

The Viking'S Mate Hunt

Chapter 15 The cave

Elisabeth/Eir's POV.

Panic got the best of me as I crawled up the steep mountains like an animal. Small rocks and loose dirt rolled down around me. I clawed my way up, the howls echoing in my mind. The sweat trickled down my back, and I reached a small flat area before I managed to calm down. Far up the mountain, my eyes wandered, taking in the scenery. Wild was the first word that crossed my mind. Wild and untouched nature as long as the eye could see.

A picturesque view, more breathtaking than any pictures I've ever seen. The sun colored the sky and the ocean on the horizon on its way down deep purple, light pink, warm orange, and bright yellow. Then the backside of my little plan struck me; I saw everything from here, and there was nothing for me to hide behind. Scrambling to get to my feet to take in the mountain behind me, I wasn't even halfway up. But if I went around this first ridge, at least I could put the hill between us this first night.

It was nearly pitch black before I reached the other side, and luck finally struck—a little cave entrance with some bushes that scratched their roots between cracks in the steep mountain stones. The opening was only about two meters in, but it would do! Before I went in, I ate another hand full of orange-spotted grass. Carefully jumped from stone to stone, not to leave footprints in the sand or dirt. With the last straw of grass, the sickness faded.

It was hard trying to sleep; my heart would not calm down and kept pounding in my chest. I thought I heard footsteps and branches breaking and jerking up. I Have no idea how long I did this, but long after, the darkness was so thick I didn't see my fingers.

The night had been cold, and I realized I had fallen asleep when I jerked back up again. Sun rays lightened up the lite cave space; I made it through the first night! My stomach growled in hunger, but I ignored it. I crawled out of my hiding space and stretched before taking greedy sips of the water I had carried with me. My eyes took in the view; this forest was more open. The threes seemed smaller, not so dense, and I could spot small streams, some

open fields, and even a little pond. 2 days left, two days with wild wolves behind searching for me.

I can do this, and this is the place I'm staying. Again, I ate my orange spotted grass, the only thing I felt like I could hide behind right now. I didn't know how long it lasted, but better safe than sorry. Before I slid down the mountainside, I fluffed up the bushes by the cave opening and hid the rest of the grass inside. On my way down, I realized it was a chain of mountains that separated one forest from the other, some of the peaks so high there were hidden in the clouds. It didn't necessarily mean anything, but it could at least buy me some time. I'm guessing this is not the first place they're searching.

Luca's words about a twin world swirled in my head as I walked between trees and bushes. This side of the forest seemed so much more familiar. I found blueberry bushes filled with big juicy berries and raspberry bushes, and in one of the clearings, I even found an apple tree. I filled up on sweet berries and decided to cut my second pocket out so I could carry food with me back to the cave.

My body ached. It's been years since I used it this way. But I ended up going up and down the mountainside three times. I filled both pockets, which I've now made into leather bags with berries and apples. I washed a big bark piece that curved a little, so it would be perfect to put all the berries in, and it was a struggle carrying it up with the two filled leather bags. But I managed.

The second time I filled them both with water. The sun was burning on my shoulders, and sweat trickled down my back. I could not risk fainting from dehydration right now! my third trip up was the hardest. I dragged several long branches up, planning a makeshift bed a little off the cold ground in the cave.

By the time I had rigged myself a cozy little place inside the cave with food, water, and something to keep me off the ground, dusk had already announced its arrival I dozed off. Dreams and memories blended in my head.

My pale mother whispering about monsters, pictures of a wolf towering over me faded into an image of a black wolf curled around a little girl sitting in the green grass. Its tick fur warmed my hands and tickled under my nose. I was the little girl. I laughed, a peal of laughter I never thought I ever had, pure happiness. A child without a care in the world. Happy, in a brief moment, protected by a black wolf, I felt free, safe, and content.

My eyes flew up, and I held my breath, listening. I swear there was a sound outside. Something woke me up from this strange dream. My skin itched, and my eyes focused on the darkness. There, by the opening, something moved, and I gritted my teeth while my hand frantically searched for my knife.

Wolf, werewolf, whatever, I will protect myself! They brought this upon themselves!

The darkness changed. The rough cave opening looked lighter than the darkness. I could see the silhouette of the bushes move, and then the moonlight shone through. Giving me a perfect night picture of the cave entrance, bushes, and a massive bear rummaging the ground right in front of the bushes. The cold moonlight provided enough light to see some details, and it had to be a huge bear scraping its paws where I'd been sitting and eating berries before I crawled inside. Stupid, stupid Elisabeth! Of course, there would be other animals here!

My grip on the little knife tightened, my eyes still glued to the massive beast moving only a couple of meters ahead of me in the darkness. My lungs screamed for oxygen, but I didn't dare to breathe, afraid it would hear me.

Grunts and shuffling as its massive paws kept scarping on the ground and with his nose pressed down on the ground. I nearly cried when the moonlight disappeared, making me blind in the night.