



QUEEN'S MOVE

'Pizzaaaargh!' roared the Berserker. 'Wharsoapizzaaaargh!'

'Oh, don't you mind him, madam,' said the Knight. 'He'll settle down nicely once the pizza delivery arrives. Honestly, it's bad enough we got left behind on a sandy beach on Lewis. But the home-delivery service from Stornoway is beyond belief. When did we place that order, Harald?'

'Ages-and-ages-ago!' roared the Berserker, laying about himself with a bloodied axe. 'Time-of-our-ancestors!'

'That's right, Harald, it was quite a while ago now, wasn't it? Maybe a good couple of hours. Shocking service.'

'Kill-them-all, kill-them-all!' Splinters were flying out of the top of his shield as he gnashed his teeth.

'Well, maybe just a two-star review on TrustPilot, Harald. We'll let you do that later.'

'Pizzaaaargh! Death!'

'Just talk, just berserker talk, madam,' whispered the Knight. 'But he is really quite unpredictable when he's hungry for his lunch. And what about the Queen?' The Knight slid his eyes sideways to indicate the rather plump woman sitting next to the King, one hand supporting her cheek. 'Don't even speak to her, would be my advice. Doesn't look too happy, does she? Not at all. Listen, let's move away a little, I'll tell you something. Over here's fine. See, that's Queen Katrinsdottir. Gave up a pretty comfortable life in Norway to get married over on Iceland. As part of the wedding celebrations, she was promised a voyage of conquest, sand and sunshine in the Black Sea. Cocktails, infinity pools, massages, the works. Instead she ends up on a cold and – let's face it – pretty windy beach, five hundred leagues from nowhere, up to her neck in sand. I'll say she's not very happy. And, to crown it all, she ordered up a Grand Big Mac, and that's not arrived either. Maybe we should send someone out to look for the delivery guy, could have got lost, what d'you think?'

'Pizzaaaarghh!' screamed the Berserker, who was following us everywhere. He was standing right behind us, gnawing his shield. His eyes were rolling and there was froth all over his beard. 'Wharisit-wharisit? Ahmstarving!'

'No,' agreed the knight, 'not a pretty sight, is he? It's OK, Harald, we'll get this sorted soon. Deep breaths, remember what we discussed? And counting to ten?'

'Five-seven-nine-ten! – aaargh! Wharsoah-pizzaaaargh!'

'Oh dear, so sorry about this. You should have seen him last week, when his jumbo thick crust haggis pizza didn't arrive. Well, it did arrive – late and stone cold. I suppose they'll unearth the Deliveroo boy from the dunes sometime. What's left of him, at least. Anyway, so the King here – that's Surli Surlisson. You'll recognise from his pictures, of course? No? Famous all the way from Shetland to Greenland? Oh well. King Surli, he's not a happy boy either, what with his wife kicking up. Wasn't what he had in mind, either. Nor any of us really. We had a good contract sewn up with the Russians, you know? Oh, look: must go, that's the Bishop shouting for me.'

'Get over here, you miserable wretch, the Queen wants you! Is this what we pay you for? Is this what we pay him for, Your Highness? By Odin's Bloodied Beard and the Merciful Wrath of God, we think not!'

'Sorry, Your Holiness, I was just -'

'Just nothing!' interrupted the Queen. 'Call yourself a Knight? Where's your horse? You've got a horse, haven't you? Even if it is a teeny-tiny one. Call those horses, Surli? No wonder we've ended up here. I've seen bigger dogs than that back home in Norway. My mother was right. She told me I

shouldn't have fallen for you.'

'Sorry, dear,' muttered the King, looking as gloomy as a King can look.

'Pathetic,' snorted the Queen, looking down her nose. She glared at the Knight. 'You! - fetch your horse and then get over to town and fetch me my Big Mac. If there's any hold-up, trash the place – take the Berserker with you.'

'But -'

'In fact, no,' snapped the Queen. 'Don't even bother asking about the Big Mac. Just slaughter them all. Leave no one alive. Raze the place to the ground, that'll teach them. Then drop by Burger King and get me a Rebel Whopper, extra fries and a Chocolate Shake. And make it fast!'

'Certainly, Your -'

'What are you even still doing here? That's not a question!'

The Knight put spurs to his pony and set off at a trot. The Berserker bashed his shield with his axe, popped his eyes and set off behind in a loping run. He looked a bit more cheerful now that something was being done. The pair disappeared over the last of the sand dunes and into the moor. In the distance, even against the howl of the gale, we could hear the war-cry :

'Pizzaaaargh!'

