

Hairballs!

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Author's note: This fiction is completely silly.

"I do so love the Holidays," Freya Crescent sighed as she took a seat next to her husband on the old settee that rested in front of the fireplace. She arranged herself carefully upon the red and gold cushions, tucking her broad feet beneath her rump and snuggling herself against Fratley's side. "A week filled with feasts and festivities! It is a shame that they come only once each year."

Fratley slid one arm over the arched back of the settee to encircle Freya's shoulder, pulling her gently against himself as he stared into the dancing depths of the fire burning on the hearth. "It is good to have a time for rest, when we are freed from the worries that our chosen paths in life have burdened us with. This a peaceful time."

"Peaceful indeed," Freya said. "There is nothing to trouble my mind. The Reconstruction has been going well, our citizens have been returning to their homes, and Burmecia is waxing prosperous once more."

"Truly, things have played out better than we could ever have dreamed, for us as well as Burmecia," Fratley said. "Our fortunes have turned and the Gods have favored our undertakings."

Freya and Fratley sat together in silent contentment, enjoying each other's presence and the warmth of the fire. The drumming of the rain on the slate roof over their heads was comforting, familiar, and hypnotic. Freya had almost slipped off into a doze when a sudden thought roused her. "Fratley," she said, "I'd like for us to go out to the old market square in Bentfork tomorrow, to see what sort of seasonal foods are in the shops. I've a craving for fruitcake and those odd little spice cookies. You can only get those near the Holidays."

"We should have plenty of time for that," Fratley replied. "It isn't very far to walk. Perhaps we could even take a chocobo cab."

"A cab!" Freya exclaimed. "That would be fun!"

"And we could pick up a few of those sausages Rahne the butcher makes, too!" Fratley added. And a pudding, and a meat pie, and"

Fratley's words trailed off as the sound of the rain outside changed to a light, wavering patter. Two pairs of ears dipped and swiveled instinctively, fascinated by the change. "I am certainly glad we're not outside now," Fratley commented.

"It must be freezing out there," Freya said. "I feel sorry for the skeleton crew of guards that are posted about town tonight. Bad luck for them."

"Well, they do get quite a bit of bonus pay for working through the Holidays," Fratley said. "Fair compensation, I believe. Most of the people on the watch tonight are volunteers, for that reason."

"Yes, Fratley, but I still feel sad that they have to work at such a joyful time." Freya shrugged her shoulders and looked down at the arm of the settee. She lifted a hand and used the tips of her claws to idly trace the outline of a fleur-de-lis on the worn brocade. She fell into silence again, her mind fixed upon the plights of the soldiers and knights who were still steadfastly on duty throughout the Realm of Eternal Rain. Outside, the sound of the rain changed once more. What was at first a rhythmic tapping slowly receded into rustling waves that persisted for a few minutes before becoming a soft scratching at the roof and windows of the house.

"Snow!" Freya exclaimed, sitting up straight. Her hands smoothed the hem of her nightshirt as she craned her neck towards the window on her left. She could barely make out the specks of snow as

they brushed against the diamond-shaped panes of glass. "Fratley, let's put the screen across the fire and go stand at the window! The greater moon is nearly full tonight, and I want to watch the snowfall. It is so hypnotic to observe! I feel as if I am flying close to the stars when I look up at the falling snow. It makes me recall the time I spent on the Invincible, soaring above all the Mist."

"Well then," Fratley said, "let me up and I'll cover the fire so we can see outside."

"Thank you, Fratley!" Freya crooned, leaning forward to give her husband a gentle nuzzle. "Ah, such a romantic evening! It makes me want to..."

A quiet pause followed Freya's incomplete statement, and Fratley was momentarily distracted from his task at hand as he turned to gaze at his beloved wife. "Freya," he whispered, nuzzling her cheek. "Tell me, what else do you desire?"

Freya leaned forward suddenly, with her eyes slightly crossed and the tip of her tongue protruding from between her lips. From deep within her pale-furred throat came a sudden, guttural exclamation. "Hork!"

"Hork?" Fratley asked, cocking his head and raising an eyebrow in puzzlement. "I can't say that I'm familiar with that term. Is it something you read in one of---"

"HOOORK!" Freya replied, thrusting her head forward. Her shoulders began to heave in rhythm to the strange noises that were coming from her throat. "HORK HORK HORKHORKHORK!"

A sudden flash of realization animated Fratley into swift movement, but his response came a moment too late. Freya's jaws parted wide and her ears flattened themselves against her skull as a bolus of damp, gray-tinted fur sprang forth from her mouth to land upon Fratley's nightshirt with a disturbing splat.

"Oh Gods!" Fratley moaned, reaching down and trying to hold the damp fabric of his tunic away from his fur. "A hairball!"

Freya was champing her jaws and flicking her ears in disgust. She raised a hand to wipe her lips before she turned an apologetic look towards the squirming Fratley. "Sorry!" she whispered.

"Haven't we discussed the need for you to take your medication at regular intervals, Freya?" Fratley sighed. "So that moments like these will not happen?"

"That medicine tastes horrible," Freya replied. "And it gives me the runs like you wouldn't believe."

"You don't have to take it that often," Fratley muttered. "Besides, if you would just stop licking, you wouldn't have a problem with hairballs. Civilized Burmecians do not groom themselves by licking. Ugh, ugh, ugh! I need a towel or something to get this nasty mess of yours off of my shirt."

"What? Are you suggesting that I lack civility?" Freya exclaimed, growing suddenly indignant.

"Just because I developed the resourceful habit of keeping myself tidy in the old manner while I was traipsing all over the face of Gaia for five years, looking for your silly tail? Just how would you groom yourself without water to spare, Fratley? Tell me! You'd use your tongue, you would!"

"I am not getting into a debate with you, Freya. You made me a promise that you would take your medicine after the last time this happened, and I am going to go back to the bathroom and fetch that medicine out of the cabinet for you."

"Crap!" Freya said.

"A promise is a promise. Don't give me grief."

With those words, Fratley grabbed a candlestick from off the top of the mantle and bent down to light it at the fire. He departed for the bathroom at the rear of the house. After a moment, Freya's sharp ears picked up the sound of him rummaging around in the medicine cabinet. Pills rattled, bottles clanked, and something made of metal clattered onto the floor, accompanied by a soft curse from Fratley.

He returned with one hand clutching a small tan bottle plastered with a torn and stained label, and a spoon. "Here we are!" Fratley exclaimed. "Three spoonfuls, and all the unpleasantness will be over."

"I knew I should have dumped that nasty concoction down the toilet," Freya muttered.

"Open wide, dear!" Fratley said, holding a spoon brimming with a thick, brown liquid out in front of him.

"I am only taking this because I promised you I would," Freya said with a grimace. She wrinkled her muzzle in dreadful anticipation before lunging forward to engulf the spoon in her mouth. For a moment, she was perfectly still, and then her eyes went wide as she leapt sideways off of the settee, spitting violently.

"Fratley, you moogle-brain!" Freya howled out between spits. "That is my ear medication!"

"Uh?" Fratley gasped. He carried the bottle of medicine over to the fireplace and studied the label intently. "Place six to eight drops into affected ear three times daily until discharge is no longer...oh, damn. Sorry, Freya! I'm sorry! I couldn't see the label properly by candlelight, and the bottles are so similar...err...I'll be right back with the correct remedy!"

Fratley snatched up his candlestick and dashed from the room as Freya took a swat at him. She waited and fumed, rubbing her offended tongue on the palm of her hand until Fratley returned with another bottle. With a sheepish grin, he held the medicine out where Freya could see it. "Want to read the label on this one and make certain it is right?"

"No," Freya replied, baring her teeth. "I want to strangle you!"

"It's really the anti-hairball draught this time, I assure you. Please, Freya, forgive my error!"

Freya stood in the middle of the living room floor, wiping her muzzle with the back of one hand and staring at her husband in indignation. "If it is NOT the hairball medication, I will first feed you the spoon you deliver it by, and then I will follow it up with the damned bottle and whatever home furnishings are within my convenient reach."

"I assure you, Freya, that I have made the proper selection this time, and that...HORK."

"What?" Freya exclaimed, planting her hands on her hips and looking askance at her lover. "What did you just say to me?"

"Noth...HORK!" Fratley replied.

Swiftly, Fratley turned away from Freya and snatched up an iron poker from its stand next to the fireplace. He stood in front of the glowing logs on the hearth and prodded at them, arranging them with exaggerated care as Freya strode over towards him. He hunched himself over the fire and arched his back suddenly, while a strange sizzling noise erupted from the center of the stirred-up embers.

"What are you doing?" Freya inquired.

"Just building up the fire a bit, so the chill from outside won't permeate our cozy den," Fratley replied as he turned to replace the poker in its stand.

"I head an odd sound...what was it?"

"A bit of sap sizzling," Fratley shrugged. "The wood must not have been fully seasoned."

Freya frowned for a moment, and then her nostrils flared wide as she detected the unmistakable aroma of burning hair wafting from the fireplace. Fratley smelled the unpleasant scent as well, and his ears fell as he realized that he had been caught.

"You just spat a hairball into the fireplace!" Freya exclaimed. "'Civilized Burmecians do not groom themselves by licking' indeed!"

"Sorry!" Fratley muttered sheepishly.

Freya reached out to take the bottle of hairball medicine that Fratley was now brandishing in front of himself as if it were a talisman designed to ward off evil. With a smirk, Freya read the label of the bottle aloud. "Take three full spoonfuls twice weekly, or as symptoms warrant. For initial treatment, it is recommended to take two dosages, each consisting of six spoonfuls, twelve hours apart."

Fratley grimaced and stepped back a pace.

"Oh Fratley, you will love this!" Freya said. "It tastes just like rancid fish and roofing tar."

Pulling the stopper from the bottle, Freya rapidly poured and consumed three spoonfuls of the medication herself. "Now, I have fulfilled my promise to you by taking my medicine," she gasped. "Next, it is time for your own treatment!"

"Must I?" Fratley moaned.

"What is sauce for the chick is sauce for the chocobo. Open up!"

With a pleasant grin, Freya filled her spoon to brimming and waved it gently in front of her husband's nose. "Be glad that all you have are hairballs," she said soothingly. "You don't want to know what I'd be doing with this spoon if you were afflicted with piles..."

This has been the Greatest Burmecian Hairball Fanfiction Ever Written.

The characters of Freya Crescent and Fratley Iron-Tail, as well as the Burmecian race, are the property of Squaresoft.

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