

**Welcome to the Infinite Women podcast, I'm your host Allison Tyra and today we're talking about the legendary Norwegian shield-maidens and pirates Rusla and Stikla.**

Also known as the "Red Woman" for her ruthlessness, Rusla is a princess mentioned in Saxo Grammaticus's History of the Danes and in Irish annals. When her brother's throne was stolen by a Danish king named Omund, Rusla gathered a pirate fleet to attack Danish ships in revenge. Stikla, who had turned to piracy to escape marriage, was by her side every time. Some sources call her Rusla's sister, though with the scant details, the exact nature of their relationship is open to debate.

While Rusla was attacking ships and coastal towns in what is now Iceland, Denmark and the UK, her brother was busy being Omund's bitch. The Danish king had tricked Tesandus into siding with the Danes, and in the process he lost his own crown to Omund. Where Rusla got pissed, Tesandus was being a good little boy. He was on one of the ships she attacked - although the ship was sunk, Rusla was merciful and allowed her brother to escape with his life. In an epic case of misplaced anger, Tesandus swore vengeance not on the man who conned him out of his throne, but on the sister who fought to avenge their family honor. He chased her fleet with one of his own, eventually captured her and held her by her braids while his crew beat her to death with rowing oars.

To be fair, she earned her ruthless reputation and took no prisoners, so there is a sense of live by the oar, die by the oar.

Stikla appears to have had a longer and hopefully happier life. The History of the Danes states that the Norwegian town of Stiklestad was named for her, and she apparently settled here after her exploits with Rusla.

**Join us next time on the Infinite Women podcast and remember, well-behaved women rarely make history.**