

# The Viking'S Mate Hunt

## Chapter 33 Saved by...?

“Be quiet..”

Someone whispered behind me, but I couldn't determine who it was. My ears were ringing; my whole head was throbbing and aching. I tried opening my eyes, but they were too swollen. The memories flashed back into my mind, and I started to wiggle and struggle.

“Shush! Don't make a sound; I'm getting you out of here! ”

I felt like I should remember the voice, but I didn't manage to place a face or name on it. All I wanted was to sleep, sleep or cry. It didn't matter, I'd had enough, and right now, right now, everything hurt.

“It's Astor. I've placed a glamor shield in front of you; it will buy us some time! But don't make a noise!”

He whispered in my ear as he struggled to loosen my hands.

“The sound waves will disturb the shield, possibly break it. There! Follow me!”

He took my hand, and I held it so tight my finger hurt. Don't leave me here! It was a silent plea. My feet were shaking, and I still didn't see a thing! My eyes were as good as glued shut. My face felt like it was burning, and I had trouble breathing, even with my mouth wide open. I didn't see, don't leave me! That's what I wanted to say, but the only thing that left my dry and cracked lips was a guttural sound. Salty tears streamed down my face, making the cuts burn even more. I didn't have the energy to run; my head wanted to explode just by moving. Helpless, I don't think I've ever felt this vulnerable, and it was a terrible feeling! I heard Astor swear and mutter beside me, so my body instantly tensed. Were they coming back? Did they see us? My head waved back and forth, trying to see something. Anything.

I winched as a hand brushed against my shoulder.

“Shush! What is the name of the light did they do to you?! Here, I'll carry you! We need to leave now!”

I bit my tongue as he lifted me up in his arms, pain rippling through my body. But I didn't care; I wanted to get away! as far as possible now! Carrying me bridal style, he ran through the woods. I pressed my cheek against his chest. Luca's warning about Astor still rang clear in my head, but he was here. He helped me. For now, I had no choice but to trust him. It all felt like a bad dream. Where every single move, every sound, and even the gentlest touch of a leaf or branch made me feel like I would throw up. I fell in and out of a dimmed dream state, maybe unconscious at times. I had no idea. Time and place blended like an abstract acrylic painting. Nothing made sense.

At one point, everything stopped moving. We stopped moving. But I can't remember when, how long ago it was or why. But I woke up again in a little bed that squeaked as I moved. My eyes fluttered, and bright light forced its way into my sore eyes. I groaned but at the same time realized I could open my eyes! With trembling hands, I carefully touched my face. I was still swollen, still sore, and everything felt sticky. But better, much better! I could even open my eyes even if it resulted in small lightning bolts of pain rushing through my head.

"Don't take it off just yet. It's a remedy my grandmother taught me, that and a dash of fay magic. It will help with the healing! "

Astor's voice was soft but also sounded tired.

"We can stay here just for a little while, so rest. Let it heal you as much as possible; then we got to move again! They are not that far behind us."

My muscles tensed. The threat wasn't over yet. I swallowed a couple of times. My throat was dry as sand, and I couldn't utter a word. I saw him now, through a blurry shield on my eyes, but I saw him as he sat down next to me and lifted a glass to my lips. I emptied the glass with greedy sips. The cold water soothed my throat, but I heard my own voice as I spoke. Raspy and deep, like a stranger was talking out of my mouth,

"Astor, where are we going?"

"I'm not sure. Out of here is the first plan! Out of the city of light's woods, away from Byron's lands. I don't know. Far away from here, then we have to make a plan."

Byron, that sadistic fay prince. A man I never wished to see again. No, that's not true! I want to see him again; I want to see him suffer! Caught up in my

own thought and fantasies of revenge, Silence filled the room. Astor had actually come for me. Why?

“Astor? How did you find me?”

“It was a lucky coincidence, actually. I had a bad feeling about that hunt, especially after that poorly planned accident where someone spilled their drink all over you. There was something up. Here, that’s never a good thing. ”

He snorted a little before he continued,

“Especially if you are different in any way. And let’s face it, you are! I wanted to check on you, but the hunting ground was empty, so I wandered a bit. I’m glad I did ”

He laughed a little, but it was a short half-hearted laughter. It was quiet again for a long time before he almost whispered,

“I’m so sorry! For what they did to you! For what we all have done to you.. It’s not a perfect system. But not many want to accept that truth.”

I couldn’t say thank you. Even if I both heard and felt he really meant it, I could just nod. It wasn’t his fault, but he was here too, was he not? I sighed and decided to jump straight into it.

“Why did Luca warn me not to trust you?”

His body stiffened as I mentioned Luca’s name before he let out a long breath. Through my blurry vision, I saw him anxiously start to pluck on his sleeves.

“I’m gay..”

“Your what?”

“Gay..”

Shame his voice was imbued with shame and self-loathing. He was gay, was that it? Then I remembered what he said about being different. How they treated women here..

“Is, is that forbidden here?”

He scoffed again.

“No. No, not really. But are you looked down on and treated as a freak if you are? Yes. My parents are socialites. Rich and powerful, they refuse to accept that’s the way I am. Refers to it more as a hobby or a phase. I’m their only son. Their bloodline or reputation will die with me if I don’t get an heir. That’s why I’m here. It’s not really a secret, but it’s a well buried truth. One, I am forbidden to speak out loud before I’ve mated, with a girl, of course. ”

I laughed. I really laughed, and I shouldn’t have. It was so painful, but I couldn’t stop. I could feel his eyes on me like I had finally lost it.

“Your gay! That’s the reason I’ve been so skeptical. The reason I can’t trust you?”

It sounds so surreal and stupid in the midst of all this. He is gay; I was afraid of him because he was gay. Now I felt stupid too! And continued laughing.

“So, that’s not something that’s strange for you?”

“Strange? No, not at all. I don’t care who gives you a hard one or what scratches your itch. ”

Both our heads snapped to the side; our eyes landed on the little window as something fell over outside the little cabin. No voices, but two sets of steps came closer and closer. Until a familiar face with a wicked grin appeared in the window. My smile fell, and my chest tightened. Byron!