

# Run Fast, Be Safe, and Live Free

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Isla watched her field as darkness slunk over. A weak glimmer of sun remained, which shone dully off of her jet-black coat. Her eyes scanned the land, wondering where the other foxes of her skulk were. Siffrin must be hunting. Isla's chilled fur warmed at the thought of the red fox. Pirie was probably practicing foxcraft. Her brother was always trying to show off. She continued, her raven black paws practically invisible in the still, darkening land.

**BANG!**

A sudden noise shook the world, making Isla freeze, her silver-tipped tail shooting up. She knew at once what it was. The furless. Isla had encountered them many times in her life, having grown up in the greylands. She remembered her last encounter, when a hunter had shot at her and Haiki.

*Haiki.*

Pain slashed through her as the stinging memories of the grey fox and his betrayal washed over her. In the end, he had made it up by sacrificing himself to save her, but the memories of him still were bitter. She wished she had another chance to work things out with the troubled fox.

*What is seen is unseen*, she thought, racing towards the source of the bang. *What is sensed is senseless*. She hoped her skulk was safe. *What is bone is bending and what is fur is air*. She finished the chant and breathed in, watching her dark fur vanish as invisibility washed over. Isla reached the top of the hill to see the furless standing with his death stick pointing right at Pirie.

*No*. Isla couldn't lose him again, so soon after defeating the Mage and rescuing him. She threw her jaws up at the sky, letting the sound of furious crows fill the air. The hunter looked around, confused. Pirie slipped away. Isla wanted desperately to exhale, exhaustion from slimmering and karaking at the same time seeping through her invisible pelt. But she pushed harder with the karak, the angry screeches of the crows filling the open fields until finally, the hunter fled. Relief fell over her as she exhaled, releasing the slimmer.

She flickered into view, reaching her brother with a gasp. Pirie's silver and red speckled coat sparkling in the dying sun.

"You ignorant furball!" She cried playfully. "What were you thinking, just standing there?"

Pirie sheepishly ducked his head. "I-I, well I thought I'd be able to slimmer. Guess I'm still a little rusty."

Isla pawed at him, playfully, but suddenly, a faint yowl sounded. Isla froze, recognizing the voice.

*Siffrin.*

At once she exploded towards it, Pirie on her heels. Another bang pounded in her ears. The hunter must not have fled after all. The wind rushed in her face, panic blinding her gaze as she thundered on. They reached the top of the hill and Isla froze. The hunter's deathstick was pointed right at the beautiful red coat of

Siffrin. Two other furless had the fox surrounded. Desperation slashed at her, but there was nothing she could do. They were too far. The furless leveled his stick, Siffrin right in its aim.

**BANG!**

Isla wanted to look away, but suddenly, in front of her eyes, the stick changed direction, now pointing down at the ground, the bullet pointlessly striking grass. She looked up to see a gray coat standing on top of the stick.

*Haiki.*

A loud karak filled the air, once again causing the hunters to look around in wild confusion before fleeing. She glimpsed Siffrin dashing away, towards their den, Pirie following. Isla turned to go after, but instead found her paws pulling her towards Haiki. The next thing she knew, she was standing in front of him.

"Isla," He looked up at her, pain flashing through his gentle gaze.

"How?" She choked out. "You..."

"Died?"

She met his gaze. For the first time, she noticed his pelt was shining. "Yeah."  
"But then how are you here?"

He stared at her. "I was given one more chance to prove myself. Prove I'm not a traitor."

Pain slashed through her. "Oh, Haiki...you're not a traitor."

"Really?" She heard a hint of hope in his yip. Isla didn't know what to say, before suddenly his pelt began to vanish before her eyes.

"Wait!" She called, to the nearly invisible spirit.

"Run fast, be safe, and live free, Isla..." His eyes glistened with hope, before...he was gone.

Isla turned out to the sunset, watching a single star twinkle brightly in the sky.  
*Run fast, be safe, and live free...*