

Wednesday 3rd February

LO: Comprehension

“Who is Starkad, Rurik?” he said. “Why did you call him Prince?”

“What else would you have me call the King of Kaupang’s son and heir?” said Rurik. “Some day all this will be his, and he’s welcome to it.”

Rurik took a seat at a table, and Gunnar stood behind him. He could see the resemblance between Orm and his son now. Starkad didn’t yet have his father’s bulk, but they had the same sinister smile. Was Starkad his enemy now too, along with Hogni? Gunnar told himself he didn’t care. The only thing that mattered was getting out of Kaupang and bringing Father back from Valhalla. He wasn’t going to be frightened by feuds or the sight of a few rotting corpses in the harbour. He’d just have to be clever, keep his eyes open, find a way.

The days passed, the north wind brought snow, and Gunnar learned to be a slave. He lived in Rurik’s hut and slept by the hearth like a dog, although Rurik kept his word and was a kindly master. There was plenty for Gunnar to do – errands to run, weapons

and armour to clean – but Gunnar soon came to believe Rurik was uncomfortable with the idea of owning a slave. The only time he seemed to like it was when he could flaunt Gunnar in front of Hogni.

Before long Gunnar felt he knew Kaupang as well as the Great Fjord. The town was always full of people – Vikings from the northern lands, tall, fair-haired Saxons from England, Irishmen with intricately tattooed faces and bodies. There were loud, bearded Franks from further south, wild-eyed Huns from the lands of the Rus beyond the Baltic, even dark-skinned Moors.

There were traders as well, quick-tongued men who came to buy and sell whatever would bring a profit. And there were the slaves – men, women and children from everywhere. Gunnar was one of them now, and got his fair share of kicks and curses. Although no one dared mistreat him when Rurik was around.

Gunnar also came to know more about Orm and the people of his hall. Orm had twenty or so warriors – Orm’s Hounds, as they were known. He had a

Retrieval

1. Where did Gunnar sleep ?
2. What did the Irishmen have on their faces and bodies ?

Words in context

3. Find and copy a word which means 'harmful or evil'.
4. Find and copy a word which means 'a long and bitter quarrel'.

Inference

5. How did being Rurik’s slave help Gunnar ?