

The Alpha God's Luna by Marissa Gilbert Chapter 28

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Astrea watched the show with a frown on her face.

what in the witch's hallucinations is this? Nova snarled.

The best puppet show in town , the Dragonfly commented. Enjoy what that...bi- I mean, witch Salome wants us to see.

"Long ago, deep in the desert, there lived a beautiful maiden unlike any other. For she was not only gifted with prominent beauty but also with great magical powers." The woman's eyes sparkled with mischief as she leaned into the puppetry, coaxing the children's imagination to new heights. There was no doubt that the doll in the red dress looked almost identical to Salome.

Astrea felt a twinge of revulsion rising in the pit of her stomach.

"Everyone in her tribe loved her, for she was the kindest and purest of souls."

Oh, gods! Nova snickered as Magda went on.

"However, one fateful night, a marauding group of rogues descended upon her home, burning it to the ground and forcing the beautiful maiden to flee. The maiden ran with all her might, tears streaming down her face, as the men relentlessly pursued her, eager to inflict their cruel intentions and mercilessly take her in turns right in the middle of the desert. For every one of them wanted a piece of this beauty."

Someone should probably tell them that this children's show is not actually PG 13 Nova commented dryly, and it took all Astrea's willpower not to roll her eyes.

In the meantime, the doll in the red dress was running away from men in black who were screaming about how gorgeous she was to her fleeing back.

Typical rogue behaviour, the wolf scoffed again.

“Just when the maiden was about to surrender,” Magda continued in a grim voice, “a large wolf leapt out of the shadows, fiercely protecting her from imminent danger.”

A doll that was supposed to represent Fenrir appeared, and Astrea giggled for noticing how poorly it was made.

Is that an old sock? I bet he hates this show, she commented while Nova chuckled profusely.

“As the morning sun emerged, the maiden gasped in shock as the wolf turned into a tall and handsome man before her eyes!”

She’s probably the first witch who had never seen a werewolf before , Nova huffed another laugh. At least this is funny.

“But he was far from the kind gentleman she expected,” old Magda raised her index f*inger into the sky.

There is our Fenrir! Astrea cheered. Finally there was a part of the story that looked believable.

“Rather, he was a lone wolf shifter with incredible magical powers who lived in solitary confinement in a cave and did not wish to see anyone. Only three brave warriors were guarding him day and night.”

The blue backdrop with silver stars was pulled away, replaced by an embroidered cave on a piece of canvas fabric.

“Despite his reluctance to allow her to stay, the maiden persisted, refusing to leave his side. She stayed by the cave together with the warriors, waiting for the wolf to accept them. Day and night, they slept in tents by the entrance until one day, in gratitude for their steadfast love and persistence, the wolf rewarded them by using his magical abilities, creating new homes with great haste to house his friends. And guess who got the house first?”

“Salome!” The children screamed in delight as Astrea rolled her eyes so hard it was almost painful. Did they listen to this piece of local folklore daily?

“Of course!” Magda grinned at her spectators. “Since he loved her the most, the maiden’s house was built first, and it also was the biggest one. It still stands to this day, watching over the entrance to Solace.”

“So, you’re saying it’s the furthest away from Fenrir’s mansion?” Astrea couldn’t help saying it out loud.

“Shh!” Some boy gave her a reproachful glare.

“What?” She looked at him innocently, quickly replacing that glance with a menacing grin. “He wanted to get rid of her so much that he was ready to build her house. Just saying.”

The child’s face contorted in confusion, and she almost felt guilty about her words. Almost.

“Word quickly travelled that a new city was established in the middle of a kingdom that perished, and its name was Solace. New people arrived, accepted by the maiden, the wolf and the three warriors. The community soon grew, melting the cold wolf’s heart with their love and generosity, making him the protector of all the people who were once rejected. As the city grows in prosperity and graciousness, the wolf still protects it to this day. And the beautiful maiden, together with the three warriors, are always by his side.”

The crowd burst into applause, and Astrea clapped a few times too. Simply out of respect for the elderly.

“Magda,” one girl raised a hand, “is that story about Fenrir and Salome?”

“What do you think?” the old lady winked at her, implying that, of course, it was, and a wave of giggles erupted.

“Yes!”

“Of course!”

“They are perfect together!”

More and more praise of the happy couple sounded from every corner.

I am going to throw up! Astrea announced, ready to leave. Enough was enough.

“Are you done ruining the dreams of children?” Devoss appeared by his side wearing a dazzling emerald-green suit.

“Oh, one of the three great warriors, I assume?” She raised a brow at him, and the man’s smile faded.

“Actually no,” he shot an angry look at Magda, who reciprocated with narrowing her eyes, “the old hag doesn’t like me and she cut me out of the story.”

“Oh, I didn’t cut you out!” Magda let out an annoyed sigh. “Here you are.”

She pointed somewhere near the Fenrir doll’s leg, and Astrea had to look closer to see a little dirty black fox sewn to it.

“I am not even gracing that with a response!” A frustrated sigh escaped Devoss’ chest, punctuating his displeasure with the situation.

“I am just concentrating on what was important!” The old woman was already packing her little theatre in a box as kids dispersed in the crowds.

Devoss mimicked her as he draped his hand around Astrea’s and pulled her away.

“Seriously, what are you even doing here?”

“I was just-” She couldn’t find the right words to explain, still feeling the bitter aftertaste of Magda’s story. “Learning the history of Solace’s founding.”

“That?” He almost choked. “Please, tell me you are not taking this seriously!”

“Okay,” she arched her brow, “so, tell me then, is there anything between Fenrir and Salome? Were they ever together?”

“Why do you want to know?” Devoss’ lips stretched in a sly smile. She was about to tell him to forget it when a familiar scent enveloped her.

“Yeah, why do you want to know?” Fenrir’s breath burned the skin on her neck and next to her ear, making her whole body shudder with excitement.

“I-” Astrea was looking for the right words when the Rogue King laced their f*ingers together and tugged her gently to follow him.

“I’ll take it from here, Dev.” Fenrir led her back to the line of people on the other end of the square as she was cursing at herself inwardly.

He stopped before they reached the crowd and said, without looking at her.

“Nothing ever happened. She is a friend just like Kara. I have no other women in my life except for-”

His mates. Or that other woman he said he loved. He did love someone, after all.

“Except for you.” His grip tightened, and her heart skipped a beat.

Target, target, target. Just a target.

“So, what is this?” Astrea asked, clearing her throat and pointing at the people. Warg and Kara were checking something on their wrists and then typing something on their tablets. After this check or whatever that was, they were greeted by the warriors Astrea remembered from the Fortress and given a red box.

“This is what I brought you here to see today,” Fenrir replied, the corners of his lips rising slightly. “The newcomers.”

“Newcomers?” Now that she was looking at the people with interest, she noticed three familiar faces almost instantly. The woman she saw back at Raja with twin girls. Fenrir spoke to them privately back then, and now they were here with red bracelets on their wrists. Just like everyone else in that line. “Is that-”

“I see you recognise them.” The rogue chuckled.

“Back then you-”

“Gave them the passes,” he nodded with a smug smile on their face. “Raja means border, Astrea. People who live there need to prove that they aren’t rogues in the traditional sense. We keep watch over them and choose the worthy ones to live in Solace.”

“What are the criteria?” she wondered, feeling warmth spreading over her chest. She was happy to know that the woman and the twins would live here now. Solace was a good place. She had to admit that.

“Basically, not to be a criminal or a psychotic murderer,” Devoss snorted to her left, appearing behind her back with a cardboard box, full of the red smaller boxes they were distributing. “Wanna help?”

“Sure,” she smiled, “what can I do, though?”

It was rare for her to be able to do anything that didn’t require either killing or spying, so she was really happy to join them today.

“Each red box has a number corresponding to newcomers’ bracelets. They tell you their number, and you find their box,” Fenrir explained. “Be careful as their new life is in it. New documents, the keys from their new home, information they need for their new job. We try to think of everything.”

“That’s very kind of you.” She had to admit that. “Not everyone would bother with such things.”

“But someone should, and here we are,” Fenrir replied, as if it was the simplest of matters.

They stood in front of tables with the red boxes, distributing them, and Astrea found peace in this little task. The people were thanking her as if she did more than just hand them something that others had prepared, but thanks to that she could tell how much this new life meant to them.

Deep inside, she could understand. After all, a new life was what she craved. Like a stealthy intruder, a treacherous thought slithered into the depths of her mind. What if she could have a new life right here in Solace? Next to Fenrir...

Astrea swallowed hard, chasing it away. It wouldn’t work. The Teacher would search the whole desert for her. It would never be safe here.

“Thank you so much! I don’t know how to thank you!” The woman she met in Raja was accepting her box from Fenrir, her eyes glistening with tears.

“I chose the perfect place for you.” He smiled at them, and Astrea felt an unmistakable pang that tugged her heartstrings. Did he have to be this sweet?

“Anything would do!” The mother clutched the box and pressed it against her chest. “You have no idea how much it means.”

“It’s very close to the school,” Fenrir added, and Astrea closed her eyes. This was too much. “There is a little garden attached to the house and a big playground within walking distance. You are going to love it here.”

“Damn it,” Astrea swore under her breath, pretending to look for something underneath the table. Anything to take her eyes off that man.

He was changing lives here while she still plotted to kill him.

He was her target, and usually, Astrea wouldn’t think twice. Especially not when Niki’s life was also on the line. But this... this was different. Fenrir wasn’t a criminal mastermind or a corrupt politician.

She came here thinking that he was just a rogue, but in reality, this couldn’t be further from the truth. Fenrir was anything but. The people of Solace relied on him. They loved him.

The whisper of doubt echoed in her mind, planting seeds of uncertainty deep inside her soul.

She couldn’t do it. She wouldn’t be able to kill Fenrir.

“My number is 4837.” A familiar voice brought her back to reality, and, to her credit, Astrea didn’t flinch when she saw the woman who was not supposed to be here in Solace, despite knowing this wouldn’t bring anything good.