

# *The Viking's Witch*

By Kelli A. Wilkins

**(Sample Free Read)**

*The Viking's Witch*

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## ROMANCES BY KELLI A. WILKINS

*A Deceptive Match\**  
*A Secret Match\**  
*A Most Unusual Princess\*\**  
*A Most Intriguing Temptation\*\**  
*A Most Unfortunate Prince\*\**  
*Beauty & the Bigfoot*  
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*Cupid's Schemes (Volume 1)*  
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*Dangerous Indenture*  
*Four Days with Jack*  
*Killer in Wolf's Clothing*  
*Loving a Wild Stranger*  
*Midsummer Night's Delights\*\*\**  
*Midwinter Night's Delights\*\*\**  
*Redemption from a Dark Past*  
*Trust with Hearts*  
*Ultimate Night's Delights\*\*\**  
*The Viking's Witch*

\* *A Deceptive Match* and *A Secret Match* are related titles with shared characters. However, each novel can be read separately.

\*\* These titles make up the *Royal Desires* series. Although connected, each book stands alone as an individual read.

\*\*\* These novellas complete the *Naughty Nobles* trilogy. It is recommended that they are read in sequence.

Visit Kelli's website: [www.KelliWilkins.com](http://www.KelliWilkins.com) for additional titles as they become available.

## CHAPTER ONE

*Stronsay, Orkney Islands, Scotland*

*803 A.D.*

“Ye filthy bastards dare call yourselves men of God? Unhand me!” Odaria kicked and fought the men dragging her away from the village.

Brennan slapped her across the face. “Quiet, witch, or I shall tear out your tongue.”

She stopped struggling and glared at Brennan. The blow hadn’t hurt her. If anything, it merely sparked her fury. “Do as ye will, but ye shan’t be rid of me so easy.”

Odaria dug her bare feet into the soft earth as Brennan and Malcolm forced her up the side of a small hill. A cool breeze billowed her thin chemise behind her like a sail. She shivered and gazed into the clear night sky. Twinkling silver stars surrounded the three-quarter moon. Would this be the last peaceful image she’d ever see?

Her thoughts faded as they reached the top of the rise. She looked at the beach and gasped. Everyone from the village stood in a circle around a bonfire. The flickering firelight cast evil shadows across their faces. A two-foot-high wooden platform with a tall crossbeam was positioned near the roaring flames.

She cringed, and Malcolm shoved her forward. “Take your punishment, witch.”

“Nay. Set me free.” To her surprise, her voice sounded weak and shaky. She wiggled her hands and tried to loosen the rope binding her wrists in front of her. They truly weren’t going to burn her alive, were they?

“Hold her fast,” Brennan ordered. “She’ll not cast spells upon us again.”

“Me spells would best be used to put your head on a pike.”

Brennan wrapped his hand around her throat and squeezed, cutting off her air. “Mind your words, witch, for they shall be some of your last.” He motioned for Malcolm to step aside, then faced the group of villagers before him.

“Faithful followers, you have gathered here to witness the purging of evil from our God-fearing village. After tonight, the witch shall plague us no more with her spells and devil worship. No longer shall we fear her wrath as we sleep.”

Odaria glanced at the pile of dried grass and brush stacked around the wooden platform. One spark would set the pyre ablaze. She stared across the crowd and scanned the firelit faces, looking for a compassionate soul. There was none.

How could they do this to her? She had known these people since she was a child, and now they were about to burn her for a crime she hadn’t committed. She’d done nothing to warrant this. They should be punishing the redheaded devil, Brennan, not her.

But the villagers would never dare question him, no matter what he ordered them to do. He was their leader, and he was obeyed.

“The devil’s harlot shall be sent back to the pit of hell from whence she came. Our Lord God commands...”

She bowed her head as Brennan preached on. How could she get free? Fighting her way out of this mess was hopeless. She felt as weak as a newborn kitten. For the past fortnight, Brennan had held her prisoner. He’d starved and beaten her, compelling her to confess to a crime *he* had committed. With each lash of the whip, she had cursed him to a dire fate.

The wind blew in off the sea, tousling her black hair around her face. She breathed deep, filling her lungs with a mix of salty sea air and smoke from the fire. A prickling sensation washed over her. She raised her head and looked at Brennan. Nay. It was *not* hopeless. As long as she could summon her powers, she still had a chance.

Brennan turned to her. “Confess to the murder and soul stealing, witch, and I shall be merciful. If you admit your evil deeds and renounce your pagan ways, I shall spare you the agony of being roasted alive.”

She laughed. “Murder? You talk of murder as you stand ready to burn me? I would rather die than confess to *your* crime.”

“Throw her in,” yelled a man in the crowd.

Brennan tightened his grip on her upper arm and dragged her to the platform. “Your soul must be cleansed for what you have done.”

She looked over her shoulder and saw Darach standing near the top of the hill. They had become close friends and confidants during the past several months. He knew she was innocent of murder, but yet he had done nothing to save her. Why not? Did he fear Brennan’s wrath as well?

“Set me loose, and I shall spare you, Darach,” she called out. “You know I’ve done nothing wrong. Tell them. ’Tis your last chance.”

Their gazes locked for a second. Then Darach bowed his head and crossed himself.

“Cowardly bastard,” she muttered.

Brennan pushed her onto the platform and slammed her against the rough wooden post. She winced as a flash of pain shot up her spine. Her back was bruised and burned from weeks of torture.

Darach tossed a rope to Brennan, then strolled down the hill to join the others.

“For your crimes against God, I hereby condemn you to death by fire,” Brennan roared as he wrapped the rope around her torso.

The crowd cheered.

Odaria squared her shoulders. She took a deep breath, savoring the acrid scent of burning wood and dried grass. Now was not the time to show fear. Now was the time to get angry.

She closed her eyes and recalled everything that had happened in the past month—her mother’s death, the murder of an innocent baby, the villagers who had betrayed her, Brennan’s delight in torturing her beneath the church... The images washed over her, feeding her rage.

She snapped her eyes open and glared at the crowd, enjoying the fact that several villagers yelped and jumped back. “You call yourselves God-fearing Christians, and yet you allow this devil to lead you into murder?”

“Deep in your black hearts you know the truth. I have harmed no one.” She had never denied being a witch, but she was not guilty of murdering an innocent *bairn*. She spotted a former friend in the crowd and nodded in her direction.

“Isobel, you came to me when you needed healin’ for your sick innards. Why did you not fear me then?”

Isobel crossed herself three times.

“And Trevor, you sought me out when your sheep took ill. You begged me to—”

Brennan smacked her across the mouth. Her head struck the post, and she saw a bright flash of light. That was it. She had taken enough.

Her pulse surged, and every muscle in her body tensed. A searing heat flared from within her, and her skin broke out in a



thin layer of sweat. She felt no fear now, only raging power. She narrowed her eyes to slits and glared at Brennan.

“I curse you, Brennan, and everyone in this damned village. I condemn all of you to a fate worse than death. You brought this hex upon yourselves. I warned you not to cross me, but you heeded me not. May a dark plague descend upon this village and make every one of your last hours a living hell.”

She grinned as the wind picked up, whipping in from the sea and fanning the bonfire. The red-orange flames sent a shower of sparks high into the night sky. She could hear the roll and crash of the rising ocean waves as they broke along the nearby shoreline.

It was working. Her strength and power were building. She still might die tonight, but before she did, she would set a curse upon the village to last for generations.

“I invoke the Ancient Ones. Rise up and do my bidding. Destroy this village and all who have betrayed me. Make them suffer as I have suffered. May the wrath of the gods and goddesses serve justice where it’s due.”

An unholy roar broke through the night, followed by high-pitched shouts and screams. It sounded as if the doorway to hell had ripped open and spewed forth its worst demons.

She opened her eyes and saw the people at the outer edge of the fire running away. Giant figures emerged from the shadows and chased after the fleeing villagers. Whoever—or whatever—they were, they moved fast. Within seconds, they had cast large

nets over the crowd, trapping most of the villagers. The terrified people shrieked and struggled to get free.

Brennan stood next to her on the platform, immobile. His mouth hung open. “By God,” he whispered, “what have you done?”

She smirked and let out a harsh laugh. “Run. Perhaps they shan’t eat you alive when they catch you.”

She prayed her words would frighten Brennan off. Truth be told, she had no idea what was happening, but she was clever enough to use it to her advantage. The “demons” she had invoked were busy hunting the villagers. They hadn’t noticed her.

Brennan leapt from the platform and ran across the field. “I shall see you burn yet, witch,” he called out over his shoulder.

“I think not,” she muttered as she wriggled her way out of the rope. By the grace of the gods, Brennan hadn’t tied it. It was merely coiled tight around her midsection. She freed herself and hopped off the platform.

Her knees buckled, and she glanced around the clearing as she regained her balance. The bonfire blocked most of her view, but she heard the villagers begging for mercy and pleading with their Savior to rescue them from the invaders. She watched as a hulking figure chased Brennan toward the sea. The gods would decide his fate.

She slipped into the shadows and bolted for the village. She had to find a place to hide—fast. She was too vulnerable out

here. With each step, her legs wobbled and threatened to collapse beneath her. Using her powers always rendered her weak. She needed food and water to build up her strength.

One question whirled through her mind as she ran—what in the name of the gods had she summoned from the sea?

\* \* \*

Rothgar stepped around a net holding a weeping woman muttering prayers. He scanned the shadowy hillside. Everywhere he looked, terrified people cowered in fishing nets.

He sighed and scratched his beard. All in all, capturing the villagers had been far easier than he had expected. Perhaps it had been *too* easy. The men, eager for a bloody battle, had anticipated charging into the village square with swords raised. Instead, they had netted the unsuspecting villagers in the blink of an eye.

A raging bonfire had drawn them directly to their prey. The orange flames flickered like a beacon in the black night. They had slipped ashore without a sound, surrounded the group, and attacked. But this effortless victory did not feel right to him. Why were the villagers assembled around the fire at this late hour? What had entranced them so that they had not noticed one hundred Norsemen lurking in the shadows?

He broke from his thoughts as Karnik approached him.

“This was easy, *ja*?”

“*Ja*,” he answered. He was surprised Karnik had obeyed his order to keep everyone alive. Karnik’s warriors were notorious

for their bloodthirsty behavior. He gazed at the villagers. Most of them had stopped trying to free themselves and were now praying for mercy.

Rothgar frowned. The villagers did not understand that he *was* showing them mercy. The nets would hold them, yet not harm them. If Karnik had been in charge of the raid, he would have slaughtered everyone on sight.

He walked to the nearest net and bent over a fair-haired man. “This is all from the village?” He said the words slowly, so the man could understand him. Although he spoke their Pict language, it sometimes sounded garbled.

The man spit in his face. “Burn in hell, vile sea scum.”

Rothgar straightened up and wiped his face with the edge of his green tunic. *Damn fools*. Perhaps they *did* deserve a taste of Karnik’s rage. He immediately pushed the thought from his mind. No, he needed to keep the villagers alive, at least until he found Orvind. After that, he would have no use for any of them.

Karnik tapped him on the shoulder. “Rothgar?”

“*Hvat?*” he growled.

“The men are awaiting your orders. They’re hungry and wish to sate themselves.”

“I’ll wager so,” he muttered, then cleared his throat. Even though he was the leader of this mission, he felt the constant need to reinforce his position over Karnik.

“Find a high place to fasten the nets. I don’t want the villagers to escape. Tell your men not to harm them, *any of them*. I need to question them all.” He paused and fingered the silver Hammer of Thor pendant dangling from his neck. Touching the cool metal of the *Mjollnir* seemed to give him added strength.

“Then set up camp. Gather supplies. It is past harvest season. The larders should be overflowing. The men may eat and drink their fill.”

“*Ja*, I will tell them.” Karnik hurried off.

His mind wandered as he stared into the raging bonfire. It reminded him of the firelit festivals they held each year to honor Thor. Were the villagers making an offering to their gods? No, these Picts had turned their backs on the Old Ways and now embraced the newer Christ God.

He strolled along the hillside, watching as Karnik’s men carried out their orders. The strange actions of the villagers concerned him. Something didn’t feel right about this raid. Then again, he hadn’t gone *a-viking* in years. He was too settled for all this commotion. But like it or not, he was a Nordmann with a duty. He would complete his mission for the king, no matter what.

He spotted a wooden platform near the fire and kicked it into the flames. It burned down in seconds. He clutched his necklace again and whispered a quick prayer. The sooner he found Orvind, the sooner he could sail for home.

\* \* \*

Odaria sat huddled in the bottom of the wooden cabinet, her knees pulled close to her heaving chest. She held her breath, hoping to quiet her gasps for air. Her heartbeat thundered in her ears, nearly drowning out the sounds of the men exploring the gathering hall.

She swallowed and winced. Her throat felt parched and raw. How many days had she gone without water? She rested her head on her knees and fought back the tears that threatened to overwhelm her. Nay, she couldn't start crying now. She must be silent. If the men found her, she would be done for.

After she'd fled the hillside, she had dashed into the village, hoping to steal enough food and water to last for several days. Once she had provisions, she could hide in the *cairn* and think of a way to leave the island. But her plan had fallen through.

To her horror, the invaders from the beach were swarming the small cottages and storage huts. She had crept into the gathering hall through the cookroom door and hidden in the bottom of the cupboard. Now she was trapped. A group of men had stormed into the gathering hall a few moments ago. From the sounds of their movements, they didn't seem to be in a hurry to leave.

She listened to the men talking as they tossed logs onto the fire and dragged benches around the table. She tried to make sense of their harsh, guttural language, but it was nothing she had ever heard before.

Who were these strange men, and how had she summoned them here? Her powers had never allowed her to do anything like that before. The invaders had arrived at just the right time to

save her from the pyre, but what did they want in return? How long would they stay? If she concentrated, could she send them back from whence they came?

She raised her wrists to her mouth and tried to bite through the thick knot binding her hands. The cord tasted like smoke and sweat. After a moment, she spat out a small piece of the heavy rope and gave up. It was no use. Brennan and Malcolm had bound her tight. She needed a sharp blade, and all the daggers were in the cookroom.

She slumped against the inside of the storage cupboard. Now that she had escaped the fire, what would be her fate? If she could elude the invaders all night, she might be able to sneak off to the *cairn* come morning. After that, she'd have to find a boat and leave the island. But where would she go? She had no friends or family to help her and—

The cabinet door flew open. She screamed as someone seized her by the hair and yanked her out. She crumpled onto the straw-covered floor and stared at the bearded man looming over her. He had mud-brown hair and wore a red tunic with a sword strapped to its side.

He grinned and muttered something unintelligible as he reached for her. She scrambled to her feet and bolted toward the main door, only to be chased by three other men.

A man blocked her path and tripped her, sending her sprawling to the floor. All the air was knocked out of her chest. She lay on the straw, coughing and trying to catch her breath.

Three men immediately surrounded her. One said something to the others, and they all laughed. She kicked at the man in the red tunic as he made a grab for her leg.

“Leave me be. I command you to go back to the sea, you foul demons.”

Her protests seemed to amuse the men, and they chuckled as they knelt around her. One clasped her ankles and held her fast, while another forced her arms over her head.

She fought them, but it did no good. Even if she weren't so weak from hunger, she'd be no match for three strong men. She turned her head as the man in the red tunic groped her breasts through her thin chemise. *This isn't happening. I'm dreaming, and I'll wake up in the cottage or in the cairn, anywhere but here.*

As the man lay on top of her, she closed her eyes and screamed as loud as she could.

The next thing she knew, the man's weight was thrown off her. She opened her eyes and gasped. A blond man wearing a green tunic and matching cloak stood over her. His sword was pointed against the throat of the man clasping her wrists.

She glanced to the side and saw the man in the red tunic sitting on the floor near the fireplace. He had one hand pressed to the side of his head. Blood trickled through his fingers. All the men in the room fell silent.

The blond growled an order at the man still holding her wrists, and she was released. Before her rescuer could turn his



attention to her, she rolled onto her hands and knees and crawled under the wooden table. She huddled there, shaking, while he shouted at the others. A man argued back, and she heard the smack of flesh on flesh.

Who was this man? Why had he saved her?

The man in green bent down and looked at her. As he reached out to grab her, she backed away. She kept her gaze riveted on his brown boots as he marched around the table. He yanked a bench away, then reached for her again. She yelped and scooted to the far side of the table. What did he want with her?

The man muttered a few words and retreated. Seconds later, the table tilted up onto its side. She squealed as pewter candleholders and wooden serving bowls clattered to the floor. The massive table rocked once, then toppled over with a crash, blocking her escape.

Trapped, she tried to dart past the man, but he grabbed her around the waist and pulled her to his chest. She screamed and fought him, trying to free herself. He clamped his wide hand over her mouth.

“Quiet!”

She gazed into his eyes and stopped struggling. The man’s eyes were ice-blue, nearly white in color. In all her nineteen years, she had never seen anything like them.

A slight grin crept across the man’s bearded face, and he arched his left eyebrow.

All of a sudden, she realized why he was grinning. His right arm was wrapped around her ribs, and his hand rested on her buttocks. He squeezed her closer, and a burst of heat flared between them.

The urge to fight drained out of her. Although this strange man now had her at his mercy, she did not fear him. If anything, he intrigued her. Her instincts told her he wasn't like the other invaders. Something about him was different. Who was he?

The other men in the room stood rooted to their spots, watching them intently. None of them spoke, and they made no attempt to challenge the blond man. Was he their leader?

“You are mine,” the man said as he scooped her up and threw her over his right shoulder.

## **WANT MORE HISTORICAL ROMANCE? DON'T MISS...**

### ***Dangerous Indenture***

*Indentured for five years... how long can Shauna resist her master's son?*

Desperate to escape her past in Ireland, Shauna Farrow signs on to become an indentured servant to Joshua Stewart, a wealthy man in Pennsylvania Colony. But a life of servitude quickly turns to drudgery, and Shauna's hopes for starting over and creating a better life for herself are waning—until she meets her master's roguish son, Ashton.

Ashton needs to redeem himself in his father's eyes and earn the respect he has always longed for. Meeting Shauna turns his life around, and he sets out to win her heart. Torn between propriety and passion, Shauna struggles against her growing attraction to Ashton as long as she can.

But amidst their flirting, something dark stirs. Shauna soon discovers why no other servants wanted to work for the strange Stewart family.

Stewart House has an unsavory reputation: a previous servant died there under mysterious circumstances. When another servant goes missing in the middle of the night, Shauna is convinced that a member of the family is responsible.

Shauna's investigation leads her close to the truth, and yet, she's not sure who she can trust. Events take a deadly turn when she confronts the murderer and discovers the mystery of the Stewart family.

Will Shauna be rescued before time runs out, or will she meet with the same fate as the other servants?

## *Redemption from a Dark Past*

Lord Sebestyen Adrik has an unsavory reputation as a madman, murderer... and worse. Lonely and searching for love, he seeks the companionship of local young women, hoping one of them will ease his torment and bring him the happiness he longs for. Katarina is his last chance—but will she fear him like all the others? Or is she the one who can lift his curse?

Desperate to avoid a forced marriage, Katarina agrees to become Lord Adrik's latest companion, despite the rumors she has heard about him. She discovers the "Dark Lord's" secret past and realizes he's not the monster everyone thinks he is.

As their love blossoms, she renews his passion for life—yet they cannot escape the ghosts of the past.

When a meeting of the nobility goes horribly wrong, Sebestyen's world unravels, and his enemies plot to destroy him. As all seems lost, a mysterious stranger arrives at the castle. Sebestyen must decide if he is a friend or a foe...and if he can find redemption in his love for Katarina, or lose her and everything else that he holds dear.

## *Loving a Wild Stranger*

*A woman running from her past... straight into the arms of  
an untamed man*

In a moment of desperation, Kathleen Stanton flees her pampered life in Kingston, New York and ends up stranded in a small town in the Michigan Territory. Out of money and forced to rely on her instincts, she impersonates a handsome stranger's mail-order bride.

Committed to her deception, Kathleen calls herself Michelle and starts her new life with Luther in an isolated cabin in the wilderness. Luther can't believe his luck when his beautiful bride arrives, but something doesn't feel right about his new wife. Michelle has terrifying nightmares involving a man named Roger and is reluctant to talk about where she came from.

Luther's friend, Redfeather visits and tries to convince Luther to send Michelle back east. Distrusting Michelle, he warns Luther that his bride is not what she seems. But Luther is in love with Michelle, and he is harboring a secret of his own—one that might force Michelle to reject him when she learns the truth.

Michelle falls in love with Luther and adapts to her new way of life. Together, they face off against brutal townspeople and overcome harsh living conditions. When they finally give in to their desires and agree to become a proper man and wife, a dark figure from Michelle's past resurfaces and threatens to destroy everything.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelli A. Wilkins is an award-winning author who has published more than 100 short stories, 19 romance novels, 5 non-fiction books, and 2 online writing courses. Her romances span many genres and heat levels, and she's also been known to scare readers with her horror stories.

Her historical romance, *Dangerous Indenture*, was released in March 2019. This full-length novel is set in Pennsylvania Colony and blends a sensual romance with mystery and suspense.

She published the second half of her flash fiction series, *Cupid's Schemes*, in early 2019. These two volumes of lighthearted mini-romances are perfect reads for a quick lunchtime escape or an after-work indulgence.

Kelli released her Teachable mini-course, *Fiction Basics: Finding Ideas* in February 2019. She authored *Fiction Writing for Beginners* through Teachable in 2018. These courses are perfect for anyone who wants to learn how to write.

Visit: <https://kelliwilkins.teachable.com/> for more details.

If you like horror fiction, don't miss her latest novella, *Nightmare in the North*.

Not just an author, Kelli is also an amateur photographer. Visit her pages on Shutterstock <https://www.shutterstock.com/g/kelli+wilkins> and iStock <https://www.istockphoto.com/portfolio/kelliwilkins> to view her photos.

Kelli posts on her Facebook author page:  
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