



LEFT
THE UNLUCKY
VIKING

SAGA OF THE SHOOTING STAR

GARY NORTHFIELD

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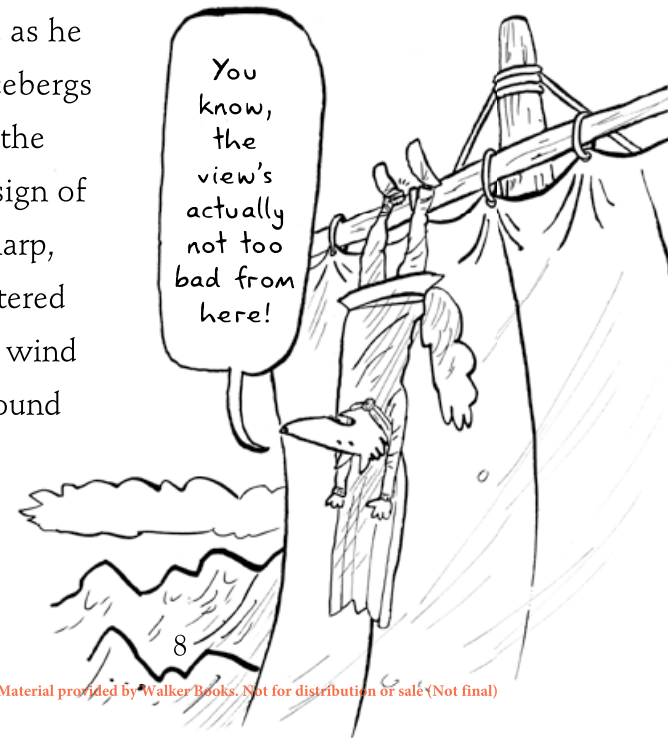
WALKER
BOOKS

CHAPTER 1

HOMECOMING

Leif was used to falling off things: ladders, trees, even a grassy roof once or twice. But falling off the top of a ship's mast? Now that WAS impressive, even by Leif's standards.

From his upside-down viewpoint overlooking the harbour, the little wolf squinted as he scoured the icebergs jutting out of the fjord for any sign of a longship. Sharp, icy specks battered his face as the wind whipped up round the top of the sail.



I spoke *too soon!* Leif thought as he wiped his eyes.
I can't see a THING!

Suddenly the low hoot of a horn,
barely audible above the flapping
of the sail, finally heralded
what Leif had been
waiting for.
“HE’S
HERE!”
cried Leif.
“FATHER IS
FINALLY HOME!!”

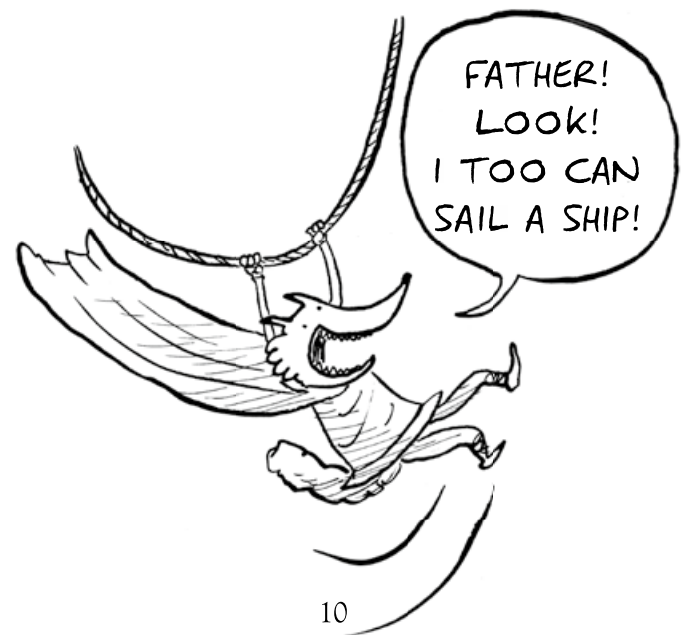
He started wiggling his caught-up boot.

“He’ll be so
excited to see
me again,”
he puffed. “If
only I can set
myself—”



With a great CLONK, Leif dropped onto the deck of the ship. Dazedly shaking his head, he watched as everyone from the settlement and surrounding farms rushed to greet Erik the Red, their celebrated chieftain.

How Leif LOVED the ships that his father sailed. Such magnificent beasts! Every day he dreamt of sailing one on his own exciting adventures, exploring new and strange lands, just like his father. But Erik and his crew would never let him near them, not with Leif’s famed cursed luck!



From the shore, the hulking, hairy beast that was Erik the Red, Leif's father, dropped his barrel of fish and bellowed at his wayward son.



"What's the matter, Father?" Leif laughed. "Do I not look like an adventurous Viking?"

But as the cheeky pup spun round on the rope like a swing, the great sail suddenly unfurled and came crashing down.



As Leif rubbed his sore head, he felt the boat jerking beneath him. He looked up to see the sail billowing out as a great gust blew across the bay.

"Don't worry, Father!" Leif declared. "I'll pull the sail up again! HUFF!" he grunted. "THIS MUST BE THE ONE!"

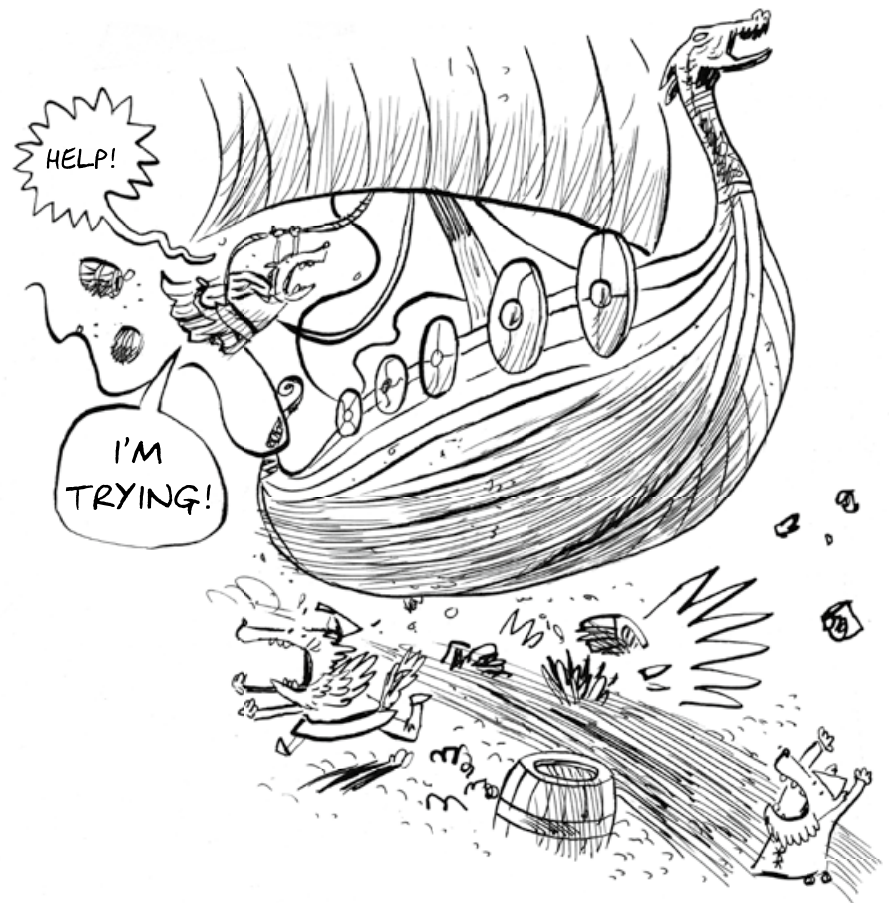
But as he heaved on the rope, it came loose in his paws.



The ship suddenly lurched forward, knocking Leif off his feet. With a deep groaning noise from the creaking wood, it scraped over the shale and pebbles of the beach, sending everyone scattering.

Gathering speed, the ship smashed through barrels and chests. A furious Erik quickly pushed straggling crew members out of its path.

“STEER IT AWAY!” he roared at Leif.



The wooden keel groaned again, swerving across the beach, heading squarely for the settlement.

“There’s a big kick up the bum coming my way, if I’m not mistaken!” Leif gulped to himself as the ship flew straight into a fishing hut, smashing it to smithereens. He desperately tried to steer it back to the sea, but he only seemed to be making matters worse.

He closed his eyes and started praying to Thor, the god of wind and storms.

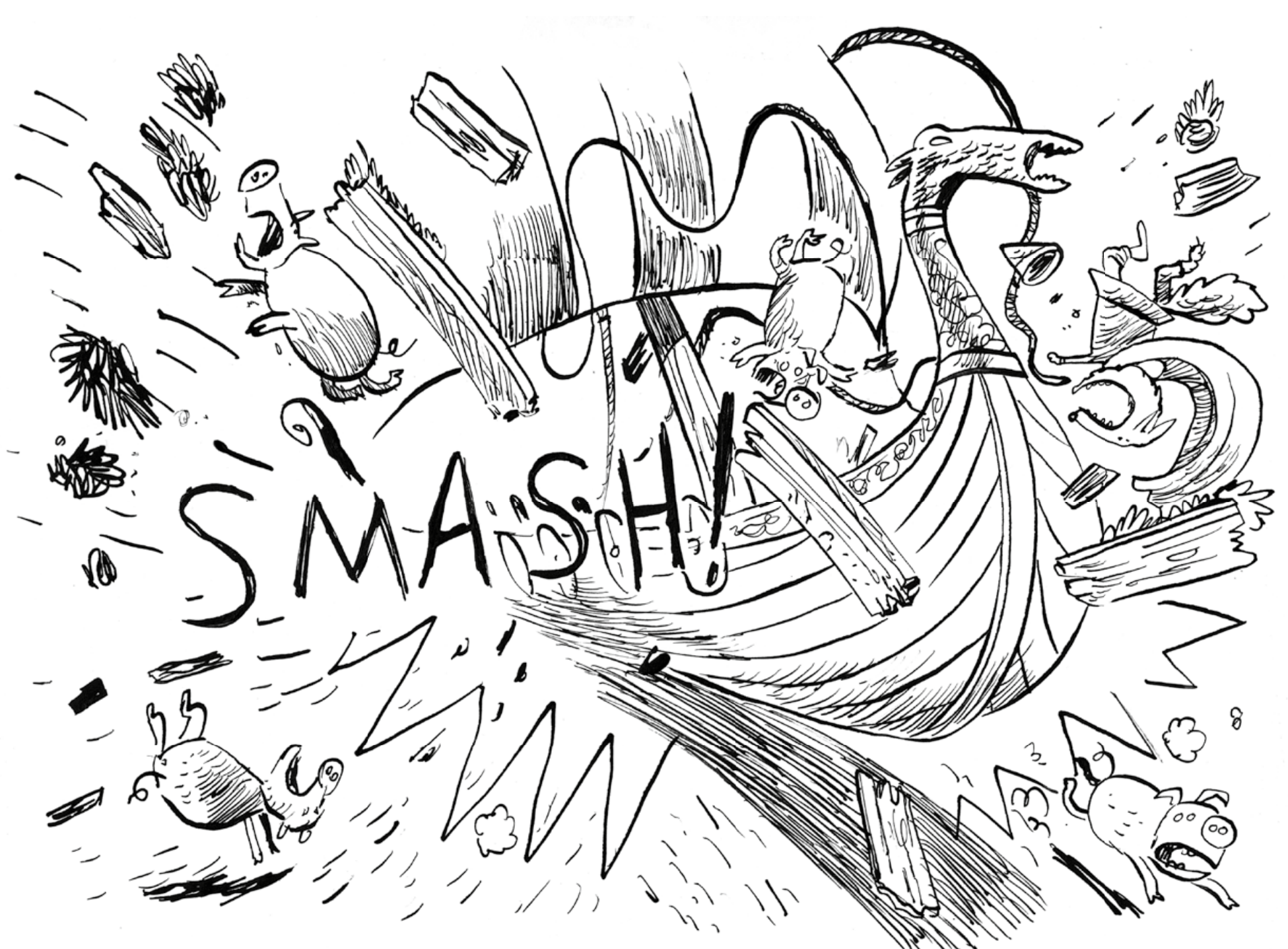


It was at that moment a great scream rang out.



It was too late.

“Yeah, thanks, Thor,” Leif muttered under his breath.



“OI!” shouted a furious voice.

Leif blinked and wiped the dust out of his eyes. He was upside down again, but this time buried under rubble and broken planks.

“I SAID ‘OI!’” came the voice again. “IS THIS YOUR DOING?”

Peering up through the wreckage, Leif saw a group of angry pigs.

“WHERE ARE WE SUPPOSED TO LIVE NOW?”

Before Leif had a chance to answer, a great paw reached down, grabbed his leg and hauled him up through the debris.



“Fear not, pigs,” growled Erik, “Leif’s bed is plenty big enough.”

“WHAT?!” spluttered Leif in disbelief. “I’m not sleeping with a bunch of PIGS!!”

“Then the quicker you rebuild their barn,” snarled his father, “the less time you’ll have to share a bed with them!”

