

Viking Gold, First Pages: My Conundrum and A Bit More

by L.A. Sartor

Viking Gold is Book Two in the Carswell Adventure Series and is the story of Abby, twin sister of Tori, whom we meet in book one of the series, *Stone of Heaven*.

A little history behind the series. *Stone of Heaven* started out as a screenplay. It did amazingly well in contests, finaling in the top 100 (out of thousands entries) of the Scriptapalooza contest and earning various reads, but one in particular held huge promise. Rhodes Rader of Heavy Duty Entertainment (does a lot of work with Ben Stiller) and his female assistant loved it because it had such strong roles for women, and their support made me believe it would go somewhere. It hasn't ... yet, but I loved the story so much I turned it into a novel. I believed in it that much.

Okay, back to *Viking Gold* which starts at Tori's wedding and immediately delves into the differences between the girls, focusing on Abby as this is her story.

"You should have caught the bouquet. I threw it right at you," Victoria Carswell said as she led the way into their familial home on the cliffs of the Oregon coast. The laughter from the reception guests and the music from the jazz quartet followed them into the house.

Abigail Carswell grinned at the touch of pique in her sister's voice. Abby wasn't going to play that game and had deliberately bent to fiddle with her shoe the exact moment Tori tossed her spray of lilies, white roses and ivy.

"BJ needed it more than I did. Didn't you see the glow on her face after she caught it?" Abby said as she followed Tori, her older twin by a mere two minutes, into the intimately familiar bedroom they'd shared until their thirteenth birthday.

Closing the door, Abby leaned against the smooth, cool oak, immediately soothing her overheated skin but not her overfrayed nerves—caused by her uncharacteristic foot-dragging, not the hot June weather.

"Why are you being so stubborn about marrying Hermann? You adore him, and we could have had a double wedding."

Tori's bewildered tone matched the confusion Abby had been dealing with for the past year, ever since Hermann Weiss had gone down on one knee and asked her to be his partner in all things. To be his wife.

Joy and giddiness had filled her as he slipped an exquisite three-carat, yellow diamond solitaire on her finger. She loved this man with a fierceness that stunned even her.

It was only later in the evening that Abby had felt the first pangs of uncertainty, and anxiety. Even Hermann noticed. She'd seen it in his eyes, but bless her German, he had said nothing, instead choosing to hold her tight.

When Tori announced that she and Reid were getting married and asked Abby and Hermann if they wanted a double wedding, Abby saw the joy in Hermann's eyes. But it was quickly doused when she said she wasn't sure if the timing was right.

Of course it would have been right, if only she could rid herself of what was stopping her from committing completely to Hermann.

Abby let loose a sigh. "Would you believe me if I said I don't know why I'm hesitating, or as you put it, being stubborn?"

"Oddly, yes," Tori said. "But still, you're the more adventurous one. And marriage is definitely going to be an adventure. So I expected you to dive in right along with me." Tori pirouetted in the tight space between their old twin beds, still covered in the same African quilts their parents brought home from one of their adventures long ago.

My intent in these pages is world building as well as establishing the central conflict between our major characters and focusing on their traits. As I said, the book is about Abby and Hermann, but Tori and her new husband, Reid, are in on the action throughout the story.

My uncertainty is whether the opening is too slow; this book has sold okay, but has garnered good reviews. And my thought is that if you don't know the history set in an active way, then the conflict between Abby and Hermann (both you meet in Stone of Heaven, Book 1) seems contrived. At least that was my thought at the time.

I'm interested in what you all think of my opening.

A few pages later, Hermann and Abby are approached by a man who seems humble and to want one thing, but acts suspicious, casting doubt on his veracity. Hermann is intrigued by the hunt, but very suspicious of the man and his knowledge.

This comes on page 8.

"Tell us why it is so important that we have this conversation right now," Hermann said, keeping his voice pleasant but neutral.

"You're the only person I know who can solve this mystery."

Hermann felt Abby's glance, knowing it held a glint of amusement at the man's dramatic choice of words. Motioning for him to continue, Hermann waited, watched and listened. He'd been right; the man did want something from them. But what?

"Sorry, I should introduce myself. Sigurd Thorsen, student of Trondheim University, Doctoral Candidate at the department of Sociology and Political Science."

Hermann nodded. He'd pegged him as Scandinavian from the accent, even with the darker hair and green eyes. Not all Norse were blond and blue eyed. The Vikings traveled to and settled in many parts of the world, and Hermann was fairly certain Sigurd had more Celt in him than classic Norse.

Sigurd again wiped his palms on his khaki shorts. “My research and dissertation regard the plundering of cultures, ancient and current, and how such activities continue to rob subsequent generations.”

Sigurd's gaze lifted from Hermann's to take in the shelves of artifacts behind him.

Hermann couldn't read the expression in the young man's face. But the closest he could come was knowledge, as if he knew far more than he was telling them.

Odd and disturbing.

“As you know,” Sigurd continued, “Norway wasn't exempt from Nazi occupation. I've been sifting through hundreds of communiques, and one wreck in particular caught my eye—”

This section starts the adventure, suspense and action toward the treasure hunt.

Do you think Sigurd is a villain? A cohort? A thief? A puzzle? I'm not telling, but my intent was to have you wonder and thus continue reading to find out. The last line “and one wreck in particular” is meant to tell you that you're in for treasure hunt which to me always means adventure.

Again, tell me if it works. Do you want to read more?

This story has appealed to men as well as women because of the adventure aspect. I make no bones about the fact that I'm not a Dan Brown whose work and research astounds me. But I do want to take you on a ride.

Marketing a book that has been called “The Best of Indiana Jones and Romancing the Stone” hasn't been easy. And I have a third story, the culmination of the “real quest” which ties up the loose ends. But both of these books took over a year to write and do I want to spend the time on another book if the sales don't warrant it? This is the conundrum in my post's title.

Or do I want to take the risk and write it along with my new amateur sleuth mystery series? It's a question I can't yet answer.

I write because I love telling stories, but now there is another component to it, sales. As an indie author, I pay for everything. My fantastic editor, my artwork (I now do my own covers), the ISBN numbers, promotion (which Trad published authors have to do as well unless you're a top tier author) and more, a lot more. So I'm torn between love of the story and business (read expensive) end.

Please let me know your thoughts, whether a reader, author- indie or trad. I'd love to hear from you.



AUTHOR BIO and Social Media Links

L.A. Sartor is a bestselling, award-winning author. She began telling stories around the age of 4 when her mother, at L.A.'s insistence, wrote them down and L.A. illustrated them. As an adult, she writes suspense and action-adventure novels with a dash of romance, and screenplays—she's had a contracted adaptation! She lives in Colorado with her husband whom she met on a blind date. L.A. loves to travel and thinks life is an adventure and we should embrace the journey. She has a [blog](#) and a [mailing list](#).

Titles published:

Dare to Believe (2012)

Stone of Heaven (May 2013) Carswell Adventure Series Book One

Be Mine This Christmas Night (Holiday 2013) Star light ~ Star Bright Series Book One

Forever Yours This New Year's Night (Holiday 2014) Star light ~ Star Bright Series Book Two

Viking Gold (July 2015) Carswell Adventure Series Book Two

Believe in Me This Christmas Morn Star Light ~ Star Bright Series Book Three

The Prince of Granola (Coming 2017)

Social Links

[Website](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Facebook Author Page](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Goodreads](#)

[Pinterest](#)