

Series Title: Following Tides IV
The Tragedy of Thorir & Æinridi
Chapter Number: One
"The Truth"
Author: D. Sanders

=====

For many years, the Truth of Æinridi and Thorir had lay in shadow and deceit. Now, many years after their deaths, their honor had been restored and once more around fires, kinsmen shared stories of their once beloved lost kin. Two spirits atop the Holy Height were finally allowed to rest in peace. For they were no longer the accursed Ger that had been believed to be punished by the Gods, they were simply Æinridi and Thorir, tragic lovers caught in a web of hatred and jealousy that had sealed their fate.

As the longhouse fires burned, an old woman, Æinreda, twin sister of Æinridi sat to warm her joints, young men and women beside her and at her feet. After Leif had told them all the truth of what happened, what deep down Æinreda has always believed in her heart knowing her brother and his beloved, they were suddenly eager to know what they had been like.

Æinreda smiled, remembering her dearest brother. "I will tell you the truth of happier times." She began and weaved her tale to eager ears...

"Almost fifty turnings ago now..."

Series Title: Following Tides IV
The Tragedy of Thorir & Æinridi
Chapter Number: Two
"Take What the Gods Send"
Author: D. Sanders

=====

Æinreda ran on swift feet, leaping over the stream near the cottage. She was excited and her sixteen-year-old legs ran with a joy. Her twin lived up on the mountain with his herd and he had not seen the new stranger from the Bear Village to the north. She called for her brother and he walked out of the north pasture where he was tending his alpaca.

"Æinreda? What are you doing running around like a fool?"

"Be glad I came. You have to come see!" She panted out of breath.

"See what?"

"Only something I know you will thank me for later."

"I know that look sister. You are matchmaking for me again. Please stop, you know I'm Ger."

"I know. However, what do you call a handsome man-grown with no beard who comes from the North Village with bear belts? That's a long journey to be clean shaven in such cold!"

"He could just have no wife. Please Æinreda, I beg you to stop this. Do you remember the trouble I had with cousin Oleg and you're urging him to court me?" Æinridi shivered, Oleg's eyes were cruel, his words terrifying in duplicity. Even his gentle affectionate alpaca spit at Oleg in distaste. Thankfully he had stopped coming around in recent months, his new position as shaman was thankfully a busy job.

"Forgive, I know. He just seemed to like you."

"In ways I do not like him. Please, there are precious few Ger sister mine. I know I may be alone forever and I can accept that. It will make it easier on me if you stop trying to help."

"Just please look, he is at least worth that much. You've never seen a more handsome man."

"I will get no peace unless I do will I?"

"No." Æinreda grinned and grabbed her brother's hand and pulled him toward the Village.

~*~*~*~

Thorir was a fur trader and trapper and at twenty turnings living in harsh weather and working in a taxing profession out in the elements he was a prime specimen of male youth. Tall and broad of shoulder. Lean and muscular and indeed very handsome of face and feature. His reddish tinged dark blond hair was in a myriad of long layers that fell just past his shoulders, casually swept back with fingers out of his face.

He rubbed his chin as he haggled over price. He would need a shave soon; he could feel the stubble forming. He would wear no beard by choice. He was Ger, he would take no wife, bear no sons. Nevertheless, he was content with his choices; he just had not found a man to share his life

and passions with, and not for lack of looking either. Ger men were few, the choices extremely limited. The few he had met either already had each other or did not strike anything in him past fleeting interest over a handsome face. He kept his eyes open however and the conversation he was having died, his breath stopped, and his attention was arrested when his eyes fell on perfection.

A youth, probably only sixteen if he were a day came into the market, being reluctantly pulled along by what was obviously his sibling. They looked remarkably alike. Twins perhaps. He was elegantly fine boned, tallish, thin, his hair like fresh snow it was so blond in the light and hanging about his face in a shaggy cut.

He was due for a taming; he looked wild as if she had just dragged him from the fields.

Oh he was beautiful, even the annoyed look on his face set Thorir to grinning. He had fire and Thorir's interest was immediately kindled. He was staring blatantly when his customer regained his attention.

"Thorir, how much again?"

Thorir's attention was dragged, unwillingly back to business. "I am feeling suddenly in good spirits. Five gold hard money."

It was a bargain and they shook, exchanged pelt for money and Thorir pocketed it and closed up the stall he had rented to sell his furs. He was on the hunt again, his prey just coming up to the stall.

Their eyes met and the boy's looked away and a barely perceptible pink hue dusted his high cheekbones. "Trader Thorir are you closed?" The girl asked.

"Aye for today. It was a long journey and I am hungry. Perhaps I might beg you show me to the Longhouse?" He asked and the girl smiled wickedly.

"I cannot, but my brother can."

If looks could kill, his sister would have been a shriveled corpse. This was looking quite promising. "Ah excellent. I am Thorir." Thorir held out his hand and the boy shook firmly, but took his hand back as if singed. Thorir would have sworn later he had felt sparks when they touched. His fingers tingled.

"Æinridi." His voice was quiet and shy. Thorir wanted to cackle with delight. He would woo this shy creature to within an inch of his virginal life. Thorir loved a good hunt.

"Then come Æinridi, I will treat you to a meal in my thanks." Thorir said and the sister galloped off and the boy showed Thorir where the main longhouse was.

Over the meal and several beers, Æinridi's manner became less stilted and his cheeks were dusted with the red of near drunkenness. They talked of their professions, Thorir telling tales that had Æinridi's full attention and awe and Thorir learned Æinridi was a shepherd and before the meal was over Thorir managed to get Æinridi to consent to show him his herd.

They both staggered up the trail, Thorir had drank more than he thought and he tripped over a rock and caught himself on Æinridi, noses almost touching, Æinridi blushed hotly. Thorir grinned. "Charming." Was all he said before he righted himself and hooked Æinridi's arm through his own.

"So we don't go tumbling in our state." He winked and they continued up the trail.

Æinridi's skin was flushed and tingled, his heart pounded in his ears. He was having a difficult time containing himself. He was thoroughly lost headlong into infatuation with the tall trader. Ruggedly handsome, quick to smile, easy to laugh, his eyes twinkled with mirth and good nature. Everything Æinridi found desirable.

Thorir was more than interested in this bright youth, he was smart, gentle, and rather shy but only because Thorir could tell he was walking virgin territory. The boy knew what he wanted, just had never actually had it within his grasp before. Thorir had remarkable perception, he knew the boy was Ger, and the boy knew he was Ger-inclined; he had just never had a lover and was nervous around the unknown element. Not knowing Thorir was Ger too so minding himself and desperately looking for signs. It was a fine line to tread and Thorir was going to let Æinridi tread the unknown a bit longer before telling the youth that he too was Ger.

As they walked they talked about nothing in particular, senseless rambling about nonsense. The weather, the price of pelts, their favorite beer or food. Thorir learned Æinridi liked to sing and he even managed to get a song out of him as they walked. Thorir fell in love with that voice, he would never tire of that tenor.

"Most beautiful. You're wasted as a Shepherd." Thorir complimented and Æinridi blushed with the compliment but smiled genuinely.

"Thank you. I do like to sing; my sister is better than I am though. I am just a longhouse dinner singer, I am a better shepherd."

"Æinridi is too modest. I like a man who doesn't boast too much, even when he is entitled to." Thorir winked and Æinridi smiled back.

"Do you sing?"

"Only when either exceptionally drunk or when I wish to make others ill."

"I take that as a 'no' then."

"Smart and handsome you are then." Thorir grinned as they reached the pasture gate.

Thorir never saw the animals as Æinridi pointed them out; his eyes were on the young ger in the moonlight. His prey very near and a lone cottage beckoning nearby. "It is cold tonight. Might I share fire with you this night? I had not realized how late it is, I have forgotten in my enjoyment of your company tonight to find a room at an Inn."

"You fib." Æinridi accused, and rightly. Thorir grinned.

"Only a little. It is cold, I do not have a room and I am most truthful about enjoying your company a great deal and have no desire for it to be ending soon."

Æinridi visibly gulped. "Forgive, I am sorry. Yes, be most welcome by my fire Trader Thorir."

"Just Thorir please. Thank you Æinridi." Thorir did a little jig inside as Æinridi led him inside.

It was not long after they warmed up and shared tea that Thorir made his move. Æinridi was banking the fire for the night and pulling out blankets when Thorir trapped him in a corner. "I think I would much rather keep warm in other ways beautiful Æinridi."

"Thorir, I..." Æinridi blushed again but his eyes danced with excitement. He was just as taken with Thorir and Thorir was with him.

"Being Ger is not easy Æinridi. Take what the Gods send. Or do you not like me? I will not force you." Thorir whispered leaning forward to nibble at a trembling lip. The response Thorir got from Æinridi he had not expected, but was not ever going to complain about. Arms wrapped around his neck and a youth was pressed against him, kissing Thorir in rough desperation. Thorir chuckled as he pulled away.

"I am thinking I would very much like to take this night slow. You are a great temptation Æinridi. I want more than just a passing night with you. Much more. I like you a great deal." Thorir said leading Æinridi to the lone bed in the room and sitting down on it before Æinridi who still stood shaking. Thorir slowly undressed him, kissing heated skin as he bared it.

Peeling down soft wool from legs and a hard erection stood curving up a flat belly. Thorir nuzzled it, drinking in the scent of arousal. "Perfect."

"Thorir... I... Please." Æinridi's voice was pained with desire, a little trepidation and normal virginal anxiety.

"Aye, we will. Slowly. Let me drink you in first. I am feeling right now that I am falling very much in love with lovely young Æinridi. Humor me, please?"

Æinridi nodded, his knees shaking as Thorir pulled him into bed and stood to undress himself. Æinridi's eyes widened. Thorir was a large man, in many ways, and exceedingly handsome in Æinridi's lustfully dilated and longing eyes. He was falling in love too with the beautifully sure handed trader who took his time and whose touch was exceptionally gentle as he led Æinridi in the dance of lovers.

Æinridi was one anxious knot of anticipation as Thorir crawled back into bed dripping kisses up Æinridi's quivering flesh. He felt devoured and lost. Thorir was a wicked and wonderful dream come true. He would lose his virginity tonight and never regret it, not even if it was just this one night. Nevertheless, his soul told him otherwise, the hands touching him promised much more than a fleeting sating of mutual needs. Thorir's lips spoke without words, they promised so much more than satiating desire, they promised the world.

Æinridi was taught as a lute string, his body was shaking and Thorir had barely done more than kiss him. "Ah the Gods when they created you Æinridi, they cast away the mold. So beautiful. Why can I feel you in my very thoughts?"

"I... I don't know. I feel yours too." Æinridi gasped. So it appeared he was not alone in sensing Thorir's emotions. It seemed he felt Æinridi's in return.

"Take what the gods send and be grateful. I am most grateful to them for sending me My Æinridi." Thorir purred, his lips nibbling on Æinridi's earlobe eliciting a shiver of delight. Æinridi noticed the possessive 'my' in that last statement and would never argue. He was taking the love that the gods sent and rejoicing in it with his entire soul.

Æinridi gasped and all thought was obliterated when Thorir began doing things to his body he never had dreamed possible. That warm mouth on him began dragging out moans that echoed in the rafters of the little cottage. It was too much for his control and almost before it began, Æinridi was convulsing with release. Thorir sat up with a chuckle, dabbing the corner of his mouth with a finger. "I think I will let you catch your breath Heart of Mine, before I go further."

"Thorir, forgive... I"

Thorir just laid a finger to Æinridi's lips. "Nay, no forgive. I did that on purpose Heart of Mine. I want you to just feel and not hold back. That was perfect." Thorir smiled brushing Æinridi's hair off his brow and planting a kiss on it for good measure. He stood and went over to his pack and rummaged in it for a minute before coming back to the bed and setting a small corked bottle on the little table beside it.

"What is that?"

"I'll show you before the night is over what it's for Heart of Mine. I would not hurt you for the world. When I love you, what is in that bottle will make it so I hurt you not. Ger love is much different than man to woman. You do know that much I hope."

"Aye." Æinridi blushed again; he had the concept and his own private fantasies but no experience. He was awash with relief that at least one of them knew what he was doing. Thorir chuckled.

"I can feel you inside my chest, how very strange. Aye Heart of Mine, one of us knows." Thorir winked as he crawled back into bed and once more began his torture with lips on Æinridi's now overly-sensitive flesh.

It was not long before Æinridi learned what was contained in the small bottle. A sweet smelling oily substance was poured onto his most intimate places and fingers coaxed and teased until Æinridi felt he would go mad from torture.

"Thorir! Please!" Æinridi begged and Thorir crawled up between his legs, leaned over to kiss him and smiled.

"Aye, now it's time to love you Heart of Mine." Thorir almost whispered as Æinridi felt pressure and then purchase as Thorir gently pushed slowly past Æinridi's resistance. Thorir groaned with pleasure and Æinridi's hands gripped powerful shoulders as he was blissfully invaded. Thorir's attentions insured he had felt no pain at the intrusion, just sweet torture on his senses. He came again almost immediately the pleasure was intense.

Thorir was sweaty and gasping for breath as he moved and thrust into his willing and mewling young lover. Æinridi was spent and every nerve extended and overly abused with pleasure. He whimpered with joy as Thorir struggled to remain in control and grew in ferocity and tempo the nearer he reached his own pleasure. Thorir was panting his name with wonder. "Ridi! Ridi! Oh Gods!" He cried as he shuddered in force, driving the last few thrusts in deeply as he came in great body spasms of release. Æinridi felt Thorir's seed empty into him in hot bursts of molten fire.

Thorir collapsed atop his lover, plundering a mouth with joy. "So in love with you." Thorir panted in between fierce kisses. Æinridi wept and clung to the man still joined to his body.

"Thorir." His name was cried in jubilation as Æinridi clung to him in the darkness. Their very souls it seemed to be joined and shouting out in joy at their union. Had they known what soul-bonds were, they would have had a name for this connection. They only knew they suddenly in once afternoon, loved each other beyond all scope and rationale.

They didn't care and didn't question. They just held onto the wonder of their new love that the Gods had sent to them. They fell asleep still entwined, Thorir wrapped around Æinridi like a man possessed over a covetous treasure. Æinridi melted into that possessive embrace and rejoiced in the love that Thorir emoted with every breath he took.

It was just after dawn before either of them stirred and then it was only Thorir who blindly reached for an extra blanket to cover them up with, his beloved was cold and he was back asleep almost as soon as he woke, falling back into the arms of the youth he loved more than life itself.

Series Title: Following Tides IV
The Tragedy of Thorir & Æinridi
Chapter Number: Three
"Jealousy"
Author: D. Sanders

=====

Thorir awoke to the smell of strong tea and bacon frying. He opened his eyes to see Æinridi, wrapped in a thick robe, walk gingerly around the kitchen fixing them breakfast. Thorir crawled out of bed, wrapping a blanket around his nakedness as his bare feet hit a cold floor and he walked over behind Æinridi to wrap him up in the blanket as well, kissing the back of his neck. "Good morning Heart of Mine." He whispered and Æinridi turned and wrapped arms around Thorir's waist.

"Good morning sleepy. Breakfast is almost ready."

"So I can smell. How do you feel this morning? All right?"

"Sore. But all right. I suspect this will take getting used to."

"Aye beloved. It does, so long as you aren't in serious pain it's okay."

"Nay, not pain. Just stiffness."

"Good. I wouldn't hurt you for the world."

"I know. I can feel your love. Can people really fall so fast?"

"Apparently. Come sit down, I'll finish cooking." Thorir said and Æinridi laughed.

"Not naked near frying bacon you won't. Sit yourself; it's almost done anyway. I was about to wake you Heart of Mine." Æinridi stood up on his toes to kiss the tip of Thorir's nose as he guided him to a chair and set the bacon aside to quickly scramble up some eggs in the leftover drippings.

Both men devoured their breakfast with gusto and Thorir chuckled. "Never fails, hungry as a bear I am after."

"I've never been so ravenous. I never eat this much." Æinridi grinned as he finished his own meal and considered cooking more.

A knock came to the door and Æinridi quirked an eyebrow and went to go answer it. It was obscenely early for visitors and he found Oleg was at the door and trying to peer around Æinridi to see inside as he opened the door only halfway and stood blocking the room.

"Can I help you Cousin Oleg?"

"I thought you might be in trouble cousin Æinridi."

"Whatever gave you that notion? I am fine, just finishing breakfast. If it's not important will you please excuse me, I'm not even dressed yet."

"I saw you share a meal with the Trader and leave with him last night. He did not come back and I was worried about you."

"I am fine." Æinridi sounded annoyed and Thorir hearing the conversation, the annoyance in Æinridi's voice and noticing the distress in his soul, Thorir got up and loomed up behind his beloved.

A large, squat-necked, broad-shouldered and heavy-set youth of about nineteen to twenty-two years old, it was hard to tell, stood there. Dirty and unkempt, his dark blond and greasy hair askew and his small eyes hard. He was dressed in bearskin and wore a necklace of bear claws. A new shaman by the looks of him. He looked furious when Thorir came into view dressed in nothing more than a blanket.

"He's fine Shaman and if you don't mind, you're letting in the cold." Thorir said and he felt the brush of Æinridi's amusement on his senses.

"Æinridi! What is this?"

"What does it look like Cousin?" Æinridi asked and Oleg sputtered.

"He's a Trader! Outlander from the North!"

"Aye, and my beloved. Now please Oleg, it is cold this morning and neither of us are dressed for company. Thank you for your concern, but I am most well. Better in fact than I have ever been."

"Love does that to a man Heart of Mine." Thorir smiled at Æinridi who returned the smile oblivious to Oleg's outrage.

"Æinridi be warned, he will break your heart Traders have wandering feet." Oleg glared and Thorir met his gaze realizing by the look on the young man's angry face he had apparently usurped this Shaman's conquest. Not that there was much to usurp. The man was positively revolting.

"I'm a fur trapper Shaman. I can just as easily set traps here as I can elsewhere. My feet are quite fine. Only a fool would wander away from perfection. Good morning to you Shaman." Thorir pushed the door shut and they could hear the snow crunch as Oleg stormed off. Æinridi deflated against the door.

"Bother you a lot beloved?"

"Aye. He just will not leave me alone." Æinridi shuddered. "WHY my sister thought HE was a good idea I'll never know. Shaman or not, he is cruel and the STINK! Makes my eyes water!"

Thorir chuckled. "Aye, he was most ripe. Avoid him Heart of Mine. He's jealous and I like not the look in his eyes."

"Aye. Never mind the stink, the eyes on him are pure evil. I shiver when he looks at me. I avoid him all the time."

"Good. If he dares bother you, come to me please immediately."

"You really meant that? You're staying?"

"Aye beloved. Only a fool leaves the man he adores."

"Thorir!" Æinridi cried for joy and leapt into Thorir's arms, kissing him soundly.

"Happy Heart of Mine?"

"Oh Aye!" Æinridi smiled impishly. "I think I will show you just how happy I am." He added dragging Thorir over to the bed before proceeding to show Thorir he was a fast learner and it was Thorir's turn to moan as Æinridi did wicked and delicious things to him with his lips.

It was late morning before either man was dressed and ready to head down to the village.

~*~*~*

Summer turned to Autumn and Autumn to Winter and the little cottage by the north pasture was full of love. While Thorir wandered up into the forested mountains to set his traps sometimes for a few days or a week at a time, he always came home to a lover who welcomed him with open arms and sincere affection.

They loved and kept each other warm on the coldest of nights and the days Thorir was not out working his trapping lines he was helping Æinridi with his chores. Making sure a warm meal was waiting for his beloved when he came out of the cold after tending his herd for the day.

Oleg kept his distance, but he was always present in peripheral vision it seemed. If they were in the village, no matter where Thorir looked there he saw Oleg, staring with malice in his eyes.

This angered Thorir to no end. He and Æinridi were quite obviously partnered and very much in love with each other. The entire village knew it and accepted it without so much as a bat of an eye. Gers were still men and had every right to choose their own mates. Thorir was damn near possessive of his mate; he had never in his life felt so much affinity for another soul. Æinridi was HIS and Oleg's naked hunger pissed him off and worried Æinridi. It was growing worse; they could almost feel Oleg's jealousy creeping across their skin. They stopped going to the village alone. They always went together, Thorir didn't trust Oleg as much as he trusted that the Gods would get tired of Oleg's rank odor and drop him in a lake themselves at some point.

Winter turned to spring, which meant Thorir needed to go up again and set more traps. He worried leaving Æinridi alone.

"Heart of Mine. I will not let him in here and Æinreda said she will come and stay with me while you are away. I don't think he'll try anything with her here."

"I still have a horrible feeling beloved. He has magic and I fear him using it on you. My gut tells me to fear. I cannot lose you, I'd die without you now." Thorir said as he clutched his beloved close where they lay in bed near the low fire.

"Thorir, love. I too would die if I were to lose you. I fear every time you go up into the mountains. But I trust the Gods will bring you home safe to me."

"He has turned his back on the gods, he is shaman in falsehood. I fear his power greatly. Gods only guide and they only teach. I have never known them to interfere with man's will. They weep I am sure from where they watch us stumble about blindly. Good men suffer and evil men grow

strong. They give us a path and we either choose to walk it in their light or run from it to shadow. He is deep in shadow. I think come summer we should leave beloved. He grows too strong for my liking. He covets you in darkness. Will you come with me to my Home Village when the weather is better for the journey? I would feel safer knowing our shaman's magic could protect you from his. My grandfather is most kind and I know he would shelter you from Oleg. I hate to take you from your family, but I can't ignore this gnawing ache inside."

"Thorir, I'll go where you wish us too. Yes, I love my family but I love you more. If you think this is best, then I will go."

"Thank you beloved. I would feel much better knowing you were away from him."

"Then come summer we'll go."

"I love you Heart of Mine. I will not let him have you."

"I love you too dearest Thorir."

They slept uneasy but with hope. They would get as far away from Oleg as they could come the summer thaw.

Series Title: Following Tides IV
The Tragedy of Thorir and Æinridi
Chapter Number: Four
"Soul Lost"
Author: D. Sanders

=====

Æinreda was sitting at the table while her twin sat across from her working Alpaca tack. "So you're leaving?"

"Aye. In a moon or two, as soon as the thaw begins. It's not safe anymore. Thorir rightly fears Oleg. I am scared."

"Brother, I will miss you, but I think you are right. Even father says he likes not the looks Oleg gives you, in front of your husband no less!"

"Father calls Thorir my husband?" Æinridi paused, he and Thorir were not bonded, they could not officially marry each other, there were no laws forbidding it, but it had just never been done in Skanda before.

"He says close enough to be and closer than most bonded he knows. He likes Thorir, we all do. He has brought you many smiles."

"Aye. I love him greatly. He loves me and tells me so several times daily. He is a wonderful man. I never did thank you for dragging me down to the market that day." Æinridi grinned at his twin.

"I just knew it. I felt it when I saw him. It must be because we're twins. You told me you feel his emotions and thoughts. Perhaps I picked-up on his soul being your twin?"

"Perhaps. I still don't understand what we have. I've never heard of it. Grandmother calls it soul-binding but said it's so rare she's never actually known anyone who felt it. For lack of any thing else to call it, I'd say that's what we have. It fills me completely. I always feel him in my heart even when he is miles from here, like now. He's cold and wishing he were home by the fire right now. His trapping lines are not as full as he'd like."

"You can tell that?"

"Aye."

"Amazing."

"Aye." Æinridi smiled and continued working his tack as his mother arrived at the cottage with fresh bread.

"Brought some loaves for you Æinridi dear and came to steal your sister for an hour. I need help with the rugs. Would you like to come to dinner love?"

"Aye. Let me finish this and I'll join you." Æinridi said as he oiled leather.

"See you soon then love." His mother smiled as she and Æinreda walked out.

He finished his work and laid out the tack to cure as he banked the fire and pulled on his coat.

He was half way to his parent's cottage when Oleg appeared in the path. "You will come with me."

Æinridi blanched with fear. "Nay I will not. Please Oleg stop this! Leave me be! I am happy with Thorir, please understand I do not mean to hurt you, I never did, but I do not love you. I love Thorir!"

"You do not know love filthy little Ger who sleeps with the first handsome face he meets!"

"Oleg no! It's not like that. I love him, we share a soul in truth we love so deep and did when we met! Please try and understand. Please."

"Enough talking! You will come with me you need cleansing!"

"NO!" Æinridi tried to run and then suddenly had no control over his limbs and he fell. Fear gripped him as Oleg threw him over his shoulder and headed up the mountain. Æinridi couldn't move, couldn't scream he was paralyzed by a choking power crawling black over all his senses. He felt Thorir in his chest, he knew Thorir had felt his fear and was running back. However, he was miles away, he would never get back in time!

Up the mountain they went and Æinridi wept. His voice could not make sound past a harsh whisper that felt like he was screaming. "Please! Oh please Oleg stop. Put me down please!"

"Shut up Ger." Oleg said tossing Æinridi into a cot in a small shack at the very top of the trail. It was nothing more than a spare and abandoned tack shed. Æinridi tried to move and could not; he was limp as a coil of rope against his will. Oleg tore at his clothes, bending him over the cot edge. He knew what was coming and wept raggedly as Oleg tore him apart.

Thorir's gentle hands had never given a moments thought that the act of coupling could hurt so very, very much. There was no preparation, no lubrication to ease the joining and Æinridi felt torn in two and he could see on his legs that he was bleeding as Oleg raped him. Oleg showed no mercy, no tenderness as he took his own rage out on Æinridi's magic trapped body.

Æinridi wanted to die; he felt battered and broken as for hours Oleg took him repeatedly. Æinridi gagged as he was forced oral copulation on an unwashed member that had already been used elsewhere on his body. It was foul and Æinridi wretched and vomited all over himself as Oleg released. He had gone past the point of crying, he'd sobbed himself raw and he couldn't move even to curl up on himself. He lay there in his own filth, covered in Oleg's stench and seed, boneless and his soul was bleeding and lost with despair.

Oleg sneered at him just as Thorir's frantic cries of his name could be heard. "Think he'll want you now? I think not, you're mine!" Oleg laughed as Thorir made it to the door and screamed in Horror at what he found.

"Ridi!" Thorir's voice was stricken with grief as he stumbled over to Æinridi's broken side. Eyes numbed with horror stared blankly past Thorir, no longer seeing anything but misery and torment. The pain had broken him, his soul and sanity was forever lost. Thorir felt the light inside his heart turn cold and Thorir flew into a mind shattered rage.

He screamed like a banshee as he dove for Oleg, intending to rip him apart with his own bare hands. His soul shattering like shards of broken glass, his mind becoming dark with loss and sorrow. He never made it to his target, he fell dead to the floor, his heart stopped and

constricted in agony as he felt magic grip him and squeeze. He sobbed "Æinridi" as he took his final breath, his hand extended toward his beloved, just out of reach.

Æinridi shook in great tremors, even the magic gripping him could not stop the loss he felt when Thorir died. All light faded from Æinridi's eyes as Thorir's name was gasped as their bond severed.

Oleg had not expected Æinridi would die the minute Thorir did. He had planned to spell him to forget this night and he had planned to kill Thorir and make it look like he had been attacked by wolves out in the forest keeping Æinridi for himself under a spell as his own lover.

Oleg spelled the scene, to make it look like the two lovers had come up here and died. He would wait until they were discovered and then say the Gods had punished them for their un-natural love. The gods were displeased; no children came of this partnership after all.

Oleg left them, laying together, eyes still open in horror as he hurried back to the village to wait until they were found.

If he couldn't have Æinridi, then no one would. Moreover, no others would follow; A Ger's freedom to flaunt their affections in his face would end. Oleg sneered to himself in righteous self-indignation. Let that teach the little ungrateful boy not to toy with his affections. Oleg actually laughed as he closed the door of his home and sat down to a late supper.

Up on the mountain a light shimmered. Æinridi and Thorir stood looking at their bodies from outside of them. Their spirits reaching out for each other to hold. A voice from the light echoed in their spirit ears.

"Lost to shadow. Others will follow. Stay my children, stay and watch over those who come after. Ease them into their sorrows. One will come who is chosen, who will cast out of the light and back into shadow the great sorrow that will grow from this day. Until then, comfort those who walk in your path. When my chosen comes, I will bring you, my chosen guardians of the Holy Height Home."

The voice vanished and Thorir took Æinridi's hand. There they faded into the night, spirits on the Mountaintop watching as people came and found their bodies, and watching in horror as innocent gers met the same fate they had. They would comfort the men, letting them die in their arms as the cold took them but hurt them not. They warmed the soul even as the body grew colder.

Then they watched with joy as the God who had charged them with comforting tormented Ger, came himself to protect his Chosen. This one did not die, this one they actually had the joy of talking to while he dreamed. They told him their tale, as the other spirits that now lived on that Holy Height told him theirs. When the one called Leif had learned all their stories, he took them back down the mountain and the spirits that had once protected that Height were allowed final rest and went home in Peace.

END - The Tragedy of Thorir and Æinridi.