

Halvdan

The North Realm

by Tony Graham

Thyri kept the creatures at bay with her winged spear as she backed out onto the frozen surface of the lake. Her shirt and pants were both of leather but tight enough to leave no doubt as to her sex. She wore no cloak, and her long, golden hair was unbound. As a beautiful woman hunting alone, her look was an invitation. Her appearance was deliberate.

Rumors of these creatures had first been heard of two winters past. A creature, walking upright like a man, dressed as a man, but thick of body, long of arm and cursed with a large, round, bestial head. Monsters that dressed and used weapons as a man. The creatures had shown a preference for capturing women. A question of taste. The creatures eventually ate the people they captured. They ate the dead.

Halvdan stood up, shaking the snow from his shoulders and back. He pulled the sword from the scabbard on his back, tightened his grip on his axe, settling it comfortably into his hand.

He was proud of his cousin. Proud that Thyri had laid this trap for the creatures, volunteering to serve as the bait. It was a good plan. He looked again at the creatures dressed as men. They angered him.

There were a dozen of the creatures circling Thyri on the edge of the ice. One creature carrying a spear had a lame arm, red blood trails from it falling onto the snow. Thyri had wounded at least one in the chase. They stayed closer to the shore as their greater weight would crack the ice.

Halvdan raised his axe in the air. The six warriors spread out to his sides readied their axes, swords and spears. Halvdan began to jog out of the wood, increasing his speed as he hit





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the clear ground of the lake shore.

On the ice, Thyri began laughing at the creatures. For a moment, the creatures paused, puzzled by her reaction.

Halvdan let the rage boil out of him in a battle cry taken up by the other as they charged the creatures across the snow.

“Vakur!”



Illustration *Thyri* by Andy Underwood.

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