

Chapter 14

"The Mountain" Saga — Episode 2
Song: Roxane, The Police

Roxane, The Police

I hate the mountains!
Just the word and I frost over!

*Life is just a series of embarrassing moments separated
by snacks.*

That day, I'm at work. The Viking, in his *drak-car*, has visitors.

The policewoman — *Knock, knock*, hello, it's the police. Please leave this land, Sir, parking is not allowed.

The demigod explodes — You're evicting me from my kingdom on wheels?!

The policewoman — You're parked on private land, Sir. Your power cable is blocking the digger.

At nightfall, I get home from work, bags under my eyes, standing in the snow, seeing double. *General Melchett* bellows at me.

Him — Report for duty!

The Viking's nerves are shot to pieces like never before! Since the police turned up, faced with a critical threat level, he has declared red alert: maximum emergency. His troops are in defensive positions. He has recorded the policewoman's speech, photographed her number plate, to get her suspended and wreck her career.

Here we go! The rear-view mirror is back... He's off again on his intimidation trip. I try to calm him down.

Me — Hang on, it'll sort itself out... we're not in a bad war film.

Result? He kicks me out of his *drak-car*! A sleepless night in my car with my things... well, most of them. At dawn, he has packed up to leave. He has an appointment with the policewoman at 8 a.m. in the car park at the bottom of the slopes. And I have to go with him to translate. She explains:

The policewoman — The owner took the Viking for a tramp squatting on her land.

Me — I negotiated a parking space on his land with my boss, for a seasonal job.

The policewoman — The boss never asked the landowner's permission.

Me — I'm not surprised, with the building works running late, it's the least of his worries: "*it's a right why-oh-why!*" But it's not my fault! Then again, if she throws us out, I lose my home, my job and my pay. I'll have come to work for nothing.

The Viking, instead of calming things down, adds fuel to the fire.

Him — I'm a *Lögmann*! I'll have your badge!

I reckon we'll end up at the station.

Me (in French) — He thanks you for your patience. He's a *Lögmann* from *Soumerland*, famous for untying clan knots even beyond the fjords.

She understands the situation; she knows all about the parish-pump feuds between the village's eighty-something landlady and that foreigner of a boss... I have a hunch the policewoman is raising her child on her own. Maybe out of pity for me or fear for her job, she phones the owner, uses patience and diplomacy and gently negotiates us back to square one.

The policewoman — The owner agrees you can stay until your planned departure date.

The Viking suddenly turns back into the most charming of men and offers her a coffee to thank her. She leaves, all sorted. Huge relief. For one second. Then...

Him — Up to now, it was only about you. This time, it's about me! Your boss humiliated me and did nothing to fix the problem. I won't let it lie, I'm going to tell him what I think!

I go pale. Confirmed: it's his war! If he takes on my boss, I'm the one who'll take the hit! I haven't slept enough, my nerves snap, I crack. I burst into tears... he softens... Still, careful!

Me — It's nothing, I'm short of sleep, that's all. No time to dwell on it. Let's go, I've got to get to work...

That evening, when I get back... I was right to be wary...

Him — We're leaving now! I don't feel safe here!

The Viking panics. I do my best to stay focused and grounded.

Me — If you leave before the planned date, I've got no roof over my head.

Him — Just get your seasonal staff room back.

Me — I can't get it back until you've gone, it's in the contract I signed so you could come.

Him — Then we leave together!

Me — I can't leave without my pay. The date is in a week. You can hold out till then. After that, you go.

Him (growling) — You're manipulating me, you let people walk all over you, you're a *loser*, not me! I'm not rowing in your galley, I'm off right now!

Day after day: negotiations, drama, sleepless nights, back and forth to my car, no tantrums, no heating, in the snow, at -6 °C... *"Roxanne, you don't have to put on the car light!"* Bliss! Confirmed, I hate the mountains! What the devil was I doing in that galley?



The Hammock and the Hummingbirds

A novel by Karine Baridon



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