

Saga of the Twig and Wolf

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In the far north lays a secluded island, known as the Lush Isle. The ruler of island was a man known as King Balder and his wife, Queen Ceraza. The land was prosperous and the people loved the family. King Balder and Queen Ceraza had a son named Vit. Queen Ceraza gave Vit a silver valknut with his name engraved in the back. Everyone was welcome to come see Vit and pay the family respects.

Now to turn to a woman called Umbra. She was a sorceress traveling with her brother, Bjorn, who was known as a berserk. They were leaving a country, Umbra escaping prosecution for her sorcery, and Bjorn went to protect her.

When Umbra and Bjorn came across the Lush Isle, everyone was celebrating the birth of Vit. Umbra saw how the people of the island loved the King and Queen. Umbra laid a curse on the land, the land was no longer bountiful, and was experiencing a famine. The people of the land became uneasy and murmurs of attacking King Balder and Queen Ceraza. Umbra sent Bjorn to live amongst the people and rallied them together. He gathered them like an army and led the attack against King Balder and Queen Ceraza.

King Balder and his closest men, Gilpin, his brother Gissel, and their father Göran son of Håkan fought well against Bjorn who looked like a bear mauling people apart. King Balder could not see a way for them to win so he pulled Gilpin aside. "Gilpin, my trusted friend, you must find my wife and son. Take them away from here, save them. Do this and I will bestow the title of 'The Shadow' upon you."

Gilpin, although shot in the leg with an arrow and having an open wound across his chest, managed to sneak away from the battle and found Queen Ceraza holding Vit in a closet. Gilpin

led them away from the fighting and led them to the forest. He was finding it hard to stand, and knew it was almost time for him to go. Queen Ceraza held Vit close to her breast, and followed close behind Gilpin. A pack of wolves approached them, Gilpin lifted his sword, but the wolves did not attack. He fell over, breathing in his last breaths. Ceraza knelt down and said a verse,

“Noble beasts from Odin, watch the boy.

Make him strong, fast, noble, and coy.

With my breath, I heal the Shadow.

The time will flow,

And he will care for his gift.

May the young meet again

And be their bane.”

With that as her final breath, Gilpin’s wounds healed and he fell asleep in the forest. The wolves then took the young Vit and raised him in the forest. That place is now known as Ceraza’s Grove.

King Balder and his men Gissel and Göran fell. Umbra had Bjorn appear to lead the people, but she was the one in control. Bjorn promised to make the land fertile again, but they would need to pay tribute to him and his sister. If they refused, Umbra had them killed. Those that were not killed and did not flee, had to paid tribute in silver and grains. The land became known as the Nether Isle.

When Vit was 5 years old, he was often accompanied with the wolves wherever he went. Vit was out exploring accompanied with his wolves that let him wander around but stayed close to him. Vit came across a tree that had water flowing from the base of the tree. He went to the tree to drink the water, as he knelt down something jumped down from the tree. Vit was able to jump

back at the last moment, but his eye was cut. Blood poured from the wound, he held his eye for a moment as he stared at the creature in front of him. The creature looked like a man, but it was far too ugly to be any man. The wolves smelled blood and rushed to where Vit was. When the wolves came to Vit's aid, they saw that he was covered in blood and held the creature's head in his hands. The wolves cleaned Vit and revealed that he only had one cut on his eye, the rest of the blood was the creature's. Vit kept the head and preserved it with herbs he found in the forest. 15 years passed since Umbra and Bjorn took over. Vit, although raised by wolves was a very dignified man. He was a handsome and strong man with golden locks of hair. From his encounter with the _____, a scar on his eye was his souvenir. He treasured his silver pendent, and yet did not know of his royal bloodline.

To return to Gilpin, he was considerably older now and only had one child. His wife, Tindra daughter of Aud, died giving birth to his daughter Friava. Gilpin was filled with grief when Tindra died and never married again. Gilpin raised Friava like a son. Gilpin dressed her as a man, and taught her how to act and the expectations for her. Everyone thought that Gilpin had a son and called him Freyr. Freyr, although shorter and skinnier than men his age, was very strong and handsome. He was very respected amongst the people.

Gilpin liked to tell Friava stories of the "old days" before Umbra and Bjorn were in charge. Friava loved to hear these stories. The night before her 17th birthday, Friava had a dream of a bear tearing apart her father. She woke with a fright and ran to her father's chamber weeping. She told her father of her dream. Gilpin's face turned white and said, "Freyr, a man should not cry like this. We must all die sometime, there is no changing how or when we die." Friava said she knew and that is why she wept. Gilpin told her another story, "Friava, maybe my dream will calm you. I dreamed that a white wolf picked a twig in its mouth and attacked a bloody bear."

The following morning, Gilpin found Friava, dressed as Freyr outside tending to the farm. He took Freyr into the house and showed him a beautiful sword. “Freyr, this sword is called ‘Röd Drottning.’ The old King Balder gave it to me, and I give it to you. I have told you many stories so far; let me tell you of one more.” Gilpin then told the story of his family, how they were great friends with the royal family, and how his family died protecting the King. He also spoke of the escape of Queen Ceraza and Vit. After Gilpin told Friava the story, he instructed her to stay indoors until it was darkest outside. He then took his sword and shield and left.

Friava sat at home waiting for her father to come back, or until it was darkest, whichever it was first. Friava loved this story so much, she made a shield and painted it. She made a shield poem depicting the escape of Vit and Queen Ceraza. Finally, it became darkest, and Friava went outside, still dressed as Freyr to find a figure in the dark. The figure was smiling, looking towards the woods, wolves running around him. She knew the figure to be her father. Leaving the sword and shield at home she chased the wolves into the forest.

The wolves lead Friava deep into the forest. As they disappear she realized she is alone. Vit revealed himself and asked, “Who are you?”

Friava hesitated, “Freyr.”

“You look like no *‘Lord’* to me. You look so small, like a twig. How did you get here *my Lord?*”

Friava turned red, “I followed the wolves.”

Vit looked around, “Wolves? I see no wolves.”

Friava exclaimed, “They were here! They led me here!” In her passion, Friava stared at Vit. She noticed the silver valknut. “Are you the prince Vit?”

“My name is Vit. But I am no prince. Now how do you know my name?”

“Vit, come with me and I can explain everything.”

“I will not. Although, you do not seem to be an enemy. Twig man, let me help you back to your cozy home.” Vit summoned a wolf to his side, “Let Geri lead you home.”

The following day, Friava awoke in her bed, her disguise as Freyr cast aside. She did not notice, the two ravens that sat in her chamber. She put on her disguise as Freyr and left the house. She did her chores on the farm; yet had the feeling she was being watched all day. Whenever she looked around, she only noticed two ravens. Later she went door to door and asked the people if they knew where Gilpin went. No one knew where he had went, and Friava was left at a dead end and did not know where to look next. Friava noticed still, that the two ravens were still following her.

At the end of the day, she retired back to her stead. She looked at her sword and shield, remembering her father, a lone wolf howled. Friava grabbed her sword and shield, and went to find the wolf for it would surely be a threat to her homestead. When she went outside, she saw Geri. He walked in a circle and stared at Friava, she thought she heard Geri speak to her and followed him back into the forest. Geri brought Friava back to Vit.

“Twig man, I know you look for your father. Why?”

Friava asked Vit, “How do you know this?”

Vit responded, “My ravens, Huginn and Muninn, I sent them to watch over you. Now why do you look for your father?”

Friava turned red, “My father was killed. It is my job to get revenge for him.” Friava grabbed her shield in one hand, and Röd Drottning in the other, “He taught me everything I know. As his son, I have to get revenge.”

Vit noticed the shield poem and the valknut. “That symbol, why is it on your shield?”

Friava looked at her shield, and back at Vit. “My father told me stories about King Balder and Queen Ceraza. This was their family symbol. My family was close to the royal family, we served and protected them. After the king and queen had a son, a witch and a berserk killed the king. My father, Gilpin the Shadow, was able to help Queen Ceraza and her infant son escape.”

“What was the son’s name?”

Friava knelt down, “My Lord, I think you already know.”

“Rise Freyr. You know who killed your father. The same witch who killed my father. If you are to serve me, then we shall both fulfill our duties and get revenge for our families.”

Friava rose up, “My Lord, you will need a weapon; perhaps a spear?”

Vit agreed, “That’s seems noble enough.” He summoned two wolves, “Let Geri and Freki lead us. Where is this spear?”

Friava replied, “At my stead. It was King Balder’s, he gave it to my grandfather, Göran.”

Once at Friava’s stead, she found the spear and gave it to Vit, “It is called Gungnir. A noble weapon for a noble man.”

Vit took it, smiled, and recited a verse,

“Forged by dwarves,

Runes for it to strike true.

This strikes fear into many a man.

A fine gift for a king.”

Vit and Friava arrived at the home of Umbra and Bjorn. They entered inside a large room but saw no one. Friava looked around and saw a light glowing in an adjacent room. She grinned and Vit grabbed her arm and recited a verse,

“Now then my friend.

Now to your purpose.

Patience. Enjoy it.

Revenge can't be taken in haste."

Friava smiled showing teeth, "It's been days for me, My Lord. But for you and the country it's been 15 long years." With that Friava ran off to the other room to find Umbra.

Vit turned around, "I thought I smelled something foul." He will be spoken of later in the saga.

To turn to Friava, she ran into the adjacent room and came face to face with Umbra. Friava turned red when she sees Umbra, "You witch, you ..."

Umbra scoffed, "I what? Killed your father? He was 15 years late for his death. And you know what happens when you try to change fate don't you, Freyr?"

Friava gripped Röd Drottning and charged at Umbra with all her strength. No matter how she tried, she could not hit Umbra. "Why does this fail me?"

Umbra laughed, "Poor little boy. So foolish, try it again I think it will work this time."

Friava gritted her teeth, and charged again at Umbra. Rather than swing Röd Drottning, Friava took her shield and hit Umbra with it. Umbra was knocked down onto the floor, and her nose was bleeding.

Umbra held her nose and yelled, "You dare hit a woman?! I'll have you executed, you dishonorable little boy!"

Friava laughed, "The witch isn't as all-knowing as she seems. Gilpin the Shadow had one child, but no son. My name is not Freyr. I am Friava, his daughter." Umbra's eyes widened at this.

Before she could do anything, Friava took Röd Drottning and cut off Umbra's head. Friava fell to her knees, and picked up Umbra's head, "Father, may you rest easy."

Returning to Vit, when he turned around, he saw a man who looked like a bear.

Bjorn standing there, turned red, “So the prince finally returns. Did you return to where you were born to die?”

Vit took Gungnir, smiling as he did so and said a verse,

“Strength in numbers,

Wolves return to kill

The bear that drove him from home.

The Norns do not say a wolf will die.

The Norns say a bear dies today.”

Bjorn laughed, “Poetry? You should focus on the fight young boy and take a tip from your elders.”

Vit charged at Bjorn, and thrust Gungnir at him. Bjorn jumped out of the way. Vit turned around with Gungnir leading to strike again. This time, Vit grazed Bjorn’s chest.

Bjorn looked down at his chest and touched his blood. He cried out to his sister, “Umbra, what is this red water that flows from me?” But he got no response and turned around to call out again, “Sister? Why do you not respond?”

Vit, now behind Bjorn, smiled and recited a poem,

“He knows not what Twig has done?

The Twig was the favorite son.

The Twig was appalled.

The wolves have been called.”

Bjorn turned around to face Vit. He faced Gungnir in his throat. Bjorn opened his mouth, “The white wolf is stronger than the bear.” And with that he died.

Vit pulled Gungnir out and called out, “Freyr my friend, come to me. Bring me good news.”

Friava ran into the room where Vit was, “My Lord...”

“Speak my friend. What do you wish to tell me?”

“I have lied to you since the beginning. I am no man. My real name is Friava.”

“Why tell me this?” Vit had no expression on his face, and did not appear to be affected. “I have always known this. I may have kept my distance from everyone, but I am no fool.”

Friava looked stunned, “But my Lord, I have lied to you, that is-”

Vit interrupted her, “Marrying Friava would be very wise I think. She is able to hold her own, and she does know about my family and country. She is wise and honorable. Only problem is that she dresses like a man, but if she was to stop, I think she might make a good wife and queen. And if Friava were to marry the king... Her lies would be pardoned.”

Years passed, the land flourished again and was known as Sanguine Isle. The king and queen had two children. A son named Gilpin, and a daughter named Ceraza.

This ends the Saga of the Twig and Wolf.