

Chapter 62 - The Alpha God's Luna

Joran was so empty inside, yet his chest felt heavy. As if that wall was still on his shoulders, obstructing his airways.

He couldn't even remember if Astrea thanked him for saving her life. That girl always took everything he did for her for granted, and he was getting fed up with it.

He closed his eyes, and immediately, the image of Fenrir holding her painted itself in his mind. The way she looked at him. The way he touched her... these things repulsed him and hurt him more than anything before. Just why did he let himself be that attached to her? Wasn't losing a brother enough? Did he have to create even more pain for himself?

He used to imagine how he would live with Astrea and how Fenrir one day would accept them for her sake. He used to believe he was the remedy to their curse, imagining the picture-perfect family.

Now they will have this picture, but cut him out of it. He was alone again.

Joran rubbed his forehead. He needed a swim. Or at least a shower. Water was the first element he ever mastered, and it still managed to bring him peace. Not to mention that he wanted to get rid of Astrea's lingering scent. It was driving him crazy, more than he cared to admit.

The elevator doors opened, and his heart sank at the sight before him. The once luxurious and pristine space he was so proud to call his was now a scene of chaos and destruction. The doors were broken, furniture upturned, glass shattered, and debris scattered across the floor. It was as if a tempest had turned through the room, leaving nothing unscathed. And bodies... several dead bodies lay in awkward positions around, some missing limbs.

Joran was too physically tired and too emotionally exhausted to process it all, so it took him a few seconds to notice that amidst the wreckage, there was a figure lying on the ground in a pool of ruby-red blood.

"Bjorn!" He rushed to the bear's side, falling to his knees and trying to assess the wounds.

It looked bad. So bad that scales began to emerge from beneath his skin. It had been years since the last time that happened uncontrollably.

His champion looked like he went through one hell of a fight. Joran knew that blindness did not make him defenceless, but he could smell the blood of his enemies everywhere in the living room and wondered if he had underestimated the guy's abilities after all. The warrior in Bjorn did not go anywhere.

“Th-they took her,” he muttered, desperately clenching the deity’s arm as if to urge him.

“It’s okay, it doesn’t matter!” Joran tried to reassure him, seeing how much blood he had lost. “I am just glad you are still alive and—”

“No!” Bjorn bared his teeth, fingers digging into his flesh. “You don’t get it! Nikki — They came for her—”

“Irrelevant! I don’t care where she is, and you should—”

“But I do—” The bear seethed, his chest constricting as he coughed blood. It wasn’t the time for him to start caring about that girl. He had to think of what was best for him!

“I’ll send someone after her,” the dragon tried to distract him, his priorities elsewhere. He had already lost his brother and Astrea. Losing his favourite champion would be too much.

“No!” Bjorn’s claws grew longer. If Jormungandr weren’t a god, they would have pierced his skin. “I need — Strawberry — She is — I’ll go!”

“You will go nowhere.” The dragon let out an aggravated sigh. Why was everyone in his life so stubborn?

“I can’t — leave her—”

“You are in no state to go anywhere!” Joran warned him. “I will need to perform a miracle to heal you, and you know I have already surpassed my limits for you and Astrea.”

“I’ll give you anything!” Bjorn’s grip tightened. “Whatever the hell you want from me! My soul! My firstborn! Anything!”

Joran’s lips parted.

Bjorn did not take these words lightly. He knew who he was dealing with, but he was still offering...

If he accepted the plea now, he could bind him to — No, that wasn’t right.

“You don’t mean that,” he tried to brush it off. The bear must have been delusional because of his injuries. “No woman is worth it, Bjorn.”

“This is why Astrea will never be yours!” The bear retorted, letting out a bitter chuckle. “Why do you think she never trusted you? You only take what conveniently falls into your arms or what you can manipulate. You — you don’t fight for her, don’t make sacrifices, don’t see her the way he sees her — a person. You wouldn’t walk through fire for her.”

“You were ready to walk through fire for Savannah a little less than a year ago,” Joran reminded him. “And look how that ended.”

“And I still would. She was my mate even if she didn’t love me — You’d never understand!”

“You are lucky you are already hurt,” Jor muttered, watching his champion struggle with his breathing laboured.

“Anything!” Bjorn repeated himself. “I’ll be your slave for life. For eternity, if you want it.”

This was too tempting. After all, today, it looked like he would spend the eternity alone.

“Please,” the bear was now ready to beg him, “Nikki — She deserves everything good in this life. She went through the training of the Firstborn Island and remained so pure-hearted.”

“If you think she loves you—”

“She hates me.” A sad smile curled onto Bjorn’s lips as he remembered the little she-wolf. “It — doesn’t matter. I — I don’t hate her, you know—”

Joran knew exactly what he meant. No matter how he tried, he couldn’t hate Astrea either.

He also knew that they had seconds until the decision had to be made.

“If you want to go after her, I’ll have to turn you into something else.” His words were cold and quiet, but the bear heard him well. “You’ll be — something else.”

“I am already a monster, am I not?” Bjorn chuckled and ended up coughing more blood. “Just do it! Whatever it is!”

“It’ll hurt like hell, and you may die in the process.” This was the last attempt to bring him back to his senses. “Or I can just heal you and—”

“Do it!” The man roared, the pool of blood under him growing bigger.

“Before we begin, is there anything else you want to tell me?” Joran asked, still hesitant about the whole thing.

“The warriors who came here — Apart from their scents, there was one more on them. I wouldn’t have noticed before, but in my current condition—”

“What’s the scent?” the dragon rushed him. They couldn’t waste a second more.

“Peppermint with a hint of grapefruit.” Bjorn’s face tensed after he said that, which meant he knew whom the scent belonged to. Joran knew as well.

This changed everything.

“That’s all I know,” the bear admitted. “Use it as you will, friend.”

“Here,” Joran pretended he did not feel the single treacherous tear that was now rolling down his cheek. Just like Bjorn pretended he didn’t know what it was when it landed on the scars of his long-gone eye. “Hold my hand, Darius.”

Bjorn’s fingers wrapped around his, and the dragon took three beads off his bracelet, hoping it would work.

“Try to be still,” the dragon god said, clenching his lips into a thin white line and crushing all the beads simultaneously.

A resounding roar pierced the silence in the room, reverberating through the entire building.

After what seemed like hours, Joran stood up on shaky legs as his stomach was about to empty itself. He was done. Done with the pain. Done with loving anyone. Done with people betraying him.

He didn’t trust too many people, and now he had remembered why.

Partially, it was his fault. He was too busy to notice what was happening under his nose, and now this was the result.

Peppermint and grapefruit... The bearer of this scent had to pay for the betrayal, for what was taken from him today.

Thanks to the traitor, Darius Bjorn was dead.

“Speak, witch!” Vidar commanded, but Salome did not move. “You will tell us everything one way or another. There’s no need to make this hard on yourself.”

“Threatening a witness is a sure way to get false results.” Astrea was hectically thinking of ways to throw her so-called mate off his game.

“Sadly, we don’t have time to dance around her,” the God of Vengeance acted as if she was a silly child passing by and not a Luna of a whole country. “There is an army on our doorstep, and we need answers now. If anything, I find it suspicious that you want to stall us. It makes more sense, though, when I remember you recently swapped sides and joined the East.”

“I don’t know what you are implying. I lived my whole life in the South, and it will always be my home. I have its best interest in my heart no matter where I live.” Astrea sent a withering glance down his way. “I am sensing a bad energy here. Yes, I had to reject you as my mate, but I hoped we could deal with it privately as two adults.”

A wave of whispers erupted, and the Dragonfly knew she had made him look like a bitter fool now.

“No offence taken,” Vidar inhaled through his nostril, clenching a little remote in his hand so hard it let out a cracking noise. “I have many candidates for the role of my Queen.”

“Luna,” Fenrir interjected, lips curved into a slight smirk.

“Excuse me?” Vidar raised his brow at him, annoyed by them both and barely holding back his anger.

“As far as I remember, you are not a king, Vincent. Why would you have a queen? Unless there is something we all don’t know about your plans?”

Another wave of whispers rippled. The newcomer already looked power-hungry, but this little slip-up made it worse.

“We are not here to discuss my personal life,” Vidar reasoned. “My Luna will be treated like a queen. That’s all.”

“Good for her.” The Councilwoman with silver hair tapped her fingers over the desk. “Now, can we get back to the witch? You seemed to have a point about something there, and we are all ears.”

“Yes, Salome Gray is the mastermind behind the explosion, and we would have been under a massive attack right now if my men didn’t catch her before the North could act,” Vidar announced. “Moreover, there was more than one bomb.”