

**The Viking Heritage**  
**By**  
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**Abridged English Edition\***  
**From**  
**The Original**  
**“Vikingarven”**  
**2016**

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\* Assisted in Translation and Editing by K. M. Heath. The content is the sole responsibility of the author.

## PREFACE

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The Abridged English Edition focuses on Malte Moddy, who contracted malaria while on vacation in South Africa. His condition results in extended sick leave from his security position at Western Norwegian Oil. Sick and unemployed, Malte withdraws from life until his brother, Jon-Berg, insists that he spend Christmas with him, his wife Karen and their two children in Reine, Norway. His stay rekindles an old interest in his family's genealogy and the stories past down through the generations. While attending a local genealogical society meeting, he learned that through DNA testing it was possible to find relatives back in time, actually thousands of years back in time, if you were lucky to find other matches. What he discovers is a shared Viking ancestry with a Russian Mafia boss (Sergei Shargunov) and an elderly winemaker and his daughter (Rostislav Korolev and Elizaveta Koroleva) in Ukraine. Malte becomes entangled in a dangerous race for possession of a rare Viking Legacy, one of four, that Harald "Hardrada" Sigurdson looted from the Byzantine Empire in 1042 AD.

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## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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Harald “Hardrada” Sigurdson became King of Norway in 1046 and died September 25, 1066 in Yorkshire England at the battle of Stamford Bridge. He was born in Ringerike, Norway about 1015. At the age of 15, he participated in the Battle of Stiklestad on July 29, 1030. He was then fighting with the army of his half-brother, Olav II Haraldsson, who was killed during the battle and later declared St. Olav. Harald was wounded, but managed to escape, helped by Ragnvald Brusason. To save his life, Harald fled through Sweden and continued up the Russian rivers with a group of men. He was well received by Yaroslav the Wise, Grand Prince in Kiev Ukraine and served in his army for several years. In 1034, Harald signed on as a mercenary of the Byzantine Empire where he became the commander of the Varangian Guard. While in the service of the Byzantine Empire, Harald accumulated a large amount of wealth from looting that he would then ship to Yaroslav for safe keeping. After the death of Emperor Michael IV in 1041, Harald became entangled in the dispute for succession between Michael V, nephew to the Emperor, and Zoë, the late Emperor’s wife, and her sister Theodora. In 1042 Harald wanted to leave the service of the Empire, but his request was refused. He managed to secretly escaped, left the Byzantine Empire and went to Kiev. Now he was a wealthy man who had done many deeds and was found worthy to marry Yaroslav’s daughter Elisiv. In 1046, he returned to his homeland with Elisiv, reclaimed the crown and became King of Norway together with his nephew Magnus I Olafsson. After his nephew died on October 25, 1047, Harald became the sole King of Norway.

Sigmundur is his fictional friend and The Golden Horns are his fictional loot.

## Prologue

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### Ukraine, Crimea

Sergei Shargunov ran his fingers through his thin, gray hair as he leaned on his black ebony cane capped with a gold skull. This cane was his trademark – both had a cold smile. He leaned the cane against the wall outside the steel door while he removed his access card from his wallet and with one smooth motion, swiped it through the security scanner. He was outside the east-facing tower room of “his” castle in Crimea. Ever since he acquired this magnificent castle from the Korolev family estate, he found the eastern tower the most pleasurable and tranquil. On a clear day he could gaze over to Russia. Inside the door he entered the code that disabled the alarm system. He had plenty of time before the alarm was triggered, 15 seconds, but only two attempts were allowed. Sometimes he pushed the wrong code on purpose to check the system and test how long it took before the guards arrived. On one occasion it took more than four minutes. The next day, the senior guard was disposed of while the other guards were given extra drills until they reached the room within three minutes. But today he made sure he entered the correct code that only he knew.

The walking stick made a sharp sound against the marble floor. The large gray boulders gave the room an impregnable character. Only in this room had he kept the walls, as they were when the castle was built sometime in the 1600s. He limped over to the opposite end of the room. To the right of the tall, narrow, tower window was a safe built into the meter-thick wall. The safe was the older type with a coding wheel, a simple system for anyone who knew code. Sergei spun the wheel three times. The massive safe door slid open without a sound. He pulled on the white gloves resting on a shelf in the vault. With a devout expression on his lean, furrowed face, Sergei pulled out what was most precious to him.

The object was wrapped in a silk cloth with elaborate embroidery. He carefully secured it against his chest. The ebony stick hit the floor three times

before he slid down into a modern brown leather chair. Cautiously he placed the object in front of him on a small table. With both hands he raised his almost completely rigid left leg up and let it rest on the footstool. He glanced down at his knee that had been hit by a bullet during a skirmish with a rival family. He breathed deeply. With studiously elaborate gestures he unwrapped the silk cloth. One magnificently crafted drinking horn of pure gold sparkled in the dim light. The leather chair was placed in such a way that he had a clear view through the narrow window with the elongated Gothic arch. He pressed a remote control on the table. The room was filled with the rhythmic sounds of the national anthem of his country. He waited patiently until the first golden rays of the sun appeared and slowly moved toward the chair where Sergei was sitting. The first beams gave the horn a golden, red glow.

*My Golden Horn!*

Sergei leaned back in his chair and enjoyed the moment. He smiled to himself. His thoughts floated hundreds of years back in time, back to the bay of the same name. The old stories tell that only four such horns were made. To be sure, the Byzantine Emperor supervised the casting and ensured that the molds were smashed afterwards. At least this was the story his father had told. His father also believed that there should exist one more such golden horn similar to this somewhere in Ukraine. The other two had been taken out of the country a very long time ago, hardly possible to trace.

The Golden Horn was Sergei's dearest possession. He touched the figures under the brim of the drinking horn, ran his fingers down until he came to the thorax of the ram. *Imagine when I am able to touch another Golden Horn, exactly like this one!* Nobody else alive, except his gorgeous, slim built wife had been allowed to touch this magnificent artifact.

With his left hand firmly wrapped around the skull of his walking stick, he lifted himself up from the chair, grabbed The Golden Horn with the other hand and limped over to the window. He raised his precious artifact up to the light. The last golden rays of the sun reflected off the golden horn scattering beams of

light throughout the room. Devoutly he waited until the sun struggled free from the mountains in the east. Every Sunday this was his regular ritual. On a clear day the feeling of joy warmed his cold heart. For several minutes he held The Golden Horn, caressed it and let his mind go free. *Where are the others?* He could not imagine the possibility of possessing all four horns. *But a duo, yes, I can manage to possess the other one in Ukraine. Then my wife, Irina, and I can make a toast with the most expensive champagne that money can buy.* Inside the cabinet nearby the safe there were two such bottles, purchased for a staggering amount of money at an auction in France, less than a year ago.

This was just after his father gave him The Golden Horn and told him the legends while on his deathbed. He slipped into a coma and died shortly after. This was the closest he and his father had ever been. His father had managed their business without compassion for those who succumbed to his greed for wealth. After his father's funeral, Sergei put his enormous organization in search of the second Golden Horn that was, in all likelihood, still in Ukraine.

With rehearsed movements Sergei rewrapped the horn in its silk cloth exactly as it had been throughout the centuries. He gently placed his precious artifact back into the safe and whispered, *"Soon you shall have company inside here. And then you get to taste the finest champagne. I swear! My father's last wish is also mine!"*

After he had acquired the Korolev castle, he installed climate control in the room that held exactly the proper temperature and humidity. The gold was indestructible, but the silk cloth was for him an important part of the history. The fine embroideries had motifs from Persian mythology. In themselves, these were immensely valuable. *Completeness means everything.* These were the same words that were carved into his father's headstone a few meters from the east wall of the castle.

After his private ceremony he nodded to himself. *I will not fail!* The Golden Horn was actually one of the few things that he felt was truly his heritage and no one else. This treasure had been passed down through all the centuries,

from father to son beginning from the time the four Golden Horns were brought into the Ukraine.

Presently he only had a daughter. However, his brother had two sons. He snorted at the thought of his brother gaining this heritage. His brother was weak. His only ambition was to spend time with his family. He worked an honest job as a Realtor. What kind of job is that for a member of our family? It was me who Father sent out to collect protection money from restaurants after I had turned eighteen. He wanted me to learn the profession from the bottom up. I would run the business after he died. His father appointed him second in command when he was only 21 years old. His older brother refused to have anything to do with the family business.

Yes, within the next year, three goals must be achieved. The cost will not matter. I must have a son. If I do not sire a son this year then we will use science for artificial insemination and the selection of a new heir. I am only fifty years old, still young for members of my family. He glanced down his long, lean body. His narrow face had strong features. His eyes were set deep inside his skull and produced a cold, ruthless glare. *The heritage line should never be broken! This must be fulfilled! Then I must find the second drinking horn.* I will double the reward for those who provide me with information about who possess the second horn. It must be in the Ukraine and likely a distant relation of whom I am unaware. Finally, I must find out if another male qualifies to inherit the missing Golden Horn. There are means now besides genealogy and family stories to find distant relatives, there is DNA testing. All methods will be employed. No stone will be unturned. I must acquire the second horn and I must make sure that my unborn son is the only living heir to the horns. I have connections that will help me achieve my goals. How it is achieved is unimportant. He left the tower. Stiff footed he stepped down the stone stairs humming to himself.