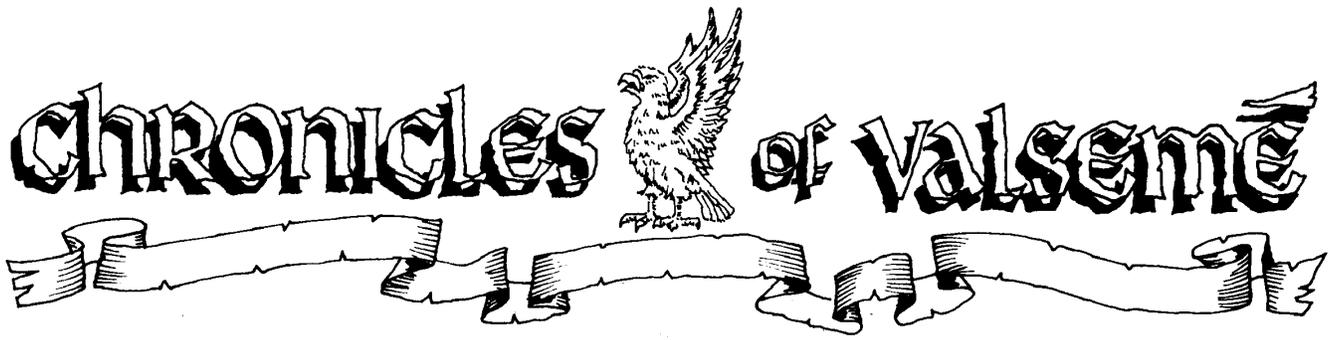


Chronicles of Valsemè



Greetings gentlefolk,

I write this missive in haste. Pray forgive its brevity. There be scant moments to set my quill to parchment, but I wished to alert you — something is afoot in the barony!

With the first airs of spring, a ship arrived out of Danmark from the famed market town of Hedeby. Now, over the past several years, Lord Rurik has conducted trade and maintained his former contacts with the merchants there. A cargo was not expected at this time, however. Indeed, 'twas the baron's plan to sail later in the summer, along with his family, to personally barter Valsemè's goods in Hedeby this season.

As it happened, the Danish ship docked for only a few hours, its cargo destined for other Norman ports. However, a curious man debarked from the ship and presented himself straight away to our good baron. Lord Rurik secluded himself in his chamber with the man (who has since been identified to me as a kinsman of Isaac the Jew, an old acquaintance of Lord Rurik's). When the men emerged from the chamber, I can tell you a new heaviness weighed upon the baron and his countenance was most solemn.

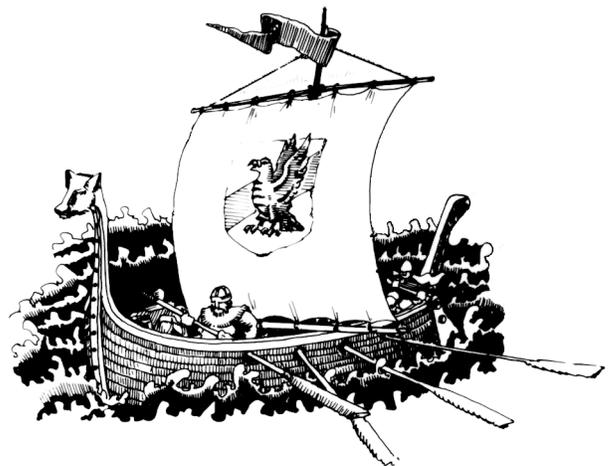
Isaac's kinsman departed forthwith, and Lord Rurik repaired to the top of the keep, as he is wont to do when he desires to be alone to deliberate some matter. Hours later, he descended and sought out Lady Brienne, then Ketil and, finally, Bolsgar. 'Twas not until dinner, as I sat over my trencher in the hall of the manor house, that I learned what the day had wrought. Lord Rurik rose from his place on the *dais* and announced he would journey to Hedeby earlier than he originally intended. Lady Brienne and their children, and Ketil and his wife, Aleth, will also join him. They intend to sail as soon as the *Sea Falcon* can be provisioned and manned. We've done little else since, I can assure you, thus owing to my haste this eve. Bolsgar will oversee the barony in the lord's absence and I will assist him in what capacities I can.

More news. Lyting has freshly arrived from helping renovate St. Wandrille's abbey and brings tidings of his own. He has decided to take the cowl of the Benedictines and join the holy brothers at the monastery of Corbie. Brother Bernard is greatly pleased. Ketil, predictably, is thoroughly and quite vocally disgruntled. Lady Brienne could not conceal her initial surprise, though she has since masked her feelings in the matter. Lord Rurik keeps his own opinion close to his heart but has invited Lyting to join their sojourn to Danmark. Lyting contemplated this and after some discussion with his brother, agreed. 'Tis my belief, Lyting looks on this excursion as a pilgrimage of sorts, a last venture to his birth land before he cloisters himself behind the high stone walls of Corbie.

I must set apart this parchment for now. There is yet much to be about. On the morrow, the *Sea Falcon* sets sail. Keep Valsemè's noble family in your prayers, I urge you. A chill of foreboding has settled deep in my bones. I fear whatever draws Lord Rurik to Hedeby has fateful consequences to bear. But who shall bear them? This, I know not, only that the chill remains.

May the days smile upon you and God keep you well.

Anita of Gordon
Chronicler
Valsemè, 915 A.D.



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