

The Luna Trials by Marissa Gilbert Chapter 76

Chapter 76

He had done it just once in the past, but the Wolf God remembered it as if it was yesterday. The previous time he experienced completely different emotions, though. Back then, he still had hope and thought that he was fighting for a better future. Moreover, Fenrir believed he was the one building it. The life of his dreams was just one step away, and his happiness was so close he could almost touch

Everything was different now. It wasn't his war, and his kind lived for so long without his presence that it seemed he did not have a place here anymore. Fenrir did not see the point in this war. Or any other for that matter. No war in the centuries he existed made anyone happy. He knew it better than anyone. He won so many of those in the past, but he was still as broken and empty as ever. To the point of not caring anymore.

Years and years ago, he left the fighting to the mortals and resigned from his obligations to live in solitude. Every day of his life was torture, and he couldn't do this anymore. So he left for a place where nobody else wanted to reside and stayed there.

But today, something changed for him. Today he couldn't stand and watch his wolves die when they fought so hard. He had seen "The hope and stubbornness in them that resonated with his inner pain. He was sure that he would walk away and forget about it as he tried to forget everything else so many times. Just another thing to add to a long list.

He couldn't do it, though.

They reminded him of his younger self. Fierce believers were ready to die for the cause, and Fenrir couldn't help but admire each of them. Even if he'd never admit it out loud.

He was especially impressed by the two Lycan kings, by the way they worked as one team, by how they managed to unite species who usually hated each other under their joint flag.

They did not need anyone. They did not need him. If Jor hadn't interjected himself into this problem, they would have never needed him.

However, his brother had to interfere with the mortals. He had to try and erase his kind from the face of the Earth. Even after so long, he was still holding his grudge. He couldn't let it go and move on.

And now Fenrir had no choice in this matter.

Because it wouldn't be fair to the ones who bravely fought in this war. They didn't give up protecting what was right. They didn't even start the war. Lycans, werewolves, cats, witches and birds tried to defend their lives at whatever cost.

A part of him was still hesitating, but deep inside, Fenrir knew what he had to do..

The Call.

The divine weapon in his hand, which once belonged to his grandfather and that became his after he killed the King among Gods, made his fingers tingle. The ancient magic recognised its owner and begged him to wield it, to summon it. It was desperate to be unleashed.

Fenrir swore loudly. He had already broken his own rule creating a new Amarok, and now he was about to make it even worse. The spear disappeared in his arms, returning into his body as pure power. This was also something he tried to avoid.

But here goes nothing.

The decision had already been made, and he knew he wouldn't change his mind even if it would be the last thing that he would do. Everything felt so different now, and he couldn't explain why.

He shifted into his primordial form and raced to one of the hills towering over the battlefield.

Slowly stepping out of the darkness of the northern forest, Fenrir knew that this was his last chance to leave and avoid the mess that his decision would cause.

warm.

However, this was the right thing to do.

She... she would have approved. And even though she was long gone and he would never see her again, it made his chest

A few wolves below noticed him, shocked by his presence. It was hard to take him for someone else due to his size. Even Amarok was much smaller by comparison, and no one had any doubts about what they were witnessing now.

Fenrir raised his head to where he felt the Moon even though it wasn't visible in the sky yet. He always felt it... even when he did not want to.

A loud howl left his chest, a howl full of pain and pride that gradually transformed into a resounding growl that shook the mountains around them.

The Call.. The Call that found its place in every wolf's heart. The Call that was heard by every shifter present. The Call that was more than any Alpha command. It was the Call of a God, a summoning full of power and promise, as it could give anything to the ones who responded. As long as they had the one thing Fenrir demanded from them a pure heart.

Their response was the most important thing here. The Call summoned the souls of the ancient creatures residing in human bodies, and nothing could be done without them responding. It was their choice, but it had a price. The response let him in. It let him see what they were like inside. If they simply craved power, if their motives were not pure, the Call would kill them, burning them from the inside.

This was why not everyone could let him in.

It made him sad to receive the first rejection. And then a second, followed by a few others. The shifters who knew they wouldn't pass the test were bowing out one by one.

Centuries had passed, and nothing had changed...

The world stopped as he looked for the ones who were worthy, too afraid that he would find none. Was Kai the only one worthy here? Were things that bad? Did he imagine what he saw in this army just moments ago?

However, soon a small she wolf responded to him, begging him to give her the power to save her mate and the woman who was like a mother to her. She was so tiny but the spirit inside her was pure. The little wolf with pink stripes of fur was not born to be a warrior, but her soul pleaded to become one now. It wasn't in her nature, but she was ready to change it for the ones she loved. And she was the first one to receive his blessing.

Then her mate responded, begging for the same thing, unable to watch her sacrifice herself. His request was granted as well.

And then wolf after wolf after wolf opened their souls, permitting him permanent entry. Not perfect, but with pure intentions, Fenrir couldn't help but admire them. They were ready to die here today to defend what was right. But he had other plans for them.

A wave of power went through the lines, making his subjects howl in the pain. Divine gifts always had a price. When he was done with the wolves, he looked at the others. To win this war, he had to do what his brother did and give his gifts to everyone he could, however big or small.

The wolves, cats, bears, foxes and birds kept slaughtering each other in the chaos that surrounded them and did not even notice that their leaders were gone.

No one cared anymore. It was kill or be killed. The only way to leave that field alive was to kill the enemy.

Naya knew the stakes were high when she brought her pack here today in her mother's stead, insisting for the Alpha and her Luna to stay in their home to defend it if the need arose. She was trusted with an Alpha's responsibilities and was going to prove herself tonight, but the bolts of electricity that went through her shook her frame and made her disoriented.

It took the werecat a few good seconds to realise what had happened.

The white bear she was fighting with did not waste time and gave a blow that should have sent her flying across the field. Only that ...it didn't. Instead, she bounced back surprisingly quickly and felt stronger than ever before. She loved feeling this power, and the expression on her enemy's face was priceless.

The gift granted to her by a Wolf God would not be wasted. And it was greatly appreciated.

She saw the scenery around her changing rapidly. All of a sudden, everyone who was on their side was awakening, changed to some extent. They were not mutated like their enemies blessed by the Serpent. They were full of pure raw power that was granted to their souls, not bodies. And it was just what they needed today.

Not wasting any time, Naya ordered her cats to launch a new attack on the left flank.

This was a game-changer.

Kai glared at Bjorn standing in front of Savannah and saw red. As long as this man was alive, they would never know peace. He knew that now. After everything, that bear was still ready to sacrifice everything to force his mate to be with him, and Kai knew he couldn't let this happen.

His eyes met Savannah's, and he could tell that she was thinking the same thing. The baby inside her belly had to be protected at all costs; his Queen had to be protected at all costs.

"Glad that you finally joined us!" Bjorn let out an unhealthy wicked laugh. One could tell just by looking at him that the White Bear King was losing it. "What took you so long? I am tired of waiting for you."

Amarok stomped his paw on the ground, and huge ice spikes grew out of it, trying to reach his opponent.

However, the latter did not even flinch. When the sharp ice was near, he just smashed it with his fist, breaking it into pieces much to

everyone's disappointment.

Kai suspected that Bjorn would be that strong, so he wasn't intimidated one bit. It wasn't the ice that he wanted to use to kill his nemesis. No, he wanted to taste his hot blood on his canines and bury his claws deep into his flesh. It was the most primal desire to kill that possessed him now. He had to protect, he had to defend, he had to kill,

However, Kai was a King first and Amarok second. One look downcast reminded him that he had to think of his people too. He felt Fenrir's presence and the power radiating from below. A wave of gratitude to his deity rippled through him. He was too desperate to pray to him, but Fenrir arrived at the best time on his own.

He did not expect more help than he had already received from the God but simply knowing that he gave them a fighting chance now was amazing. It was what they so desperately needed.

So, he shifted into his human form and stood before Bjorn, ready to negotiate. Killing him would sure feel satisfying, yet at the same time, if he could save his people's lives, he was ready to sacrifice his ego.

"Your plan did not work the way you expected," Kai started, holding his head high just like a true king was supposed to. He was calm and collected while Bjorn's clenched fists were shaking from all the tension. The bear could barely control himself seeing how all his advantages were destroyed one by one. "It was a good plan, and I have to admit it, but it failed, Darius. Take your men and return to your

lands. We can draw a new agreement between us, and there is no need to waste any more lives."

"In your dreams!" Bjorn spat, frowning, "I haven't come this far to back away now! So, unless you are ready to surrender your crown and return my mate to me-"

A loud growl stopped his speech. This wasn't something Kai was going to tolerate.

"As far as I am aware, you have no mate!" The Northern King snarled. "This is my last warning! Leave my wife and my kingdom alone!"

them.

"And if I don't?" Bjorn's lips curled into a cruel smirk. Kai already knew that there would be no peaceful talks between the two of

"Then I will have to kill you!" The Lycan King announced. "And I will never have to see your face again!"

"You can try!" Bjorn taunted.

The two white bears that arrived with him reached the top of the mountain where they stood and roared at Kai, but this was when Savannah shifted back into her royal Lycan form and stood in their way. She knew she couldn't interfere in the fight between the two kings. As much as she wanted to help Kai defeat Bjorn, she knew that he had to do this alone. So she was happy that she got to be busy as well. She needed to release her anger and frustration, she craved the distraction because she wasn't sure she'd be able to stay idle and just watch her beloved fight to the death with the man she hated more than anything.

Bjorn shifted first and charged at Kai, hoping to get him earlier than he would transform back into Amarok, but no such luck, His claws met ice on the wolf's dark fur that almost pierced his healthy eye, and immediately he had to back away because a set of sharp, canines almost tore a part of his side.

Bjorn had avoided this fight his whole life, but he was done with hiding. Today he planned to prove that the prophecy was just an empty sound and to put an end to all this. He was fighting for what he believed in, and he was ready to sacrifice his life if he had to.

But Kai would go with him. He wouldn't have his hands on Bjorn's mate. Never again.

Darius knew that he would be a great king. He was a better man, a better warrior, a better ruler. Just one thing always stood in his way to greatness, and he was ready to get rid of it today. He was desperate to prove himself, desperate to show his mate that she was making a mistake, desperate to kill the one he hated so much. The hate for the Lycan King of the North had such deep roots in his heart now that he knew he'd never be able to live a happy life if that man stayed alive.

Kai knew the stakes were high. However, he was calm. They were lucky. So lucky that Fenrir did not abandon them. That their warriors could now stand up for themselves against the monsters.

He knew that Savannah would take care of the two bears, and he knew that Bjorn wouldn't be able to stand long against him. Bjorn was a good warrior, but Kai was better. He was the best. He did not let his emotions control him.

Bjorn may have loved his schemes, but Kai was good at tactics.

Time after time, he let the white bear believe that he had made a mistake, that his defence wasn't perfect and that he could be killed. And each time when Bjorn jumped on that opportunity, Kai made sure he was paying for it with his flesh and blood.

He did not like to admit it, but the bear was stronger than what he would prefer. However, it did not matter. Savannah was near, and her presence alone gave him strength. His warriors beneath did the same. He could already taste the victory. Each attack, each charge, each blow was bringing them all closer to the end of the war.

However, there was a problem. Although he managed to get the bear plenty of times, the latter was still standing strong. The gift that Joran gave him was invincibility. Any other bear would be dead by now, yet Bjorn was still able to attack him. It made Kai think of other ways to deal with him. Even a god wouldn't be able to walk the Earth after being decapitated. Or without a heart. Savvy already proved once how helpful that was. So, if nothing else worked, he would have to try these options.

Bjorn launched at him, aiming at Amarok's side in the hope of getting his guts out, but the wolf's defence was mastered to perfection. Right before his teeth were able to sink into Kai's flesh, ice spikes grew, trying to pierce him through. And it was a miracle that Bjorn managed to dodge at the last moment.

The two of them were well matched.

Savvy watched the fight from the corner of her eye, and her heart was racing with worry. The two bears she fought did not try to kill her. Even

now, she could tell that their orders were to get her alive, and she was using that to her advantage since they gave her this wonderful gift. She wasn't above it.

What worried her more was the battle of two kings. She knew very well that Kai wanted to deal with Bjorn on his own, but she was not going to let his pride risk their whole future together. She wanted to help him if he needed that, and she would face his reproach later if she had to. At least he would be alive to scold her and they would have time to work through this.

She finally caught the right moment and snapped one of the bears' necks in a death grip, then manoeuvred around the other and pushed him off the cliff with all the force she could muster. His heavy body fell, hitting several rock ledges on its way down, down, down. Even with Joran's blessing, he wouldn't be making it.

Savannah was ready to lounge at the White Bear King when Amarok finally managed to bite into his leg, causing the bear to roar in pain. Ice spikes grew one after another at incredible speed. The bear managed to avoid most of them, but because of his injury, he stumbled and got pierced in the stomach.

Sawy gasped, afraid to make a movement. She was too afraid to even inhale deeply. Kai was now cornering Bjorn, ripping some part of him every time they made contact. The victory was so close and the Northern Queen knew that her King wouldn't

disappoint.

Her smile faded when a huge shadow over their heads made the world go dark. Her breathing hitched from the fear she felt because it couldn't mean anything good.

The dragon was back, and unfortunately, none of them was a match for the flying, fire-breathing serpent...

Joran was furious. What the Seer told him turned out to be true after all, and everything here reeked of his brother. The mutt was definitely here.

That enraged the Serpent. Fenrir spent the last few centuries where he belonged-in the underworld, grieving the loss of everything and everyone he loved. This was where Joran wanted him. After his betrayal, there was no love lost between them and to appear now to stab him in the back when Jor's plan was working perfectly was the last straw. He was not going to tolerate this. He lured Fenrir out, yes, but he had his own reasons for that. He needed something from him. And this wasn't it.

“more.

Jormungandr roamed the sky, searching for the giant wolf, but Fenrir was nowhere to be found, which infuriated him even

He did not learn his lesson. It only meant that Jor would have to give him a new one, Fenrir would wish he never came back! He knew his brother too well. He knew how to hurt him better than anyone.

And now he finally found what he was looking for. The one person that made Fenrir invest in him, awakening something that was long dead.

He saw Amarok fighting his champion, and his fiery stomach churned with fury. He flashed over their heads, making the three of them fall down to the ground. The girl who didn't give him the firstborn for his collection screamed and shifted to avoid the impact while Bjorn did the same, trying to get closer to her. That stubborn boy... Only Amarok stood still, knowing that the first attack was just a game. Joran laughed internally at that audacity of his. He dared to look at him as if he could be defeated. Thus, sealing the fate of himself and his mate.

Joran turned around, ready for his next attack. This time he was so fast, that no one had time to hide. Ice needles flew into his face, but it only

made him laugh harder. His claws locked around the ice wolf, and his wings took him to the sky. Higher and higher, with his victim helpless.

Amarok growled and snarled, trying to free himself. His spikes grew bigger and longer, but nothing was enough. The dragon deity. wasn't for him to defeat.

Savannah trying to get up. She tried to scream, but no sounds were coming out. Close. They were so close to winning, and now her husband was high above in the sky, held captive by a monster.

“No!” Her voice was a broken mess as she saw Joran's dragon unclench his claws and drop Kai down onto the sharp cliff peaks.

It was too high. The rocks were too sharp and too hard. No one would be able to survive that, and seeing the love of her life flying down made her experience so much pain that she forgot about everything and ran towards him.

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Chapter 77 Avalanche

Brigit was clutching Aspen's body, tears streaming down her beautiful face. Their love story that never happened flashed before her eyes. What would they be doing now if everything was different, if she didn't reject him when they met? Would they be happy, celebrating Kai and Savvy's wedding? Or it could be time for their own mating ceremony. How would his mark look on her neck? And would he allow her to claw his flesh to mark him in return? She felt like he would. He used to love her so much... His love could warm her heart now if she hadn't ruined everything.

Aspen was what she had always dreamt of, her perfect mate, the flawless man of her dreams, but they... they never happened. And now they never would.

Luckily, Brigit knew just the person to blame.

If Bjorn's greed and ego didn't come into play, if he was not controlled by his obsession with the woman who did not want him in the first place, this war wouldn't have happened. And yes, Brigit knew that Joran played his part too, but Bjorn was the one who had controlled her life since the first time they met. He was the one who forced her to reject Aspen when there was no need for this. And "because of his threats, she couldn't accept her mate in the first place.

He was the one she was going to kill today, and she was going to enjoy it. Luckily, she knew just the way... She'd come prepared.

Her bears were still defending her in a circle, and Brigit leaned down to kiss the wolf in her arms one last time. It wasn't enough. Those rare moments they shared would never be enough. She would regret this loss forever, unable to recover.

"This life or any other I ever get, I will only love you, my mate that never happened," she whispered as her salty tears rolled down to his deadly wounds.

She carefully placed him on the ground, brushing her fingers over his soft red fur and wiped her face with hands covered in his blood, knowing that it would be smudged over her skin. Brigit did not care, though. In fact, she did not mind This would remind her of why she was doing this.

In less than a second, she shifted into her bear form and ran into the epicentre of the battle, followed by her warriors.

Savannah watched the love of her life being thrown over the sharp, deadly cliffs of the Northern Mountain chain. Her breathing hitched, and

it seemed that life itself stopped because this couldn't be happening. The whole world around her froze.

She'd already lost him once. She couldn't go through this again. She would go mad. One person couldn't possibly endure this much pain. Her heart wouldn't be able to bear this..

Savvy wanted to jump right after him, and only the thought that she was carrying Kai's baby in her belly stopped her from doing this. Her North Star mark ached, and this brought tears to her eyes. If Kai did not survive now, she did not want to live either. He was the only one who could make her happy. He was her mate, her love, her husband, her better half and also the worse one at the same time. They went through so much, fought so hard... This couldn't be it for them.

"Kail" her scream pierced the air above the mountains and down to the battlefield.

Joran still wasn't satisfied. Some bird tried to catch the lycan while he was falling, and it infuriated him so much that he sent a wave of fire down its way. How annoying were these little specks of mortal dust? His brother's Champion had to die. It was only fair for interfering in his matters and for resisting after all this time. After all, Fenrir had to know better.

But somehow, it didn't feel like it was enough. The punishment had to be bigger, harsher, more cruel. His brother, who swore not to meddle in his business, just defied everything. Again. And now Joran had to give him a proper response. His eyes fell on the Princess, who now called herself a Queen without his permission. The one who did not take his generous offer. The one who rejected his Champion despite how hard it was for him to get this bond for the two of them.

Now that he looked at her better, he saw something else. Something he couldn't ignore. The mark on her neck was glowing like starlight while

she screamed in agony, but that glow had something else in it. Something he did not expect to see.

The Seer's words came to his mind. You aren't getting that firstborn.

Because someone else had already claimed it!

Fenrir. His brother had already laid claim to the child in that woman's womb.

This was the last straw for Joran, and he charged at Savannah, ready to reunite her with her beloved. guy? So be it!

She wanted to be with that

Bjorn wanted to gloat or to feel happy, at least. His rival was now gone, thrown away to suffer a miserable death unworthy of legends. His woman was so close he could practically taste her delicious bluebell scent. All that was left was to grab her and get her home, but he couldn't move.

Savannah's face contorted from the pain she felt, and the sound that left her chest was so... broken. She was broken. His beautiful Princess was crushed, and he wondered how many times one person could be destroyed and be rebuilt again.

The White Bear King tried to push these thoughts away. He had been through a lot too, and he was fine! Their mate bond would heal them both. They were meant to be, and this was it. He knew that Savannah belonged to him from the moment he saw her. He worked so hard to get her, and he couldn't question all that now... But why did his heart clench so painfully when he looked at her grief-stricken face now? He's seen her broken many times and it had never had this effect.

Their eyes locked, and he knew that all she desired now was to kill him. He wanted to lie to himself again so badly and persuade himself that this was temporary. That she would cry it out and get back to her senses, that

he would fill this void that was forming in her soul now. Just a few seconds passed, but suddenly, he knew the truth. They would never be together. Even if their bond would snap in its place now, she would still hate him forever. Until the day she died.

He couldn't have her no matter what he did.

He could burn the world for her, he could wage and win thousands of wars, but Savannah would never want him as her man. She would never feel the way he felt. He knew that now.

Her hand was resting on her belly, and he instantly realised that he was too late. He'd been too late all this time... She had already created a family without him. She was already happy without him.

And he had just helped to ruin it all.

He had nothing to give to her to replace that.

Darius sensed a familiar energy and lifted his eyes to the sky to see his mentor flying towards them. It was rare to see him in this form. Let alone for so long, but the speed with which Joran charged at them told him that he was angrier than ever. The deity was radiating with rage.

And there could be only one person on the top of that mountain on whom he could loose his rage.

Savannah...

He had less than a second to think of what to do. It was barely even a moment... But Bjorn jumped in front of her and pushed his mate out of his way into a pile of snow before Joran's enormous claws clutched around him instead of her in his deadly grip.

Their eyes met, and he saw the shock in hers. Savannah had not understood the extent of what he felt for her. She never knew, never believed him. All the words he told her, all the effort from his side – she

never took it for what it really was, and that knowledge pained him as the Serpent took off back into the sky with the wrong victim in his claws.

At least he'd given her a chance to survive now. It made him a little bit happier, knowing that she would walk the earth thanks to him.

His mate was getting smaller and smaller until she was just a tiny dot on the white snow that covered the mountaintop. Bjorn closed his eyes, and a single tear forced its way down his chin against all odds.

Maybe she would know now... Maybe... just maybe, she would know that everything he did was out of love for her. The sick, twisted, overwhelming love that would never fade in his heart. He would have given her the stars if she'd only let him... Perhaps, they weren't meant to be after all, but even now, he had no regrets. He tried to give them a chance, and it was worth it....

Joran was furious. What was this boy thinking? Why did everyone under his control defy him today? He'd invested so much in this. bear cub! He'd spent years training and shaping him to become a perfect champion, to serve his agenda and rule over the Moonrise Kingdom they tried to restore. And he was throwing all this away for a woman? He knew that Darius was obsessed with his mate, but was she even worth it, considering how many times she'd rejected him? She now had another man's baby in her womb and wore his brother's divine protection. Savannah Stormhold Fionnlagh, or whatever she was called now, was a lost cause not worth their time. Joran made his intentions clear, but Darius fought him on that.

This infuriated him even more. The bear would survive the fall, but he had to learn his lesson and never oppose him like that. He could get him another mate if it was so important to him, but respect and obedience were of utmost importance. Joran had already forgiven his disciple too many times for his behaviour.

So, to remind him of who was in charge here, Joran loosened his claws and let Bjorn fall down into the depth of the snow covered mountains. He would survive, of course, thanks to his blessing, but the cub would have to think twice about crossing him again.

The dragon deity watched his Champion's descent. Tomorrow would be a new day, and they would talk again. They would work on the mistakes that were made today and find a solution. They always did.

He wanted to burn the whole battlefield to the ground seeing how his champions were losing the battle one by one. Disappointed.... He was so disappointed with each and every one of them. Not worthy, not strong enough. They would have crushed the enemy in a minute or two if they were like his dragonfly.

Joran knew that he had to find her, and then everything would return to normal. This was a setback, but he would work on a better plan next time. For now, he had to find her and make her regret betraying him. He broke her once. He could do that again.

However, he couldn't leave without a little surprise. He'd bury them all here as a punishment for their resistance and failure.

When Gideon saw the dragon flying in the direction of the Northern Castle, he knew that Riannon had tricked him. It was too easy to make her stay behind this time, and he naively thought that it was because of her pregnancy when, in reality, she simply had more important things to do. She must have known that she would meet the dragon and planned accordingly.

He broke into a sprint, worried sick and leaving the battlefield at a crucial moment to go to her, but her calm voice in his mind stopped him.

"I am fine, my love," Ria assured him. "It was quick, and he is already gone. I am fine, and no one got hurt.""

“Oh, someone will get hurt right after that baby is out of you, Riannon!” he warned her.

“I am so scared!” she taunted him with a chuckle, shifting his state of mind into a completely different one. His Queen played him like a fiddle, but he didn’t really mind. As long as she was safe and they were together, he could take it all.

“What were you thinking?!” he snarled, not wishing to let her off so easy.

“I got what I wanted,” she replied. “The answer to everything. Or at least I think so.”

“Ria, was it even worth it?” The Western Lycan King gritted his teeth.

“I’ll guess we’ll know soon enough “she sighed.” Get back there, Gideon. Savvy needs you more now than ever. Take care of her.”

“Stay where you are!” Gideon growled, hoping that maybe for once this stubborn woman would do as she was told. And then, remembering that Riannon Stormhold did not take orders, he added, “Please, Ria. I beg you.”

“I’ll stay here until it’s over and I am needed again. Now go, Gideon. You have to be there now.”

He knew better than to ignore his wife’s words. She knew things. She always knew everything before everyone else, so he started looking for his little sister since Ria had mentioned her name.

When a wave of power hit them, he saw Reid changing before his eyes, but instantly felt that his Beta would be all right. The change was for the better.

However, he still couldn’t find his sister. The Luna Squad was still fighting, but she wasn’t there anymore.

Finally, he noticed Amarok sprinting to the top of the mountain, and he knew this was where Savvy would be. Those two were inseparable.

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However, when he reached the top using his Royal Lycan form, he only found Savannah, unable to speak, and the damned dragon flying away with what looked like a man in his claws.

“Savvy!” he shifted back into his human form and grasped his sister’s shoulders, turning her to look at him, but she still stared somewhere at the mountains and pieces of a horrible picture puzzle began to click together in his head. “Where is Kai?” he asked, and Savvy’s body shuddered at the mention of his name. This couldn’t mean anything good.

He stared at the dragon flying in circles in the sky, his serpentine body had to do that to defy gravity. As soon as he dropped the man he was holding, Gideon knew that it was Bjorn and not the Northern Lycan King.

“I need to find him!” Savannah muttered to herself as if she wasn’t there with him. He could tell that she was shaken by deep shock, the raw emotions were still on her face.

“I need to get you back to the castle,” Gideon said cautiously, still watching the deity that seemed to fly back at them at high speed. “Come quickly, Sav.”

“No!” She resisted the moment he pulled her hand, wishing to stay.

The dragon was already so close that they could not escape his wrath. Gideon grabbed his sister forcefully, unable to count on her coming back to her senses in time. He jumped to a lower ledge of the mountain, keeping her close. Savvy did not make it easy for him as she struggled against his grip. However, Gideon knew that protecting her now was more important than anything.

His worst fear came true when the dragon slammed his long tail against the mountaintop, causing it to shake. The Lycan King could feel the vibration, the snow started to move, and he knew he had just a fraction of a moment to hide. He shifted into his Royal Lycan form and made a leap with Savvy in one of his hands while grasping the ice rocks with another not to slip all the way down to their death. He was aiming for the cave where Savannah's warriors fought, and luckily, he managed to reach it just in time.

"Inside!" he roared to the warriors still left there, and all of them obeyed his Alpha command fast. Even the white bears listened to his order, and he did not find it in himself to push them away. Every shifter felt that they had seconds to do what they were told or be wiped away by an avalanche going down the sharp cliffs as an unstoppable force.

With no time to spare, Gideon threw Savvy inside, closing the entrance with the rock used as a door. The light that went through the little cracks was gone the moment it was done, and they all were drowned in the darkness, buried under piles and piles of snow.

Trapped...

The Luna Trials by Marissa Gilbert Chapter 78

Chapter 78 Under The North Star The Finale

Savannah breathed heavily with her eyes closed. Trapped inside of the ancient passage within the mountain, she tried not to think about Kai. Not only was he thrown from the sky onto the deadly spikes, but now he was probably also covered with a merciless sea of snow. Her heart stung, making her dizzy, and her fingers went to the mark on her neck.

Gideon was saying something to the unfortunate bears who were locked in with them now, although his speech sounded more like growling, but Savvy couldn't bring herself to listen.

She rubbed the mark near her collarbone, its glow and the crescent on Gideon's neck were the only two things illuminating the dark space around them.

The glow suddenly gave her hope. It was common knowledge that the marks were fading slightly if one of the mates was dead. Not to mention that Savvy was supposed to feel Kai's pain if he died. She didn't feel anything of the sort. She was fine, just scared to death and worried sick. The nausea was getting stronger, and she rubbed her belly hoping to suppress it.

"Little one," she whispered so that no one could hear her, "I need your help now. I need to find your Daddy so I can't be sick. Please, baby, help me stay strong. I need to bring him back for the both of us."

She tried to think straight and tried to trust her instincts..

When Zack was alive, she could feel a lot of what was going on in his life. She had to believe that it was the same now. Her bond with Kai was much stronger. She was slowly calming down, knowing that there was no chance of him being dead. Her soul had not been ripped apart. Her mate was still alive, and she was going to find him.

They waited for the vibrations to stop. Unfortunately, it took some time. One of the warriors brought her clothes, and she put them on, still leaving the scarf wrapped around her neck. She would have to go and search for Kai the moment she was free from this place.

"I think it's over," Gideon said, and she exhaled heavily, ready to find out what the wave of deadly snow did to their people.

"Could you feel anyone via your mind link?" she asked her brother and saw his face, illuminated by the light of his mark, tense. "Just a few," he admitted. "Reid is fine, I think, but others may be just busy or unconscious. It doesn't mean that they are-" None of them wanted to say

the word. It was probably naïve, but they wanted to cling to the belief that their people were alive, even if just for a second longer.

“Move the rock,” Savannah ordered the bears, who stood quietly without making a sound. Outnumbered, they did not dare be arrogant. “Put this strength of yours to good use for once,” she told them, and they nodded silently, getting to work.

“The rest should step back,” Gideon chimed in. “When the rock is gone, this place could be flooded with snow. We don’t know how bad it is outside.”

Soon, they had to admit that the situation was probably terrible because the white bear shifters struggled to remove the rock, meaning that the snow buried them alive here. Gideon had to shift into his Royal Lycan form, and together they managed to move it after a brief struggle. The snow did press inside as predicted, but it wasn’t too bad as there was plenty of space in the passage cave.

Slowly, they started to work as a team, moving the rock farther away and digging the snow around it to give it more space. They were lucky to have been blessed by two gods. The extra strength and high endurance were handy now.

Finally, after a few hours of work, they managed to free themselves, and Sawy could finally see what had happened to their armies. Everything was white below them, and snow mist was obstructing the view. But their shifter hearing allowed them to hear the growls and snarls of people struggling beneath, meaning that there were many survivors.

“Well,” Savannah sighed, “that’s one way to end this battle.”

“And hopefully war,” Gideon agreed, next to her. “Let’s go, sister. We are needed down there.”

“This is where I have to temporarily entrust my people to you, brother,” Savannah looked him in the eye, and he knew she was full of

determination. “I have to find my mate first. I know that he’s somewhere out there.”

“Savvy,” Gideon didn’t know how to say this. “Look-”

“He’s there!” She insisted, not wishing to hear otherwise. “I know this and I am not going to rest until I find him.”

“Still, the people below need to see at least one of you now,” her sibling insisted. “Or you risk returning to a few self proclaimed kings.”

Savvy hated that he was right and knew what Kai would want her to do.

So, she went down and spent hours making plans for the rescue teams. The bears and foxes did not know what to do, but when they realised their King was nowhere to be seen, they started following her orders too.

After all, if they wanted to save their friends from this cold death trap, they had to work as a team.

Hours later, Savvy made her last orders and prepared to leave. “You don’t think you are going alone, do you?” Lachlan caught up with her fast and whistled for a few more warriors to join them. “We aren’t leaving our King and Queen.”

here,”

“Good,” she nodded as Zara stood by her side too. “We have a lot of work to do, and Gideon, Riannon, and Kyle can take it from

But the longer they searched, the harder it got.

Savannah walked through the snow, ignoring how the cold bit at her skin through the clothes. This was too cold even for shifters, but thanks to being mated to Amarok, she was doing fine. Zara flew over her head and landed next to her, shifting into her human. Lachlan wrapped her into his

arms at once, both looking tired now after hours and hours of wandering through the snowy mountains in

vain.

news.

“Did you see any trace from above?” Savvy asked, slightly sorry to interrupt the love birds..

Unfortunately, Zara only shook her head, lowering her eyes. She could not face Savvy, knowing she did not bring her good

It had been so long, and everyone was exhausted. The battle, the avalanche, the rescuing of survivors, everything was taking its toll on them, but Savannah stubbornly kept walking.

“You need rest,” Lachlan told her. “If Kai was here, he would never forgive me for taking such terrible care of you. Especially considering-”

He got quiet, but she knew what he meant. Especially considering she was expecting.

“Savvy,” Gideon caught up with them in his wolf form and shifted back into a human. He didn’t even open his mouth yet, but his sister had already shaken her head.

“I am not going back until I find him!” she informed them all firmly. A part of her wanted to sob, but she was too tired even for that. All she could do now was keep walking, keep making her feet move in the snow against their will. All for one purpose only – she had to get him back.

but-”

“Savvy!” Gideon made her stop and look at him. “Savvy... I only want what’s best for you, I swear, I know how much you love him,

But he believed that Kai could be dead. They all did even despite her telling them so many times that she felt he was alive. “Listen to me!” she snapped. “All of you! He is Amarak! Literally a huge, powerful, and Fenrir-blessed ice wolf! He can handle this snow better than all of us!”

“If it was just the snow, Savvy,” Gideon said, eyes downcast. He knew so well what his little sister was feeling now. If it was Riannon missing, he would go insane and never give up. But then Savannah would be the one trying to bring him back to his senses. Right now, it was his duty to tell his sibling that the man she loved more than anything in this world had probably already died, and as unfair that all the sh*t that had already happened to her in her life was – It was just the tip of the iceberg. There was nothing worse than losing one’s

mate.

“Savannah,” the King of the West made his sister look at him, “the snow is not a problem for him. It’s true. But he fell a few good miles from the sky against ice and hard rock. The werebirds were searching for him all over the area and found nothing. Which means he was buried somewhere during the avalanche. If he could move, he would have already gotten to the surface, Or connect with you or anyone else via the mind link. Savvy, I love you so much, and I am so sorry, but-”

“No!” she stopped him coldly. “don’t you dare finish that sentence! I don’t care what you think! I know what I know. I know what I feel. And I know that my mate is alive, and I’m not leaving him out here alone! Not when he needs me the most! He came to save me when I was captured, and now it is my turn to save him. This is how we work! And you, of all people, should know that!”

“Sawy,” Gideon ran his hand over his face, “think about the child.”

“I am thinking about the child!” She lost the last bit of her patience and snarled at her brother. “I’m not leaving my pup without a father! Now, if you’re not going to help me, move out of my way!”

“I am afraid I am going to insist!” Gideon stepped in front of her with a grim expression on his face. “Again, I am so sorry, but if Kai was here, he would be grateful for this. You have to come back to your castle and get some rest. Others can continue the search party, but I am taking you home.”

She stared at him in disbelief. She knew very well that he always kept his promises. Gideon was prepared to take her home against her will. And although she could understand his intentions, it still made her angry to the core.

“We are not in your Kingdom for you to tell me what to do anymore,” she informed him bluntly, raising her head regally so that he could know that she was serious and did not plan to budge. “If anything, you are now in my Kingdom, brother. The warriors that surround us now belong to me! They take my orders, and trust me when I say this: I will order them to fight you if I have to, because nothing is stopping me from searching for Kai! Nothing and no one! Not even you! So, don’t test me!”

Gideon stood there, shocked by his little sister’s words. It was his mistake, though. She wasn’t little anymore. He had seen this before, but now he had no doubts. Savannah Fionnlagh was a Queen to be reckoned with. He was losing for the first time in his life.

“My apologies,” he bowed his head respectfully, feeling a strange mix of emotions where he had to let go of something pure and innocent, but at the same time, pride and respect were quickly filling this gap, “I overstepped, but, if you will allow me, I wish to stay by your side until we find him.”

“Stay then,” she agreed with ease. “But no more talk about going back. I will only return with my husband by my side!”

It was dark when they had to take a break. Zara brought them food and more warm clothes to wear. None of it interested Sawyer, as she couldn’t

sit still even for a moment. She drank a cup of hot tea and ate something quickly simply to get everyone off her back.

Then she kept staring at the night sky while waiting for the others. Even if they decided to stay for the night, she would continue her journey. She had already lost too much time while helping people after the avalanche.

The stars were shimmering like scattered moondust in the night sky, but Savannah looked only at one of them while holding her precious necklace in her hands. The pendant he gave her.

“How do I find you now?” she whispered the question and felt her eyes stinging. She blinked away the tears not to show her weakness to the shifters accompanying her. She was aware that the moment she did, they would drag her home for protection, and this was something that she couldn’t afford.

Her heart was calling for Kai, and she found herself praying to Fenrir and the Moon Goddess together while looking at the North Star above her head.

“Help me find him, help me find him, help me-” she chanted desperately, panting.

Savannah threw her head back to gulp the frosty air and closed her eyes for a moment. She knew she was missing something this whole time. He was alive, and he was so close, but she was doing something wrong.

She clenched her North Star necklace so hard, and the mark on her neck prickled her too... Her North Star mark... Savvy opened her eyes in sudden realisation.

The North Star! It was there all the time, showing her the way. All the magic in Kai’s life was connected to it. He was the Star!

Why didn’t she think about it before?

“I know where to go!” she shouted at her companions, and they stood up immediately. The Queen couldn’t wait for them. The sudden surge of strength was pushing her to keep going.

She had to find him! He had to be there.

North

She ran through the crispy snow, not caring about the cold or anything else. She ran for so long, getting between huge rocks, passing a frozen river... She ran, and she ran, watching the direction the North Star was giving her. The night was stepping aside, giving its place to the dawn of the new day, but the star still stayed shining in the sky right next to the bright moon. Savannah sped up, too afraid that she didn’t have much time.

At last, she reached the bottom of a tall gorge and stopped, seeing that this was a dead end. The snow blanket covered everything here, and in the very centre of the passage, stood a small icy hill.

She wasn’t sure what to do. It did not seem right. All her instincts were screaming at her that she was in the right place, but her eyes were telling her otherwise.

“Sawy, Zara placed her hand on her Queen’s shoulder. “I-”

“Fly around this area; look for him!” Savannah shrugged. “The rest, start digging. Kai is somewhere close! I know this!”

No one replied to her, and only Lachlan went forward and started digging the snow as ordered. He was the one who complained the least, because he wasn’t ready to lose his King and best friend either. Thankfully, the rest followed his example.

Savvy was removing the snow and the pieces of ice, feeling angry and frustrated. But still not ready to give up.

After about an hour, the star was gone, and she started to feel desperate. And furious. So furious that she began to scream at the top of her lungs.

“Kai!” Her voice was so loud that her friends feared she’d cause a new avalanche. “Kai! I know you are here! Kai!”

She started hitting the ice block before her, remembering how she had already fisted a wall once when she was desperate. Now she was not only hopeless but also enraged.

She would crush those northern mountains if she had to! She wouldn’t stop at anything!

But this was when the ice before her started glowing...

When Kai was falling from the sky, the only thing that worried him was that Savannah stayed alone with Bjorn and the goddamn dragon. He knew it was too high for him to survive the fall, but giving up was never an option. Not when his mate was in danger.

“It’s going to hurt!” Asgard warned him, but Kai did not have a problem with that. As long as they got to return for her again, he was fine. “Give me the control!” his wolf growled, and he obeyed. He did not have any good ideas now, but it seemed like his wolf had a plan.

Kai could feel how ice started growing from his spine, every bone of his, every cell of his body... It was covering him whole, and then more and more formed around him. He couldn’t breathe anymore, and at first, it was scary, but then he quickly realised that in this state, it wasn’t required.

“Only hibernation can save us now,” Asgard explained through gritted teeth. “It may take a while to wake up, but-”

“Whatever works,” Kai grunted. A day, a year, ten years... He’d take it for a chance to be with Savannah again. Anything was better than dying and leaving her behind.

By the time he reached the ground, he was an unbreakable globe of ice. His blood flow froze, and he had to close his eyes because he couldn't stay awake anymore.

The darkness enveloped him, and he had to give in to it.

Until bright light made him wake up again. It was so pure and luminous that he was sure it was the North Star itself. However, soon

he realised that the golden glow was something else. It was getting closer and closer to him, and then he finally heard it. Not with his ears because the ice was blocking the sounds completely but with his heart. She was calling his name, and there was so much pain in her voice that he couldn't ignore it.

Savannah was near, and she was searching for him. Her soul was searching for him, and his soul was responding.

"Kai!" her voice was so hoarse that it pained him.

"Savvy!" he growled, and the strength started to return to him. He remembered that he was the one who controlled the ice, not the other way around.

The molecules obeyed him, cracking his prison. Myriads of ice shards flew in different directions, yet not one of them hurt his mate or his friend. He was in full control, and now he finally stood up before Savannah, alive and well. And radiating power as if he was a deity himself.

Savvy's breathing hitched when she realised that the ice hill was actually where her mate was preserved. It wasn't an obstacle. It was the final destination.

"Kai," she couldn't stop repeating his name as tears streamed down her face. It was him. He was alive. The worst thing that could happen to her never did. She did not lose him. She'd never lose him again.

“You aren’t getting rid of me that easily my Queen,” the Northern King shifted into his human form, and this time she did not hesitate.

She threw herself into his arms, crying and laughing at the same time.

“Don’t cry!” he said, kissing away every tear on her face. “My brave, beautiful mate. Never cry because of me. I’ll come back for you from the dead if I have to. Do you hear me, Savy? Lam-

“You are not going anywhere anymore!” she laughed. “I promise you that, Fionnlagh! Our child and I need you!”

“Agreed,” he said, covering her lips with his while his fingers faced into her tangled hair. “My Quech, my wife, my mate...”

Their friends watched them with relief on their faces. Once again, these two were so close to disaster, but somehow they managed to bring everything back to order again.

Gideon smiled, happy for them. He finally knew that he could leave the North with a calm heart when the time came. Savannah was in good hands, but also... also she did not need anyone to take care of her. Now she was the one taking care of everyone around her.

“You are so cold!” Kai whispered, moulding Savvy into his rock hard body. “Let’s go, my love. We are going home.”

She giggled again as he wrapped his hands around her and lifted her up to spin her around. This was surreal. Arguably, one of the best moments of her life.

“Just so that you know,” she smirked at him, entwining her hands around his neck. “We won that war, and I think our kingdom just got bigger.”

“Sounds good to me,” he chuckled. “Because are not stopping on just one pup, Savvy. Our kids will be invading the North in twenty something years”

“I hope that’s a promise,” she murmured into his ear.

“Take it as an unbreakable oath, my Queen,” he caught her lips again and placed her back onto her feet. “And now, take your right) place on my back. I am not letting you make another step today.”

In his wolf form, Amarok kneeled before her, and she climbed on top of him, leaning over the soft fur she loved so much. He still smelled of pine forest and frosty northern mountains. Her most favourite scent in the world. The one she’d be inhaling every day for the rest of her life...

It took Brigit a while until she found the one she had been searching for. She knew she couldn’t leave it to destiny. Destiny was always too cruel to her, and it seemed like she always had to do everything with her own hands.

Bjorn’s body was lying on top of a hill that towered over a frozen river. She shifted and kneeled next to him, ordering her warriors to leave them be. This was something she had to do alone.

She slapped him. Hard. And when he did not move, she did it again and again until the white bear monster opened his healthy eye and tried to focus it on her.

“Savvy?” his voice sounded so hopeful that it made Brigit let out a dark laugh.

“Gods, no!” she sneered. “She’d never search for you. Ever. She hates you, Bjorn. Everyone hates you. And do you know why?” He did not say anything. He probably knew it pretty well, but she intended to tell him anyway.

“Because you are a heartless, disgusting monster who never cared about anything but himself. Your mother died because you were useless. Your brother died because you poisoned him with your ugly ambitions and overinflated ego. You killed your own mate without giving her a fair chance to explain herself. And then you tortured your second mate over and over again. She wouldn’t want to be with you even if you were the last man in the entire universe!”

”

She spat the words at him, and it finally felt so good. “You destroy everything you touch, and you are the shittiest King a country can have. Everyone searched for Kai and took care of Sawy today, everyone tried to get her back when you abducted her, people would die

for King Gideon and Riannon. But your search party consists of just me,” she declared. “And only because I came here to kill you and ensure you don’t hurt anyone anymore!”

“Savvy “Bjorn coughed blood, but she could tell the colour was returning to his cheek. The blessed bear was regenerating faster than she would like. She had so much to tell him. She wished she could torture him like he tortured Aspen. She wanted to break every bone in his body, but she knew it would be wiser to be done with him fast. So, she produced something she had prepared for today and had it strapped around herself even in her bear form.

Bjorn didn’t understand it at first as he stared at the small wooden knife in her hand. It was barely a letter opener. Why was she demonstrating it to him as if it meant something?

“You don’t know, do you?” the woman sneered as she traced the wooden blade with her fingers. “The power that you got from Joran Someone else had it before you. There was a god killed by his father, a god that no one else could kill. An indestructible god. Just. Like.

You.”

Bjorn’s lips parted in shock. Now he started to understand.

“Of course, even that God was better than you,” Brigit snorted.

“Everyone liked him, you know. When he died, his friends and family wept and mourned.”

Brigit straddled him, and he placed his hands on her hips, trying to throw her off. Only that she was still stronger at the moment. He didn’t restore after the fall yet.

“Mistletoe,” the she bear placed the wooden knife to his cheek and pressed into his skin. “The thing that killed the indestructible god was a sacred mistletoe. And I went to great lengths to get a piece of a similar plant. I dried it and prepared it just for you.”

“I’ll give you... anything.” Bjorn tried to negotiate, and the smile on her face dropped.

“The only thing I want,” she said with quivering lips, “you can not give me. The second thing I want after that, I am taking myself now!”

He wanted to say something else, but she stabbed his only eye with her little knife, making him scream in agony. Jormungand’s Champion fully lost his vision, bringing his worst memories to the surface. He coul! feel his power draining, his body weakening by the second. But when the woman on top of him twisted the knife, he knew he had seconds left to live.

The last thought that came to his mind was that Brigit mentioned Savvy which meant that she was alive. Joran did not kill his mate.

When he would be gone, she would live...

His lips curled into a soft smile when Brigit pressed the knife to the hilt, ending the life of the White Bear King once and for all. She was breathing heavily, tears rolling down her face. The she-bear stayed like that for a while to ensure she succeeded this time. That scum had to die today for everything he had done.

After a few minutes, she found the strength to stand up and looked at him once again. Contrary to her beliefs, she did not feel better. And now she knew that she never would.

Angry, she pushed Bjorn's body off the edge, watching it fall into the icy river after it broke the first layers of ice. The stream started destroying the rest, cracks everywhere... and soon she saw her dead enemy floating away into the unknown just as he deserved. Even his body would never be found.

"What's now?" One of her men found the courage to reach her in about an hour.

"Now?" she sighed, remembering she was a ruler of a whole pack and an official traitor to her people. It was a mess, but surprisingly, she knew what to do next. "Now we have an allegiance to pledge. The new King and Queen of the North await."

Kai and Savannah returned to the battlefield, where bears, wolves, foxes, cats, birds and some other rare species were still working together to find the remaining survivors. They hadn't been able to unite their forces for many years, but today it wasn't a problem.

Amarok let out a mighty growl, and all the heads snapped to the top of the hill he was standing on with Savannah on his back. The Luna jumped off, and the giant wolf shifted back into his human form, Body carved out of stone, he wasn't embarrassed for his nakedness and only took his wife's hand, lacing their fingers together.

None of them had prepared a speech for this moment, although it felt like it was needed. The drones were back to circling in the air and filming everything, and if anything, it made Savvy smile now. After everything they had been through, it seemed normal.

They looked at each other with love, adoration and determination to restore the North to its former glory. Together, they would build a new future.

And as if their people heard them, one by one, they started kneeling to their new King and Queen.

All of them.

Every single one.

One of the bears lifted his head, and a deep roar left his chest. Followed by another, and then another. Until all of them roared, howled, growled, and snarled, demonstrating their respect for the couple before them.

“I think you were right about winning this war,” Kai tilted his head to his wife.

“You’ll come to learn that I am right most of the time,” her lips curled involuntarily, and she gave him that mischievous gaze he loved from the day they met.

This level of respect was unseen before. It was a pledge from every northerner who fought in the White Battle.

They weren’t naive to think that life would suddenly get easy in one day and that the species who always hated each other would

1. Under The North Star Th...

However, no one couldn’t argue that this was one hell of a first step...

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Epilogue 1

dress.

“Kai, we should stop!” Savannah pleaded as her husband kept peppering her neckline with kisses, trying to relieve her of her

“We really shouldn’t,” he murmured softly, biting her shimmering North Star mark, which always made his wife throw her head back and give him better access. He stood behind her, hands greedily travelling all over her body, grasping and kneading everything that finally belonged to him.

“We have to-” Savannah gasped, forgetting what it was that they had to do. There had been so much work in the past few weeks. that they couldn’t enjoy their life as newlyweds the way they desired. In fact, they either did not see each other during the days or, worse – they saw each other, were so close to each other, but the circumstances did not let them touch each other. Reunited only at night, they

both lacked sleep. However, the choice was always obvious. Especially now that their subordinates made the mistake of leaving them.

alone together for a few minutes.

What were they thinking? That Kai would be locked in a room with his beautiful wife and not touch her? Not a chance!

“I don’t know about you, but I just have to have you. Now!” His voice rasped somewhere in her hair that he let down, throwing away the pins that held an intricate hairdo a few seconds prior. Something that took her omegas an hour to make look perfect. “Your scent drives me crazy, Savvy, so it’s your fault anyway.”

“And how is this fair?” She giggled, ready to succumb to his advances, when someone knocked on the door, disturbing them.

“Shh,” Kai bit her earlobe gently. “If we are quiet, they will go away!”

“No, they will not!” Lachlan grunted behind the door.

“You two are too loud anyway!” Zara supported her mate with a chuckle. “And it’s time! Everyone is already here.”

‘Just five minutes!’ Savvy yelled at their friends and turned to face her husband.

“Ten!” he growled, crushing his lips to hers, and then added, when he broke the kiss to breathe, “Twenty!”

Zara and Lachlan stepped away a respectful distance from the door, knowing it would be longer than twenty minutes. Their King

and Queen never knew how to stop once they got together. Which was understandable, of course, but it made their lives so much more

complicated.

Zara closed her eyes, and Lachlan chuckled, “What are you doing?”

“Asking the maids to bring a new dress here and to search for the one who did Savvy’s hair. All the previous work just went in the

bin. Kai is too passionate to bother with these things. And while I deal with the Queen’s look, you deal with him.”

The werebird pointed at the Western King, who strode in their direction accompanied by his wife. Riannon’s belly was already round

and plainly visible and she had one of her hands laid on its top, looking like a vision in her milky white silk dress without any extra

decorations. Only a delicate gold and diamond tiara adorned her head in the shape of flowers.

Gideon looked beyond annoyed. “Where the hell are they and how long-”

A loud feminine moan emerged from Kai’s office, followed by a growl that shook the walls.

The four of them froze, which only let them clearly hear another moan.

“Never mind,” Gideon winced, furrowing his brow. “Tell them-”

A scream this time.

“We’ll meet them in the throne room!” Riannon let out a soft laugh, leading her traumatised husband away. “I told you they were busy!” she jabbed him as they made their exit, clearly enjoying his predicament. “That serves you right.”

This time a moan and a growl happened simultaneously, and the King and Queen of the West had to speed up to escape the audible evidence of the newlyweds’ happy moment together.

“Well, at least no one will question if the marriage is consummated!” Lachlan joked, trying not to think of the woman next to him.

She looked too gorgeous tonight to ignore and he was not made of stone.

Kai and Savannah emerged from the office one hour later, eyes sparkling with happiness and hair and clothing completely

dishevelled.

faces.

us!”

“For Fenrir’s sake!” the Beta ran his hand through his hair as he observed the royal couple, unable to erase the wide grins from their

“Relax!” Kai gripped his shoulder in a friendly manner. “We are the King and the Queen. They literally can’t start the event without

“Yeah, yeah,” Zara rolled her eyes, pushing Savvy back into the office. “With all due respect, you aren’t making our lives easy! Lan, keep him there until we are out. Don’t let him in! Or it will be the same thing all over again!”

“Your command is... well... my command,” Lachlan chuckled as a swarm of omegas appeared to help Savvy look like a picture-perfect Queen again and not like the happy newlywed she really was.

She reappeared in a beautiful blue gown with a train and flowers embroidered all over it. Her hair was up again, although in a more relaxed style now, a few strands loose and her beautiful mark on full display. This was just how Kai liked it. He wanted the whole world to know that this woman chose him and now belonged to him. He allowed himself to wear a black collarless shirt and blazer today so that his North Star was visible as well.

else.

They passed a group of Lunas who probably were supposed to accompany their Alphas but were actively discussing something

From the corner of her eye, Savvy recognized a familiar book. The hot pink cover with a Northern blue stripe in the middle and the picture of Claude and Chloe back to back was hard to miss.

“And then the Queen ripped his heart out with her bare hands!” one of the women gasped. “They blurred it in the tv special, but in the book, Claude tells-”

Kai rolled his eyes, lacing his fingers with his wife’s.

“I hate that book,” she mumbled, and he nodded understandingly.

“Those two are something else!” Kai chuckled. “How is it that the book is about us, but they are the ones on the cover?”

“Oh, please!” Savvy let out a little laugh. “If you would like that, I can arrange it! The sales will certainly spike!”

“No, thanks!”

“Besides, haven’t you heard?” Savvy taunted. “The real heroes of the story are Claude and Chloe themselves. Apparently, Chloe told me what to do back at the bear castle and gave me the strength to rebel. While Claude risked his life to get us all out of captivity and then personally encouraged you to turn into Amarok.”

“Seriously?” Kai raised his brow, holding back a laugh. “And people bought that?”

“Well, it’s not like you or I corrected them, right?” Savannah snorted quietly. “So yeah, they are getting away with this one, and everyone loves it. All that being said, our ratings are through the roof now, and Kyle says the book helped sustain the favourable impression we gained after the Avalanche Battle.”

“Are the twins invited today?” Kai glanced at Zara as she was the one who had a folder with the guest list in her hands.

“They are invited everywhere,” Elene greeted her brother at the entrance to the throne room with a stiff smile. She had been waiting for them for Fenrir knew how long. “All the best places, too. You are late. And what the hell did you do to King Gideon? He looked like he was about to get sick. If you ask me, greenish skin colour doesn’t suit him.”

“We’d better not share the details,” Kai winked at his sister, “or you will join him.”

“I am not going to ask.” Elene sighed, shaking her head, Let’s go! After you, Majesties.”

They walked into the Grand Hall decorated for the occasion with blue flowers of different shades. The royal couple of the North took their time getting to their thrones, knowing that all eyes were on them.

Just one month had passed since their wedding and coronation, but they’d mastered every move to perfection. They knew how important today was because their people needed to see them. After the devastating war where so many shifters died, and their world turned upside down with Fenrir’s and Joran’s blessings, it was easy to dwell in panic. The whole continent could be easily devoured by chaos. It was their role to project confidence to their subjects as a sign that everything was going to be fine and that they had everything under control. They had to give them hope and stability, even if they were still finding their feet in this changed world.

They were finally at the top of the stairs and turned their backs to their respective thrones. Elene and Lachlan stood at Kai’s side, while Zara and Kyle took place next to Savannah.

“We are happy to welcome you to our house,” Kai greeted the guests. “It’s a huge honour to have so many friends who came to help

us in our time of need. Today, we will be celebrating the heroes, dead and alive, saying our thanks to each of you and ensuring that no debt is left unpaid.”

“We will start with a minute of silence, as we remember every wolv, werecat, witch, werebird and other shifters who did not survive the war,” Savannah announced loudly. “While no words will be pronounced, we’ll each reflect on what happened to us and why, pray to our gods, and think of what we can do to avoid letting this happen again.”

One of the lower ranked lycans rang a bell, and everyone present bowed their heads in respect. They had all lost someone in the Avalanche Battle, or in smaller fights and attacks that preceded it. They all personally knew the price of the war.

When the minute was over, and the guests raised their heads, Savannah smiled through tears. It was harder to control her emotions now, thanks to hormones.

“And now we will celebrate life!” she gave the floor to her husband.

“King Gideon and Queen Riannon Stormhold,” Kai called the first names and gestured for their relatives to join them at the top of the stairs. “We are family now, but it was a rocky road getting here. I am proud to call you both my friends and family, and I give you my word that I will do everything in my power to ensure that the alliance between The Northern and The Western Lycan Kingdoms remains strong for as long as I live.”

“Accept this token of our gratitude,” Savannah took a little box from Zara and handed it to the couple. Riannon gasped when she saw a beautiful labyrinth medallion with a Northern Star in one of the paths.

“Even in your darkest days, you can count on us,” Kai promised. “It’s enough to send a messenger with this pendant, and we will

bring an army to help you.”

“The honour is mine,” Gideon bowed his head respectfully and whispered so that only Kai and Savvy could hear him. “Next time, I will bring you something shiny and pretty too, Fionnlagh.”

“Don’t worry about it. No one expects you to have decent manners!” Kai gave him a crooked smile, and it looked like two old friends

were happy to see each other in front of the many cameras in the room.

They exchanged sharp glances, but then Rinannon sighed and asked her husband to help her down the stairs. She could walk

perfectly fine, of course, but since Gideon was overprotective of her in this “delicate state”, it worked like a charm.

“Nayara Knight,” Savannah called the next name and the werecat with silver hair walked up to the King and Queen in an elegant

green velvet dress. “You saved my life several times already and proved that you could be trusted. I will forever consider you my personal

friend, Naya. And I am so grateful for everything you’ve done.”

Savvy handed the woman in front of her a box with the same locket and the same message. If Naya ever needed help, she would get

The new werebird leader accepted her box, and the land promised for their help.

Salome was the next one to be rewarded, and after accepting her token, she handed Savannah a box of her own.

“Keep it with you during labour, and your child will be safe,” she whispered. “My Coven will take your baby under its protection.”

Others were rewarded with smaller tokens of appreciation, but all meaningful nonetheless.

When everyone thought that the main ceremony was over, the bell rang again, and Lachlan announced loudly, “Alpha Brigit

Borg!”

Brigit was nervous. They did not let her into the Northern capital for almost a month. A month while the fate of her people was being

decided. For all she knew, they could already be doomed despite her attempts to save what was left of them. It was entirely possible that she'd been invited today simply to be executed publicly and in front of the cameras. After what had happened to Aspen, she

was sure that everyone hated her.

She deserved it, though. She was no saint.

She had to wait at the entrance, wearing a beautiful silk sea blue dress with long sleeves and a cape covering her shoulders. Today she was representing her kind, and they already had a bad enough reputation after the war.

Brigit had a couple of challenging weeks behind her. When they were ordered to return to their lands, even after submitting to the Lycan King and Queen, she couldn't help but feel disappointed. Although maybe it was what the bears deserved. They couldn't be trusted

after so many schemes and plots. When she returned to the Bear castle with other Alphas, she had to deal with the aftermath of Bjorn's

rule and death.

Her pack was rightfully accused of being traitors because they killed their own during the battle. Brigit ensured her pack's survival

by challenging the biggest and baddest Alpha bear in the room with the dirtiest words in his mouth. And when she killed him in front of

everyone, she acquired his pack as well. She was ready to rinse and repeat, but luckily just one show was enough, and no new challenges

were thrown at her. Without any kind of election or vote, she somehow became their leader.

But that meant she was the one dealing with the aftermath of the war.

They started reorganising and rebuilding. Her kind wasn't sure that they had a future and what it would be, so she kept them busy to distract them from their gloomy situation.

That was the only thing that had helped her after Aspen.

She worked, and worked, and worked... sometimes as a simple laborer, cleaning up the tower that she'd exploded just a few weeks

ago to make Aspen's escape possible. Each day she strived to overwork herself and fall down onto her bed half dead because nothing else helped her. This was what her days looked like now.

So, when she was summoned with her entourage, she didn't know what to expect. She didn't even have an "entourage" to begin with and had to pick a few bears whom she disliked the least since becoming an Alpha. She hoped to be done quickly today...

But also, she hoped that some kind of a miracle happened and Aspen was alive.

Yes, it was stupid, unrealistic and absolutely impossible, considering she left his dead body during the battle. But then the wolves changed. What if.... She was afraid to finish that thought. It was too foolish. He was already dead by then, and Fenrir did not resurrect anyone that time. She'd asked.

Her name was announced, and the doors opened before her, letting her in. The castle had changed since Bjorn set it on fire, but she liked its new look more. It was still an old rough Northern castle, but it seemed fresher and brighter now. As if someone breathed life into

Brigit's eyes darted to the thrones in search of bright red hair. The Gamma was supposed to stand by his King today. But she only saw Lachlan and Kyle. She then started scanning the crowds against her better judgement. It probably looked disrespectful, but she couldn't help it, greedily studying everyone around.

The King and his Queen gave her the time to do it before they spoke.

“Brigit Borg, it’s a different story with you, isn’t it?” Kai did not look too pleased at seeing her, and that was understandable. “We trusted you once, and you betrayed that trust. You let our enemies into our home and allowed them to destroy it. You caused the death

of my Gamma. These are unforgivable crimes.”

She stopped listening after the words, “the death of my Gamma”. Her heart clenched so painfully even though she thought she had already accepted this fact. If they were to kill her now, she would just say thank you.

“However, we are aware that your circumstances were different,” Savannah started speaking, her lips curled into a soft and friendly smile. “We know that your sister was held hostage, and I personally got to see the way women were treated in the bear territories. We are also taking into account that you helped us during the last battle, and this help was pivotal for the results we got. We’ve been thinking for a long time about what to do with you and your kind, who fought fiercely for what they believed in. The bear territory will always be a

part of the Northern Lycan Kingdom. However, we are willing to give you autonomy to some level. You will have your own laws, with the exception of a few we require you to implement. Such as equal rights for men and women, a ban on forced marriages and so on. You can review and-”

“We accept,” Brigit interjected without realising how rude that probably was to interrupt the Queen. Yet there was nothing to think about. This was already better than what they had hoped for. And after Bjorn’s demise, not too many bears wanted to continue his cause. Most were ready to resume their lives as they were before. But this... this would allow them to make improvements.

“Very well,” Kai nodded, “then we pronounce you Queen Brigit Borg of Nova Oberon, the Bear Kingdom.”

She gasped, looking at them in disbelief. She couldn’t possibly have heard them correctly, however, Savannah was already holding a delicate tiara in her hands.

“Come and kneel!” she tried not to grin but was failing.

The short flight of stairs seemed to be her life’s longest and hardest obstacle as she walked towards the future she never expected.

Carefully, she knelt before the Queen of the North and felt cold metal placed on her head, heavy and uncomfortable. The weight of newfound responsibility. Just like a crown should be.

When Brigit rose, everyone else, except for the kings and queens present, bowed their heads in respect.

“Brigit, you will have to work closely with our new Gamma, Kyle,” Savannah gestured at the redhead lycan next to her, and the Bear Queen’s bottom lip quivered at the mention of the title.

So, he was dead, Dead, dead, dead.

“It would be my honour,” she tried to force a smile, but it did not look convincing.

“Of course, you will also have to work closely with our Ambassador in your kingdom. You already know him,” Kai added with a stiff upper lip. As if he did not want to say it.

The door on the left behind the throne opened, and suddenly the whole world stopped spinning. Brigit’s heart faltered, and she

stopped breathing when she saw the man she had never expected to see again.

Aspen walked with a cane, however, his movements were confident even in this situation. His red hair was longer now while the

beard was trimmed the same as always. He did not meet her gaze, but she did not care. She wanted to throw herself at him regardless,

and only Savannah's hand on her shoulder brought Brigit back to reality.

"Ambassador Aspen Morr," Savannah "introduced" him. "We hope the two of you will be able to achieve a successful alliance

between our two countries. We are all still Northerners, after all."

"Of course," Brigit smiled through tears.

"It would be my honour," Aspen nodded, and his eyes passed over the Bear Queen just for a moment. This was, however, enough to

make her feel as though her whole body was lit on fire.

He left as abruptly as he arrived, but she would never complain. She would never complain about anything ever again because she

had just witnessed a miracle.

And hope bloomed in her heart against her will...

Kyle barely managed to stand through the whole ceremony. Those official events were always too dull for him. Not to mention that

the North went over the top with all that. He had a lot to get used to.

However, only one thing kept him from yawning

Evelyn.

She purposefully did not look at him. Most of the time. But sometimes, she couldn't control herself and was sparing him a short withering glance. As if she was trying to tell him to stop gawping, albeit she always received a different result.

That woman did not leave his mind, but despite all his efforts, she still rejected him time after time.

Little did she know that it would not work on him. They were probably the oddest couple here, and there were a number of contenders at the moment, but Kyle knew almost instantly since the day he met her that they were right for each other.

It was hard to explain because, on the outside, they were nothing alike. Yet, somehow, they still worked. They'd bonded from day one, and he had never had this with anyone else. Kyle wasn't sure he would ever have this with anyone else, even if he got to meet his mate. Because Evelyn was perfect to him.

She was the one, and he'd known that for quite some time. Now he had something to offer to her. He was finally more than just Savannah's best friend. He was now the Gamma of the North after Aspen resigned. Kyle would have a good position in the kingdom, a salary to die for, a place to call home, and all that he was missing was the woman he loved.

He managed to catch her glance for a moment again and saw Evelyn roll her eyes. However, there was a pink tint that graced her cheeks that gave her away. Evelyn wasn't a woman to blush easily, and yet he managed to get this reaction from her every single time.

Kyle slid his hand into the pocket of his trousers and grasped the tiny box he held in there. A ring with pink diamonds in the shape of a leaf was waiting for its moment. A leaf because Evelyn told him once that

she loved autumn, and the colour of the stones was chosen to remind her of Petra who would be leaving her soon.

*Sometimes Kyle envied Petra. The pink haired girl had Evelyn's unconditional love, while Kyle had to fight for bits and pieces of her attention.

Kai was rewarding Alpha Asher from the West, and Kyle remembered how they ended up fighting side by side to defend their women during the last battle. He had never cared for Ash before, but they would probably spend a lot of time together in the future, considering how close their future wives were. And although no announcements have been made yet, Kyle's intuition told him that Ash and Petra would be making those really soon.

Ash only had his eyes on the little she wolf. Before this development, he'd only looked at one woman like that his love for many years, Riannon. Except back then, he had to hide it and steal those little glances here and there. Right now, he was getting bolder and did not bother pretending that he was not interested anymore. He looked at Petra in a way so that everyone present in the room with them knew that she was his mate and future Luna.

"I will miss you," Savannah gave her brother a tight hug, and he wrapped his arms around her tightly.

"You can always come home if you want," Gideon chuckled and received a warning growl from Kai, who stood nearby.

"My home is here now, Big Brother," The Queen of the North smiled. Everything changed so much in just the past few months.

"I know, and you deserve to be happy," her sibling caressed her cheek gently in a fatherly manner. "Probably more than anyone."

“She will be.” Kai stepped in, pulling his mate into his warm embrace. Savannah leaned into him at once, enjoying the warmth he emitted and letting his arms lock around her waist. “I would die for her.”

“You already did, and it did not make my sister happy,” Gideon reminded him with a huff. “I guess the secret is to not die, Fionnlagh.”

“Savvy, about the baby,” Riannon glanced at her sister-in-law, asking for permission to touch her belly and changing the subject subtly at the same time.

“What about the baby?” the Western King tensed.

“You will find out when the time comes,” Riannon arched her brow at him, and then looked back at the Northern Queen. “If I ever find out anything, I will let you know as soon as possible.”

“Thanks, Ria,” Savannah gave the fellow Queen a tight hug. “I know I can always count on you.”

“By the way,” Gideon pulled out an envelope from his blazer’s inner pocket, “I have something for you. Let’s make it official. After all, it was a condition in our alliance.”

“What is it?” Savvy shot her brow up suspiciously.

“The lands your husband has wanted for so long,” her brother explained.

“I can’t accept them anymore,” Kai shook his head, trying to return the envelope that was handed to him. “This is not why I married your sister.”

“I know,” Gideon smirked. “This is why I am giving it to you now. If you don’t want that as part of the alliance, then consider it my

wedding gift to my younger sibling.”

“Which we graciously accept!” Savannah chimed in, grasping the important papers. She wasn’t letting an opportunity like this slide.

“We still need to develop that agriculture project of yours, my love, remember?”

“Yes, you’re right... as always,” he agreed. “But I think there is something else we could do there.”

“May I ask what?” Gideon rubbed his chin. He had some ideas of why Kai needed those territories but wanted a straight answer nonetheless.

“I want to build a new city over time,” the Northerner confessed. “We have so many species, and all of them live isolated from one

other. I want to change that. It will be a city where packs would be formed of different species working together. Brand new packs. They

will receive land and money if they support the agricultural project. It’s all just ideas for now, of course. But I have met so many people lately... wolves, bears, cats, birds... A lot of them want a change. This could be a start.”

“This sounds wonderful,” Riannon supported the idea. “I was telling Gideon just recently that our Kingdom is ready for more changes too.”

“This territory borders with the West,” Savvy winked. “What if we make it a joint project?”

“I will have to see the details and the proposal first,” Gideon was the only one not succumbing to their collective excitement.

However, when they all glared at him, he added, “But it sounds like- it could work one day.”

They talked about it some more, but all good things always come to an end. And finally, Savannah was watching her brother and

sister-in-law getting into their car. The Westerners left the castle grounds soon after that, but Savvy stayed to watch the vehicles

disappear into the setting sun.

“We will visit them after the birth,” Kai kissed her temple..

“I know,” his mate turned to look at her wonderful husband, and he leaned down to capture her lips gently. “It just feels like the end of an era.”

“Good,” Kai chuckled and pulled her closer, inhaling her wonderful bluebell scent. “The end of the old era is always the beginning a new one.”

Epilogue 2 will be available soon. More info in the author’s note or in Marissa Gilbert’s Reading Circle group on FB.

The Luna Trials by Marissa Gilbert Chapter 80

Epilogue 2

The celebrations were finally over and Elene was happy that they were finally done with all this. Now she could let all this stress go since everything went according to plan for once, and the people closest to her were happy.

His brother had his Queen now, and that left the Northern Princess to wonder what was in store for her next. She’d spent years by her brother’s side, assisting him the best she could and performing some of the Luna duties. This wasn’t needed

anymore, and she wasn't sure what she wanted to do now. What was her place in this new world? Did she even have one?

She was happy for everyone, but at the same time, the void inside her was still there. Would she ever meet someone to fill it? "There you are," Savannah appeared out of nowhere and without any guards by her side. This was something that Elene was still working on with the new Queen. One could never be too safe, especially considering her little niece in that woman's belly.

Sawy.

The Queen was glowing, and pregnancy suited her even if it wasn't visible yet. One could feel it just by laying their eyes on

"Just getting some air," Elene leaned over the balcony rails and took a deep breath. "It's so stuffy in there!"

Savannah smiled but didn't reply. She stalked towards her sister in law and gave her a gentle hug she did not expect.

"It's going to happen to you too, you know," she whispered, and the princess let the heavy sigh that had been building up for a while escape her. They both knew what the Queen meant. The Princess craved love just like anyone else. She wished to find her other half and

her place in life. Now more than ever.

"I don't know about that," she admitted. "Maybe I don't deserve it."

"You were a young girl who had the responsibilities of a Queen placed on her shoulders without actually being one," Savvy said. "You are the kind of person who is ready to do anything for the ones she loves. You deserve happiness, and never let yourself think

otherwise.”

Elene wanted to reply something to that, but they heard some kind of commotion below, and their eyes darted that way.

Below them, Celia and Inga stood in Brigit’s way.

“Don’t you even dare dream of getting close to my brother!” Celia snarled at the Bear Queen, not afraid of any kind of consequences. “Alter what you did to him, I cannot believe he accepted the position of an Ambassador in that rotten kingdom of yours!”

“I hope he did it so he could destroy it from the inside!” Inga chimed in. “That would be all that you deserve!”

Brigit had nothing to reply to any of that. Both she-wolves annoyed the hell out of her, but there was truth in their words too.

“If you had an ounce of decency, you would have asked for a different Ambassador!” Celia gritted her teeth. “Can you imagine what

it is going to be like for him to meet all the people who tortured him?”

“He will be safe-” Brigit wanted to protest when she saw a hand raised that was about to slap her. She realised that she was going to

accept the slap. She deserved it, after all.

“Stop!” A loud voice emerged from behind their backs, and they saw Princess Elene marching their way angrily, followed by Queen

Savannah, who took her time.

Celia lowered her hand, scowling.

"I'm sorry, but she deserves this!" the redhead insisted. "You know what she did to Aspen!"

"I understand," Elene agreed. "And I know that Aspen can deal with it on his own. While you have to remember that you are talking to the new Bear Queen and you are representing our Lycan Kingdom."

"She was just emotional," Inga gave her friend a hug.

"Also understandable," Elene agreed. "And this is why there will be no punishment... this time. But consider yourself warned for the next. And now, follow me, ladies."

The Princess turned on her heel, and Savvy gave her a light smile. She'd handled the situation well.

The other Northerners left and the Bear Queen of the Nova Oberon intended to do the same.

"Brigit!" Queen Savannah gracefully walked towards her, a friendly expression on her face. This was the first opportunity that they'd

had to talk in private.

her.

time!"

Brigit's lips curled involuntarily. She was happy and angry at the same time, and a swarm of emotions was rippling through

"Why didn't you tell me he was alive?" The she-bear asked bluntly. "I inquired so many times! 1- I was mourning him all this

Treacherous tears burned her eyes despite her not wishing to demonstrate her weakness. She knew very well that she was an appointed Queen. And with that title came conditions. She and the Lycan Queen of the North weren't equals. At least not now.

"Good," Sawy responded, and Brigit's eyes shot at the other woman.

However, the Northern Queen's face wasn't hostile or derisive. A soft smile was playing on her lips.

"Good?" Brigit raised her brow up, clenching her fists so tight that her nails pierced her skin.

"Yes," Savannah replied, giving her a stern gaze this time. "Now that you have lost him for real, you will know how it feels. You will treasure him the way he deserves. Or you will lose him again."

The words were like a slap in the face, but the new Bear Queen knew she deserved it. Everything bad that happened to Aspen in the past was her fault. She would have to live with that knowledge forever.

"It doesn't matter anymore," she lowered her head, her voice shaky. "We aren't mates.

"Did you stop loving him then?" Savvy tilted her head curiously. anymore."

It was the most obvious question in the whole damn world, but for the first time, Brigit had to admit it, at least to herself.

She's never stopped loving Aspen. In fact, she only loved him more with each passing day: Mate bond or no mate bond. She did not need a magical pull to tell her that he was the one for her.

It was a whole different story for him, though.

“He probably hates me, and rightfully so,” she whispered, eyes downcast.

“He wants to hate you,” Savannah tried to explain, choosing her words carefully, “But each time he woke up in agony while he was

healing, it was your name on his lips.”

A quiet little sob escaped Brigit’s chest, and the Lycan Queen stepped closer to shield her from anyone else observing them.

“If you love him, truly love him, you will fight for him. And you will earn his trust back,” she said, giving the she bear’s hands a tight squeeze. “I am not promising that it’s going to be easy, but ”

“I’ll do whatever it takes,” Brigit interrupted her friend. Yes, now she could call Savvy that. A friend. “If there is at least the tiniest chance of him loving me again—”

“He never stopped,” Savvy grinned, but the grin slowly turned into a snarl. “However, Brigit, hurt him one more time, and I will personally send the whole northern army for you!”

“I won’t!” the werebear chuckled. “I-”

“Save those words for him,” Savvy let go of her and turned on her heel, looking over her shoulder. “He is the one who needs to hear them.”

Joran did not want to come back.

At first.

But as the world he worked so hard to build started to crumble, the memories of an insolent boy who did not want to be tamed flashed before his eyes, awakening something he was sure was long dead.

The Dragon God felt his Champion die while he was on his way to chase his favourite Dragonfly, infuriated that the war so carefully planned was ruined by his brother, who wasn't even supposed to be there.

What was Fenrir thinking? They had a deal! He wasn't supposed to meddle in Joran's business anymore.

So, when that wolf decided to bless everyone too and ruin the last remaining advantage of the bear army, it enraged Jormungandr.

It infuriated him so much that he'd made a mistake with Bjorn, leading to him taking his anger out on his Champion.

Of course, the bear was invincible. He'd given him one of the most precious powers out there. When the dragon had thrown him

away, Bjorn was supposed to be fine. Nothing could kill him.

Yet something did. Or someone. After all, Fenrir was there. It could have been him, and if it was indeed the Alpha God, then he would pay for this.

To his own shock and resentment, the Serpent regretted his fit of anger. The boy was foolish, but it was partially Joran's fault for persuading the Moon Goddess to link him with the Western Princess. What seemed like a great idea at the time did not work

out so well in the end. He should have arranged their meeting earlier, but it was impossible to predict that she would fall in love with the Northern Lycan King and then choose him over both of her true mates. That had never happened before. It was a stupid mistake to not interfere and also partially his Dragonfly's fault... She had distracted him and held him back during crucial moments.

It hurt him more than he'd expected to feel Darius' death. With all his flaws, the boy was promising, and Joran spent years mentoring him. It was one of the reasons the Serpent had once switched sides from his father to him. Bjorn looked like he would be able to finish the job and break both powerful Lycan Kingdoms once and for all.

Initially, the deity did not plan to come back for his body. Bjorn failed him, and it was reckless to return to where Fenrir could appear again. After all, his motives were unknown and it was too early to test his brother. Joran wasn't ready for that yet. It would require even more elaborate planning before they could meet. And if Fenrir wouldn't withdraw when that day came, Joran would have to kill him. Something he should have done years ago if he was honest with himself. However, there was something he needed Fenrir to do before his death. And when it was done, it would finally give Joran exactly what he wanted..

The deity tried to ignore the ugly, heavy feeling that scratched him from the inside, making his heart ache. He didn't think he was capable of these emotions anymore, but even he had to admit that he did not want to leave Bjorn to rot in the lands he couldn't conquer. The White Bear King deserved more.

When he arrived at the scene, the Northerners were lucky to have already departed. The dragon deity would have destroyed anyone in his way because he was still in that state of mind where he had to admit that everything had gone wrong. He hadn't lost for a few

hundred years already. And it tasted just as bitter as he remembered.

Locating Bjorn in all that snow wasn't problematic for him, he could feel the remnants of his own energy at the end of the frozen

river far too well. His Champion was washed ashore and then buried under piles of snow that Joran melted with a wave of his hand to see him clearly. The melting caused his newly injured eye to bleed again, only a small wooden hilt was poking out of it.

"Mistletoe," Joran gritted out, not knowing whether to laugh or level these mountains to rubble. How did they guess? Who told them? This was literally one of only two things that could kill Bjorn. All this time, he'd feared him meeting the Northern Lycan King in

battle, but it had to be this stupid twig that killed him.

No. He was not ready to accept that.

It would set him back in his plan, it would drain his powers, already weakened by recent events, but he would not let his Champion

go out this way.

Not letting himself think twice, Joran knelt next to Bjorn and wrapped his hands around the little dagger. At least the mistletoe did

not let the body decay as it was a magical death. So, he had plenty to work with.

Ideally, he would have wanted to return Bjorn in time to a moment where he could have changed all the recent events. It worked so well for the Moon Goddess with the one she chose to bless. The Goddess' desperation made him laugh back then. Well, karma, indeed

was a b*tch, and now he was in a similar situation.

However, that plan had one significant flaw. It would drain him even more, making him vulnerable, and he'd already used so much

of his strength. He needed to restore himself first, so his options were limited for now.

Joran looked at his Champion one last time. Now he was missing both eyes, but again... the deity could work with that. For now, just one spark of life would be enough. He would have to think of the rest later.

Placing his hand on Bjorn's chest, he shared with him one more speck of his divine power, giving him a piece of his own soul. An irrevocable act.

And just like that... Darius' heart started beating again.

It was a long way to recovery, though. Luckily, werebears were not new to hibernation and this was the state Joran put him in for the

moment.

that.

The Serpent knew that it was better to take the bear away from here to safety. His time would come again. He would ensure

Shifting into his dragon form, he took Bjorn's unconscious body into his claws and spread his wings, charging into the sky, slashing

the air with his enormous wings.

The tall gleaming buildings of the Southern Republic were already visible when Joran turned in a slightly different direction.

He took his Champion to the island, where he trained his Dragonflies, watching neat lines of firstborns exercising before he landed.

A few of his highest ranking warriors arrived instantly to greet their master and looked at Bjorn lying at his feet questioningly, probably

assuming that he was some kind of prisoner. No one here knew about the one he chose as his Champion. That knowledge wouldn't do

any good to them.

"I want him healed," Joran announced. He was about to leave when he added, "He is important, so... take good care of him."

That startled his subordinates, but none of them would think to question him, so they stayed silent.

This was why Joran wasn't used to disobedience.

His mood was still sour when he reached his luxurious quarters, so he went straight to his bar and poured himself the strongest mead he had at his disposal when he heard a chuckle.

“Hard day?” The last person he wanted to see now, other than his brother, turned out to be sitting in his chair. Forrest, the senior member of the Alpha Convocation of the Southern Republic and the one who loved to oppose him at every opportunity imaginable, smirked at him.

“Are you lost?” Joran gritted his teeth. “This is my domain. I’d be careful here if I were you.”

“With all due respect, Chairman, we needed you at the latest session,” the Southerner was not impressed by what was clearly a

warning. “There is chaos after the defeat of our plan, and your absence is not helping.”

“Why is there chaos, Principal Chairman? Isn’t it your job not to let that happen?” Joran chuckled darkly, taking a sip of his drink

and feeling his powers slowly start restoring. Sadly, too slow for his needs. “We didn’t take part in this war, after all. What do we care?”

“You know that we care if the West and the North are growing and cooperating,” Forrest stood up. “This shouldn’t have happened.”

“It doesn’t matter,” the deity brushed him off, “Nothing will help them when I am done with them.”

“The plan was not to use the Southern army,” the Alpha reminded him.

"The plan was to weaken the enemy without revealing ourselves. And we did just that," Joran reminded him.

"You have revealed yourself, though." Forrest poked at his wound.

"The deity in me revealed himself, but Jordan Nathair remained untouched in this mess."

"And how about your brother? Will he be a problem?" The lycan kept pushing him to his limits.

"He will not," Joran replied. "And you should stop meddling in my business. Go back to the Southern Republic and play your role

until my return. Do some damage control and offer the North and the West some humanitarian help which they will, of course, decline. I

have quite a few ideas of whom we should engage into this next to finish what we started."

"Care to share?" Forrest folded his arms over his chest as he waited expectantly. Joran knew that he wouldn't like his idea. Not that

Forrest liked any of his ideas before that.

"Who do you think?" The deity taunted. "The only kingdom that we haven't been involved in this war yet. The one that
perished."

"East?" Forrest scoffed. "Only rogues live there."

"Exactly. This is why they will be desperate to join us," A sneer spread over Jordan's lips. "And do our dirty work."

A few days ago

Astrea ran as fast as she could. She had always been the fastest, but now she was exhausted after a few days of travelling by foot. What could she do, though? If she had tried to go by plane, she would have been caught for sure. And the route she had to use to hide from Joran was impossible to cross by car. She'd had to adapt, but she could feel it with her skin that they were close. The ones she grew up training with were after her now.

It was so stupid. She had been dreaming of escaping for years and never acted on it.

However, when she was ordered to poison the whole royal family of the North and their guests, it did not sit right with her.

Many things did not sit right with her but she'd always executed every order from her superiors. This time was different, though.

Initially she loathed the Luna trials and every single contender who took part in it. She was not interested in the king, believing that

he would end up as her target. But then she took a liking to the Western Princess and witnessing her love with the Lycan King bloom, she

grew attached. She found Petra funny and her mentor, Evelyn, the picture of a perfect mother she never had. She respected Naya, who was a great warrior but somehow found her biggest value as an amazing and loyal friend. She found it funny how Kyle manipulated the

opinions during the Luna Trials broadcasting. At some point, she realised that she liked these people more than anyone else she knew,

possibly.

And then she met the Luna of the Western Lycan Kingdom.

Though they barely spoke to each other, Riannon was a picture of kindness, elegance and strength. But most importantly, she felt so

familiar...

Astrea was distraught when she received the message to poison them all with the exception of Savannah during her short fake fight

with Bjorn in the shrine. She played her role well back then, and no one suspected a thing. All for the greater good...

If it were just one of the kings or even both of them, she would have probably done it. She would have killed them as she'd done to

many before them.

This time, however, it was a much harder mission because she'd had to live with those people for such a long period of time. But

also... just by observing them she knew that they were good rulers. Better than the ones in her kingdom. Maybe they weren't perfect, but

they sought to make the world better and Astrea found it very appealing.

So, she convinced her partner Emma to give the antidote to Savannah while she took care of the poison in everyone's cups. She'd

had to go to great lengths to save them. Luckily, no one was interested in her much, and she managed to sneak out one night and get to

one of the secret witch apothecaries in the capital, where she paid a hefty sum for the potion with the desired effect.

She put them to sleep instead of killing them at the moment they all fell to the ground, her clock started ticking.

Astrea knew that they would soon discover what she had done, how she had betrayed Joran and the other dragonflies.

And they would never forgive her.

Emma didn't. She realised that something was wrong first when Astrea tried to dump her in the woods and drive off alone.

But Emma caught on to her suspicious behaviour early on and attacked her before she could do anything. They'd been rivals for as

long as she could remember, and Emma was happy to discover that Astrea was a traitor now. She'd intended to reveal the betrayal to

Joran, and this was one thing the assassin couldn't allow. Her teacher would never forgive her for this. She knew that much.

It was unfortunate, but she had to kill Emma. The other woman kept attacking her and sadly there was no way around that. So,

Astrea thrust a dagger into her chest and left. Then she had burned the magical tattoo on her arm, knowing that this could be used to

track her. That shimmering dragonfly was a part of her but for now she had to get rid of it. And she would have to keep burning her skin in

this place for the rest of her life because her skin would regenerate and the tattoo would shine in its full force again.

She heard the howls and the snarls, speeding up as twigs were hitting her face while she ran. Beads of sweat formed across her forehead and all over her back.

Close. They were so close! The Firstborns were near.

And if they manage to catch up to her, she would be dead by the time the sun set.

Kai's fingers were covering her eyes for quite some time since he brought her to the woods next to their castle, telling her that it was

a surprise.

"Just a few more steps," he cooed, chuckling at her unhappy face. Savannah hated surprises. She'd had enough of them for ten lifetimes already. All she wanted now was the stability he had been giving her for the last seven months. That was priceless.

She expected a picnic, or maybe another gorgeous view of the North she hadn't been aware of yet; Kai loved to show her those, and

it seemed like the North would never run out of picturesque locations. They managed to do a tour around the country while her

pregnancy was still allowing it, and her husband proudly showed her everything that he loved in their country.

A sweet floral scent reached her nostrils, and she stumbled. She had to be wrong about it!

“Is that-” she gasped, and finally, he took his hands away, letting her see why he had brought her here.

It took the Queen a few seconds to adjust to the light, but when she did, she couldn’t find the right words for what unfolded right before her.

“Kai!” she whispered, covering her mouth. “How?”

“The magic of love, my dear,” he winked at her, a wide grin plastered all over his face, “the magic of love!”

A thick blue and violet carpet covered the ground of the forest, and it seemed to be stretching for miles. The delicate flower petals

were trembling in the wind, glistening with morning dew in the first rays of sunshine. A picture of serenity and a miracle in flower form.

hers.

“But- they aren’t supposed to grow here!” Savvy gasped, glancing back at her mate.

"You have no idea how hard it was to make them grow," Kai confessed. "But your face right now was so worth the effort!"

"You are a gardener, after all!" the woman giggled, and he turned her to face him and pulled her closer, resting his forehead against

"You were right back then, you know," he hummed, the sound of his voice vibrating against her skin. "There are no flowers like bluebells. They are... unique..."

He placed a soft kiss on the tip of her nose.

"Uh-huh," Savanna's smile grew wider.

"And beautiful," Kai's lips brushed over her lips feather light.

"True," she agreed, taunting him slightly.

"And the scent drives me crazy!" his voice rasped right before he crushed his lips against hers, devouring her greedily, fingers tangling in her hair and not letting her pull away. Not that she intended such a thing.

A soft whimper left the Luna of the North and Kai immediately stopped.

"What is it?" he studied her face.

"The little princess is kicking me," Savvy chuckled at her husband's worried expression. "It looks like she takes after you."

Kai relaxed a bit hearing it. "I don't know about that. Sounds just like her mother!"

She pinched him.

"Ouch!" he let out a hearty laugh. "You see what I mean?"

They both laughed, and he turned her around again to wrap his arms around her from behind, enjoying her closeness and this moment of peace they finally got.

But there was something lingering over and tainting their happiness, and they knew it. They always felt it despite all their efforts to pretend that it wasn't there.

"I will not give her away, Kai," Savannah confessed all of a sudden. "Not to a God, not to anyone. She is our daughter."

"I know and I am so sorry for my stupid mistake" The Northern King's voice broke.

"Don't be," she gave his palm that rested on her belly a little squeeze and leaned her head back into his chest. "It was right at the time, but it doesn't mean that it's right for us now."

"Agreed," Kai kissed the top of his wife's head. "The witches promised her their protection, but in case that's not enough, I will try to strike new deal. Or-"

"Or what?" Savannah shifted on her feet to face him, locking their eyes.

"Or we will have to find a way to kill a God," Kai told her firmly and he meant every word.

"Is that even possible?" she whispered, afraid to speak too loudly considering what they were discussing.

"Anything is possible with the right motivation," the King said firmly and pressed his wife tightly against himself.