could barely hear Mairead through the static but the Irish Brogue came through.

"Mairead, where are you?"

"We found the fookin house and her husband, a dead old lady and blood everywhere. We found him in the corner with a sword across his lap and clutching on to a bloody axe head with no handle. It is an evil fookin ritual that happened here Captain."

"How did you find the place?"

"I stopped into a lodge don't ya know and had a shot or two with this one eyed old man. He remembered Lydia and helped us find the place. Followed the truck tire tracks and a trail of dried blood through a fence and down a bloody path. A fookin witch house gives me shivers."

"Are you bringing his body for identification?"

"Not a body! He is alive, barely. He is on the way to the hospital."

"Alive? For weeks?"

"There were lots of opened cans next to him. It looks like he must have used the sword and cauterized the arm with heat of the fire because there are fookin rune marks along the arm burned right in his flesh. The same runes on the sword blade. We will leave the woman's body til dawn and you can find someone else to come back. Not me. I am done with this fookin place!"

Hours later and several bags of intravenous, Ross and Lydia were briefly reunited at the hospital. With months of rehab Ross will be fitted with a prosthetic arm.

Captain Carr spent time with Ross in a separate room hearing almost the same story as Lydia told her. But she wanted more.

"Ross, so after Lydia fled and the wolf dragged you away, you ended up back in the house. Helga Skoll butchered body lay on the floor next to you and you were still alive. What happened?"

"The wolf's name is Fenrir. You won't understand Viking folklore but Fenrir is Hel's brother. Hel is the goddess of the underworld. Anyway, Fenrir dragged me to the steps of the house and Hel stood there waiting, polishing off the bottle of whiskey and having a cigarette, like some woman who just bedded a man..."

"Yes. Go on."

"Hel didn't see the axe head in my hand as I lie there at her feet bleeding. She balance herself on the sword handle looking

down at me as she spoke in the Old Norse language to the wolf. I know some of it and she basically told Fenrir to disappear into the woods and wait for her return someday.”

“So the wolf, Fenrir, took off into the woods?”

“Right. So as soon as the howling was further and further away, Hel hands me a yellowed envelope and told me to get it to Lydia, no matter what happens to me... or her during this last battle. I wasn’t going to wait around for the ‘last battle’ so I took the envelope from her and as she reached down to hand it to me I slashed her shoulder and slashed and slashed. She fell backwards I into the house. I got up and closed the door behind me so Fenrir wouldn’t come back.”

“So you are saying you fought back in self-defense?”

“She was pure evil. Norse Pond is pure evil. You have no idea.”

“Ross, what do you suppose I should do? Lydia is free to go because she didn’t murder you as we first thought, however, I will have to charge you with manslaughter of Helga Skoll. You understand that right?”

Ross nodded.

“I understand. As long as Lydia is free, I will accept my circumstances. But I must ask you one last favor.”

“What is it?”

“Give her this envelope. I was told to give the envelope to her, no matter what happens to me.”

Captain Ann Carr took the envelope as Detective Mulroney entered into the room.

“Ross, what is in the envelope?”

“A deed. The deed to the property at Norse Pond and it is signed over to Lydia as long as she lives there.”

Detective Mulroney threw something across the room.

“No fookin way! I am not going through this all over again!”

Captain Carr left the room as Detective Mulroney read Ross his rights and handcuffed him to the hospital bed.

Captain Carr walked into Lydia’s room with the envelope trailed by Detective Mulroney. Captain Carr handed the envelope to Lydia. The vertical shades were slightly open that night. Lydia opened the envelope and read the contents. She smiled as a sliver of blue moonlight brushed the side of her face. As she stared at Detective Mulroney, a warm red glow in her eyes appeared.

Detective Mulroney threw her hands up in disgust as she walked out of the room.

“Fookin fookin witch! I knew it all along!”

End

Norse Pond