

The Alpha God's Luna by Marissa Gilbert Chapter 17

The Alpha God's Luna by Marissa Gilbert

Chapter 17

Astrea paced around her room, too agitated to fall asleep after the events of today.

She decided to skip dinner after her quick stroll around the fortress, where she noticed that the warriors were indeed stationed in the building now. She counted at least a hundred. That fact made her uneasy since they all were still technically rogues. Their Kingdom wasn't acknowledged. Their packs were just groups of wolves without the connection of a real pack and its binding hierarchy that helped control the beasts inside them. To become a pack, they needed to perform a ritual, swearing their loyalties to the Alpha and getting their blessing from Moon Goddess priestesses. Only then would they be able to mind link each other and work as one when necessary. This was why pack connections were so sacred and why rogues often went crazy if they didn't belong to any. The Moon Goddess's intention was to give her children a family they could count on. Hence their nature required it.

Rogues were deprived of that. Their wolves were slowly going insane in their minds, leading to all kinds of trouble which Astrea didn't want to face.

She doubted any Moon Goddess priestess would be living here to help them build proper packs. Especially considering how rare forming a completely new pack was. Usually, they were created from existing ones by uniting them or... conquering them. All that plus an Alpha with alpha blood in his or her veins to lead them.

The phone buzzed, and Astrea groaned, knowing that only one person could be calling her. A part of her wished she didn't have to reply, but the snake tattoo on her neck moved again, and she sighed as she brought the phone to her face to unlock it.

"Dragonfly," Joran practically purred, not even bothering to check if it was really her. It was like he knew, and her hand instinctively touched the tingling tattoo. The connection that was forced on her.

“Yes,” she replied calmly, still unable to use his name but knowing that if she called him Teacher again, he would get angry. Something she couldn’t afford, so she chose not to call him anything.

“Any news for me?” he asked, his voice unnervingly tranquil.

“I’ve been to the city. It’s nothing special. Very underdeveloped,” she reported curtly. “Got attacked while in there.”

“Hmm,” he hummed to himself, and she wasn’t sure how to read it without seeing his face. “I know you are not hurt. So, how did it go?”

“I defended myself and then—” Astrea stopped talking, almost biting her tongue.

“Then what?” Joran’s tone became sharper.

“The King arrived,” she confessed dryly, not knowing why she didn’t want to speak about it. It was literally her job.

“Did he?” The Teacher’s words were slow and deliberate, each dripping with malice, causing Astrea to feel a deep unease. She knew him too well not to pick up on the passive-aggressive notes in his speech.

“Yeah,” she cleared her throat, choosing her words carefully. “He is—”

She halted halfway, suddenly realising she didn’t know whom she was protecting, herself or... Fenrir? And why the hell would she be protecting him?

“What did he do?” Joran insisted.

“He killed everyone,” she admitted, thinking that the Big Bad wolf could take care of himself. She had to think of her and Niki. “It was quick.”

“What did you think when he did this?” The next question surprised her.

Did it really matter what she thought? He had never asked her similar questions before.

“That he is an animal! A barbarian just like we expected,” she informed her mentor dryly, knowing that it wasn’t quite what she really thought, but it was a safe thing to say.

“Do you hate him?”

Again, a strange question.

“Hate is a strong word,” Astrea shrugged. “I simply don’t care.”

“Good,” Joran chuckled finally, and she secretly breathed out. Whatever test that was, she had just passed it. “Then you will have no problem with the change of your task.”

A knot formed in Astrea’s stomach, and her free hand instinctively balled into a fist. This couldn’t be good.

Don’t! Her wolf warned her, knowing how quickly she could get herself in trouble again.

“What has changed in such a short period of time?” she asked, knowing she could regret this.

“The Rogue King has something precious in his possession, and I want it,” Joran admitted, and a snort escaped her.

“That guy?” She scoffed. “His most priceless possession is his leather jacket, and trust me, that thing as old as time.”

“He can keep that,” the Serpent was unimpressed. “I heard that there is a bracelet on his hand. With beads.”

Astrea furrowed her brows. There was indeed a bracelet on Fenrir at all times. Quite old from the looks of it, with natural crystal beads.

“What about it?” Surely that couldn’t be anything significant.

“I want it. You need to bring it to me.”

She pondered for a few moments before deciding to test her luck.

“It will be hard,” she sighed heavily.

Careful there, Asti, Nova growled at her.

I know what I am doing, she assured her.

"That's why you are the one there and not anyone else. You can do it." Joran either didn't take the hint or completely ignored it.

"He will kill me! Have you seen the guy? He crushed a skull in his hand today! I've never seen anything like it!" Astrea decided to thicken the colours of her story.

"Then find a way to kill him first," Joran cut her off, and she almost gasped but covered her mouth with her palm in time.

"Kill him?" Killing the King wasn't mentioned once during her preparation. "But what about the alliance?"

"When he is dead, they will need a new leader, and I would be happy to assist them with that. Why have an alliance when we can simply take the army? So, there is no need for buttering up the King anymore. Kill him and bring me his bracelet."

"Niki," she heard herself saying her ward's name before she realised it.

"What about her?" Joran asked dryly.

"Free her together with me if I succeed." A sense of disbelief washed over Astrea at her own boldness. She was making demands now, something she couldn't imagine before.

"Is that what you want?" Joran didn't sound too happy about that.

"Yes. I want a peaceful life somewhere far away," she confessed.

"You don't. I know you," the Serpent retorted with a chuckle and for some reason, it infuriated her. Why did he think he knew what she wanted?

"It doesn't matter what you think you know. Let Nikki leave with me," Astrea insisted, biting her lip and almost drawing blood from it. "She deserves peaceful life too."

"Only if she wants to," Joran added. "It may come as a shock to you, but some people don't want to leave the Firstborn island. Niki has a talent, and I see a great future for her within our ranks. I don't want to kick her out if it's your dream and not hers."

"Fine," she agreed. "if Nikki wants to leave, she leaves with me."

“Only if you succeed in both, killing him and delivering me that bracelet.” The Teacher clarified.

“Deal,” she bit her lip, realising she didn’t want to do it.

She didn’t want to kill Fenrir.

And yet she had to now. It was either him or her freedom.

“I will send you some help to help you escape when you are done. You know what to do,” her mentor said.

“Okay, speak to you later,” she was ready to end the call.

“Astrea,” Joran’s voice trembled for a moment, but it didn’t escape her. “Just remember that if you want to come back home and stay here, you are always welcome.”

This was new. This tone and this... attitude.

“Someone is at the door,” she lied. “I need to go!”

Astrea prepared for her little night outing quickly. It was time to retrieve her weapons and other gadgets, and although she would have been done faster in her wolf form, she decided against it because, in that way, she would be more noticeable. Not to mention that she had to check the coordinates with her phone while she was at it.

Running in the sand was a nightmare, even for someone as well-trained as her. It shifted under her feet as she ran, sinking and rising like the ocean tide, slowing her down. However, she reached the place in less than an hour.

Two bags were waiting for her, and she kneeled next to them to check if everything was in place. Meanwhile, the sounds of a rhythmic clapping distracted her.

It couldn’t have been a wolf, a fox or a bear, and for a moment there, she wasn’t sure what she was hearing until the realisation hit her. A horse!

This was probably the last thing that she expected to see here.

A horse? I get that they are underdeveloped here, but horses? Really? She snorted in her mind and expected Nova to support her.

Stay alert. There wasn't even a trace of laughter in her wolf's voice. Something is off here.

She could feel it, too, now. The air shifted, becoming thicker and heavier. Astrea looked around, and now it seemed the night had gotten darker despite the stars and the crescent moon shining brightly.

The sounds of the hooves were more distinct now, and she was ready for anything, letting her claws out. She was ready to fight if she had to.

However, only a single dark horse appeared on the horizon, its coat shimmering in the moonlight like polished obsidian. Its muscled form was sleek and graceful, gliding through the sand towards her, mane and tail whipped by the wind.

A magnificent sight!

Right until the moment, she noticed its eyes glowing purple.

What is this? Don't come close to it! Nova snarled, her instincts inflamed.

I don't feel danger coming from it, Astrea told her, mesmerised. Isn't it beautiful?

Is that a horn on its head? The wolf bristled, not liking any of it.

Astrea couldn't believe her eyes. A spiralled horn was indeed growing out of the creature's head, a subtle purple glow radiating from it as well.

It slowed down when it saw her. As if it was afraid to scare her off.

Not that she was going anywhere. She couldn't leave this wonder without exploring it first.

"Where did you come from?" Astrea smiled at it, still not feeling any danger from the beast despite its heavy and dark aura. "A unicorn! Who could have thought!"

She stepped closer, stretching her hand forward and trying to create some kind of bond with the ethereal creature.

“Don’t touch it!” Fenrir’s voice cut through the stillness of the night, sending shivers down her spine.

She was so busted! Two bags full of weapons and gadgets were right behind her, and she was unlikely to frame the unicorn for hiding them here.

She could, however, use the creature as a distraction.

“How could I not touch this beauty?” she giggled, continuing her way and thinking of what to do next hectically. Between the unicorn and Fenrir, the horsey seemed like a safe option. This was now officially one big mess!

“Astrea!” the wolf growled behind her back, but she was only looking at the beast before her, their eyes locked. She could tell it liked her, and when her hand was finally close, it brushed its head against it. Its coat was as soft as silk, and she could feel the energy coursing through the creature, knowing it wouldn’t hurt her.

“What are you so worked up about, Fenrir? It’s just a unicorn!” she scoffed, thinking if the creature could help her escape. Her mission had officially failed. Unless...

Unless she tried to kill him here and now. Just the thought of it made her nauseous, but it wasn’t a choice anymore. When he found out about her bags, he would kill her himself. And if she returned to the Firstborn island, not completing her mission, she would have to stay with the Serpent forever.

And yet she didn’t want to do it, prolonging the inevitable as long as possible.

“It’s not a unicorn!” Fenrir informed her, folding his hands over his chest. He clearly saw the bags already but mainly looked annoyed with her not obeying him. She wondered why he was so hard to read while she thought of reaching for her knife. One quick throw and...

It had to be done.

Quick. She would do it quickly and forget about it.

“It’s not?” she smirked at the rogue and slowly brushed her finger over the horse’s horn, playing with fire. It felt cool to the touch. As if it was made of glass.

Fenrir watched her intently, and when the corners of his lips went upwards slightly, she knew there was a problem she didn't figure out yet.

"No," he shook his head with a chuckle. "It's not a unicorn. It's a Nightmare. And you really shouldn't have touched its horn."

"Why not?" Astrea tried smiling, but her vision suddenly got blurry, alarming her. Did she just miscalculate who was the biggest danger?

"Because it's poisonous!" Fenrir replied, confirming her suspicions and watching how her legs gave up on her.

Panic rippled through her body as she was losing control over it. Her eyelids were getting heavier and heavier as she watched the Nightmare staring at her with its deep purple eyes.

One second – and the demon, or whatever it was, galloped away into the night, sprinkling her with sand in the process.

Fenrir towered over her, and she tried squeezing the knife in her hand harder, knowing that he would probably kill her.

The King was saying something, his eyes sad for some reason, but she couldn't decipher the words anymore, regretting only that her end was this... unimpressive. She always knew she would die young but hoped to go with a bang.

"Do it... fast!" she managed to form her last words before her mind switched off, and she lost the battle to the darkness.

"How could you bring her here?" the witch was furious. "She is going to be the end of this place!"

"Salome, I don't think I need your permission," Fenrir snarled at her. "I only need a detoxifying potion from you, and you may go."

"Tell me why I shouldn't leave her like that?" the brunette hissed, narrowing her eyes at him, her bright red kaftan flowing as she walked back and forth to calm herself down.

“Because that would make me very angry. That’s why! And because next time you need a favour, I will be the one hesitating.”

That seemed to work, and the woman clenched her mouth tightly as she considered her options.

“Fine!” she finally agreed. “I’ll be back in half an hour. She can wait this long.”

The witch stormed out of the bedroom, and he knew this wasn’t the end of it.

He knew, and yet he didn’t care.

“I should have sent you away,” he sighed, brushing a lock of silvery-white hair off Astrea’s forehead. He should have known that horrible thing would get to her sooner or later. It found her every time!

He took her hand to check her pulse and... didn’t find it in himself to let go. The thoughts of Asgard invaded his mind again.

Especially that night...