

The Alpha God's Luna by Marissa Gilbert

Chapter 54

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Chapter 54. Queen's Gambit

Joran banged his fist on the door, awaiting a reply, while his brother burned a hole at the back of his head with his eyes. He could feel Fenrir's patience growing thin, and this was not how he planned for everything to go between the four of them. He was supposed to be the one in power since he practically owned Astrea.

You don't even have Bjorn! Her words rang in his mind repeatedly since the moment he left her. The words that stung him.

"If this is another trick of yours, I swear I will find a way to replace Hel with you in the underworld realm!" Fenrir promised, his voice dark and unyielding.

"That's not it!" The dragon said through clenched teeth. "I cannot sense the tattoo, which means that a divine weapon was used on her! And that could mean that Vidar has her!"

"If he has her, I'll kill him, but your destiny will still remain the same. You ruined our lives!"

"I saved her!" Jor exploded, breathing in sharp pants. He was tired of hearing the same thing over and over. Why couldn't they see it his way? "I did what none of you could do! She is the strongest she's ever been!"

"You make others feed from her power!" Fenrir threw the accusation his way.

"And how do you think I managed to hide her from Vidar for so many years?" Joran scowled. "That stupid glowing dragonfly on her skin is like a beacon for him. Wherever she is, he'll find her. The only way I could prevent him from doing so was to dull it down. Four, Fenrir, I needed

four people draining her power to make her invisible! And you ruined it all in a matter of months! She could have had a calm life for once!”

“With you?” The wolf let out a chuckle.

“And why not? It I could-”

“You made her obey you like you owned her. You turned her into a killer when it goes against her nature. Don’t give me crap about making her happy. If you wanted that, you would have never come to retrieve her from Solace and set the whole city on fire searching for her.”

“It was working just fine until I sent her to you!”

“She ran away from you long before we met in this life!” Fenrir gave him an eye roll. “But whatever helps you sleep at night!”

Joran clenched his fists. Why couldn’t that wolf admit this woman was not for him? Life proved that to him time after time. Did it have to be this way? Fenrir and Astrea ruined each other time after time for centuries, almost destroying what was left of them. Just why were they still drawn to each other? She’d be better off with him, and Fenrir could be happy for them for once. If he loved her so much, he could learn to be happy for them! You don’t even have Bjorn...

That boy hiding Nikki from him stood before his eyes. He was covering her behind his back as if Joran would hurt her when everything he did was to draw them both together and give that bear his second chance after his past mishaps. Something he didn’t have to do but did out of his good will.

Why did everyone ignore that?

They finally heard sounds from behind the door, and in a few seconds, it swung open, a tall, imposing man glaring at them both.

“Is this how the South greets their guests?” King Gideon Stormhold raised his dark brow at them. “First, you can’t guarantee safety to anyone in your own capital, and now you take away our privacy as well?”

Considering you call yourselves the most advanced country of our continent, it's laughable!"

"I am pretty sure you know why we are here!" Joran stopped him, not wishing to prolong this humiliation. Mortals did not dare speak to him this way, but right now, he had to take it because he needed something from the royal couple of the West.

"I do, but I really want to hear you beg," Gideon smirked, leaning over his doorframe. Expectantly.

"Do you realise I can burn your country to the ground?" Joran flares his nostrils at the cocky man.

"No, he can't," Fenrir pointed out from behind his back. "He needs it for his grand, evil plan. But we really have no time for this."

"And who would you be?" Gideon lazily shifted his gaze to the other deity.

That mutt had some balls.

"You know who I am," Fenrir said, and just for a second, the King's lips parted. "You've heard my voice before, and you responded to my call. I gave something to you. A gift of sorts."

Now Joran saw something the King did not give him but was offering freely to his brother – respect.

"Come in," Gideon stepped inside, and both men followed him.

Joran haled the situation. He knew what Fenrir did. In the battle where they were on opposing sides, they both blessed two different armies of shifters, changing the world as they knew it. That meant Gideon Stormhold was now Fenrir's champion. That complicated matters for the dragon. He didn't really have a pressure point here, but Fenrir did.

They walked into a spacious room and saw the Queen of the West sitting in a comfortable white chair with a high back and golden studs adorning

the edges. She was still wearing the same elegant white dress and looked serene.

“Long time no see!” Riannon beamed at Joran. She was about to stand up, noticing Fenrir, but he shook his head, and she stayed in place.

“You know why we are here!” Impatience was getting the better of the dragon.

“I do!” Riannon smirked, leaning over the armrest and relaxing her head on her palm.

She didn’t say another word, provoking him.

“Where is she?” Joran growled.

“Who are you asking about?” The insolent woman shrugged.

“No games! Is she in danger?” The dragon decided to try a different approach.

“She is,” the Queen responded calmly. “Then again, that’s nothing new for her. Is it? She is always in danger when she is with you. Just earlier today-”

“Who took her?” Joran interrupted her before any unwanted information was spilt in front of his sibling

“Someone you know,” Riannon replied, pursing her lips. “Do I have to drag each word out of you?” Joran gritted his teeth, seething. “Because I will. To be honest, I thought you cared about her, and I wouldn’t have to—.”

“Funny you should say that.” The Queen stood up. “Caring is a word with such vast meaning. It really depends on whoever interprets it, don’t you think?”

“I know you hate me,” Joran exhaled sharply through his nostrils, barely holding himself back from killing this woman on the spot. He knew Fenrir would stop him, though. Moreover, Riannon had the gift that none

of them could lay their hands on. A gift that couldn't have been stolen. Not even after her death. They all needed her now

"That's – an understatement," the Queen's lips curled in a half-smile.

"But will you really let her die for your revenge?" Joran tried to manipulate her feelings. Surely, Riannon cared about Astrea enough not to want her dead. She had to know who they were to each other by now.

"Of course, not!" The woman chuckled. "According to my predictions, we still have some time, though."

"And what happens when this time is over?"

"I take your brother aside and tell him where she is." The Western Queen sighed nonchalantly. "Just him, though. Not you."

The dragon deity clenched his fists so hard his knuckles turned white.

"And what do I need to do for you to include me?" He knew he lost this game already.

"You want that, don't you?" Riannon finally locked eyes with him, knowing she had him under her heel now. He wouldn't want his brother to find Astrea without him present and be the hero of the day. He wouldn't want to risk the wolf taking her away and hiding her forever. Getting Astrea out of Solace worked because of how unexpected it was, and also... he had some help. If Fenrir took her away from him now, finding them would be hard even for Vidar. And Joran would be left aside.

"What. Do. You. Want?" he repeated, anger coursing through his veins.

Fenrir watched the entire show, growing tired of it. He was ready to accuse the Queen of playing games with Astrea's life when he heard something that shook him to the core.

"I want your word," the woman said calmly but with so much confidence that it seemed she could move mountains.

“My word?” Joran furrowed his brows. This couldn’t be good. “What-”

“I’ll give you the information on where she is, and when you find her, and she is safe,” Riannon’s eyes became as cold as ice, “you will remove your mark from her. Forever. No tricks.”

Now it was Fenrir’s turn to part his lips in shock. Never in a million years had he expected that a mortal would solve this little problem for him.

He knew he’d find a way to make Joran do it eventually, but what happened just now was a surprise. “No!” Joran ground out the word through clenched teeth

This would mean he’d lose power over Astrea. He’d lose his leverage over Fenrir and Vidar. This would be his end, and it couldn’t be, not after centuries of getting to this point.

“Fine!” Riannon shrugged “Leave then. We are done here.”

“Don’t think for one moment I wouldn’t fly to the West and get your son to-”

Gideon snarled, his eyes glowing golden and claws elongating.

“I know for a fact you wouldn’t.” His wife’s voice calmed down the King instantly, but he left the sharp claws, ready to use them any moment if needed.

“So, what’s it going to be?” Riannon tilted her head. “Tik tok.”

Joran peered at his brother.

“Yeah, Jor, what is it going to be?” Fenrir crossed his arms over his chest.

“What’s in it for me?” The dragon turned to face his brother. “Do you have any idea what Vidar is offering? What is your offer, Rir?”

“I offer you to do the right thing for once,” the wolf replied. “You know you owe me a debt that cannot be repaid. But you owe one to Astrea, too.

Whatever you choose, it will not change anything for me. I know what I have to do. Your choice is for you. It

A laugh escaped Joran.

“Not much of an offer, is it?”

“Suit yourself.” Fenrir shrugged and turned to the Luna.” Riannon Stormhold, I think it’s time for us to have that conversation.”

“It will be my honour,” the Western Queen stood up finally.

“Fine!” Joran raised his hand. He had to go to Astrea. He had to try to save the situation somehow.

The divine mark on Astrea’s neck meant a lot, but not everything. This was already proven.

Besides, it was a preventative measure for when he sent her away. The real power over her was Nikki. And Nikki, as every firstborn, belonged to him.

Still, it wasn’t ideal.

“Fine what?” Ria knew the rules of the game by now. He had to say it.

“Tell me where she is, and I will take my mark off today,” he gave up, knowing it would cost him.

“Of course,” Riannon smiled genuinely at him for the first time. “A deal is a deal.”