

"I am the King of the Danes," he announced, "and I'm going to have you put to death."

# The Skoli Vikings

A Norse Story

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*As told by Chengir Abu Beni Said*

A king of the Danes had heard rumors of the Skoli Vikings, who the stories said, were not afraid to die. He questioned every traveler he knew if the tales were true and everyone agreed. What was said about the Skoli Vikings was indeed accurate.

As it happened, a ship of the Skoli Vikings was captured in Danish waters and the king took the opportunity to determine for himself if the legend was true. He had all the Vikings locked in the hold of their ship and brought them up one at a time. The first captive was a strapping young man whose muscles rivaled even the god Balder, the master of beauty.

"I am the King of the Danes," he announced, "and I'm going to have you put to death."

The young man smiled. "Very well. I am a Skoli Viking and not afraid to die."

"You don't understand," the king tried to explain, "I'm going to have you disemboweled. You will not go to Valhalla. We're going to take bets on how long it takes you to die."

"Excellent," the Skoli Viking announced, "Do you mind if I bet too?"

The king of the Danes laughed, but he agreed to the young man's request. There was great merriment among the Danes as the Skoli Viking's entrails were spread over the deck. He, however, remained stoic and silent. Never revealing any sign of distress. Nor did he plead for his life. Soon the Danes mirth turned to melancholy as the Skoli Viking died. For not only was he not afraid to die, but he had won the bet. The Danes were forced to throw his winnings over the side with his body as was the custom.

The king of the Danes called for another to be brought forward. This Skoli was a tall man, well over six feet in height. He was well dressed. Almost as well outfitted as a jarl. The king of the Danes grinned. Surely this man would not wish to see his life come to a close.

"I am the King of the Danes," he announced, "and I'm going to have you put to death."

The well-dressed man gave him a wry smile. "As you wish. I am a Skoli Viking and not afraid to die."

"You don't understand," the Danish king tried to explain, "You will not be joining your ancestors in Valhalla. We're going to tie your legs to a rope and throw you out to use as bait for whales."

"Excellent," the Skoli Viking announced, "I love a good spot of fishing."

The Danes laughed and chained his ankles and tied the chain tightly to a rope. They raised the sail and threw him overboard. The weight of the chain dragged him under, so he would drown, and the movement of the ship dragged him behind the stern. Not long after, fish began to land on the deck. The Skoli Viking was tossing them up from the sea. Dogfish and Sea Lamprey's flopped on the deck. The Danes tried to hold their breath to test themselves. To see if they could outlast the Skoli. But one by one they were forced to exhale and gasp for fresh air. Once all the Danes were exhausted, a huge Basking Shark landed on the deck. It was at least eight feet long, but it lay still on the deck. The Skoli had strangled it with his bare hands before tossing it onto the dragonship.

Finally, the rain of fish halted, and the Danes cut the rope, sending the Skoli Viking to the bottom of the Aegir's sea. The king of the Danes was still not satisfied. He continued to bring up the Skoli Vikings one

at a time. The king offered a prize immense enough to make a man wealthy if one of his men would fashion a way to make one of the Skoli fearful of his impending death. His men were both inventive and gruesome, but each one of the Vikings proclaimed he was “not afraid to die.”

Once the Dane’s exhausted their repertoire of horrific execution methods, the king simply had Olaf Wildhair cut off their heads. As Olaf was an old man of over forty, his arms grew weary quickly and he began to take several swings to lose a man’s head from his shoulders. The last two of the Skoli Vikings noticed this and hatched a plan to escape their fate.

The second to the last of the Skoli Vikings had long, beautiful blond hair. The type which made young maidens drool. As he was brought forward and announced he was “not afraid to die,” he turned to the king of the Danes. “Your grace, I do have one request before I die.”

At this, the king’s ears perked up. He smiled. “If such a boon does not involve you escaping your fate ... and if it is within my power to grant, speak and it shall be yours.”

“I am not afraid to die,” the Skoli repeated. “However, the ladies would be most distressed to see my golden locks caked in blood. Could you have Olaf’s son hold my hair so when the blow is struck it will not be soiled with my blood?”

The king of the Danes considered this for a moment and then agreed. Olof’s son stepped forward and grabbed the Vikings blond hair with his two hands, holding the golden locks out of the way of his father’s swing. Yet when Olaf grunted, the Skoli knew he had begun his swing and he leaned forward, pulling the boy’s hands into the path of Olaf’s blade.

Before Olaf could stop, he had severed his own son’s hands. Anger filled his eyes and a rage awoke in Olaf’s heart. He found the strength to sever the blond man’s head with but one swing of his axe. The king sighed and ordered the last of the Skoli Vikings to be brought before him. Bored, he repeated: “I am the King of the Danes and I’m going to have you put to death.”

“Naturally,” the Skoli expressed his understanding, “as you know I’m not afraid to die, but I do have one regret.”

The king did not look amused. He was in no mood to be tricked again. Yet, his curiosity got the better of him. He gave the Skoli a hard stare. “They’ll be no trickery here. Your fate is sealed. I will book no ploy to escape,” he declared with grim determination.

“Not at all,” The Viking mused showing off his bald head, “I’ll have no one hold *my* hair. Nor will I cringe or move in any way when the blow is struck.”

The king couldn’t help himself. None of the other Skoli were afraid to die or had even one regret, but this one did. He had to know. “Very well then, tell us your regret.”

The last of the Skoli Vikings grinned. “My only regret is I have not lived long enough to rape Olaf’s daughters.”

Hearing this, Olaf found the strength to sever the last Skoli Viking’s head from his shoulders with but one blow.

And there you have the tale of the Skoli Vikings.