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book one

# RAIDERS from the SEA

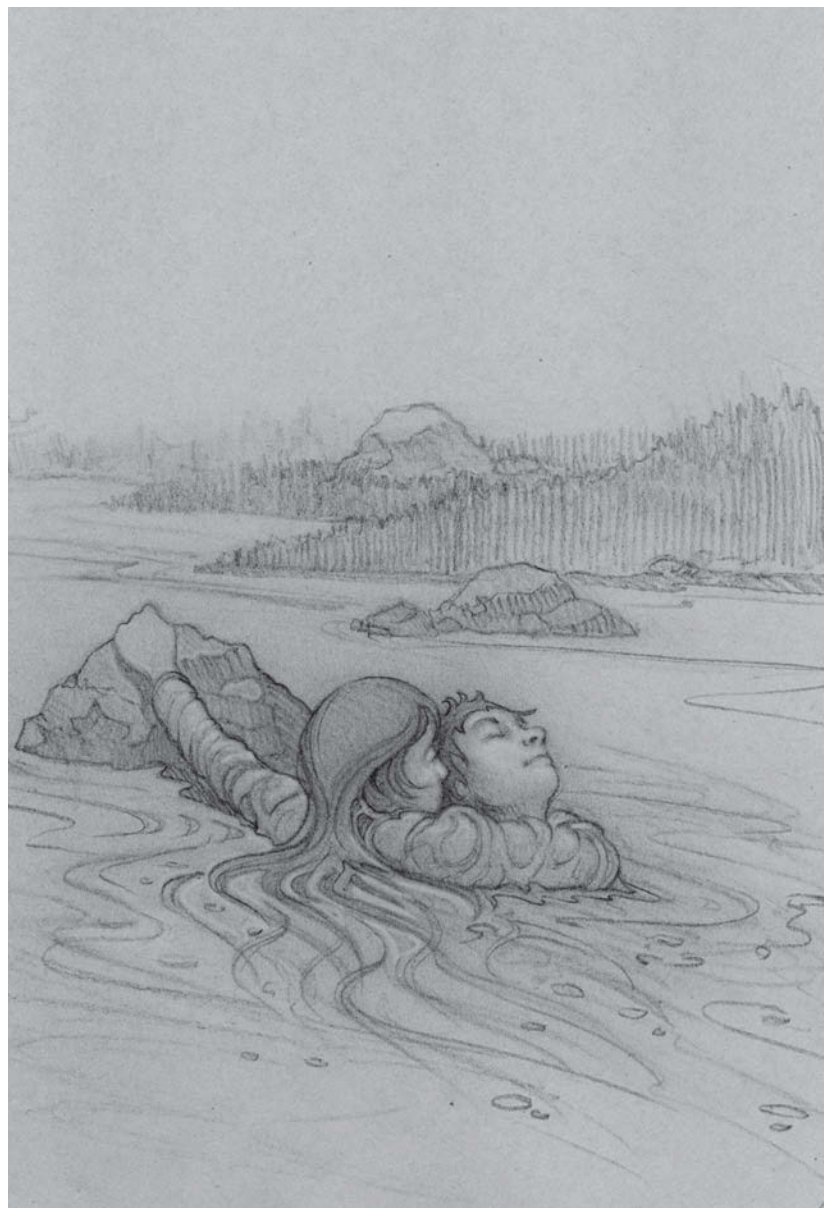
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Without making a sound, Briana O'Toole slipped out the door to walk the mountain behind her home. In the half-light before dawn her reddish blonde hair swirled around her face. Her brown eyes peered into the mist that hid the valley below.

From the time she was born, Bree had lived in the Wicklow Mountains of Ireland. As if they were close friends, she knew every bush, tree, and stone along the path. What she *didn't* know was that this September day in the late tenth century marked the end of her old life and a new beginning.

After a steep climb, Bree reached her favorite spot on the side of Brockagh Mountain. When the breeze came,

she felt it first upon her face. Moments later, the rising sun broke through the mist. The distant waters of the Irish Sea drew Bree in a way she couldn't explain even to herself. *If only I could know what's out there.*

For Bree the thought was not new. Years ago it started as a hunger—a curiosity that built with each story she heard about life in distant places. By now her wish to know the world beyond Ireland was a longing that wouldn't go away. What would it be like to see faraway lands?

Still watching the sea, Bree felt the dream of adventure. Then a whisper of fear crept into her thoughts. *Would I have the courage I'd need?*

Her brother, Devin, seemed brave enough for most anything. But Bree knew an unknown world might be frightening too. Whenever friends gathered in the cottages of Ireland, she heard stories about Vikings and their fast ships with the dragon heads. Fierce raiders from the North countries, they fell like lightning upon a peaceful countryside.

Bree shivered. *Please, God, not here. Not ever again.*

As the red ball of light grew large, the sun glittered and danced on the sea. Tossing her long hair over her shoulders, Bree shrugged off her worry. She'd let nothing spoil the wonder of this, her thirteenth birthday. In a loose-fitting blue dress that gave her the freedom to climb steep hills, Bree felt ready to celebrate.

When she started down the mountain, the mist still hung in the valleys, but she took the long way home. Even without seeing them, Bree knew every turn of the rivers that passed near her family's farm on their way to the Irish Sea.

Below her lay the place where she took her younger brother and sisters swimming. Beyond that sheltered spot, two rivers flowed together. Close by, her father had nearly drowned as a child. Often he warned them about the stepping-stones just upstream.

"People think it's an easy spot to cross," Daddy said. "But if something goes wrong—"

More than once, he had told Bree what to do if the younger children ever needed help. Always Bree felt glad for the way her dad praised her ability to swim. But now she felt the sun on her face and welcomed its warmth in her thoughts.

*Someday I'll travel beyond these mountains, she promised herself. Someday I'll see the world beyond the Irish Sea.*

In that moment the mist parted, showing Bree the place where the current ran swift and deep. There on the stepping-stones just above the joining of rivers was a lad with blond hair. *Tully!*

The boy stood on a rock with his back turned, but Bree felt sure she would recognize him anywhere. Wearing long narrow trousers and a sleeveless tunic, Tully was the son of her daddy's best friend. But what was he doing here, so far from home?



Bree's heart leaped just thinking about it. *Has Tully come to give me a birthday surprise?*

It would be just like her mother to plan something special with the Byrne family. But Bree couldn't wait. Moving on silent cat feet, she hurried down the hill, planning a surprise of her own.

On that September day the river ran full from autumn rains. Swirling water covered the stepping-stones on the far side of the river. As Tully moved from one stone to the next, Bree's excitement about a birthday surprise changed to uneasiness. *Can't he see how swift the current is?*

When he reached the last big stone, ready to slip into the water and swim the rest of the way, Bree called a warning. "Tully!"

At the sound of her voice he started to turn. Suddenly his foot slipped, and he lost his balance. Arms waving, he tumbled into the water.

On bare feet Bree raced to the edge of the river and followed the stones into the stream. There she found her worst fears true. Tully had hit his head when he fell. He lay facedown just beneath the surface of the water.

Dropping onto the closest stone, Bree stretched out. In that instant the current caught the still body and washed it beyond reach.

Filled with terror, Bree stood up and leaped into the river. With quick, powerful strokes she swam through the

water. The moment she saw Tully's head, she reached down, caught his hair, and pulled him up. One hand under his arm and the other treading water, she kicked. When they broke the surface, she held up his head and kept kicking.

With one arm across his chest and swimming with the other, Bree started for shore. She had only one thought—getting Tully to breathe. But in that moment the full force of the current caught her. The powerful rush of water took them downstream.

*Go with the current, Daddy had taught her. Don't fight it. Let it carry you toward shore.* But time for Tully was running out. Her panic growing, Bree looked around for help.

The surrounding countryside lay empty, even of sheep. And now Bree faced another fear. How long could she hold him up?

Then, just as she started slipping under the water, she felt the river bottom. Setting down her feet, she found firm ground and headed for shore. With her last ounce of strength she dragged Tully onto a broad, flat rock.

As he lay on his stomach, Bree turned his face to one side and pounded his back. When Tully gagged, water poured from his mouth. Coughing, he started to breathe.

Relief stronger than any current poured through Bree. *He'll live!*

Then the boy raised his head. For the first time Bree caught a good look at his face. *It isn't Tully!*

A ripple of shock washed through her. *If it's not Tully, who is it?*

A red bruise on the boy's forehead marked the spot where he hit his head. Now his gasps for air became long gulps. Turning his head toward Bree, he muttered two words she didn't understand.

Puzzled, Bree watched the boy. Still catching her breath, she dropped down on the grassy bank next to him. Even her knees felt weak. Never had she felt so glad to touch the green sod of Ireland. Who could the boy possibly be?

On this side of the river, grass and stones gave way to steep hills. In the brief time they had been in the water, the sun had disappeared. A cloud of mist drifted between the mountains.

As though feeling the change in air, the boy rolled over and sat up. He seemed close to Bree's age, but the sun had given him a deep tan. His blond hair hung in a loose cut just below his ears. Most of all, Bree noticed his strong square jaw. Whoever this stranger was, she felt sure he wouldn't be afraid to express his opinions. But now his blue eyes looked confused.

"What happened?" he asked.

"You fell and hit your head."

"Where am I?"

"On a river that flows to the Irish Sea."

“Who are you?” the boy asked.

He spoke in Norse, a language used by traders, and Bree answered the same way. Her father, a great Irish chieftain, was also a merchant who traded with people from other lands. From the time Bree and her older brother were little, their daddy had taught them to speak Norse.

Instead of giving her name, Bree jumped up. “There’s a spring nearby. I’ll get you water.” Moving quickly up the hill, Bree reached the spring and found the clay cup left for any passerby. Filling it with water, she returned to the boy.

“Thank you,” he said when he had drunk deeply.

Bree only nodded. She was angry now—angry at the danger this boy had caused. “What were you doing, crossing there when the river runs so high?”

“I could have made it.”

Bree couldn’t believe her ears. “Don’t you understand what happened?”

“I’m a strong swimmer.”

“You hit your head.” Bree’s voice curled around her words. “You weren’t breathing.”

When his angry gaze met hers, Bree’s temper flared. “You would have drowned without me!”

“I swim every day.”

The blue eyes had changed. *Not so confused*, Bree told herself, glad that he seemed to be returning to normal. But his voice held a swagger that upset Bree even more.

Watching him closely, Bree understood why she had thought the boy was Tully. The same blond hair and blue eyes. The same look of knowing what they want and going straight toward it. But there the similarity ended.

*What is it?* Bree asked herself. Then she knew. While Tully was always kind to her family, the look of this stranger was sharp, almost cold. Even now, after nearly drowning, he wore a prideful air.

“So where do you do all this swimming you’re so proud of?” Bree asked.

For an instant the stranger didn’t speak, as though thinking about his answer. Then his words came in a rush. “Around my home.”

“And where is your home?” Bree had lived near the river all her life. She had never seen the stranger.

Like a shifting shadow, something flitted through the boy’s eyes. Turning toward the river, he tipped his head downstream. “That way.”

Watching him, Bree felt uneasy. “What do you mean, *that way?* Down by the sea?”

“And beyond,” he said.

Bree knew a stone wall had gone up between them. He was avoiding her questions. Upset now, she pounced. “What are you trying to hide?”

“Hide?” He looked innocent, but he reminded Bree of a boy she knew who didn’t tell the truth.

“What’s your name?” she asked.

“Michael,” he told her.

*Michael.* Instantly Bree remembered a story in the Bible. When a courageous man named Daniel fasted and prayed, a high-ranking angel named Michael came to help him. But there was something about the way this Michael said his name. It bothered Bree. What was it?

*I'm just jumpy,* Bree told herself. As she started to ask more questions, the boy shivered. In the changing air Bree felt the cold. Though Michael also had good reason to be cold, she watched him closely.

His next shiver looked real. Grasping his upper arms, he hugged himself against the wind. “Do you have a blanket?” he asked. “Any food?”

Bree jumped to her feet. When she was only a young child her mother had taught her the Irish way. Countless times, Bree had seen her mother offer food, water, and shelter. “Sure, and it’s the Lord Himself that we serve,” she’d always say. But now a thought flashed through Bree’s mind. *Whoever this lad is, I don’t want to invite him home.*

“My mother will loan you some dry clothes,” she told Michael.

Even as she spoke, Bree kept watching him. The boy couldn’t be much older than she, but he seemed more grown-up. More sure of himself. Bree wondered about it.

Then her family’s habit of hospitality won out. “I’ll get you something to eat.”

Michael nodded. He trembled now, and his teeth chattered.

Walking quickly, Bree crossed a nearby pasture and climbed over a stone wall. Beyond were a grass-covered hill and then the oak forest. Partway up the hill, Bree suddenly changed direction. Not even to herself could she explain why.

Instead of taking the shortest route home, Bree headed for a rise where trees grew close together. When she reached a place where she could slip out of sight, she looked back.

Michael still sat at the edge of the river, huddled against the cold. Even from where she stood, Bree saw the trembling in his shoulders. He had turned to watch which way she went.

Raising an arm, he waved. In that moment Michael seemed just another boy about her age. For the first time Bree felt sorry for him. He would have been better off walking fast with her. At least he would have stayed warm. But Bree still felt uneasy and wasn't willing to ignore that warning.

The moment the trees hid her, she changed direction again. As she climbed the steep hill at the bottom of Brockagh Mountain, she felt grateful for her strong body. Just last week her brother Devin had told her, "Bree, you've kept up to me all your life. You don't have to do everything I do."

"Yes, I do," Bree had answered. But even to this brother

she loved, Bree couldn't explain why. Always she had known that she needed to be physically strong, able to climb mountains without panting for breath. Able to walk long distances and swim in cold water. This morning had proved it.

Moving quickly between the oaks, Bree doubled back onto the shortest route home. Soon she dropped down to a meadow. Sheep grazed there, looking so peaceful that for the first time ever, they seemed out of place.

By the time Bree reached her family's farm, she decided she had imagined all her reasons for questions. Inside the house, she snatched up dry clothes and a blanket. In the kitchen she gathered a loaf of bread and a small pail of milk. As she headed back out the door, she nearly crashed into her older brother.

Slender and tall for his age, Devin stood straight as an arrow and had their father's black hair and deep blue eyes. A year older than Bree, Devin was the one who shortened her name. Using the Irish word for a high, rocky hill, he often told her, "When you're stubborn, you're like a mountain that can't be moved."

Her brother meant to tease, but Bree liked having a name that reminded her of the lofty headland up the coast from where they lived. For as long as she could remember, Devin had watched out for her. Usually Bree didn't appreciate his help. Now he wanted to know what she was doing.

"I saved a lad from drowning," Bree said.



“Drowning?” Devin’s blue eyes widened. “Where?”

“You know the stepping-stones where the rivers come together? Where we never swim because of the current?”

“So you swam there? Dad won’t like that!”

“If I hadn’t, the boy would have drowned. He hit his head when he fell.”

As Bree started back across the meadow, Devin took the bread and pail of milk and followed. “So now you’re bringing him this?”

“He’s tired. Too tired and cold to come here.”

Still wondering if she were imagining things, Bree didn’t explain her mixed-up feelings. She and Devin walked quickly without taking time to talk. When they reached the high place overlooking the river, Bree glanced ahead and stopped short.

“Where is he?” Devin asked.

Bree shrugged. “Maybe he’s behind a bush or tree. Staying out of the wind.”

Worried now, she broke into a run. But when she reached the rock where Michael had been, there was no one in sight.

“You’re sure you have the right place?” Devin asked.

“I’m sure.”

“So where is he, this lad you rescued?”

With growing uneasiness, Bree dropped the blanket and started downstream. In one spot she leaped from rock to rock. Whenever she reached an open place, she

looked around. Finally she changed direction, hurried back to Devin, and followed the river upstream.

At last Bree had to give up. Whoever the boy was, he was nowhere to be found.

When she again returned to her brother, Bree saw the look in his eyes. "You're sure you didn't imagine things?" he asked.

Bree shook her head. She had no doubt that she had saved a boy from drowning. Besides, her dress and long, reddish blonde hair were only partly dry. But where could Michael be? Though he didn't want to admit it, he needed help.

*Or did he? Uneasy nudges poked at Bree's thoughts. Yes, he had almost drowned. But after that? Did he just pretend he was cold? It all seemed so strange.*

Now Devin turned on her. "Did you really swim here by yourself? Are you trying to cover up so I don't tell Dad?"

"Daddy nearly drowned here as a boy," Bree told him. "He told me what to do if I ever needed to help."

"But if you helped a lad, where is he?" Devin asked for the third time.

Even to Bree, it didn't seem real. How could Michael just disappear?

Then she looked down. One flat rock next to the river was still wet. Bree pointed to it. "That's where I helped him out."

The whole thing worried Bree. Michael had avoided her questions. Bree felt sure of that. But was he dizzy and mixed up from hitting his head? Did he fall into the river and drown after all?

Filled with misery, Bree stared upstream and down. It was all her fault. He was cold and weak, and she shouldn't have left him.

"What was the boy's name?" Devin asked, still curious.

"Michael." Bree spoke slowly. "He said his name was Michael. You know like the angel in the Bible?"

In that instant Bree understood why she felt uneasy. "But he pronounced *Michael* a different way."

Suddenly Bree felt angry. *It wasn't Michael who needed help. It was me.*

Not even to this brother who cared about her did Bree want to admit her questions. *I found Michael here in early morning. Did he come as a spy in the night? Did I catch him off guard because he thought no one was around?*

Deep inside, Bree started to tremble. *Who is this boy who seems to know exactly what he plans to do?*

VIKING



QUEST

BOOK TWO

MYSTERY  
of the SILVER  
COINS

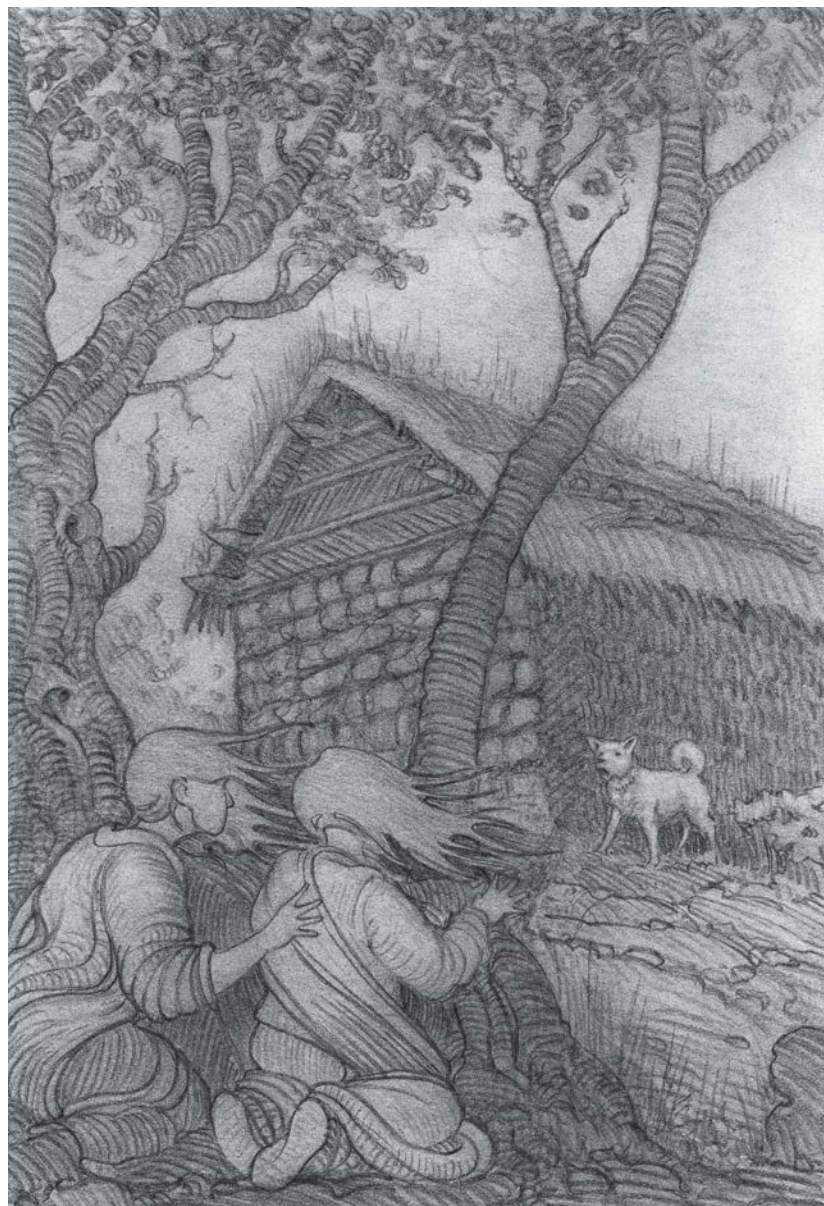
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In the silence of night Briana O'Toole's deep brown eyes peered into the darkness. As she waited for exactly the right moment, the wind off the Norwegian Sea caught her flyaway hair. On the Viking ship around her other prisoners slept, but Bree kept watch. This might be her one hope of escape.

A few hours earlier, Vikings had drawn their longship onto a beach on the west coast of Norway. Now the two men standing guard on one side of the ship began talking to guards on the other side. And still Bree waited.

On that September night late in the tenth century, time grew long. Then came the moment Bree hoped for.



When a black cloud moved above the ship, the heavens opened, and rain poured down upon them.

At the far end of the ship the four guards took refuge under the sail spread out like a tent. Without making a sound, Bree woke her young friend Lil.

“Shhh! Don’t speak!” Bree whispered close to her ear. “It’s time to go.”

Silently they dropped their bundles from the ship. As they climbed over the side, the full force of the storm struck them. Wind and rain slashed at Bree’s face as she snatched up the bundles she had prepared. Giving one to Lil, Bree took the rest herself and started across the beach.

Pounding rain covered the sound of their feet on the small stones near the shore. In the dark of the storm no moon betrayed them. No stars gave them light. Staying as far as possible from other ships in the harbor, Bree headed for a line of trees behind a cluster of houses.

When they reached the trees, Bree pulled Lil into the shadows and stopped to listen. In that instant a dog barked.

Lil gasped. Reaching out, Bree touched her arm in warning. As still as the stones of the land they stood.

The bark came from a house close to the shore. In spite of the rain, Bree could see the dark outline of the back of the house. If the dog startled the guards on Mikkell’s ship—if the guards found prisoners missing—if they went to find Mikkell—

If, if, if. All of them held the threat of danger. And all of them centered on Mikkel.

Only one year older than Bree, the fourteen-year-old led the band of Vikings that had captured the two girls. When the raiders plundered a monastery in the Wicklow Mountains of Ireland, they carried off rich treasure. From the surrounding countryside they took captives for ransom or slavery.

Again the dog barked. If the guards knew something was wrong, they would bring Mikkel back to the ship. As his prisoners, Bree and Lil were now slaves. That is, unless they escaped.

The next time the dog barked, it sounded closer. As though in reply, a second dog barked, then a third.

Lil shivered in fear. "Can we climb a tree?" she whispered.

Bree looked up. The lowest branches were far above them. Even if she lifted Lil on her shoulders, the younger girl wouldn't be able to reach.

As the pounding rain changed to a soft mist, a dog rounded the corner of the house. Even in the dark, Bree could see its white hair. Head to the ground, it sniffed its way along the side wall.

Moments later another dog joined the first. Yipping between themselves, they moved back and forth, close to where Bree and Lil had walked.

Bree held her breath. Did the rain wash away our scent?

Kneeling down behind a tree, Bree opened one of her bundles. Deep inside was the small hoard of food she had hidden away. If the dogs found them, she needed to be ready.

Her hands cold with fear, Bree touched the pieces of flatbread. If she gave them to the dogs, she and Lil would have no food. Filled with dread, Bree started to pray.

In ever-widening circles the dogs moved out, their noses to the ground. Then a third dog joined the first two. How many *are* there? An entire pack?

Yipping and barking, the dogs came closer and closer to where Bree and Lil hid.

“Don’t let them see you’re afraid,” Bree whispered. But her own heart thumped. Were Viking dogs as fierce as their owners?

Once again she touched the food inside her bundle. At the same time she felt it was hopeless. How could she ever make friends by giving the dogs a few pieces of flatbread?

As the minutes stretched long, Bree heard a woman call to the dogs. Holding a candle, she, too, came around the corner of the house. With her hand cupping the flame, she protected it from wind and rain. When the light reflected in her face, Bree saw flaming red hair.

For an instant the woman glanced toward the line of

trees behind her house. Then a small boy followed her into the backyard. "What's wrong, Mamma?" he asked.

"Nothing." The woman's voice carried clearly, as though she purposely spoke louder than needed. But the dogs kept sniffing the ground. Though they hadn't found a trail, they drew closer and closer to Bree and Lil.

Without moving the woman stared at the trees, as though seeing between them. In the light of the candle Bree saw her look toward the place where she and Lil hid.

"What's wrong, Mamma?" the boy asked again.

"Everything is all right," she told him, then called the dogs. With a last *yip* they went to her.

Reaching down, the woman took the boy's hand. "Come," she said. "Back to bed with you."

With the three dogs trailing behind, the woman walked toward the front of the house. Just before passing out of sight, she turned. Again she looked straight toward where Bree and Lil hid.

Weak with relief, Bree stood there, hardly able to believe they had been spared. Retying her bundle, she slung it over her shoulder. With a second bundle under her other arm, she was ready to move on. But Bree forced herself to wait.

As the rain started again, pounding down upon the earth, the spreading branches of oak and birch trees sheltered them from the worst of the storm. From farther away came the crash of waves washing against the shore.

But Bree knew that without the light of moon or stars she could lose her direction. She could even walk in a circle back to Mikkel's ship.

In stillness unbroken by dogs or people, Bree thought about the lay of the land. In the last light of day she had looked up to the mountains surrounding the Norwegian harbor. Farther inland, beyond the peninsula where Mikkel's ship was drawn up on shore, the ground slanted gradually upward, then rose in steep slopes.

Now Bree decided that if she and Lil headed that way, then kept walking uphill, they wouldn't lose their sense of direction. Though they didn't know where they were going, they would be moving away from Mikkel and his ship.

"Stay as close to me as you can," Bree whispered in Lil's ear.

At first the ground was flat and open, then it changed so gradually that Bree needed to keep thinking about the slope beneath her feet. Dodging low branches, she made her way between trees. *Dawn*, Bree reminded herself. By dawn they had to be hidden away. When the sun rose, Mikkel would discover that they were missing.

Already, the young Viking had the broad shoulders and strong body of a boy used to hard work. Lured by the riches that pilgrims brought to the monastery near Bree's home, Mikkel had gone ahead of his men to explore the Wicklow Mountains. When Bree first saw

him, she thought he was Tully, a friend of her family. Then, while crossing a river, Mikkel fell and hit his head on a stone.

Bree still felt that moment of terror. Without knowing who he was, she had saved Mikkel's life. Soon after, he led his band of Vikings into the peaceful Irish countryside. Vikings took Bree, Lil, and other prisoners away on their ship.

*On their dragon.* In the voyage between Ireland and Norway Bree often looked up at the fierce dragon head at the bow of their ship. She had not grown used to its snarling mouth. She knew only that the longship took her away from her family forever. That is, unless Bree escaped, and Lil with her.

Escape they would. Bree would make sure of that.

Though eight years old, Lil's small, thin body made her seem younger. While she had dark blue eyes and black hair, Bree's hair was reddish blond and her eyes deep brown. When morning came, the color of their eyes and hair would add to their danger.

As the ground grew steeper, Bree realized that Lil was panting hard. In spite of their need to hurry, Bree stopped. "We'll rest a minute," she said. "Take long, deep breaths."

When they moved on, Bree took Lil's bundle and set a good pace. Her wet clothing clung to her, but Bree's thoughts raced ahead of her feet. *Dawn*, she told herself

again. By dawn at the latest, Mikkel and his men would begin looking for them. And Mikkel would search until he found them.

One thought kept coming back to Bree. *Where can we hide?*

The ground rose sharply upward now. As thick clouds broke apart, the rain stopped, giving enough light so that Bree didn't stumble over rocks. At first she climbed straight up, finding a way wherever she could. Before long, she realized that Lil still struggled to keep up with her.

In spite of her need to hurry, Bree slowed down. With all her heart she wanted to get as far as possible from Mikkel and the harbor. At home Bree was used to climbing the mountain behind her family's farm. But now a knot of fear clutched her stomach. That fear went beyond barking dogs and Mikkel coming after them. Not only did Bree hold her own life in her hands, she needed to take care of Lil.

For more than a week Bree had thought of nothing but escape. They had managed to get away, but now Bree wondered, *Where on this mountain can we be safe?*

Inside, Bree felt a knot of fear. As it moved up into her chest, she felt overwhelmed. In the midst of her panic she started to pray. "Oh, God, please help me. I'm so scared. I can't do this without You."

Moments later, like a whisper on the night wind, Bree heard it. *Don't be afraid. I am with you.*

Bree stopped so suddenly that Lil bumped into her.

*I am with you always.*

Tears welled up in Bree's eyes. If the Lord was with them, she could go on.

As she and Lil stood there, the last of the clouds moved on and a full moon shone high above the trees. Sifting down between the branches, the moon gave the light they needed. For the first time Bree felt she could see where they were going.

When they set out again, Bree no longer tried to climb straight up the mountain. Instead she walked at an upward slant, turned, and walked back at a higher level. With each step she took, Bree watched and listened.

Born in the mountains of Ireland, she was so used to hearing waterfalls that she nearly missed the ripple of running water. But when she heard it, Bree followed the sound to a narrow stream that fell from one rock ledge to the next.

"You first," Lil whispered, and Bree knelt on the ground. With all the rain the stream was running well. Bree put her hand beneath it, let the water wash over her palm, then drank.

The water was cold, and Bree splashed it over her face. For nearly twenty-four hours she had gone without sleep, but the water brought her alive. As Lil drank deeply, Bree's thoughts hurried on.

"We need a hiding place close by," she whispered.



When they first escaped, the pounding rain had washed away their footprints. But now Bree watched each step that she took. Avoiding soft ground, she stayed on rock, grass, or fallen leaves. Lil followed close behind.

Bree knew exactly what she wanted. A hiding place far enough from the water so that whoever stopped there would not find them. A place that kept them warm and dry. And most of all, a place that hid them.

Searching for such a spot made Bree lonesome for her fourteen-year-old brother, Devin. In the mountains of Ireland they had built a shelter in a cluster of pines. Now Bree tried to find something similar but couldn't. And she and Lil were running out of time.

As the first light of dawn stole across the horizon Bree spotted a boulder a safe distance above the stream of water. An oak tree grew behind and to one side of the large rock. A second oak and a cluster of hazel trees stood nearby.

Bree motioned to Lil. Instead of climbing straight up, they circled around, avoiding soft earth, and keeping to firm ground. Climbing down from above, they stayed on rock ledges and left no footprints.

When they drew close to the boulder, Bree found the hiding place even better than she had hoped. From below she had seen only one large rock. From above, she found rocks around the upper side of a small hollow. The oaks grew close enough to spread their branches like sheltering

arms. Bree and Lil climbed the rest of the way down and crawled into their new home.

In the hollow beneath the trees, Lil spread out her reindeer hide blanket. Bree pushed her bundles into spaces between the rocks. Deep beneath the trees, they found a dry spot and stretched out the sealskin tunics they wore over their dresses.

Bree spread her own reindeer hide between Lil and the opening into their hideaway. As Bree snuggled deep beneath her blanket, she remembered she had been up all night.

Yawning, Bree told herself she had to keep watch. Instead, she yawned again and wondered how she could possibly stay awake. She had time for only one prayer. "Father, hide us from their searching eyes."

A moment later, the great distance between Norway and Ireland seemed to be gone, for Bree drifted off to sleep.

VIKING



QUEST

book three

THE  
I N V I S I B L E  
F R I E N D

LOIS WALFRID JOHNSON

MOODY PUBLISHERS  
CHICAGO



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A sudden gust of wind whipped between the mountains, lashed the water into waves, and caught Briana O'Toole's reddish blonde hair. With one quick motion Bree swept it out of her eyes and turned to face her new life.

Just then a swell of waves lifted the end of the Viking ship as it rested on the shore. Moments before, this ship that brought Bree from Ireland had sailed through a long, narrow waterway to this settlement in the mountains. Now sunlight shone on a waterfall spilling over a high rock wall.

Then the sun shone on the blonde hair of a tall woman standing beside the water. Seeming to forget everything else, Bree's enemy, Mikkell, leaned forward.

The moment the Viking ship touched shore, he

leaped over the side. By the time he touched the ground, the tall woman stood before him.

Mikkel straightened to his full height and tipped his head in respect. "Mamma," he said.

"Son," she answered. A tear slid down her cheek. "You were gone so long; I was afraid."

"I know. But I am here." Relief filled Mikkel's voice. "I am home."

A flash of envy, then anger, filled Bree's insides. *Home!* she wanted to spit out. *Mikkel is home, but I am not!* On a summer morning late in the tenth century, Mikkel had planned the raid that brought Bree and others from Ireland to the Aurland Fjord. Sometimes Bree wished Mikkel could be a friend. Other times she felt angry about everything he did.

As Viking sailors set down the ramp, Bree looked into the crowd gathered to meet the ship. There she saw a girl with sandy colored hair, brown eyes, and a dusting of freckles across her nose.

*Who is she?* Bree wondered. *Why do I think she's someone I know?*

The girl looked too thin, as if she had been sick. Yet she had to be at least eleven, perhaps twelve. As people streamed off the ship, Bree lost sight of her. Then far up on shore, Bree saw her again.

A long single braid hung down on the girl's shoulder. When she tossed it aside, her eyes lit with laughter. Bree



knew that motion, that look of poking fun at something serious. *Could it possibly be?*

Across the distance their gaze met. The girl's mouth formed a round O, a gasp of recognition. The surprise of it shook Bree to the center of her being. *It's my sister Keely!*

One year younger than Bree, the two had been close friends as well as sisters. Then six years ago Vikings raided the monastery near their home in Ireland and stole Keely away. In a similar way, a more recent raid had brought Bree on a Viking longship to this fjord.

Filled with excitement, Bree pushed her way toward the side of the ship. *Maybe there's a reason I was captured by Vikings. Maybe something good will come out of it.*

In that instant of hope Bree could see herself bringing Keely home to their family. She could imagine Daddy and Mam and each of her brothers and sisters hugging and kissing Keely. Tears would come to their eyes and stream down their cheeks.

*Keely! Yes, it has to be her!*

But the girl turned away. A tall Viking stepped in front of Bree, blocking her view. Filled with panic, Bree tried to get around him. By the time she reached the side of the ship, the girl was gone.

Bree felt sick with disappointment. *It was Keely, she thought. I know it was Keely! But if it was, why did she turn away? Why did she act as if she doesn't know me?*

*I'll find her, Bree promised herself. And somehow we'll escape together!*

In the next moment, Mikkel turned away from his mother to face the Irish captives.

"Stop!" he called out. When two Irishmen pretended they did not understand, Mikkel held up both hands. "Wait!"

Instantly other Viking sailors formed a line across the shore. No Irish prisoner would pass through that line until the men told that person where to go.

In despair Bree looked around. Here, where the ship had landed, rock walls gave way to a valley. Green fields lined the river flowing through that valley. Close to the river was a line of houses. But nowhere could Bree see the girl she believed to be Keely.

Now, like it or not, Bree needed to begin her new life. But first she wanted to say good-bye to the Irish friends she had made on board ship.

Standing to one side, Bree looked for them. When Lil came near, Bree caught her new friend in a hug. "Courage to win," Bree whispered.

As Lil's gaze met hers, Bree felt a shock of surprise. Only two weeks before, this younger girl had been afraid of her own shadow. Now Lil lifted her head and crossed her arms on her chest in their secret sign. "Courage to win, Bree," she said softly.

"Wherever you are, you will be all right," Bree whispered.

"I know." Lil's eyes shone. "And you also."

Bree swallowed hard. "Mikkel said I'll be his mother's slave. I'll watch where you go. We'll find each other."

When they walked down the ramp, Lil was ahead of Bree. Mikkel motioned Lil toward a sturdy woman with kind blue eyes. Standing there, Bree watched to see what happened with each of her special friends.

As a girl growing up in Ireland, she had always longed to travel. Often she had climbed the mountain near her home to gaze through the mists and wonder what lay beyond the Irish Sea. Yet in the days since leaving Ireland, Bree had begun dreaming about her new quest—being home again with her family.

Again she thought of her sister Keely, of walking up to their cottage, opening the door, and shouting, "Surprise!"

Again Bree let herself hope. *If Dev comes, and Keely is here—*

Ever since being captured—since watching Mikkel release her fourteen-year-old brother, Devin, on a shore in northern Ireland, Bree had clung to one hope. One year older than Bree, Dev had always watched out for her. If Dev could, he'd be here now, a bag of ransom money in his hand. When Mikkel boasted about his father being chieftain of the Aurland Fjord, Dev had learned how to find Bree.

But now a tall slender girl headed toward Mikkel. Like many of the people standing on shore, she was also blonde, but her long thick hair fell down her back, nearly reaching her waist.

As she swept forward like a queen before her subjects, the girl's gaze went from one Irish person to the next, and then stopped on Bree.

The girl turned toward Mikkel. "Who is this?" she asked, her voice sharp.

"Well, *Gee-nah*," Mikkel drawled. "What a way to welcome me home."

But the girl named Gna paid no attention. "Who is she?" she asked again.

Mikkel looked uncomfortable but only said, "One of the Irish."

Stepping forward, Gna reached out her hand and tipped up Bree's chin with one finger. Bree backed away.

The girl followed, saying, "Look at me!"

Bree lifted her chin, but the girl's finger stayed beneath it. Bree had all she could do to keep herself from opening her mouth and snapping her teeth around the finger. If she had her way, the girl would be hollering with pain.

Instead, Bree opened her eyes wide. Without blinking, she stared at the girl with her meanest look. The girl stared back.

Mikkel laughed. "You've met your match, Gna. You can't beat her down."

"No?" Gna turned on him, and the coldness in her eyes became a fire in her face. "You think I can't. I've never known a person who hasn't learned to bow before me."

*Bow?* Bree asked herself, then realized she had spoken aloud.

Gna whirled on her. "So you know my language too. You will do more than bow. You will grovel in the dust of the earth before I am through with you. You will be my slave!"

Bree straightened, threw back her shoulders, and lifted her head. With the same movement, she turned slightly from looking at Gna to Mikkel. No words passed between Bree and Mikkel, but in that moment Bree knew he remembered.

"No, she won't," Mikkel said.

Gna stared at him. Even Bree felt surprised at the strength in his voice, but it was Gna who spoke. "You think not?"

A flush of embarrassment crept into Mikkel's neck, then into his face. But when he met Gna's gaze, there was no backing down. "She will not be your slave. She will be my mother's slave."

Gna laughed. The hard, cold sound of it sent a shiver down Bree's spine. Then to her surprise she forgot

everything else. The bleating of sheep and bawling of cattle drowned out the voices of families on the beach.

As Bree swung around, she saw a wide, flat-bottomed boat that looked like a raft. The minute it came to rest on shore, the animals started over the low sides. A large billy goat led the rest. The billy headed straight for Gna.

“Gna!” Mikkel called in warning.

Whirling around, the girl saw her danger. Fingers spread wide, she held out her hands to stop him. His eyes focused on her, the goat kept coming. When Gna side-stepped to the right, he moved with her. When she leaped to the left, he followed.

“Help!” Gna cried, but to Bree’s surprise, Mikkel stood as still as a rock.

Gna whirled on him. “Get that goat!” she commanded. In the moment she turned her back, the billy lowered his head and ran straight for Gna’s behind. With one good butt, he sent her sprawling.

Trying to swallow her laughter, Bree choked. Instead, a giggle slipped out. Mikkel slapped his leg, echoing her glee. When Gna looked their way, both of them grew instantly quiet.

“Uh-oh,” Mikkel said softly. “We’ve done it now.”

“Is she the girl you’re going to marry?” Bree whispered, suddenly curious.

When Mikkel didn’t answer, Bree hurried forward,

offering her hand to Gna. "Can I help you up?" she said, her voice as sweet as honey in the comb.

But Gna shoved Bree's arm aside. Slowly, gracefully, Gna rose from the shore, brushed off her skirt, and whirled on Bree.

"I will *never* forget that!" Gna's eyes sparked her anger. "You are my enemy from this day forward. You will be my enemy forever!"

"Ah, Gna," Mikkell said. "Don't take yourself so seriously."

"Seriously? You aren't the one knocked to the ground by this—this—" Gna had no words for him. "This outlaw goat, that's what he is!"

As Gna stared after him, Bree's gaze followed hers. A short distance away, the billy goat had stopped. Looking at Gna, the goat seemed to roll his eyes. Then with all the dignity he could bring to the occasion, he started munching grass.

"Yes, he's an outlaw goat, all right," Mikkell answered in his most solemn voice. "I can see how dangerous he is."

As the billy set off again, the other goats followed. Zigzagging their way between the people on shore, they hurried toward green pasture near the longhouse.

"Where did they come from?" Bree asked.

"The out-farm—the summer pasture." Mikkell pointed across the fjord to where they had loaded the animals. "They've had good green grass all summer, but at the end

of September we bring them down. If there was snow or ice on the mountain, we wouldn't be able to get them home."

Mikkel pointed to the steep side of a mountain farther along the fjord. "See that slanted line? There's a path for the animals to go up. That's where they come down when summer is over."

As Mikkel talked, sheep followed the goats. Then a cow, swinging her head from side to side, followed the sheep, still bawling her complaint. Bree looked after the cow and the billy now far up in the pasture. Remembering Gna, Bree giggled.

Gna whirled around. With one glimpse into her eyes, Bree knew. No doubt about it. Gna was her enemy.

Bree gritted her teeth. All her life people had treated her nicely. She didn't know how to handle someone like Gna. *But I'm going to learn. Somehow I'll get along with her. Maybe we'll even become friends.*

Then Bree remembered. Being a slave would no doubt set her apart from Gna.

With his sea chest on his shoulder, Mikkel started up the slope toward the longhouse and farm buildings. When he turned to speak to Bree, she sensed the change in him.

"Come," he said, his voice impatient now.

So, *am I supposed to walk behind you?* Bree almost flung out the words. The idea made her angry. More than once



Mikkel had told her his father was the mighty chieftain of the Aurland Fjord. More than once, Bree had wanted to spit back, “And I am a chieftain’s daughter!” So far she had managed to hold her tongue.

Now she wondered about it. If her brother Devin managed to raise ransom money, what would happen?

Bree’s thoughts scurried on. *If these terrible Vikings know I’m a chieftain’s daughter, will they raise the price of letting me go? Will they demand so much that Dev can’t pay what they ask?*

Ahead of Bree, Mikkel suddenly stopped.

VIKING  QUEST BOOK FOUR

HEART  
of  
COURAGE

LOIS WALFRID JOHNSON

MOODY PUBLISHERS  
CHICAGO



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When Briana O'Toole heard the sound, she was still partly asleep. *What is it?* she wondered. The noise seemed near and yet far away. What had wakened her in the darkness before dawn?

Through an open door in the barn where she slept, Bree heard fishermen load bait and tackle. Next came a scrape across the shore as they slid their boats into the Norwegian fjord. A moment later, oars creaked as men from the village of Aurland rowed away for their daily catch.

By now, on that early summer morning late in the tenth century, the sounds were familiar to Bree. *Why do such everyday noises make me afraid?*

Then Bree knew. Only last night her brother Devin had told her that he might leave for Ireland soon. Like a warning deep inside, Bree felt sure that on this day she would learn more. No doubt it would be something she must face, like it or not.

High in the hayloft where she slept, Bree pushed back her blanket. On her first night of serving Mikkel's family, she had made her own soft bed—a nest of fragrant hay gathered from a mountainside. By now nine months had passed since the Viking raid that brought Bree and other Irish captives to this village.

In spite of all that had happened, Bree smiled, for she knew something that only the Irish knew. No one else. Not Mikkel, the fifteen-year-old leader of the raid that took Bree away. Not his father, Sigurd, chieftain of the Aurland Fjord. Not his mother Rika. Nor his brother Cort. Nor his grandparents.

*My daddy is an Irish chieftain, Bree thought. A wise and powerful chieftain who cares about his people.* Though she appeared to be a slave, Bree held the secret knowledge of being deeply loved. She felt freedom in her heart.

Reaching out in the darkness, Bree picked up her clothing and quickly dressed. As she pulled on her shoes, she heard a sea chest being dropped heavily into a ship, then footsteps coming up the path from the fjord.

With swift movements, Bree grabbed a rung and scrambled down the ladder. Through the dark barn she

hurried, so familiar now with its turns that she needed no light. When she opened the door that connected the barn and the house, she heard Mikkel's angry voice.

"I can't!" he exclaimed. "I won't!"

Without making a sound, Bree entered the hallway that led to the large room where the family ate, slept, and talked. Then the door creaked shut and the room grew instantly silent.

It made Bree uncomfortable. *What were they saying about me?* The question pounded at her heart.

Acting as if she hadn't noticed anything unusual, Bree hurried to the long open hearth. As she stirred the embers, the fire flared, and she added more wood. Taking a large wooden spoon, she stirred the porridge. By the time a knock came on the outer door, she was ready.

When Mikkel swung the door wide, Ingmar stood outside. Taller than Mikkel and with darker blond hair, Ingmar was at least four years older. He was also master of the ship that had given safe passage to Bree's brother Devin when he sailed from Ireland to the Norwegian fjord.

Seeing Ingmar, Mikkel stepped back, as though not wanting to talk with him. Only recently the *ting*, the assembly of freemen, had settled Devin's future and the argument between Ingmar and Mikkel.

Now Ingmar's quick glance went to Bree, then back to Mikkel. Suddenly Ingmar stretched out his hand. "Our



freemen have spoken," he said. "By their vote, they freed Bree's brother, Devin."

Looking down at Ingmar's hand, Mikkel stiffened, but Ingmar went on. "You and I are blood cousins, Mikkel. Let's be friends."

For an instant Mikkel glanced toward his father Sigurd. The chieftain sat on a bench along the wall as though waiting to see what would happen. Turning back, Mikkel faced Ingmar again.

With one swift movement, Mikkel pushed aside his flyaway hair. Then, as though making a deliberate choice, he stretched out his hand and shook Ingmar's.

A look of relief filled the young man's eyes. "We finish loading my ship today," Ingmar said. "If the wind blows fair tomorrow, we will leave."

Mikkel nodded, waiting.

"I'll take Bree's brother with me." Though Ingmar spoke to the family, he watched Bree. "I'll take her sister Keely and friend Lil. I'll bring them safely to Dublin."

Without warning, Bree's eyes filled with tears. *It's here. The moment I dreaded.*

But then she understood. Ingmar had come to warn her, to give her one last day to say good-bye. As a tight knot formed in Bree's stomach, she recognized his gift. *No more snatching your family away,* Ingmar was saying without words. *I'm doing my best to help you.*

Slowly Bree put down the large wooden spoon. Her

head high, she stepped out from behind the large cooking pot that hung on a chain from the ceiling. Her shoulders back, she walked around the end of the hearth and stood before Ingmar. With the grace of a young woman before a king, Bree took the edges of her skirt in hand and curtsied low before him.

“I thank you,” she said softly.

When she looked up again, Bree saw the kindness in Ingmar’s eyes and knew she had rightly understood his wish to help her. Then she saw something more—the courage that molded Ingmar’s life to speak to Mikkel as he had.

This time Ingmar spoke directly to her. “When I return to Aurland, I’ll tell you. You will know that your brother, sister, and friend are safe in Ireland.”

Once more Bree curtsied low. As she straightened, standing tall, Ingmar nodded, accepting her thanks. As he turned away, his face showed his concern for her. When he stepped outside, he closed the door quietly.

As Bree walked back to the fire, no one spoke. When she picked up the large wooden spoon and dished up porridge, no one spoke. But now Bree guessed the meaning of Mikkel’s words as she entered the room. She felt sure his mother and father had said, “Set Bree free. Send her back to Ireland with her brother and sister.” And Mikkel answered, “*I can’t. I won’t!*”

If so, it was still another reason for Bree to be angry

with Mikkel. He knew she was a valuable slave, and his greed always won.

When Bree finished serving the family, she dished up her own porridge and took it outside. On the step overlooking the fjord, she sat, quiet and alone. In spite of the ache in her chest and the knot in her stomach, she promised herself that she would make it through.

*I can manage*, Bree thought, though it tore her apart. But the longer she watched the men load Ingmar's ship, the more difficult it became.

*One more day*, she told herself. *Tomorrow I'll be alone again.*

*Alone. For how long?*

*Forever?*

At the recent assembly where Devin was set free, Bree worked out a way to ransom her sister Keely and friend Lil. Only Bree remained a slave. Then Mikkel offered a startling plan.

"Be my storyteller," he told Devin. "If you and Bree go with me on one voyage, I'll set her free when we return home."

*Free!* Just the sound of it filled Bree with hope. *No longer a Viking slave!*

"I'm Irish," Devin told Mikkel. "I'm not like your poets."

But Mikkel insisted. "Be my storyteller. Be my friend."

Looking Mikkell straight in the eye, Devin repeated the condition. "If Bree and I go with you for one voyage, you will set her free when we return."

Now, like a sword, fear struck down Bree's courage. Deep inside, she felt a warning she could not ignore. *How good is Mikkell's promise? Can Dev and I trust him to do what's right?*

*Courage, Bree thought. I need courage to help me go beyond the fear I face.*

Just then Mikkell opened the door and came outside. Bree glanced at him and looked away. *If Dev comes back and we sail with Mikkell, will we ever see Ireland again?*

VIKING



QUEST

BOOK FIVE

<sup>the</sup>  
RAIDER'S  
PROMISE

LOIS WALFRID JOHNSON

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## LEIF'S DISCOVERY

From high overhead Briana O'Toole heard the cry of a seagull. Pushing aside her reddish-blond hair, Bree looked up to a flash of wings. In that moment the dangers of the past week seemed far away.

With one swoop the gull landed on the rocky ledge in front of her. Beady eyes upon her, he tipped his head, and shrieked again. A moment later, he lifted his wings and was up and away.

Bree watched him go. Would she ever feel that free again?

Ignoring the uneasiness she felt, Bree watched the gull fly across the water. Early that morning she and others from Leif Erikson's ship had climbed to the top of this island in the great open sea.

As she started back down the steep side, Bree felt the sun on her face and light entered her heart. Then she glanced toward Mikkel.

*My enemy*, Bree thought out of long habit. But this time she wondered something more. Could he ever become a friend she respected?

Only one year older than Bree, Mikkel had led a raid that carried off rich treasure from the Glendalough Monastery in Ireland. During that raid, his men also captured Bree, her brother, and other Irish from the surrounding countryside.

Nearly four years had passed since that day late in the tenth century, and Mikkel was now eighteen. At a wider place between rocks he turned. "Let's make a new start," he said.

"A new start?" Bree felt the surprise of it. It was his fault that she had become a slave. "Do you really think we can?"

Mikkel looked her straight in the eye. "I'm sure of it." His voice spilled over with confidence. "All we have to do is trust each other."

"Trust." Bree stared at him. Like a storm ready to break, the word hung in the air. How could any trust between them possibly last?

"That's all?" she asked. "Can't you think of something a bit harder?"

Mikkel's grin lit his face. "I'll help you. I'll prove I'm worthy of trust."

Of all the things Mikkel could promise, that was the hardest to imagine. Yet he stood his ground and didn't even blink.

Watching him, Bree wondered how he could feel so sure of himself. Especially now, when they were about to enter a new world. A world where no one, not even Leif Erikson, could know what would happen.

"You'll see," Mikkel promised.

There it was again. The confidence in his voice that he could win. That he could really be trusted to do what he promised. Maybe, just possibly—

If there was anything in the world that Bree wanted, it was being able to believe in Mikkel. If that happened—

For a moment Bree dared to hope. Maybe Mikkel would even take her and her brother Devin home.

Far below, surrounded by the blue waters of the sea, Leif's ship lay anchored in a cove. Some of the men had stayed behind to guard it. As Bree looked down upon them her uneasiness returned.

*Leif knows the dangers we face, she tried to tell herself. Danger to Mikkel and to all of us.* Like the others around her, Bree had learned to value the wise and strong leader of their expedition.

Just then Mikkel spoke again. "Leif's calling."

Leaping between the rocks, Mikkel led the way back

up the steep west side of the island. When they reached the top, Leif stood on a high point, looking across a great expanse of water.

With blond hair and a beard trimmed close to his face, Leif stood taller than most men. Though still a young man, he had earned the respect of everyone who knew him, including the Norwegian king.

“There’s something I want you to see.” Leif’s voice was filled with excitement.

When his crew gathered around him, Bree remembered that as a slave she should stand apart. Instead, she moved forward, wanting to hear every word that Leif said.

But Mikkel left the others behind. Walking out on a rocky ledge, he looked in every direction.

Behind them lay the great expanse of water they had crossed when sailing from Greenland. To their right the blue coast of a rocky wooded land. And ahead of them—

When he turned to Leif, Mikkel’s face shone. “A fjord! A waterway leading into the land!”

Leif grinned. “A gateway that will help us explore.”

“And good markers!” Mikkel pointed off to his left. Like a gigantic ball of rock, the round head of a cape loomed against the horizon.

To Mikkel’s right was another cape. Between that and the round head was a large island with high vertical rock rising from its shore. Beyond lay a long, low point that turned like a beak as it reached into the sea.

“Landmarks no good Viking would miss. And there—” Leif pointed beyond the large island. Though far distant, the rocky ridge of a headland offered another marker.

For a moment Leif turned, looking back to the great open sea over which they had traveled. On the way here they had gone ashore twice as they sailed south. Now in the strong current along that coast an iceberg rose from the water. Though the beginning of July, ice from northern glaciers still offered danger to any ship that passed.

But Leif's face showed only his excitement. “When Thorstein comes—”

Leif and his brother had planned to travel together. While sailing up the coast of Greenland, Leif had learned that Thorstein was delayed.

“He'll follow the same directions from Bjarni that I had,” Leif said. “If we're able to use such a good location, he'll find us easily.”

As Leif faced the channel again, his voice held the satisfaction of discovery. “It's a gateway, I'm sure of it. A fjord that will open up this new land. Where ships can sail, explorers will come, and settlers, and merchants!”

Once more Leif pointed across the water, this time to a bay between the rocky ridge and the long point of land that extended like a beak into the sea. With his keen eyesight he had seen more than the rest of them.

“That's where we're going,” he said. “Ships will not

only be able to see us. Whether friend or enemy, we'll be able to see them."

Friend or enemy. Again Bree felt a warning. Like a bad memory, her dread returned. What about the enemy inside their group? The man who had tried to hurt Mikkel during the trip here?

Starting down between the rocks, Leif led the others. As though he had no thought of the harm that could come to him, Mikkel followed. Son of a Norwegian chieftain, Mikkel often took his rightful place with pride. When the rest of the crew followed, Bree and her brother Devin dropped back.

With all her heart Bree felt excited about the new land they had seen. Yet the possibilities of such a place also made her wonder about her own future. Soon it would be four long years since she had been captured and became a slave. What could she do to change her life?

Partway to the ship, Devin stopped and turned around. Though Bree had inherited their mother's brown eyes and reddish-blond hair, Devin had the black hair and deep blue eyes of the dark Irish. Like Mikkel, Devin was also eighteen.

As though understanding how Bree felt, Devin offered a brotherly wink. "Remember," he said. "Don't forget who you really are."

In her heart Bree added the words she knew well. *The daughter of a wise and powerful chieftain who loves me very much.*

"Yes, Dev, I know," Bree said aloud.

Even when most angry with Mikkel, she had not blurted out the truth. Afraid that her ransom would go even higher, she had never told Mikkel about her father. Only Bree, Devin, and the Irish captured with them knew the well-kept secret.

Now Bree hugged it to herself. When she entered this new land she would remember. *Though I seem to be a slave, inside I am free. And I won't let anyone take that from me!*