

The Alpha God's Luna

Astrea is a traitor.

Raised as an elite warrior of the Firstborn army of shifters, she was trained to kill and obey orders.

Until one day she had enough.

After disobeying her orders, Astrea tried to escape but was caught and brought back. She thought she was going to die, but her Teacher offered her a deal.

One last task.

This is book 3 in the Divine Wolves series. It can be read as a standalone.

1. Caged

"Finally, she is down!" One of the Firstborn gritted his teeth as he wrapped the silver chain tighter around Astrea's neck, forcing her to look up while his partner placed silver cuffs around her wrists behind her back. Now she wouldn't be able to ght them anymore.

"How many did she kill this time?" someone asked.

"Six," Felix, a werewolf who had just had his Ascension, spat blood on the grass, and Astrea's lips curled into a vicious smile. If she had more strength now, he would be the seventh.

She did not have to behave anymore since it was over anyway. At the very least, she would have fun during her last moments of her life.

"I told you to turn away and pretend you didn't see me!" Her smirk annoyed the hell out of the warriors who had just fought her, winning simply because they were lucky, and she was exhausted after days on the run. And also because they were the fth group to attack her today. The four before them were defeated, most of them dead. This group lost six men before they managed to subdue her, thanks to her tiredness and a silly mistake.

One of them, the biggest bear shifter, slapped her across the face with the back of his hand, causing her to fall.

He laughed, but no one else joined him, watching her misery in silence.

Astrea knew precisely why it wasn't funny to them. Amongst all rstborns, she was the star, the one who was always an example of excellence, the one who was successful on her every mission, the A-student and their Teacher's favourite.

And if this was her end, what would happen to them?

They may have been assassins, but there was a code to follow and rules to obey. This was the only thing that gave them stability and structure in their unpredictable lives, and now Astrea shattered all of that.

"What?" She grazed her eyes over the group of shifters who held her captive, "do you think that, unlike me, you would have a happy ending?" A cruel cold laugh escaped her, "Very unlikely!"

The bear hit her again, harder this time, and she felt dizzy, a familiar metallic taste on her tongue.

"Is this all?" she taunted, hoping to provoke them enough to kill her fast. That would be the best way out for her.

After all, she was a traitor. And the Firstborns did not forgive traitors.

A foot connected to her face and then to her stomach, the blows harsh and precise. Again and again, kicking the life out of her. But not hard enough to actually do it, much to her disappointment.

"Grow– some– balls!" Astrea growled, feeling her wolf, Nova, getting angry again. The dumb bear was about to do just what she wanted from him, but at the last moment, one of the remaining guys stood before her.

"Enough!" he said, and Astrea hoped they might nally end her life, but instead, she felt a silver needle pricking her skin. Her eyes widened because they had no reason to kill her using poison. The Firstborns did not work like that. Unless...

"You know we can't touch her!" one of the women present said. "Not really."

"He said to punish her!" Felix insisted but heard a snort in response to that.

"He also said to bring her back alive!" the same woman offered an unamused smile. "But if you wish to test the Teacher, then by all means, be my guest."

Astrea was trained to resist all poisons, including aconite, but whatever was in her bloodstream right now was new.

That wasn't what worried her the most, though.

She tried to focus her vision on one of her captors. They couldn't be serious about this. She had to die today. She'd better die than go back. Her vision got blurry, and the last thing she saw was how close she got to the eastern border.

The strip of the desert was so close and so far away at the same time.

If she could only make it one more mile, she'd get into the rogue territory, and then maybe, just maybe, she could trick them into ghting the Firstborns for her while she escaped in that mess.

This wasn't the best of plans. She knew very well that her chances were slim, and now poison was making her body limp, one body part after another. It was the end.

Astrea was held like a sack of potatoes as one of her ex-comrades took her to their transportation, and when she tried to lift her head, something changed in that strip of sand far away.

Her lips parted slightly when she saw the most magnificent creature she had ever seen. Pitch black in colour, every step made the sand under its feet darken. Astrea's vision was blurry, but she could swear their gaze locked, a familiar feeling prickling her heart.

However, she was pulled into the suffocating darkness the next moment, struggling to remain conscious.

Waking up in the trunk of a car, chained in silver and with the poison still in her system, Astrea's senses had no trouble identifying where she had been brought.

The car and engine were still off, but she could feel the slow oating sensation, the movement. And unfortunately, it wasn't the rst time she experienced that.

They were on a ferry boat, meaning that what she dreaded the most was about to happen. The Firstborns were taking her back to the island they all came from.

Astrea wanted to scream because she hated this wretched place more than anything. She hoped to never see it again, and most importantly, she knew that nothing good awaited her there. Not anymore.

As soon as they reached land, the warriors dragged her still-paralysed body through the mud for everyone to see because it was a lesson for them all to learn.

She was a spectacle.

This was what happened to traitors. This was the price, no matter who they were.

The Firstborns on the island watched her, none daring to intervene. They stopped their training and exercises, some followed them, and soon a crowd was formed. So many different emotions clouded their faces, from resentment to disappointment to fear and then pity. She hated them all.

"Astrea!" The familiar voice made her shudder, pushing the poison faster down her bloodstream. She recognised that voice at once. It was Niki, her ward.

A lump formed in the she-wolf's throat. Niki was so close to the Ascension. She didn't need for everyone to remember who her mentor was for the past few years.

But this was her ward's only weakness. Although Astrea trained her well, Niki still had too much kindness and compassion left in her. Which would make it so much harder for her to become a cold-blooded murderer they all had to be in here.

"As—" Niki's brows were knitted when her sparring partner, a tall blonde guy, caught her in his arms before she managed to reach her. Thank God he had enough brains for that. The faster Niki dissociated herself, the safer she would be.

"Don't!" Astrea pushed the sounds out of her throat. It was best for Niki to dissociate herself from her as soon as possible. It was probably the only thing she could do for her now.

No one bothered explaining why it was happening to her. The Firstborn hunters were taking her to the silver pit, and it was an explanation of its own. Only traitors were taken there. Astrea was one of them now.

Someone's hand grasped her hair and yanked her head to put an extra silver collar on her neck, and as soon as that was done, she was shoved to the ground, realising that they put on a leash, the most humiliating punishment for a werewolf. Nova growled inside her, wishing to claw it off. Sadly, they were too weak for that now.

"Remember this day!" Mathias, one of those she trained with for years, said, avoiding looking at her. "No one is safe! There are no favourites! If you disobey the Master and betray our oath, this is what will happen to you!"

Astrea scanned the crowd quickly. The Firstborn warriors were gathered around them, their exercise sessions, battles and sparring put to a stop to witness all this.

To witness her demise.

It was probably strange, but her lips still curled into a smirk. She had no regrets.

And with that, he turned on his heels and kicked her chest with his boot, making her fall down, down, down. Until she landed on the stone oor, cracking a few bones and hissing.

The air at the bottom was too heavy for her as the silver on the walls was imposing. It was a death cell, after all.

Astrea curled up on the oor, trying to hug her knees rst but quickly concluded that it wasn't a good idea. Her whole body ached from being battered mercilessly.

It would take a while to regenerate here, she knew that much. Too much silver and the unfamiliar poison still in her body would prevent her from it as long as it could. She stretched to help herself heal quicker, taking the most straight and physiologically correct position she could muster. That would helpfully let her bones grow back together faster, saving some of the work.

Closing her eyes, she remembered why she was here. The Firstborn army didn't have too many rules. All of them were unbreakable, but one of them was of utmost importance.

Always obey the Teacher.

She did it for years. Just why couldn't she do that now?

Sadly, she knew why very well. Her last mission was very different from the ones she usually had.

Usually, she was sent to make quick kills or act as a spy somewhere for a short time. But last time... Last time she had to live with her future victims for weeks. It didn't help that, at rst, her task did not imply killing anyone. So, she got to know them safely, weeding out the information for her Teacher but also enjoying herself in the process. She quickly came to realise that she liked these people. They were kind, noble in heart, passionate and so alive. Living her whole life on the island, she was deprived of what they had, but they were happy to share and she enjoyed every minute.

Astrea had to check again when she received the order to kill them all. And when it was conrmed, she was left with a choice. To kill them and continue her path of her Teacher's Dragony or– Give those people a chance and see what happens.

She hoped they used that chance wisely because she was the one now paying for it.

The sun disappeared and rose the following day. Again and again, and again. All the while, Astrea had been kept on a leash in that pit. She had a piece of bread and a bottle of water in there daily, just enough to keep her alive.

That made her realise that they would not kill her after all.

And that made her scared.

She tried to count the days but couldn't sometimes tell if she had missed one or two.

A part of her was afraid that this was it.

This was her punishment.

The Teacher wanted her to live here like a dog, watched by other rstborns, to remind them why they shouldn't betray him.

And this was something she couldn't allow.

So, the next time they threw her old bread and a water bottle, she didn't take them. In fact, she didn't move anymore. Her body was too weak already. Two, maybe three days without water, and she would be done.

Closing her eyes one of these days, she could feel that the end was near, and she welcomed it. Maybe her next life would be better than this. If next lives existed...

Astrea was awakened by a loud thump next to her. Eyes uttering open and shut, she had a hard time seeing the face, but recognised the tall gure with broad, muscular shoulders at once.

He kneeled next to her and rst checked the temperature on her forehead but then his ngers brushed over her cheek, cupping it.

She couldn't move, each bone in her body aching, her throat so dry, not a sound could leave it.

"Dragony," her Teacher sighed, scooping her up in his arms, "just what do I do with you?"

Author's Note: This is book 3 in the Moonrise Kingdom series. You don't have to read the rst two books to enjoy it, but if you do, you will know some of the backstories of the two main characters.

I really hope you will continue the adventure with me. If you are here, say hi!

THE DIVINE WOLVES series by Marissa Gibert

Book I. The Perfect Luna

Book II. The Luna Trials

Book III. The Alpha God's Mate

As always, we will have chapter discussions in Marissa Gilbert's Reading Circle group of F.a.c.e.b.o.o.k. You can also follow me on In.sta.gram and Tik.tok - my account everywhere is @marissagibertauthor. Join us to have fun, games, giveaways and many events designed for avid readers like yourself.

Are you excited about this book? Let me know in the comments. Any support is greatly appreciated.