

A Viking Holiday



The MacLomain Series: Viking Ancestors' Kin
Book 2.5
By
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Chapter One



Winter Harbor, Maine

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“WE SIMPLY *MUST* have a Christmas party for Auntie Megan,” Emily declared as she planted her little fists on her hips. “Which means we need a tree.” Her hopeful eyes shot to him. “Will you take me to pick out a tree, Uncle Sean?”

“I’m not sure that’s a great idea...” he started to say before Mema Angie interrupted him.

“I think that sounds like a lovely idea, Emily.” Her eyes met Sean’s. “Megan’s been home from the hospital for nearly a week now. A festive party is just what she needs.” She smiled at Emily. “And every Christmas party needs a tree.”

Emily grinned and nodded in agreement.

Though tempted to grab a beer, Sean sighed and poured a cup of coffee instead. The last thing he wanted to do was host a party. Especially without Cybil or Samantha to help. But unfortunately, they were still in tenth-century Scandinavia.

Speaking of the distant past.

His eyes narrowed on the living room. “Where’d Svala go?”

“Causing trouble somewhere I’m sure,” Shannon said as she joined him in the kitchen.

Emily’s mother, Shannon was one of five sisters who owned the house. Or should he say one of two? Because he knew Cybil and Samantha would end up staying in the past, and now that Lauren was gone too, he suspected the same fate awaited her.

Though most modern-day men would be baffled by the idea of time travel, Sean was more than used to it. Not because he’d experienced it firsthand, but because he knew plenty who had. Two years ago Megan, his best friend, was the first to travel back in time to Scandinavia where she fell in love and married a Viking king. Shortly after, her sisters followed and ended up with the king’s brothers. Now, Cybil and her sisters were doing the same. Finding love across the centuries.

What some might find even more astounding was that these Viking men were dragon-shifters. As it turned out, so were Cybil and her sisters. Megan and her sisters, however, were not. He sometimes wondered if it would have made a difference. If she was half dragon, would she have gotten so sick? Would she be facing cancer in her late fifties? Because though she was only gone a few years, time passed differently between the two eras. So when Megan returned to the future, she had aged over twenty-five years.

“I still can’t make sense of this,” Shannon murmured as she rolled Lauren’s button between her fingers. “Where did Lauren go? And Cybil? And what about Sam?”

“You know where,” Sean said softly as Mema Angie and Emily headed for the garage to round up decorations. “You saw them vanish by the ash tree. Sam, Sven, even Tait. They all went back in time. And then Lauren...”

“Then Lauren,” Shannon echoed as he trailed off, “was mysteriously trapped inside the house while Tait was locked outside. Then, poof, she vanished. Nobody was here, so we have no clue what really happened to her.”

Sean nodded. That about summed it up.

He and Shannon kept staring at Lauren’s button. It had been found dead center on the kitchen island. Normally, they wouldn’t think anything of it, but with a prude like Lauren, it was

ominous evidence of something gone wrong. The woman was a poster girl for the meticulously dressed. She wouldn't go anywhere with a missing button. Anywhere willingly, that is.

"Oh, God," Shannon groaned, her eyes on the deck. "I think I'll go help the girls."

He didn't blame her for vanishing.

Svala was heading inside.

Unlike several other Vikings who had arrived and then vanished, Svala had not. She showed up with her mother in late August and had been a pain in everyone's ass ever since. When Megan went into the hospital, things only got worse. Mainly because Sean insisted that Svala wear twenty-first century clothing before he'd let her go visit her mother. On occasion, she needed to look normal. Especially considering she'd dressed like a tenth-century Scandinavian since she had arrived and their small community grew more and more curious about it.

"Where is everyone?" Svala narrowed her eyes and scanned the room as she came inside. "I do not trust that woman."

That could mean either Mema Angie or Shannon because Svala didn't like either of them. She didn't like anyone for that matter.

He leaned against the counter and sipped his coffee. "They're getting ready to decorate."

She frowned. "For what?"

"Christmas."

Her frown grew heavier as she grabbed a beer and came, 'Svala close.' He'd coined the phrase himself. For most people, it meant she was in their personal space. But he knew what it was all about. She was trying to do a number of things. Intimidate him or get him riled up. If those two didn't work, she loved to try to turn him on just to see if she could. So far, in the three months he had known her, she hadn't managed to accomplish any of those things. Well, at least not the first two.

At any rate, usually she got *herself* riled up...and maybe even turned on.

He made sure he didn't focus on that last thought for long. She might be a brat half the time, but she was so damn beautiful, and he was only human. Something she enjoyed reminding him of when she taunted him about how he likely lacked in bed. How much talent it took to please a dragon like her.

"Christmas," Svala said, the word clearly uncomfortable on her tongue as her dark blue eyes held his. "You celebrate this holiday, yes?"

"Ayup."

He understood why she wasn't all that impressed. How could she be when Christianity eventually put an end to her pagan beliefs? Then again, based on what he'd heard, Norse gods very much existed in the tenth-century so who said they didn't now? It seemed Celtic gods and even God Himself did too. It had been confirmed one way or another by various time traveling friends. Multiple gods existed.

"Ayup," she mouthed, mocking his Maine accent. Though they obviously spoke different languages, the old ash tree out front was created by a demi-god and allowed them to understand one another.

Before he could respond, she shook her head and stepped even closer, her eyes far too devious as she looked up at him. "Is your Christmas celebration like our Festival of Ostara?" Her eyes ran over him slowly. "Because I am in need of sex."

She had been doing this more and more lately. Lusting rather than hating. And he was the only man around. Though tempted to take her to a bar so she could get it out of her system, he feared it would put more scrutiny on her than she already had.

Or so he kept telling himself.

"Sean," she purred, running her hand up his thigh. "Did you hear me?"

Oh, he heard her all right.

"I'm taking Emily to get a tree." He stepped around her before she got a handful of something he couldn't control. "Stay here."

"No."

"Yes." He gestured upstairs toward Megan's room. "Stay here and take care of your mother."

"No, I'm tired of being stuck here," she argued. "I am coming."

"No, Svala," he grumbled as he shouldered into a heavy coat. "I let you go to the hospital, and you almost got arrested."

"It's not my fault your people fear daggers."

"A dagger held to a doctor's throat when he tried to get to your mother's bed," he reminded. "Because you refuse to adhere to twenty-first century laws."

"Laws," she bit out as she strode after him. "Made by weak men for their weak people."

"And that's why you're staying here." He turned and stopped her. "Because you refuse to blend in. You refuse to make life easier for any of us."

"I do not care if I blend in."

"There ya go," he muttered. "Point proven."

Her brows slammed together. "Will you let me come if I *blend in*?"

"You couldn't manage it to see your sick mother," he said. "Why should I believe you would now?"

"Because I am less emotional," she said, matter-of-factly.

His brows perked. "You're never less emotional, Svala."

She jutted out her chin. "I am."

"Not once since I met you."

"Are we going, Uncle Sean?" Emily said, excited as she raced back into the living room wearing a big Santa hat that swallowed her head. She grabbed Svala's hand in passing. "And is Auntie Warriress Svala coming too?"

Emily had decided within days of meeting them that they would get the titles of aunt and uncle. Naturally, Svala made sure hers had a little extra something.

"I would love to," Svala declared, winking at Sean as the child pulled her along.

Hell.

"Not dressed like that," Sean growled and pulled Cybil's jacket out of the closet.

"Not that one." Svala frowned at it, reached around him and grabbed one of his. It was comically large on her.

He frowned. "What are you doing?"

"I'm not wearing anything of Cybil's. I don't like her."

"Then wear one of Samantha's."

"I don't like her either."

Sean downright scowled as he pulled on a beanie hat. "And you like me?"

"Better than I do them," she quipped as she helped Emily with her jacket.

"Lucky me," he muttered under his breath before he called out, "Anybody else wanna come?"

"No," Shannon and Mema Angie said in emphatic synchrony as they started bringing in decorations.

Both shot him a you're-on-your-own look when he silently pled with them.

Damn it.

They would be no help.

So off he went with Emily and Svala.

It was snowing lightly as they piled into his dual cab pick-up. The forecasters were calling for a few back-to-back storms. This was the lighter system. If all went well, he should be able to take in one more catch before the second system hit. His business had done well so far this season, but he knew his guys could use a little extra cash for the holidays.

"I would like to go with you," Svala said.

Sean frowned at her. "You are going with me."

Svala perked a brow at him. "When you go out fishing again."

"Hell, no," he muttered and turned up the radio to drown out any further crazy requests she might have.

"You shouldn't say *hell*, Uncle Sean," Emily chirped as she played with the radio until she found holiday music. "Mama says that's a bad word."

Svala smirked at him, then started chatting about Loki's Hel. Sean almost told her to stop, but Emily seemed enraptured. So did Svala. But then she tended to get like this when she talked to the little girl. Animated in a way that made him want to watch her instead of the road. It was times like this that Svala seemed almost normal. That's one of the reasons he was so glad Emily had arrived. Otherwise, he would have never known the truth.

Svala at least liked kids.

He hadn't thought she liked anything or anyone.

"Oh, look, look, look at all the trees," Emily cried a few minutes later when he pulled into the marina's parking lot. Cheerful music played, and a wide selection of Christmas trees shimmered beneath festive lights.

Svala allowed Emily to pull her along, but the Viking's eyes remained locked on the boats. Specifically his fishing trawlers. He wondered what she saw when she looked at them. Soon enough he knew as Emily ran ahead and Svala nodded their way. "They are much different than the boat you built with mother, yes?"

Sean was surprised that she knew about the small Viking boat he and Megan had built together. The very boat that ultimately took her back to ancient Scandinavia the final time. He set aside emotion when it welled. They had spent a lot of quality time building that boat, and in a way, he was glad it sailed her straight into happiness. But now it was well over two decades later, and she wasn't off living a wonderful life but back home fighting cancer.

"Yeah, my trawlers are different," he acknowledged. "So is that little boat your mom and I built still around?"

"I am not sure." Svala shrugged. "I have not seen that old thing in years." She cocked a look at him. "What is a *trawler*?"

"A boat designed to catch large amounts of fish with a net."

"Ah." Though she shot him a haughty look, he didn't miss the admiration in her eyes as she discreetly looked at his boats. "I do not need nets to catch fish. My magic takes care of that."

Sean didn't bother responding because she had just thrown him a, 'Svala hook.' That meant she was baiting him to argue with her. She would point out yet again how she wasn't just a Viking but a dragon and could do everything everyone else could do, only better. He often wondered what had happened to make her so pompous and defiant...and maybe a little insecure.

Though tempted to ask Megan why Svala acted like she did, he refrained. Because, all aside, at least some of her behavior could be attributed to her mother's illness and of course, her father's. Because as far as everyone knew, the Viking king still lay on his deathbed caught in an unnatural slumber.

"Are you not curious how I knew they were your boats?" Svala said.

"Not really." He *had* been curious but decided the less he engaged her, the better. Especially with so many people around. You never knew how she might react and what she might say, and this town was far too small.

"I can feel your connection to your boats," she said so softly he barely caught it over the wind. "Your love for them."

Megan had spoken at great length about dragon shifters and their various powers. As far as he knew, they were only mentally connected to their family...and their mates.

Sean frowned and said nothing as he focused on Emily who jumped up and down in front of a tree. "This is it! I found our tree!"

"That is a good choice," Svala confirmed as she looked it over. "Tall and strong." She nodded. "I approve."

Emily beamed at the compliment before her eyes fell on Sean. "Do you like it too, Uncle Sean?"

"I do," he confirmed and waved a guy over.

"I would like to go see your boats before we leave, Sean," Svala said.

"No."

"Oh, me too," Emily cried as he paid the guy and grabbed the tree. "Can we? Can we?" she said over and over, jumping around him as he headed for the truck.

He sighed and shook his head. "Best to get back before the weather gets too bad."

"This is a weak system," Svala said, sniffing the air. "With very little moisture."

Damn dragons.

Sean tried to hide his scowl from Emily. It was nearly Christmas, and she didn't deserve it. "It's dark. We wouldn't be able to see much."

"But there are tons of lights on down there," Emily said. "*Pa-lease*, Uncle Sean."

His steps slowed at her words, her eagerness. He suddenly remembered being her age. Pleading to see the boats, pleading for his dad to go fishing with him, but being told, "no," time and time again. He only had one memory of his dad taking him fishing, and he'd just as soon forget it.

"Okay," he finally agreed as he finished tying down the tree. "Let's head down there."

He had just turned, Emily cheering his decision the whole time, when someone called out, "Sean, is that you?"

He squinted against the parking lot lights as the same female voice laughed, said, "It is you!" before she closed the distance and embraced him.

Only when she pulled back and smiled did he realize who it was.

Julie.

The woman Megan's sister Amber had been determined he fall in love with.

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About the Author



Sky Purington is the bestselling author of over thirty novels and several novellas. A New Englander born and bred who recently moved to Virginia, Sky was raised hearing stories of folklore, myth, and legend. When combined with a love for nature, romance, and time-travel, elements from the stories of her youth found release in her books.

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