

The Alpha God's Luna by Marissa Gilbert

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Chapter 46. Shadows Of The Past

SOUTHERN LYCAN REPUBLIC

Astrea stared at the man who had just announced his claim on her, and he couldn't take his eyes off her either, mesmerised by her presence. Her body was reacting to him in a way she never imagined reacting to a stranger, waves and waves of emotions mixed with desire coursing through her. These waves, she had to shut them down as soon as possible.

He is — mate, Nova couldn't calm down, restless beyond belief. I lost hope we would ever get one. Don't get used to him, Astrea commanded. We are not keeping him. You know very well that nothing is that simple in our life, and a mate appearing now, at this time, is suspicious.

Maybe he can save us, Nova suggested. Or maybe he is the one we need saving from, Astrea reasoned. Besides, I'd rather we saved ourselves.

But it's mate! Nova became agitated. He was destined for us. And what about Fenrir? The woman reminded her wolf. Or maybe you forgot we love him and that it's not the first time we met?

Of course not. Now Nova was lost for thoughts, her excitement finally wearing off. Fenrir is — everything, but — No buts, Astrea insisted. Fenrir is everything. It's in our nature to be enchanted by a mate, but we have to think straight. We are stronger than that.

Got you, her wolf agreed, trying to build a wall around them quickly to avoid showing weakness or falling deeper. "Did I hear what I think I heard just now?" Alpha Forrest whistled, watching the scene.

“Miner the stranger repeated, bringing Astrea out of her trance. Joran stepped in front of her, covering her with his body, and for the first time, she was grateful for his presence.

“Excuse me, you must be mistaken,” he smirked. “Talk about starting with the wrong foot,” Forrest commented. “Gentlemen, allow me to introduce yourselves before you say anything else. Chairman Joran Nathair, Alpha Vincent Lothgar, son of the deceased High Chancellor.”

Astrea almost whistled herself. So, the stranger was the one who wanted the position of the High Chancellor, also known as the Head of the Southern Lycan Republic. Although they had a system built on equality, there was still one person who could veto the decisions of the Alpha Convocation and act as the person in charge in case of emergencies. Joran wanted this position for years. The Dragonfly always wondered why he couldn't take it by force, and now she began to realise he simply couldn't. Something was preventing him from it, or that man in front of them would have lost his head here and now.

“Last time I met Alpha Lothgar's son, he was just a teen pup.” Joran did not seem happy with his new acquaintance. “That was just one year ago. Now, you either take some serious growth hormones or—”

“You met my younger brother.” Vincent sneered. “Sadly, he had an unfortunate accident right before father's death.”

“Unfortunate indeed,” Joran sighed, although it sounded like a scoff. “And what a coincidence. But it still doesn't explain where you have been all this time?”

“Banished,” Vincent explained without a care in the world. “My mother was my father's first mate, but it didn't go well after she betrayed him with another man. It took me years to prove my worth to my father, and he finally reinstated me just before his death.”

That story sounded so cliché that it was hard to believe. Alpha Lothgar didn't seem to try in the least to make it believable, either, and that told Astrea a lot. He did not care whether two of the most influential people

in the Southern Republic, as well as his own newly found mate, believed in him or not. He did not need them to.

“Fascinating! And how convenient!” Joran rolled his eyes. “About the vote-”

“We can discuss this later at the Convocation,” Vincent shrugged and brushed his hand through his perfect hair, “right now, I have more pressing matters at hand. I didn’t expect to meet my mate here, and I would like to —”

“I am afraid you will have to let it go. She is already taken.” The Serpent didn’t let him finish, marking his territory at once.

Astrea observed both men with keen interest, not saying a word and thinking of how she could use the situation to her advantage. It helped that they both were busy glaring at each other now, and none of them bothered to ask her for an opinion.

She was taught to observe and learn, which greatly helped her. Be invisible but know everything – this is how she usually worked. So, it didn’t escape her eye that a new vibe was coming from her Teacher – he was intimidated by her mate.

And if he wasn’t intimidated by Fenrir, who was his equal, it meant that he knew something about Vincent Lothgar that prevented him from acting rashly around the man.

“I don’t see a mark on her neck,” her mate commented, and Astrea shivered as the snake tattoo started moving. She still loathed that feeling.

“Look closer then.” Joran clenched his jaw tightly. “What is that?” Vincent furrowed his brows and pushed Joran away as if he was nothing. He was next to Astrea in no time, his fingers digging into her shoulders as he pushed the jacket down her arms and saw the moving snake that tried to bite him the second he was about to touch it.

“The mark you were looking for,” Joran smirked, celebrating his momentary dominance.

“It’s not a mark!” Alpha Lothgar growled. “It’s not a real mark!

“It’s the only one I need!” A low growl escaped the Serpent.” Why don’t you take your hands off her now?” The snake moved again, demonstrating it was ready to defend its property, and Astrea decided to test the situation a little. This was interesting.

“It hurts,” she whispered, rubbing her neck. Vincent’s expression became darker at once.

“Take that thing off her!” He ordered and only received a mocking smile in return.

“I choose to decline that offer. Come here, Astrea.” Joran seemed impatient as he stretched his hand to her, escalating the situation.

She looked sheepishly at Vincent and added quietly, “It’s probably best if we reject each other here and now. I hope you will find your happiness-”

His anger became palpable as electricity filled the air. “Never!” Vincent’s eyes glowed blue.

“O-kay,” Alpha Forrester cleared his throat. “We all need to take a deep breath and step back. This has been a long day. We don’t have to discuss everything tonight. It’s best to put off important life decisions for later.”

“Well said,” Joran agreed. “Let’s go, Astrea. Our rooms should be ready by now.”

Her eyes locked with her mate again, and she offered an apologetic smile. Alpha Lothgar’s lips pressed into a thin white line. He took her hand, sending waves of tingles down her skin and pressed his lips against her fingers.

He knew exactly what he was doing.

“I will see you around, my mate,” he promised right before her Teacher lost his patience and yanked her other hand to get her away from the man.

He opened the doors for her, and Astrea noted she could definitely work with the situation. It was almost as if they did the work for her.

the elevator ride through the Convocation building was unnervingly silent. That is, until Joran finally broke it. “It changes nothing!” He announced dryly, and Astrea decided to play along. After all, her plan wasn’t fully formed yet.

“I understand,” she shrugged, startling him with her emotionless response.

For one-hundredth time, Joran regretted he had no power to read her mind. It would have been so helpful now.

“What did you feel when he walked in?” he asked.

“So many things!” she gasped, purposely avoiding his gaze. “He is— You know, my mate. His scent, the tingles... I could barely stay in the same room as him and wanted-”

“He is dangerous, Astrea!” Joran interrupted her.

“Isn’t he just a werewolf?” She knitted her brows, hugging herself.

“Stay away from him. That’s all you need to know. It’s not like you can leave me anyway. A deal is a deal.”

She clenched her lips tightly, trying not to snap at him. “I understand,” she nodded, “but what about the whole mate bond thing? I don’t see him backing away from it.”

“Leave it to me,” Joran sneered. “All you need to do is to reject him when I tell you. At that precise moment.”

“Sure.” Astrea agreed, sensing that things would get interesting pretty soon.

The elevator stopped on one of the top floors, and they walked out into a lavish hall with several doors. Private apartments of the most notorious Alphas of the Convocation.

“I have a surprise for you.” A smile curled onto the Serpent’s lips.

“I feel like there has been enough surprises for a lifetime!” Astrea let out a chuckle, biting her lower lip when he shot an angry gaze at her. A motion that softened him. Joran exhaled heavily and said, his voice laced with confidence, “You are going to love this one.”

He pushed the heavy door, and they entered a spacious, light-filled room. It was a comfortable modern living room in an expensive yet minimalistic style, with one of the walls made of glass to observe the city.

Astrea’s eyes immediately went to a person standing before

it, but before she could react, she heard a familiar voice. “Astrea!” Niki threw herself into her embrace, the sweet scent of magnolia enveloping her.

Her ward, her one and only friend, was here. Her looks had not changed, yet somehow, it felt as if everything about her changed. She fell... grown up. Astrea relaxed a bit, relief washing over her. Niki was fine. When they distanced each other, she carefully studied her face and noticed that her ward was visibly happy. She didn’t expect this; however, it could have been easily explained by their reunion.

“I will leave you,” Joran interjected, and she nodded, not too sad to see him leave.

“You look amazing!” Niki finally distanced herself with a wide grin. “How have you been?”

“Been better,” Astrea shrugged, her eyes travelling back to the man next to the window wall as memories coursed through her mind again.

She recognised him at once.

Darius Bjorn.

The Rebel Bear King of the North. The cold-blooded murderer. The manipulator.

The last time they met, the circumstances were very different. He had just abducted her friend, and Astrea pretended she had poisoned a few dozen people for his cause. By now, she knew that the war had ended with his defeat, and he probably was still holding a grudge against her for deceiving him since her lies were the main reasons for his failure.

“You are too noisy,” he complained, and Astrea thought of how satisfying it would have been to throw him through that glass wall. It would take him at least a few minutes to fly to the ground...

She had prepared a snarky remark when the man turned to face them; the words refused to form on her tongue. Bjorn was wearing a blindfold, and it was doubtful that anything kinky was happening there. So, that piece of black fabric had to have a different purpose.

“What happened to you?” she gasped, but found her answer watching the way he moved, searching for the direction her voice came from.

“It’s none of your business, traitor!” Bjorn recognised her, and for a moment there, it made her proud. She almost thought he had forgotten her.

“Still the heartthrob I remember!” Astrea rolled her eyes. “You betrayed me, and you stole from me!” He growled, his claws growing longer.

“I was never on your side, to begin with, to betray you,” she reminded him. “And technically, the ring I took did not belong to you anymore, so-”

Bjorn moved towards them and almost fell because of a step near the window.

Niki caught him, moving as fast as the wind.

“Careful!” She clicked her tongue. “And be nice to Astrea! She is my friend.”

Bjorn swore under his breath as she led him to the sofa and helped him down.

“Just more reason not to be nice.” He groaned, crossing his hands over his chest.

“Excuse him,” Niki giggled. “We are working on his motor skills now and haven’t started on his manners!” Astrea expected an outburst of anger from the white werebear, but nothing followed, to her surprise. It wasn’t good.

“Hey, Nik,” she smiled at her ward. “Is there coffee here by any chance?”

“Sure,” the girl nodded. “I’ll make you a cup.”

Niki disappeared, and Astrea did not waste time.

Bjorn was about to stand up and leave for his bedroom when he felt cold metal pressed against his neck.

“If you hurt her, I will skin you alive!” the Dragonfly assassin promised, pressing the blade deeper into his skin. His throat bobbed, which made her smile and regret that he couldn’t see that.

But his reply startled her.

“I would never hurt Niki!”

She pierced his skin to draw a little blood.

“Don’t lie to me! It may be the last thing that you do!” she hissed. “And don’t think I bought your little stumbling trick! I know very well you trained to fight blind because you already had one eye and knew this may happen to you if your enemies were clever enough.”

Bjorn pressed his lips together.

“I will never hurt her! Ever!” Astrea listened to his heartbeat and knew he meant it.

“What is going on?” Niki walked in with a tray and three cups, which alerted her mentor since Bjorn didn’t ask for anything. Just what was happening between the two?

“Nothing much,” she smiled and fell on the sofa next to Bjorn, to ensure the seat was taken. “We were just reminiscing about the old times.”

“You know each other?” Niki put the tray on the little table between them.

“Yeah, we do!” Astrea sneered. “Bjorn here is partially responsible for me spending months in the silver pit. He was the one who had this great idea to unalive dozens of people at the northern Luna ceremony.”

“What?” Colour drained from Niki’s face, and Bjorn clenched the sofa’s armrest harder. “Darius did that?”

“Not even his worst deed,” the Dragonfly chuckled, getting her cup and sipping the cottee. “Amongst others, we have abducting a woman, chaining her and parading her on his back as a trophy, killing another and discarding her as if she was garbage, multiple innocent unnecessary people s deaths-”

“I am bored!” Bjorn stood up, and Niki was about to assist him, but he stormed out of the room before she could do that.

“Leave him be,” Astrea stopped her ward. “He doesn’t deserve your help.”

“It’s my- job,” Niki lowered her gaze.

“You don’t have to be that diligent. Just stay with me. We can finally talk.”

Joran wanted to find Forrest and strategize for the upcoming vote when he noticed the door to the High Chancellor’s office was opened.

He walked inside, knowing well who and what he would see there.

Vidar stood with his hands behind his back, watching the mesmerising view in the glass wall. “Verum is more beautiful than I remember,” he stated without turning to greet him.

“And now that you’ve seen it, off to the New Asgard you go!” Joran clenched his fists. “This is my territory, Vincent.” He said the name with so much venom that it made his opponent curl his lips.

“Luckily for you, I don’t care about that territory.” The God of Vengeance turned on his heels to face him.

“I am not letting her go if that’s what you want,” Jor stood his ground, ready to fight if he had to.

“And what if I can offer you something you wanted for so long but could never get?” Vidar smirked. “What if I offer you the deal of your life?”