Viska

by AnUnhealthyDoseOfAngst

Summary

A Viking age AU of my fic Efterfest.

Prompt sent to me by pokeasleepingsmaug over on tumblr:

Ivar x Fredrika, Viking Age AU. Fredrika has been Ivar’s personal healer for a few months now. She finds him in a terrible fury after a defeat, and he moves like a striking predator when he turns on her. He silently throws her the salve she uses on his legs, and as she works her magic, he confides in her for the first time.

Notes

TRANSLATIONS

dāræ - buffoon, fool
heilari - healer

Please note that for the purpose of this oneshot, Ivar has a slightly different form of spina bifida than he does in the original fic Efterfest. This is because I wanted this oneshot to “meld in” more with the show’s canon. His mobility is also more severely affected here than in Efterfest since he doesn’t have a shunt to help with alleviating the symptoms of
hydrocephalus.

See the end of the work for more notes.

- Inspired by Efterfest by AnUnhealthyDoseOfAngst

I dread the moment he will summon me to his tent. Even as I sit inside my own tent, occupied with work, I can hear the return of the army. The lack of boisterous singing and shouting makes it clear that they have been defeated. Normally I would have gone outside to meet them and assess the injuries but Ivar has made it clear that I am to assist no one except him. The sun has long since started to set when queen Astrid appears at my tent to inform me that the dāræ demands my presence. She storms off before I can ask just how badly Harald and Ivar has fought after this defeat. Elin gives me a worried look before hurrying out. My supplies are scattered all over the bed and table, and I don’t rush to collect them. Any hope that Ivar might have had time to calm down is squashed when I push the flap aside and enter, nearly crashing into him. He towers over me with a malicious glint in his eyes.

“Did you get lost?” He spits.

“Forgive me, I-” I hesitate “-forgot my knife.” The truth is that my friend needed me to tend to a nasty cut in her palm but I doubt the prince would take well to the fact that his personal healer had prioritized someone else. Fortunately, Ivar doesn’t seem to be in the mood to question my excuse. He gestures at the table which has been cleared for me, then turns and shuffles to the bed. The fire has almost died out and it takes me a moment to get it started again. Once a kettle of water has been secured above the flames, I pour all of my focus into preparing the salve and will myself to ignore his pained grunts as he strips himself of the metal braces over by the bed.

***

I bring the cup of tea to his bedside and murmur for him to be careful not to burn his tongue. He grimaces at the smell, like he always does, then gulps it down in a matter of seconds in spite of my warning.

“Tastes like shit.” He grumbles to himself while pouring a cup of mead to chase away the bitter taste of kvanne. While Ivar occupies himself with removing his pants I gather the salve. Once I turn to face him again he’s covered himself with the furs, leaving only his right leg bare for me to work on. “Must you walk so slow?” He snaps. My cheeks burn with embarrassment and I duck my head down, hurrying to sit next to him. Every time that I’ve come to treat him, there have been red marks from where the braces chafe at his skin through the fabric of his trousers. This time is no different. There’s a new group of sores at his heel cord where two sections of the brace meet. Ivar curses when I rub the salve onto one of the marks. Another few of them are gathered around the brace’s opening at the back of his knee, and I have to take a moment to steady my hands before tending to them.

Satisfied that the treatment of his legs is finished, I stumble backwards off the bed to give Ivar room to reposition. He turns on his stomach with a sigh, burying his face in the furs, and the outline of a
protrusion under his shirt becomes visible. No one has seen it, yet everyone knows of it. Clever Floki made sure there was no backrest on the seat in Ivar’s chariot; nothing to chafe at the outgrowth. I carefully inch the fabric up so that just the very lowest part of his back lies bare. He begins to relax as I massage him, perhaps even giving up a content noise if my ears don’t betray me.

“You are a lucky woman, Fredrika.” He says. My brows knit together, and it’s as if he can sense my confusion even though I don’t say anything out loud.

“I might lose this war and end up dead. You won’t have to be my healer anymore.”

“I don’t mind being your healer.” It’s only half a lie. Ivar isn’t the first person I’ve helped and I doubt he will be the last, but he is one of those people that I just can’t stand disappointing. I hate it when he looks at me as if to ask ‘is there nothing more you can do?’ He scoffs at me, temporarily lifting his head to look at me over his shoulder.

“Always so polite.” He remarks before hiding his face from me again. That could have been the end of the conversation but like the idiot I am I want to try and reassure him.

“Why do you think you will die?” I blurt out “Even if you lose Ubbe would never-” Ivar cuts me off with a snarl, his mood changing as quickly as ever.

“What do you know about my brother?!” He demands “If you know him so well and he’s so kind then maybe you should be in Kattegatt, tending to his sore muscles instead, hm?” Shame immediately colours my cheek. He thinks I favour his older brother when really it’s the opposite. All of them make me feel uneasy, Ubbe even more so than the others. The second oldest son has the unsettling ability to seem kind at first. Until you get to know him. I whisper an apology and silently berate myself.

***

“Where are you from, heilari?” Ivar asks. I shake my head, and make an effort not to sound belittling when answering.

“You’ve never heard of it.” He looks over his shoulder, raising one eyebrow as if to say ‘try me’.

“Viska,” I say “It lies northeast of here and is very small, your grace.”

“Your parents don’t live in Kattegatt,” He states “Wouldn’t you rather go home to them, to Viska?” There’s a challenge in his tone, as if he expects me to say something about how I don’t care for my parents.

“They are gone.” That silences him, at least for the moment, and I hurry to finish the massage. He tugs the tunic back down and pushes himself up to sitting. I’m in the process of cleaning my hands when Ivar speaks again but his voice sounds so soft that I have to strain to hear him.

“My mother said all of us would grow up to be great warriors. Even me.” Reasoning that it would be rude not to listen, I stop and turn my gaze to him. Ivar is clutching the cup in his hands.

“I am obviously not living up to that,” He adds while chewing at the inside of his cheek “And thanks to me, Sigurd won’t get the chance to do so either.” Before I can say that I believe he didn’t mean to do it, he pours another cup of mead and offers it to me. I end up sitting at the foot of the bed,
listening to the rain and taking a sip every now and then. Ivar doesn’t say another word. Much later, when my cup is empty, I clear my throat.

“Is there anything else I can do for you, Ivar?” He shakes his head ‘no’ and I get up to gather my things. Opening the flap, I discover that the rain is even worse than it sounds. Muttering under my breath, I tug the cloak closer around me and prepare to run. Ivar’s voice breaks my concentration.

“Stay.” I turn to stare at him.

“It’s pouring down,” He gestures at the opening “You will be half-drowned by the time you reach your tent.” I freeze for a moment then begin sputter, not sure how to answer his offer. I’m not particularly afraid that he will do something it is just that it seems so...personal. The rumors surrounding Ivar and women, or rather one woman, are plenty. It almost feels like a trap to see if I am the kind of woman to get in bed with a prince simply because he is a prince. Ivar is growing visibly annoyed by the lack of an answer.

“Thank you,” I blurt out before his mood can turn sour again “I promise I won’t snore.” Something that might actually be a smile briefly lights up his face at my awkward choice of words. Ivar shifts under the furs, presumably pulling his pants back up, and I strip down to my underdress. Neither of us speak another word as we settle in for the night, nor do I say anything when I wake up the next morning to his fingers combing through my hair. Instead I feign sleep, and hope that no one will interrupt this precious moment.

End Notes

VISKA
Fredrika tells Ivar that she is from a place called Viska, which was the name of a parish located in northern Sweden. Now we haven’t gotten an exact location of Kattegatt in the show but according to the wiki it’s in southern Norway. So, Viska is northeast of Kattegatt. The name Viska is derived from the south Sami word Vistege, meaning “place rich with lichen”. In 1799, one of the villages in Viska parish was renamed in honour of king Gustav IV Adolf’s wife: Queen Fredrika Dorothea Wilhelmina of Baden. In the main fic, Fredrika isn’t actually from this place. I just wanted to add it because I’m a nerd, ok? Please don’t judge me.

SOURCES
sametinget.se/sydsamiska_ortnamn
aselebyar.nu/Fredrika
wikipedia.org/Fredrika_socken

KVANNE
The herb angelica archangelica (Fjällkvanne) was valued highly by the inhabitants of Fennoscandinavia, perhaps especially by the Sami. Historical sources tell us that there were special gardens dedicated solely to these plants. It was used as food, a spice and as medicine.
This herb was primarily used to treat ailments associated with the digestive system, but also ailments of the respiratory system, poor blood circulation, neuropathy etc. It can be administered as a tea or a tincture, its bitter taste slightly mildened if boiled. It is still used to some extent today. For example, the German FDA approves the use of angelica archangelica as a remedy for high fever, UTIs etc. and it is an ingredient in some local Faroese dishes.

SOURCES
They followed the power of the plant: Historical sami harvest and traditional ecological knowledge of angelica archangelica in northern Fennoscandia

impecta.se/fjallkvanne

herbal-supplement-resource.com/angelica-benefits

Works inspired by this one: Vid hans sida by AnUnhealthyDoseOfAngst

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!