

Editorial Review: “Her Viking Saviour” (Lore and Love Trilogy: Book One)

Author: Steffy Smith

“Wynflaed shed her filthy, ragged clothing and stepped into the chilly stream in this unchosen foreign land. All she could see were tall trees and shrubbery with no signs of human life. Not even an animal scurrying away. After the torturous boat journey surrounded by a growing filth and stench, the cold, biting water was a warm welcome. Exhausted, she could muster no shame at her nudity but she was still thankful that her captors were at a slight distance, uninterested in watching them all bathe. She had no energy for modesty. Wynflaed lowered herself into the clear depths and squeezed her eyes tight as recent tumultuous events replayed in her mind.”

Torben “Hel-Bringer” Ulfson, Chieftain of his people, is at a market, when he notices a disturbance. His status and reputation allow him to broker a solution with the evil Guthred, and all those, including this reviewer, who are eagerly awaiting the Viking version of a cute-meet are appeased. For our heroine Wynflaed is in some strife when she is rescued, and Torben is not a moment too soon. “Her Viking Saviour” is aptly titled by author Steffy Smith and this genre never gets old. These are tried-and-true themes that – be honest – we all enjoy reading for sheer escapism (what do you mean, there are no tall Viking chieftans at Walmart?). This damsel is in distress, and the hero has noticed. Please be aware, though, that Wynflaed is initially a captive and while these situations are not unexpected in this genre (and in these historical times) some modern readers may find and some readers may find the circumstances of her plight, and the threat to her personal safety, disturbing.

And so begins this fascinating historical romance, with Torben and Wynflaed engaged in a battle of wits, and in dealing with their growing physical attraction (which is more than alluded to in some scenes). Like men everywhere, Torben is subjected to joking from friends as they realize his preoccupation, and these scenes and conversations add some well-crafted humor. The dialogue is believable and authentic throughout this novel, particularly between Torben and Wynflaed. Neither of them are pushovers and both value independence.

But the story is not only about them. There are sub-plots; Torben’s previous “friends-with-benefits” relationship with Gunhilda, and his relationship with his sister Freydis, who is determined to follow her own dream. In writing of such a convincing and diverse community, Smith has created a strong and compelling plot, with Torben and Wynflaed’s relationship reflected by the reactions of the people around them.

“Wynflaed found no further opportunity to examine Torben’s personality and she had to admit she was disappointed. Within days, he had finished his trading and Ragnav led them to the two great Viking ships they were to sail to Klavik upon, much larger and more impressive than the one they had arrived on with Guthred. At the keels of the longships were intricately carved figureheads of ravens, two of them joined as one, facing in opposite directions. They were so detailed she could imagine the realistic carvings detaching themselves from the ship and flying away. The carved eyes seemed to follow her gaze. It unnerved her as much as it was impossible to look away from. A giant raven that would terrify both those at sea and on land. Ragnav must have seen her staring at them, and he gestured to the figureheads proudly.”

As is fitting for the time period, there is also mention of superstition and sacrifice, and the narrative overall provides the reader with a broad understanding of Viking life and communities. The return of Guthred symbolizes the constant threat of warfare and change. Some readers may prefer more tension in the relationship of Torben and Wynflaed, who, once they eventually admit to their mutual feelings, do not seem to suffer any significant rift in their relationship. By contrast, the challenges

they face once together are mainly external. Other readers may see this as a slow burn romance where the tension is in the anticipation of a relationship.

“Torben held the reins of both their horses as they entered Stavanger. Many familiar faces smiled as they passed, and he nodded and smiled back. Curious eyes looked Wynflaed up and down. It must be odd for them to see him pass through without Ragnav and Leif at his side. He looked down at the top of her head. She held it high, the shiny tresses framed her face prettily as they poked out from her hood. The grace she carried herself with was a thing of beauty. Her soft but sure arm movements. Her strides long and commanding. Like a Valkyrie. All she needed was a helmet and shield. His fierce Wynflaed carried herself in such a regal manner.”

“Her Viking Saviour” by Steffy Smith is a Viking romance which will delight the reader, with its mix of a sassy heroine, a handsome hero (what more do you need?) and the fascinating backdrop of Viking communities, superstition and lands. While the reader will be under no illusion as to the extent of Torben and Wynflaed’s physical attraction, the narrative makes it clear that their relationship is also a meeting of minds. As Torben battles to resolve family and personal issues, the threat of conflict is never far away. A great holiday read for those seeking an escape from the stress of the rat-race (or holiday visits from relatives!)

"Her Viking Saviour" by Steffy Smith receives 4 stars from The Historical Fiction Company