

THE FRIENDS OF FÓLKVANGR

(8th April 1940)

Dear friends, welcome!

We have reached something of a milestone; this week marks the 50th edition of the Friends of Fólkvangr newsletter. To commemorate this most momentous of occasions we will be running not one, but two competitions! Yes friends, alongside our regular Hunt the Goat contest, we will also be offering a special prize for anyone who can guess the weight of Jon Ohnstad's most extraordinary Pearl Onion. This wondrous vegetable will be entered in the Bergen fete next week. Good luck, father! The hopes of Fólkvangr travel with you!

On a more sombre note, Kvist Gundersen reports that a ladder was stolen from outside his cottage, Tuesday last, while he tended to his hanging baskets.

Has it come to this, my friends?

But a year has passed since the declaration of war in Europe, and already we tear at each other like rabid wolves. We are of Fólkvangr! We are bound to each other through honour and history. We do not take from

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one another, my friends; we do not!. I myself have spoken to Kvist, and he has agreed that if the ladder is returned by the week's end, no more will be said.

And I'm afraid there is more bad news. It is with the most profound regret that I must tell you my good friend Helga Bratvold will be leaving our fair village to take a position with a small book-keeping firm in the town of Lillehammer. Many of you will remember Helga as the runner-up in the Fair Maiden pageant at last year's fete. We have been friends for many years, Helga and I, and this bond between us remained strong, even after my unanimous victory over her at that very same pageant. Though I cannot think why anyone would leave Fólkvangr for the festering streets of Lillehammer, I would like you all to join me in wishing her well and reminding her that there is nowhere better than home.

And now friends – on with the festivities!

CHAPTER 3



Silje chewed on the end of her pencil, sighed, and put a line through the word festering. She wrote *suppurating* in its place and drew air through the spaces between her teeth. She exhaled, gasped, crossed out *suppurating* then wrote *festering* above it.

‘Yes, festering,’ she whispered to herself. “Lillehammer’s festering streets.” She groaned and leaned forward, parting her knees further. ‘Do you think ...’ She gasped again. ‘Do you think I should have mentioned that I beat her in the pageant?’

‘No.’

‘Oh.’ A spasm of pleasure rattled her spine; she tried to squeeze her thighs together.

‘Ow.’

She said ‘Sorry’ and closed her eyes, leaning back and clawing her fingers into the bark of the chestnut tree. ‘Does it sound mean-spirited?’

‘What?’

‘Mentioning the pageant. It sounds mean-spirited.’

‘Yes.’

‘Mmm.’ She ran a line through the offending sentence. ‘Though I find it hard to believe people would think that of me.’

‘Silje?’

‘Mmmm?’

‘Silje, is that your notebook resting on my head?’

‘No,’ she replied, gently sliding the notebook from his crown.

Erik swore under his breath and sat back on his haunches, wiping his mouth. ‘I thought you liked it when I did that.’

‘I did,’ she said without thinking. ‘I mean, I do. I am just ... preoccupied, that is all.’

‘Preoccupied with your stupid newsletter.’

‘Please don’t sulk, Erik.’

‘I am not sulking!’ He jumped to his feet and walked away, distancing himself from her with long, disgruntled strides.

The late spring had cast a blanket of bloodroot and lilies far beyond the forest, spreading their petals of white across the meadow – which all but smothered his indignation. Silje bit her lip to stop herself from laughing. She pushed her skirts down over her knees and got up from the grass.

‘I am sorry,’ she said, chasing after him.

‘What for?’

He was his most handsome when he was angry, which to Silje’s mind was a great shame. Even a mild rage brought colour to his othertimes sallow complexion, a regality to his slightly receding chin. To her shame, Silje often found herself making him angry just to bring a gentle savagery to his bearing.

‘For not ...’ How to say this, she wondered. ‘For not showing my appreciation.’

He stopped, mid-stride. ‘Showing your appreciation,’ he echoed. ‘I was attempting to pleasure you, Silje, not mend your gate.’ He turned west, heading for the line of sparse beech trees that separated Fólkvangr from the meadows and the hills. The flowers and the grass faded away, replaced by stony earth and patches of mud.

‘Erik, I’m wearing a dress!’

‘Then take the path back to the village you love so very much.’ He disappeared into the trees.

‘So you’re not even going to walk me home.’

'I could,' came back his disembodied voice, 'but I wouldn't want you to feel the need to show your appreciation.'

'You are being ridiculous,' Silje shouted, but there was no answer. 'This is the end for you and me, Erik Brenna. Do you hear me?'

If Erik did hear, he chose not to reply.

She sighed and pulled her coat tightly around her. Night would fall soon, leeching away what little remained of the day's warmth.

The true path to the village, the path suitable for a young lady in a pretty dress, cut through the tree-line at its narrowest point. Silje walked about half a mile before stopping at a knoll covered in lichen. She took off her shoes and climbed to the top from where she could see her village, nestled in a recess of stone and ice, and the town of Bergen at the foot of the mountain. She often came here to write and watch the Allied warships steaming away to patrol the seas around Scandinavia. But today the harbour was empty, save the small, squat lines of tugboats and fishing vessels. Silje reached into her bag and took out the old box camera that had belonged to her mother. She peered down into the viewfinder, focussing on the horizon beyond the harbour.

She could see smoke, just off to the east. She stood motionless and held her breath. Her heart was racing. As she pressed down on the shutter, the sound reached her, carried on the winds from the sea: a metallic thud, like thunder striking inside a steel box. She put away her camera, slipped her sandals on her feet, and ran down the mountain path as fast as she could.



She stopped to catch her breath where the path widened and Fólkvangr's plateau began. The track became a cobbled street that ran the length of the village from north to south, beginning just beyond the stone archway and a sign bidding visitors 'Welcome'. The sign said the population of the hamlet stood at two hundred and three.

Two hundred and two, Silje thought, if one considers the treachery of Helga Bratvold. She heard bootfalls on the stones and looked to see Jonas Kleppe limping towards her. He carried a short wooden ladder

on his shoulder and an oil can swung from a hook on his belt. Mr Kleppe – and he would always be Mr Kleppe to Silje – dressed in a flamboyant tweed oddly matched with black hiking boots and thick woollen socks. His beard was reputed to be the most magnificent across the mountains, the envy of every male villager over the age of fifty. Silje often dreamt of stealing into his home in the dead of the night and spinning his whiskers into yarn.

‘Ho there, Silje,’ Jonas Kleppe said. He raised a long clay pipe to his lips and struck a match against the oil can. ‘Dragging your feet again, I see. And such a face, child. Did someone shoot your goat?’

‘Hello, Mr Kleppe,’ she said, pointing back the way she’d come. ‘I heard an explosion, out at sea.’

He tapped her on the nose with the wet end of his pipe. ‘You must learn to call me Jonas, child.’

‘Jonas then. And Baldur thrives, thank you for asking, but I heard an explosion! Like a cannon.’

Mr Kleppe said ‘Ah’ and puffed gently on the pipe. He studied her face until Silje was quite red. ‘Your young man, Erik, came by me just a few moments ago, wearing that very same face. You can catch him if you—’

‘Thank you, I have no wish to see Erik now. But you must tell everyone; I think the Germans are preparing themselves.’

‘Ah,’ Mr Kleppe said. Something appeared to be amusing him. ‘You young people turn love into such a battlefield. It is not as hard as you make it, certainly no more difficult than teaching a goat to fetch a stick.’

Silje smiled painfully.

‘But when I think on it, Mrs Kleppe and I were the same at your age.’ He relit his pipe and squinted at the sky. ‘Though of course I would give anything to have her here today, shouting at me for not trimming the hedges or thatching the roof, or for spending far too much time at the tavern, instead of being at home tending to her womanly needs.’ He puffed savagely on his pipe.

‘I really should go, Mr Kleppe. I should warn everyone that—’

‘Death,’ he continued, ‘is a most odd thing, even when it is expected. You build a suit of armour for yourself so that when it

happens you can stand tall and true. You do not think that thirty, forty, fifty years on, the pain will come to you in the night when your armour has long since rusted away.' His eyes clouded and he seemed to fade, as though his soul were escaping.

'Mr Kleppe?'

He came back to her with a start. 'Right, yes,' he said. 'Must get on. These lamps won't light themselves.' He coughed and waved his pipe at the metal stalks that lined the path far into the hills. 'And if you want to do something useful, young Silje, then use that newsletter of yours to find more volunteers. Since Lars passed, God rest his soul, I have been doing this all by myself.'

'I will do that, Mr Kleppe.'

'Jonas!'

'And until we find someone, I shall help you every other day.'

'It is no job for a young lady,' Mr Kleppe said firmly.

'Of course it isn't.' Silje stood on her toes and pecked him lightly on the cheek. He reddened like a furnace as soon as her lips touched him. 'But I will help you all the same.'

'Then your help and your company will be very much appreciated,' he mumbled. 'Now off with you. Darkness is almost upon us. And I should warn you, your father's former wife is lurking by the orchids.'

'I shall try my best to avoid her, Mr Kl—'

'Jonas!' he said, climbing to the next lamp.

Silje's heart felt lighter as she took the path towards the village circle. She heard a short cry of surprise, and felt a burst of heat at the back of her neck. 'And you are still using far too much oil, Mr Kleppe.'

'Apparently so.'

'We may soon be at war, you know.'

'Thank you, child. I will bear that in mind.'

She had not taken three steps when a thought struck her. She stopped and turned. 'Mr Kleppe?'

'Mmm, yes my dear?' he replied, wiping the soot from his face.

'Is that a new ladder?'



The village streets were uncommonly quiet for a late afternoon. There was a flower and vegetable market every Tuesday, running from the small hours until dusk – every Tuesday since Silje could remember.

And today it was not there.

Silje marked time by the movement of Fólkvangr. When she was very young, her mother had told her the village was the metronome of her soul. Silje had stared at her with wide fathomless eyes, fearing she would break some magical spell if she asked what a metronome was.

Towards the centre of the village the single road divided, making room for a large circular dais formed of the same cobblestones as the town streets. Indeed, it looked for all the world as though the dais had grown from the road itself. Four narrower paths led away from the Monument, and at the point where each began, the first stone carried an inscription.

For Emily.

The centre of the stone circle was filled with orchids, each with petals of gossamer white and a heart-shaped mouth the colour of blood. Thirty-four blooms on slender stems, one for each year her mother was alive.

Silje put down the ladder and searched her pockets for a handkerchief.

‘You weep for her, child.’ The old woman moved from the shadows to stand between her and the Monument.

‘Leave me be, Marit,’ said Silje. ‘I have little time for you this evening. There has been an explosion out at sea and I must warn the village. And yes, I weep for my mother, as would you if God had seen fit to furnish you with a heart.’

Marit Ohnstad laughed. ‘You expect me to cry for her. You expect me to shed tears for the whore who stole my husband. You think me ungenerous.’

‘I think you unforgiving, and your soul fouled with bitterness.’

The old woman stepped forward until their noses were almost touching. ‘She stole him from me. She stole him and sired him twins, bastards in the eyes of God. By all that is right you and your brother should have been mine.’

‘You should have left. You should have left Fólkvangr and found a

new life. Instead you stayed to torture us. Look at you. My father did not do this to you. You did this to yourself.'

'You are a whore. Just like your mother.' Marit smiled, showing a mouth full of near-perfect teeth. 'Do you think I do not know why you take that boy into the hills? Do you think the whole village does not know?'

'I am twenty-three years old, and you are an old woman twisted by self-hatred,' Silje said mildly. 'All I need do is outlast you.'

Marit Ohnstad trembled. She opened her mouth but found herself unable to speak. Instead she turned to the Monument and plucked a single orchid from the circle.

Silje's heart screamed.

'I remember your mother. She was much as you are now: tall and beautiful with skin the colour of goat's milk. Such a delicate creature, spoilt by such a dreadful disease.'

'You are not fit to speak of my mother.'

'You and Magnus were too young to remember, I suppose; that thing that started as a tiny mound on her throat, and then grew until it had taken her face. And it was such a pretty face, so much like your own.'

'Shut up! Shut up!' Silje snatched the orchid from her and pushed her away.

Marit cried out and fell sprawling to the ground.

'You are evil, Marit. Spiteful and evil. That is why you were abandoned. And the few short years my father spent with her were worth a thousand spent with you!'

Silje wiped her eyes with her sleeve, then she hauled the ladder to her shoulder and hurried away without looking back.

CHAPTER 4



Night had fallen when she reached the doors of *The Mottled Goat*, the most popular and least salubrious of the public houses serving the hamlet of Fólkvangr. Like most of the taverns in the mountains, *The Goat* had begun life quite by accident. The building was a large cottage occupying a narrow street to the north-east of the main thoroughfare. It was conferred the honour of being a public house because one of its previous owners, in its dark and frozen past, had realised the cottage had a parlour that was not only larger than most but also faced out onto the street.

Silje placed the ladder against the wall and dried her tears. Meeting her father's former wife always left her flayed and aching; it had done so since she was five years old. Magnus had long outgrown Marit's baiting, and Silje felt ashamed she was unable to do the same. She cleared her throat, prepared her announcement and pushed against the doors.

She was met by an opaque wall of pipe smoke and the silhouettes of men huddled in the mist. The smoke she was quite familiar with; indeed, she was quite fond of it as it furnished her with memories of a future yet to come: sitting in a cottage of her own, weaving a small tapestry while her husband slept in the armchair and her six

grandchildren played at her feet. She coughed and her eyes watered as she strained to find her father. The tavern was uncommonly silent and the patrons unusually still. From behind the bar, Silje could hear the wireless at full volume.

‘I have just come from the mountains,’ she announced.

‘Be silent, child. And close the door; you are letting in the cold.’

Her father’s voice.

‘There is a sea battle,’ she continued, annoyed that the patrons seemed to be ignoring her, ‘less than two miles out. We should be prepared. I think the Germans are planning an assault on our shores.’

It was her brother who spoke, so close he startled her. ‘The Germans are already here, Silje. They have landed troops along the coast: Trondheim, Bergen and Oslo.’ And on hearing the smooth baritone of his voice, Silje found herself strangely conflicted: torn by the joy of having him home, and the sense of foreboding at what lay ahead.

Magnus Ohnstad stepped from the smoke and stood before her, a taller, steadfast, dependable version of herself. Beneath his greatcoat he wore the vestments of a priest-in-training.

‘Magnus!’ Silje threw her arms around him, pressing herself against his chest. ‘You’re back! When did you return? Why did you not come find me?’

He returned the embrace with the smile of a Norse god. ‘I would have, but I had a fair thought where you’d be: in the hills, under the chestnut tree, with Erik perhaps.’ The smile broadened to a grin, and Silje wrestled herself from his arms. ‘How dare you!’ she cried with feeling, and a furtive glance towards her father.

Jon Ohnstad remained where he sat with his back to them, hunched over a mug of ale. He may have trembled but Silje could not be sure. She scowled at Magnus and put a finger to his lips. ‘You swore ...’

‘That I did, Sister. But it is not my words that will give you away.’

‘We are trying to listen to the radio,’ Jon Ohnstad said sternly. He reached for his mug and drained it in a single mouthful. ‘And the whole tavern can hear you.’

‘And hello to you, Father.’ Silje took Magnus’s hand and led him away. ‘What did you say about the Germans?’

‘I said that they are here.’

They joined the crowd, six people deep, that encircled the tiny wireless from which a lone and sombre voice addressed them in sharp, precise sentences.

‘And who is that?’ Silje whispered.

Magnus looked horrified. ‘You do not recognise him? He is the most hated man in all of Norway. How could you not know Vidkun Quisling?’

‘Does he farm land in the mountains?’ she asked plainly.

‘Of course not, but what does that have to do with—?’

‘Can he rear onions and orchids as well as Father can?’

‘No, but—’

‘Can he milk a cow?’

Magnus folded his arms. ‘I assume not.’

‘Can he bake? Can he brew mead from honey and apples?’

‘I imagine he cannot, no.’

‘Then why should I have heard of him?’

Magnus shook his head. ‘Silje, I love you dearly, but I sometimes worry that you are perhaps not as worldly as you might be.’

‘If by “not as worldly” you mean I did not abandon my village and my family and run off to Stavanger to become a priest, then yes, I am not as worldly and I am glad of it.’

‘You could not have,’ Magnus said glumly. ‘There is no such thing as women priests.’

‘I know that,’ Silje snapped, realising why she’d never seen one.

‘The puppet Quisling.’ Kvist Gundersen spat upon the floor. ‘He tells us this is not an invasion, but a liberation. He tells us that the Nazi scum have come to free us from Allied oppression.’ He was about to spit again when a large cloth struck the side of his face.

‘You can clean that up, Kvist Gundersen,’ said Grette, The Goat’s formidable barkeep, whom many swore was a man in a previous life, and also perhaps in this one. ‘You know the rules about spitting in my tavern.’

'And I have found your ladder, Kvist,' Silje said to him. 'I left it outside.'

'Bless you, child!' Kvist said. He looked sourly at Grette before dropping to his knees to scrub the floor. 'Where did you find it?'

'Well, that is the strange thing: Mr Kleppe had it all along!'

'Mr Kleppe?' Grette said doubtfully. 'Mr Kleppe took the ladder?'

'Well, that is what I thought, but he—'

'That is very unlike, Mr Kleppe,' Magnus said, rubbing his chin.

'Yes, that is what I am saying, but I found him with—'

'Did you say the ladder is outside?' said Kvist, resting back on his haunches. 'You took it?'

'He gave it to me. He said I could return it to you.' Silje did not believe she was the kind of person to be concerned with such things, but this drought of gratitude ...

'Silje if you have taken the ladder,' Magnus said, 'then how will he light the lamps?'

'He can climb,' she protested. 'I have seen him do it before.'

'That was when you were a child,' Grette said, looking sternly at Kvist, 'and he was in his sixties.'

Under Grette's eye, Kvist prostrated himself to resume his scrubbing. 'I thank you for your efforts, Silje,' he said, 'but I have other ladders.'

Magnus nodded grimly. 'Poor Mr Kleppe.'

Before Silje could say another word, Quisling spoke from the wireless to announce a brave new day for the people of Norway.

'You should come with me when I travel back to Stavanger,' said Magnus. Grette handed him a tankard and smiled in what she believed to be an inviting fashion.

'I will think about it,' Silje said, still bristling.

'You cannot stay here your whole life, Silje.'

'Why not? Mother did. You have only been gone for three months, and you have already forgotten how much she—'

Magnus suddenly bade her to be quiet.

'You cannot tell me what to do, Magnus Ohnstad!'

'We are listening to the wireless!' their father called out. 'Quiet! The pair of you!'

The voice on the radio went on to deliver the most dreadful news.

Save for the sound of matches being struck and tankards being filled, the tavern remained silent until Lisbeth Fehn, the farrier's daughter, could contain herself no longer. 'Did none of you hear that? The King has fled! Haakon has fled and we all sit here!'

Jon Ohnstad said, 'No, he has escaped. There is a difference.'

'What difference is that, Jon?' Olaf cried. 'The King is gone and the government is in hiding. Quisling and Terboven are our new leaders, supported by that madman in Berlin.'

Silje looked about her, taking heed of the change in the air. Lisbeth seemed to have begun something of a revolt.

'May God smite them and the goats that sired them!' Kvist spat upon the floor and got to his feet to stand to attention, the cloth in his fist and his fist pressed against his chest. 'The King will not abandon us. You will see.'

'The King will be on the next boat out.'

Kvist whipped his head left and then right, his eyes narrow. 'Who said that? Show yourself for we shall have words, you and I!'

'It is the Jews I fear for.'

It took moments for Silje to realise it was her father who had spoken. His voice sounded tired and distant, as it had in the final weeks before her mother died.

'I have heard stories from the hat-maker in Bergen,' he said. 'He tells of atrocities the like of which I have not heard since the first Great War. Inhuman crimes against Jew and gypsy alike.'

'We must do something!'

'And what would you suggest, Lisbeth?' said Silje.

'A resistance!' Lisbeth's eyes were wild and streaming. 'We must mobilise ourselves in the government's absence.'

'We will do no such thing.'

As though they were a single pair of eyes, the tavern's encumbrance turned to Silje.

'We are a small village in the mountains,' she said. 'The Germans have no interest in us, and we should not give them cause to change that.'

‘So, you are saying we should do nothing.’ For the second time that night, Magnus looked at his sister as though he hardly knew her.

‘I am saying we should protect the village.’

‘By doing nothing,’ said Lisbeth.

‘What is to be gained by fighting the Germans?’

‘Our freedom!’

‘And how do you know we will not be free under them?’

‘Because we have seen what they have done in Poland and France and—’

‘We are not France and we are not Poland. We have no particular fondness for the Jews, so why should the Germans—’

‘So we should welcome them then,’ said Lisbeth. ‘Or perhaps it is you who wishes to welcome them, Silje.’

‘We are not made for this.’ Silje turned imploring eyes to her father. ‘You have fought before. Tell them.’

Jon Ohnstad stroked at his moustache. He stood and tried to look over a sea of expectant faces.

‘I think,’ he said finally, ‘it is time I took my children home.’

Magnus protested that he was twenty-three years old and did not need taking anywhere.

‘If you wish to have somewhere to live when you tire of being a priest then you will do as you are told.’ Jon Ohnstad lit his pipe and blew small grey clouds towards the rafters. ‘Well?’

Silje opened the door and stepped aside to allow her brother, seething, out into the night.

‘I will pay you tomorrow, Grette,’ Jon Ohnstad said.

Grette nodded, and told Kvist he must clean the floor again.



‘You embarrassed me,’ Magnus said, ‘in front of all our friends.’

Jon Ohnstad puffed heartily on his pipe. Silje stopped to pick orchids that grew wild between the taverns and cottages.

‘I am a priest!’

‘Not yet you’re not.’

‘I am a priest and I think that should command a level of respect. Don’t you?’

Jon Ohnstad called out to Silje, telling her to keep up. ‘She is right, Magnus. You should not have left.’

‘I could not stay and watch any longer.’

‘I do not understand.’

‘I could not stay and watch you both turning your lives and Fólkvangr into a shrine to Mother.’

Silje appeared alongside them and handed the orchids to her father. Jon Ohnstad smiled, a small thing he did so rarely.

‘I thought they might inspire you,’ she said proudly. ‘Help you think of more colours.’

‘That is most thoughtful of you, Daughter.’

‘It is *unusually* thoughtful,’ Magnus added.

‘Are you saying I am selfish? I am not the one who left.’

‘I went to find a life for myself. Is that so wrong?’

Their father sighed and walked on. He took a lamp from his bag as they approached the Monument. Silje was not surprised when he stopped at the circle of stones and peered at the orchids. Her father would notice such things; others would not.

‘Who would dare?’

‘It was Marit,’ Silje said. ‘She was here when I came down from the hills.’

Her father plucked the headless flower from the circle and closed his eyes. ‘She did this?’

‘They are only flowers, Father,’ said Magnus.

‘How can you say that? They are a memory of our mother! How can you be so unfeeling, Magnus? Is this the compassion they teach at the seminary?’

‘I carry our mother in my heart, Silje, not in a stone circle.’

‘And that is all you do to repay the love she bestowed on you, on all of us? Father has created a new flower for her and her alone. He has nurtured it and shaped it so it is a lasting monument to her. And I have—’

‘And what have you done, Silje? What have you done that makes Mother smile down upon you and not me?’

‘I do whatever I can for the village she loved.’

‘Quiet, both of you.’ Jon Ohnstad carefully placed the stem into his bag and wiped his hands on his knees. ‘I remember that you both helped me build this memorial, fifteen years ago. I remember how you both swore you would not eat until it was finished. I remember you, Magnus, cutting and polishing each stone until it was a perfect fit. And you, Silje; you chose each flower. “That one,” you would say, “because inside it is the colour of her lips”, or “That one, because its petals are pale like her skin.”’ He licked his lips and relit his pipe. ‘It seems you have both forgotten.’ He carried on walking to the stone archway where Fólkvangr ended and the mountains began. ‘I will replace the flower, Silje, but Magnus is right. We will not always be here to take care of the circle, and when we are gone the flowers will die and the stones will crumble. But your mother will endure in our hearts and in the hearts of your children, and the hearts of their children.’ He opened his arms, and Magnus embraced him warmly. Silje, however, sidestepped his embrace and began the hill trek by herself.

‘The stone circle will stay, and I will look after the flowers even if you tire of doing so, Father.’

‘Silje, I simply meant that—’

‘And as for you, Brother; you are a priest and so you will not be having any children.’ She took off her shoes and turned to the east, looking for familiar trees shadowed in the twilight.

She stopped at a narrow outcropping that reached out over the pine forests, and there she waited for her father, who in turn waited for her brother.

‘It is as black as tar out here,’ Magnus said. ‘How do you do it?’

‘It isn’t yet dark, Magnus, and if you’d spent time more time outside when we were children then you’d know how to find your way home at dusk.’

Jon Ohnstad looked beyond the forest and down to the base of the mountain holding Bergen in its cradle.

‘I see fires,’ he said.

Silje moved closer to the edge and followed his gaze. It was true; small pinpricks of light stood out in the harbour and in the main

town. She could hear the sound of gunshots, carried on the mountain winds. She thought she could hear screaming ...

'Tomorrow, I will travel to the town,' Jon Ohnstad announced. 'I have friends there; I would see that they are unharmed.'

'You will do no such thing,' said Silje.

'The hat-maker lives near the harbour. He has been a friend of this family for many years.'

'Father, he is Jewish. He is lost.'

Again, the look, she thought, and wondered why, this night, so many had gazed upon her as though the true Silje Ohnstad had been spirited away by trolls.

'I will help him if I can,' Jon Ohnstad said without taking a stern eye away from his daughter. 'He would do no less for me. He would do no less for the both of you.'

'At least wait a few days, until things have settled.'

'Silje—'

'She is right, Father.' Magnus looked solemnly at the fires burning in the town below. 'The Germans will be suspicious of anyone approaching the town now. You cannot help Mr Dorfmann if you are detained.'

Jon Ohnstad looked to his son, who stared back without blinking, and then to Silje who nodded her agreement. 'Then I will go two days from now,' he said. 'And I will travel alone.'

'No,' said Silje. 'We will all travel, together.'