

# Equivalent Exchange

by *Fairfield*

Defense of the realm.

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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Winter 1012. The waves bashed the foot of the crag as the wizard waited for the black speck skimming over the sea, the snot-green sea as Rowena would have it. Rowena who did not like water unless it was full of scented herbs and steaming in a big copper tub. Rowena who refused to believe his premonition. Everyone knew Vikings did not sail in the winter.

"What if these are not sensible Vikings?" he had asked.

Rowena had snorted.

The black speck had become Raven and had flown past him into the shelter of the hut. Raven longing for a return to the days of alchemy and the warm laboratory. Raven tapping on the cask of black currant wine. Raven who refused to give information without an equivalent exchange. Everyone knew Salazar was bound by his alchemy vows.

"Salt-pork and cabbage, salt-pork and cabbage," cried Raven before his beak dove again into the sweet, dark, life-restoring brew. "Mead," added Raven, "barrels of mead," looking hopeful. Yes, the Vikings were coming.

"These are not sensible items for a winter's journey," he had said.

"The ground is frozen and you needn't worry about splashing mud," Rowena had said, draping the green satin cloak around his shoulders, a cloak that smelled like Rowena fresh out of a tub of scented water. She had smiled. The aroma would remind him of what he had left behind. It would be a short journey. "Nothing will catch the gleam of a low sun better than this," she had said, fastening the silver locket around his neck. The reflected light would remind him of the gleam in her eyes. It would be a very short journey. Never one to leave a task incomplete, she had loaded a cask of her finest on the pack horse.

Salazar left Raven in the hut and returned to his vigil on the crag. The black specks on the water were flying on raven sails to the shore. He reached out to the Sea Elements beneath the green satin surface reflecting the silver sky. They required an equivalent exchange to store in their sea locket.

Knowing he could never justify it, knowing he would never convince Rowena the Sea Elements had made this demand, he carried the cask, the cloak, and the locket to the edge of the cliff. When the Viking ships were too close to shore to escape, he cast the price far out where the waves accepted them. He returned to the hut for shelter. When it was over, he and Raven took one last look at the debris on the rocks.

All the barrels of mead were destroyed. Raven was not speaking to him.

He turned to the castle and Rowena and another winter storm.

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From two prompts of MuseAmusant: Salazar Slytherin, green satin, a silver locket, and black currant wine, a winter storm, a raven.