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Alfarhollvik's Haunting

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Abstract

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Keywords

Fiction; Alfarhollvik's Haunting; The Settlers of Ingolfsey; Linda Lipnick

ALFARHOLLVIK'S HAUNTING

from *The Settlers of Ingolfsey*
Linda Lipnick



In the main building of Alfarhollvik Farm stood a small pale woman dressed in the Irish fashion. The heavy dark hair of the woman was touched by silver and her face hardened by grief and the passage of years. She was Deirdre, daughter of the Irish under king, Conor, and new-made widow of the famed viking, Hrafn the West-Traveller, son of Gormur.

Viking Hrafn was laid by the High Seat of his hall. The hour was late and the hall dark. The hearth's fire was casting a red-gold glow on objects near enough to catch its warmth. The glow of the fire was like the amber-set brooch Hrafn had given her years before. The brooch was from the plunder of St. Chevro's, as was she.

On Hrafn's bier his weapons were laid beside him, and the gilt worked shield and blue cloak which had been parting gifts from the Earl of Orkneyjar. Neither had had a chance to become worn.

Deirdre looked up after placing a lock of his faded red-gold hair inside her brooch. She saw three women at the head of Hrafn's bier. Three women who looked both young and old and were wearing their hair loose and unbound. One of them pointed at Deirdre and began to speak.

"This one has The Sight, but denies it as do two of her children; while the third seeks it. Widow of Hrafn Gormursson, listen well to what we speak.

Know this of Hrafn and all who
Sleep the Sleep of Forever
Drift amidst the Void,
It shifts nor yields not.
For my sisters and I
Have woven your course
Between rapids and rock.
Until one sister smiles and rends the work.

Warrior bold and wary-eyed
Skald of silver spinning tongue
Maid beautiful and brave
See as we do
All are naught
But gauzy veils
To be rent at whim."



A great blast of wind blew open the door of Alfarhollvik. Two cats raced in. One running to the head of the bier and the other to the foot, they stood glaring at the Norns.

Nine cloaked and hooded women followed the two cats in. The woman in the lead wore an amber necklace and began to speak in formal tones to the Norns.

“This one is to be ours. Well has he filled my hall and that of the Grim One. It is not for him to wander in Lokisdottir’s Realm. I claim him.”

The Norns vanished. Deirdre walked toward The Nine bearing the Guest Cup. Freyja of the amber necklace accepted the offering as did the others. A circle formed around the body of Hrafn the West-Traveller. The Nine were about to raise Hrafn on his shield as Deirdre ran towards Freyja.

“Lady, wait. Let me look on him longer, one last time. Let Hrafn-mine understand this too. That I will let no one sit in the High Seat until he has been avenged. And that none but those of our line will feel truly welcome and secure on the High Seat of Alfarhollvik. Is this in your power, Lady?”

Freyja gestures to the women to wait as she takes Deirdre by the arm. Freyja towers over the small Irish woman as they walk towards the High Seat whispering.

After a time Freyja rises and leaves the High Seat. Deirdre follows her as they walk to the bier of Hrafn. As Deirdre bends to kiss Hrafn one last time, The Nine and Hrafn vanish. Deirdre turns toward the High Seat clutching a falcon feather.

A beggarwoman who had crept into the open doorway earlier was to be the only witness. She saw only the body of Hrafn the West-Traveller rise on his shield and felt a great gust of wind pass her. Lastly feeling two small breezes skitter across her skirts.

So began the tale of the haunting of Alfarhollvik. For Deirdre died that same winter.

GUOMUNDUR’S PAETTIR



AFTER four years of east-viking only two of Helge Grimmursson’s crew returned home to Ingolfsey, arriving with a Swedish trader. They were Guomundur Hrafnsson, now called Grim-eyes, and Halldor Thorhallsson. Both men returned with wealth and honor. As they waited at the town of Suourvik, Halldor explained why he was also named Half-brosa or Half-smile; being named so for the scar received from Harald Land Eyoa¹ at the burning of Haldor’s family farm. A full smile would return when Harald Land-eyoa received a taste of the same.

As they set off for Guomundur Grim-eyes’ family farm, haunted Alfarhollvik, they watched a storm boil through the mountains. Guomundur said the coming storm would suit him well. Halldor Halfbrosa inquired which storm.

“Both, Halldor, my wise friend. Soon it will be time to avenge my father.”

A few weeks passed as they became settled at Alfarhollvik. A change in the main hall of Alfarhollvik was noticed. Even brave Halldor became uneasy about the hall’s un-natural chill and haunting shadows. Only Guomundur of the Grim-eyes took no notice of it.

"You are a brave and worthy man, my son,
It is not time yet for you to sit in the High Seat.
Hrafn-min is yet not avenged."
From behind Deirdre stepped hooded Freyja
"Nor is it time yet to avenge Hrafn Gormurrsson"
Freyja in falcon's shape flew at Guomundur
To the hawkfell of his outstretched arm
Her talons bit deep
Freyja eyed him coldly
I will guide your hand
When this you see
Freyja vanished as her words faded
Only the falcon feather and shadows remained.
It was near to midnight
When stalked he to the High Seat
Colder still grew Alfarhollvik
Shadows cloaking his soul
Deirdre barring the way
Shadow hooded Freyja had kept her word
Deirdre's spirit stared long at her son
While a wind rose inside the hall
Her hollow voice was heard
A rustle in Alfarhollvik's rafters



HE winter at Alfarhollvik passed slowly with few visitors; with much being made of Guomundur's slowness in avenging his father's death. Only the two warriors, Halldor Half-brosa and Guomundur Grim-eyes, found the haunted farmstead to their liking.

Halldor and Guomundur spent the long winter nights with Halldor in the Guest-Seat and Guomundur sprawled at the foot of the High Seat. Guomundur would often speak of how Deirdre's eyes would follow him; staring, while daring him to try and mount the High Seat. He would then become restless fingering the still raw scars of Falcon-Freyja's caress.

Towards the end of winter such an evening passed at Alfarhollvik. A merchant stopped at the farm. The merchant, Havard Ketilsson, an Orkneyjar-man whose skill was not in speaking.

"So it is true then, you sit at the foot of the High Seat."

The glaring Guomundur rose unsteadily towards the merchant, Havard. How Guomundur gained his name, Girm-Eyes showed. Wise Halldor took note this and lunged towards Guomundur while hissing.

"He's not worth it, Guomundur, let him go." After a time Guomundur's anger lessened and Halldor released his grip on him. Havard hastily packed his wares and left the gloomy farm at Alfarhollvik.

Grim Alfarhollvik Farm became colder still as it's rafters began to creak. The winds had sent a messenger-Freyja in falcon shape.

Both Halldor and Guomundur listened as her voice echoed through the hall.

Halldor saw the Falcon-Freyja drop a feather at the feet of Guomundur. Guomundur's eyes saw a raven and a falcon fly over him.

With the falcon leading a blood covered raven. The bloody raven dropped a falcon feather at his feet.

Freyja had sent them a sign, it was time to avenge Hrafn Gormurrsson.

(continued on page 30)

Guomundur knew then, he would not see the fields of Alfahrollvik sown next spring.

The next morning the two warriors rode off. Halldor Half-brosa north to Helgesstoir, the farm of Helge Grimmursson, and Guomundur Grim-eyes west to Birch Copse, the farm of his foster-brother. They went to find the truth about Hrafn's death.

As they approached the Northern Road they met one of Einar Sigurdsson's bondsmen.

"You are of Einar Sigurdsson's farm?" The young man looked straight at the grim warriors.

"Yes, and you are Guomundur Hrafnsson." He showed no fear as the warriors approached. Guomundur's eyes went hard, Halldor would not restrain him this time.

"Tell me why the ambush, and who dragged down Hrafn the West-traveller?"

Guomundur had already forced him to his knees and was binding his arms not waiting for an answer.

"You will take a message to Einar." Grim-eyes snarled the words through a set smile while drawing his knife. Einar's bondsman tensed as Guomundur cut through his jacket. While knowing the message the short wide blade was sending to Einar. He bit his lip through as it cut into his back lifting up his skin. Making no other sound as Guomundur broke his ribs upward and pulled his lungs through.

Soon after both living men saw again the bloody raven led by a falcon. Guomundur said he felt Deirdre's eyes and smile.

"He died well; it is to his credit he didn't whimper as did Land-eyoa's other bastard. Now Einar Sigurdsson will know that Hrafn's son has returned and is looking for him."

Halldor remained silent holding the horses while watching his friend standing with a grim smile over the body of the blood-eagled bondsman.

After a time both men remounted and both would continue their journeys. This time with the added need of reporting the killing to Einar's bondsman. With the blue clad Guomundur riding west to Birch Copse and Halldor to the north and Helgesstoir. ■

36 CITIES OF THE IMAGINATION

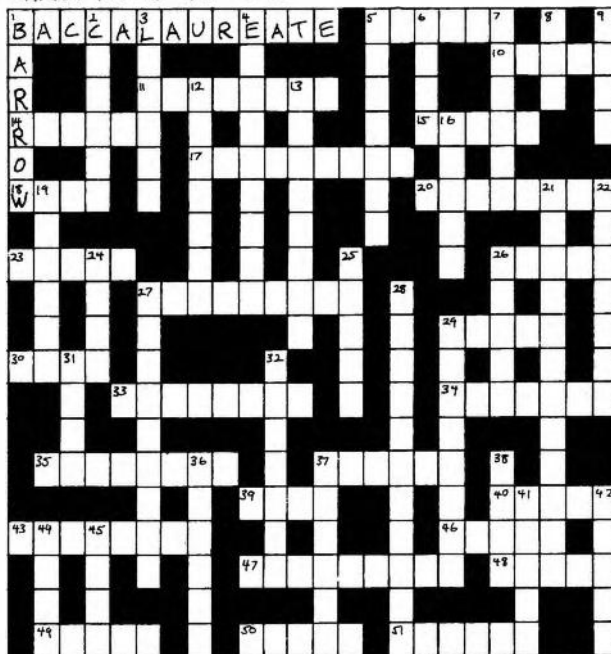
- XANADU (Coleridge)
- SHUTEYE TOWN (Poem of the same title)
- ALIDORE (Newbolt)
- CLAPTRAP (Lewis)
- SWEETHAVEN (Popeye)
- BRIGADOON (Musical of that title)
- CAMELOT (Arthurian legend)
- HOBBITON (Tolkien)
- BREE (Tolkien)
- MINIS TRITH (Tolkien)
- MANOA (Voltaire)
- EMERALD CITY (Baum)
- URG (Lovecraft)
- STRELSAU (Prisoner of Zenda)
- SARRAS (Authorian legend)
- WOOTEN MAJOR (Tolkien)
- NOVOGATH (Caball)
- PANDAEMONIUM (Milton)
- ATLANTIS (Self-explanatory)
- LANKHMAR (Leiber)
- FUDDLECUMJIG (Baum)
- HAMELIN (Pied Piper of...)
- ZINIAMVIA (Eddison)
- CENTERBORO (Freddy the Pig)
- VANITY FAIR (Bunyan)
- FARDLES (Williams)
- DIS (Dante)
- ASGARD (Norse)
- SMETHAM (Williams)
- KOR (Hauggard)
- KEDATH (Lovecraft)
- DUNWICH
- LORRBRULGRUD (Swift)
- TOSH (History of the Seven Families of Lake Pipple-Popple)
- BISTRITZ (Stoker)
- GLOME (Lewis)

39 BEASTS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------|
| Unicorn | Salamander |
| Mock Turtle | Lin |
| Phoenix | Bigfoot |
| Sphinx | Abominable Snowman |
| Hippogriff | Taniwha |
| Basilisk | Snark |
| King Kong | Plum Pudding Flea |
| Dragon | Blue Booswoss |
| Faun | Bunicule |
| Centaur | Clangel-Wangel |
| Pegasus | Grendel |
| Cockatrice | Nessie |
| Gryphon | Woozy |
| Chimaera | Pigasus |
| Argus | Jabberwock |
| Rudolf | Bifflebaum Bird |
| Hnakra | Killer Tomato* |
| Hydra | Frosty† |
| Minotaur | Godzilla |
| Satyrs | |

*Killer Tomatoes, it may be argued, are not animals, but I feel these aggressive vegetables may suitably be included in this list by virtue of their vigorous ferocity.
†This is not even a vegetable.

CHARACTER-I-SAY-TIONS



ACROSS

- 1. REB
- 5. AAAA
- 10. N
- 11. CØ
- 14. B
- 15. e, e, e, L
- 17. (LB)
- 18. Y-Y-Y
- 20. 10
- 23. NØ
- 26. pØ
- 27. 4,4,4
- 29. /ch
- 30. P, p
- 33. D, D, D, i-4
- 34. T
- 35. C11 →
- 37. 2
- 39. VV

- 40. 2K
- 43. SIN
- 46. R
- 47. /NEL
- 48. Sr., Jr.
- 49. 7
- 50. 1, T
- 51. U, G

DOWN

- 1. O
- 2. K, (4+5)
- 3. -N
- 4. N, NN
- 5. LE
- 6. PPP
- 7. {M}
- 8. ←
- 9. 2
- 12. VVVV
- 13. T+T+T

- 16. R
- 19. STUV
- 21. I, i, I, L8RRR
- 22. ØFI
- 24. UUU, S
- 25. }
- 26. E
- 27. 4 → 4
- 28. M ↔ III
- 29. L, L
- 31. A
- 32. DDD, ππππ
- 36. 10S
- 37. d
- 38. ä ä (prefix)
- 41. T, T, T
- 42. 10, 10, 10
- 44. QZJVBLFU
- 45. ste

