

Ragnar and the Sea Dragon by Bethany Harding

Come closer my friends to my glowing hearth and listen as I tell you a tale of epic heroes and a brave battle between good and evil that has been told by raging fires and whispered in the darkness of shadows for decades before you or I were even born.

Many glowing moons ago back in the dawn of time when death-defying dragons and slippery sea serpents ruled over the seas and the skies of Norway, when all seemed lost there was a flicker of hope amongst the darkness. The queen of Norway, Queen Helgar she was called, refused to be scared and ordered more fish to be caught in order to host a huge feast.

Above the waves, the fishermen were hauling the fish up from the water. Underneath the sea, something big stirred, furious at its food being caught...

Back in the castle, the queen was busy preparing for her feast in her finest and most precious long ship, the one encrusted with jewels and gems and a silk lined linen sail with the prettiest and most fabulous colours.

Once the feast had started, drawn to the music, laughter and lights, the beast of the deep rose, unfurling its bat-like wings and swooping down upon the ship. It was pandemonium. The people on the boat started to scream and shout – they had never seen a beast like this ever before!

This beast was a sea dragon but one like no other, this one had dazzling, patterned scales, a fiery searing breath, three heads, a double barbed tail, golden pointed teeth, a horrible, ghastly, blood red ruby forked tongue and a set of spines running down the length of its back and neck.

The next day, Queen Helgar sent out a message requesting a hero or heroine to save her people. All of the Kings and Queens of different lands got the announcement but they were all too scared to try and so just passed it on. Eventually, a warrior princess, Ragnar she was called, decided to step up to the challenge and defeat this sea beast of the deep and stop it terrorising Queen Helgar's people.

Ragnar set off on her gallant black stallion through the ferocious forest and up the rocky path towards Norway. Ragnar had brought lots of equipment: her magic sword with the enchanted hilt; her amulet of Zenithar and her silver bracelet encrusted with rubys. Her amulet had special powers, Ragnar could look into it and she could see her enemies next move. Her sword had a magical hilt so that the blade would grow back every time it was cut off. Ragnar also brought 16 hand-picked harthkinsmen and told them about the problem.

When Ragnar and her warriors got to Norway they met Queen Helgar in her Royal Mead Hall and at once a glimmer of sudden hope warmed the old queens heart.

"Are you... are you here to help us?" she said.

"Yes, yes I am" replied Ragnar. "I heard of your monster and so came to help you and your people".

Queen Helgar thanked Ragnar and led her to the fishermen's boats and showed her the damage done to them. Ragnar jumped into the sole-surviving boat and sailed off into the horizon.

Soon Ragnar and her battle brothers found the devil of the deep munching on yet another boat full of unfortunate souls to be feasted upon. When 'Spike Neck' – for that was the monsters name – saw them and began his journey towards the distant boat, Ragnar looked into her amulet and saw that he was going to shoot a blast of fire at them, so Ragnar held up her giant metal shield and as the sea beast blew out the fiery flames. Instead of burning up the ship they lapped at the shield uselessly.

Furious at being outsmarted, Spike Neck flapped his wings and lifted out of the sea into the sky, with water dripping and trickling down off his wings and dropping gently into the sea below. Then, spitting with venom, the slimy sea serpent flew forwards and slapped its tail against the side of the ship upsetting it and throwing two men over the side. Luckily, Ragnar had stabbed her sword into the beasts tail when it lunged and was now hanging 6ft above the seal-bath.

Supported only by her weapon, Ragnar began to climb up the creatures spiky back while Spike Neck tried to throw her off. Sooner rather than later, Ragnar reached her goal – the monsters grotesque heads – and plunged her enchanted sword (blessed by the gods) deep into the beasts skull and flesh of each head in turn. As she did, a spurt of warm blood drenched Ragnars arms and splattered everywhere. The only problem was Spike Neck immediately dropped like a stone (along with Ragnar) into the never ending wind whipped waves of Norway. The onlooking warriors gasped in horror – where was Ragnar?! Then the stealthy heroine dropped down from the sails, it turned out that when Spike Neck had fallen she jumped for the sails! Ragnar sailed to shore a hero. Then, pink with pleasure, she handed a blood covered scale to Queen Helgar.

“Your devil of the deep is no more and will no longer torment your people, nor will he give you any more trouble or loss”

A round of applause greeted Ragnars announcement.

“He is dead, drowned, no more. I have triumphed and seen with my own eyes as the murderous monster fell like a leaf in autumn”

The next day Ragnar and her remaining warriors set off to their homeland in a beautiful longship – just one of the many gifts from a thankful Queen Helgar – followed by a cascade of people screaming and shouting in happiness. Ragnar admired her new pendant that Queen Helgar had given to her. It was made of the beasts scale. Now, as she looked closer it was a lovely bluey greeny colour with a splash of white right in the centre, as Ragnar wondered, the ship crept ever closer to home.