

Prince Valiant

IN THE DAYS OF KING ARTHUR
by Harold R. Foster



Our Story: THREE WEEKS HAVE PASSED AND STILL QUEEN ALETA HAS NOT ASSUMED HER THRONE. SHE VISITS THE TEMPLES, GOES SHOPPING IN THE BAZAAR, ENTERTAINS AND, AFTER FOUR YEARS ABSENCE, NOTES MANY CHANGES..... NOT ALL FOR THE BEST.



THE KEEPER OF THE LAWS READS TO HER THE MANY NEW LAWS THAT HAVE BEEN ENACTED IN HER ABSENCE. TAXES HAVE BEEN RAISED, VAST AMOUNTS SPENT FOR 'DEFENSE', SHIPS ARE BEING BUILT, AN ARMY AND NAVY CREATED!



MANY LITTLE THINGS, HEARD AND SEEN AND STORED AWAY BENEATH THE FRIVOLOUS CURLS, NOW ASSUME A DEFINITE PATTERN. THE LOVELY, PEACEFUL MISTY ISLES ARE TO BECOME A WARLIKE POWER!



ONLY THEN DOES SHE TAKE HER THRONE, AND HER SISTER, HELENE, WHO HAS BEEN REGENT IN HER ABSENCE, STEPS DOWN AND STANDS BESIDE HER AMBITIOUS HUSBAND. AND THE WARRIORS WHO GUARDED ALETA'S JOURNEY FROM THE NORTHLANDS STAND BEHIND HER.



THEN THE QUEEN SPEAKS: "THE MISTY ISLES ARE AS JEWELS IN A SAPPHIRE SEA, THE HOME OF CONTENT. WE HAVE EVER ENJOYED PEACE, BECAUSE OUR LAWS ARE WISE, PROSPERITY BECAUSE WE TRADE WITH OUR NEIGHBORS IN FRIENDLINESS. MAY WE ALWAYS LIVE SO!" THE PEOPLE OUTSIDE CHEER LOUDLY BUT ALETA NOTICES THAT THE NOBLES WITHIN APPLAUD ONLY POLITELY.



AGAIN THE KEEPER OF THE LAWS READS: "THE SENATE HAS ENACTED TWO NEW LAWS, TO WIT, NO RULER MAY HIRE MERCENARIES OR SOLDIERS OF A FOREIGN NATION. AND... THE NUMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS IS INCREASED FROM TEN TO TWENTY."



AND ALL THE NEW MEMBERS ELECTED ARE MILITARY MEN! BIT BY BIT THE POWER THAT HAS BEEN HERS IS BEING STOLEN AWAY - EVEN HER VIKING ESCORT HAS BECOME ILLEGAL!



HER HAPPY LITTLE KINGDOM IS SLIPPING THROUGH HER FINGERS; SHE IS HELPLESS TO SAVE IT. THEN HER CHIN GOES UP AND THERE COMES A DETERMINED GLINT IN HER EYE.
NEXT WEEK - Under the Frivolous Curls.