

Chapter 61 - The Alpha God's Luna

Astrea tried to distract a group of people while Fenrir discreetly lifted a heavy block to let Gideon save a child who survived the explosion from piles of rubble. Sadly, his parents didn't make it; she couldn't take this anymore. They had been working here for hours, trying to help along with the southern fire and rescue crews, who were overwhelmed by the scale of the disaster.

It was the middle of the night and still too dangerous here, but they couldn't give up and leave these people alone. Fenrir had to think twice about using anything divine; this was clearly a response from Vidar. The first payment for the disrupted balance.

Astrea wiped the sheen of sweat from her forehead when she thought her werewolf hearing picked up another sound from a mountain of debris.

"I think I have another one," she screamed, alerting people next to her and went to it. Her movements had to be deliberate and focused as she assessed the situation, searching for any signs of the trapped person after each removed stone. She remained cautious, aware of the potential risks for her own safety.

Unfortunately, it wasn't the best place to be stuck as a huge half-destroyed wall towered over the exact place she was at, threatening to collapse at any moment.

You only have one chance at this, Nova warned her.

Each minute mattered. Too many people died today, and quite a few were on her watch. She was not ready to lose anyone else.

The closer she got, the more convinced she became; someone was moaning beneath the remnants of a once-tall office building, so she sped up her work, finally reaching a hand covered in dust.

"Do you hear me?" she called and gently grasped the fingers, happy to find them somewhat warm and trembling. Now she could tell that it was a woman, but all she heard from her was a little whimper. She probably couldn't talk.

There was quite a heavy piece of concrete on top of her with a few broken wooden planks, pipes and wire, which she cleared first.

"Astrea!" She heard Fenrir's worried voice. He was clearly searching for her, worried beyond belief. Considering how many dead bodies were around them, it was understandable.

“Here!” she yelled as loud as she could, ready to lift the reinforced concrete, but the moment she did, the light around her disappeared, and she felt a deep sense of dread welling up in her stomach. Turning her head, she noticed cracks spreading fast at the base of that massive wall. A terrible sign!

She could choose to abandon the woman, but if she did, the latter would never make it. If she didn’t, it was quite possible they both would die here and now.

“Astrea!” Fenrir was running towards her, but they both knew he wouldn’t be there in time.

Nova, help me! Astrea prepared for a final push.

I am trying! Her wolf growled, lending her the strength she needed.

Yet it was too late. She could hear the wall cracking at the base. She would die under it. It would simply smash her on top of the woman she tried to save.

She closed her eyes, ready for the impact. There was no way to avoid it —

Astrea held her breath as the cloud of dust enveloped her. Something pressed against her back, and she sensed the boulders falling around her, not causing her any harm.

She was fine.

“Astrea!” Fenrir roared, and for a split second, she was shocked to hear him so far away because someone had just covered her, saving her life from imminent death. Her first thought was that it was him, but apparently, she was wrong.

“Are you going to stand like this for a long time?” Joran seethed, holding the biggest piece of the broken wall over them and not letting it hammer her.

Her lips parted in shock. He was the last man she expected to see here.

“Dragonfly!” He groaned as one of his knees budged a bit, showcasing she wasn’t safe yet. “I thought I trained you better than that.”

“You did!” she muttered, pushing the concrete away, revealing a woman underneath who couldn’t speak but tried to open her eyes.

Responsive. And with a distinct werewolf scent. All good signs.

Astrea knew she just needed to drag her out and not break anything vital in the process. This was the benefit of working with shifters. If they were not dead, they could recover from pretty much anything over time. She simply needed to get the woman to safety.

“Hurry up, will you?” Joran rushed her, and she obeyed him, swearing under her breath. If anyone had told her they would work together just hours ago, she would have laughed in their faces.

She was out right before the wall collapsed completely, clouds of dust chasing her as she ran into a furious Fenrir.

“Astrea, what the hell?” he growled loudly, his terrified gaze scanning her. “If anything happened to you—”

“I am fine!” She tried to force a smile onto her lips, although it was hard considering the circumstances. A group of medics ran up to them with a stretcher and took the woman under their care, allowing Astrea to breathe out in relief. One more life saved.

“Please, leave these things to me.” He pulled her into his embrace. “If he had been a few seconds late, I would have lost you again—”

Astrea bit her lips, guilt washing over her.

“Sorry.” She raised her head to look at her beloved, but noticed his eyes were elsewhere.

Joran walked past them, trying to brush the dust off his jacket.

“You are welcome!” His words were filled with venom despite his selfless act, and he did not stop to talk to them, carrying on as if nothing had happened.

“You couldn’t let literally anyone else save you?” Fenrir raised his brow at her, brushing his fingers over her cheek.

“It may come as a shock to you, but I don’t want anyone to save me at all.” Her shoulders drooped. “In this lifetime, I have always felt so strong and able to go through anything, but ever since I remembered who I am — I can’t stop thinking about it, Fenrir. I am literally a goddess trapped in a dying body. Powerless. Useless.”

“Don’t say that!” He cupped her chin, lifting it up so that she looked at him. “You are the most precious—”

“I know, I know... but hear me out.” She glanced at the stars. “Vidar is at the peak of his power. Joran hates us both; you are still banished from the divine realm and unable to replenish your power the normal way, and I have nothing to offer in this fight. All I know is how to cut throats discretely or how to slip poison into someone’s cup. But all my battle skills are worth nothing when I am a mortal fighting gods.”

“I don’t want you to fight at all,” he confessed, and she placed her palms on his chest.

“Fenrir, I know, but I can’t simply watch you fighting alone!” She rolled her eyes, which only caused his lips to curl.

“I am not done talking, Astrea.” Fenrir gave her shoulders a light squeeze. “I don’t want you to fight, but it was always your destiny. Don’t you see? Every event was connected to you, and I am afraid you will be the one to end all this.”

He pulled her into his chest and locked his arms around her, kissing the top of her head.

“And when you are there, I will be by your side,” he assured her.

“I just hope no one I love suffers in the process.” Astrea gave him a half-smile, which faded almost instantly.

She lifted her head to the sky peppered with stars, and closed her eyes for just a moment, opening them almost instantly in shock.

“Gideon!” she screamed, searching for the king of the Western Lycan Kingdom. “Gideon!”

She found him next to the ambulance, helping people when their eyes locked, and he dropped everything, marching towards her.

“What is it?” His brows were knitted together.

“Where is Ria now?” She asked bluntly. “Can you check?”

Gideon’s eyes lost focus for a moment as he tried to mind-link his wife, but very soon, they were back to normal, a shadow running over his eyes as he couldn’t reach her.

“Can you call her over the phone?” Astrea suggested.

Gideon did not question her even for a moment. Riannon had to stay behind to help at the improvised first aid centre in the main Convocation building. In the first minutes, they all fell into chaos, and she helped them to organise everything effectively to accept the first wounded survivors. After all, the closest hospital was also destroyed. On top of that, the Queen of the West was supposed to watch over the members of the Convocation and alert the group if they had to return urgently.

Gideon waited for her to reply, but the call went unanswered. He dialled again, the wrinkle between his brows deepening as he waited.

“I am returning!” He announced, placing his phone back in his pants. “Even if we are suddenly too far from each other for a mind link, it’s not like Riannon to not pick up her phone when I call.”

Astrea cast an anxious look at Fenrir.

“We will go with you,” she announced, and he nodded in agreement.

They did not find Riannon in the emergency medical centre she created just hours ago to help the Southerners. Gideon’s roar shuttered the walls when their designated room also appeared to be empty.

Astrea felt her stomach churn.

“It cannot be good,” she muttered to Fenrir, hoping the Western King did not hear her.

“We need to confront Vidar and Joran,” her beloved laced their fingers together. “If she is missing, it’s definitely one of them.”

“If one hair falls from my wife’s head, the explosion would be the least of their problems!” Gideon growled, his eyes glowing golden.

“Listen,” Astrea stepped forward to reason with him, “I understand your feelings. I really do, but this is exactly what they want. This is all a game for them. They already made the North look bad, and I am afraid this may be the West’s turn. Don’t fall into this trap and support their narrative. We will get her back. I promise.”

“And if they hurt her?” The King bared his teeth, barely able to hold his wolf back.

“If they hurt her, you will have no time to do anything because I will kill them first. Whatever that costs me!” She felt bloodthirsty as fury rose in her chest after she locked her eyes with her brother-in-law. “No one touches my sister and stays alive!”

“It’s a deal then,” Gideon clenched his jaw, offering her his hand, which she shook firmly.

“O-kay,” Fenrir watched them both with concern. “How about I speak when we get in there?”

“You can speak as much as you like,” Gideon cut him off, “but I am getting my wife back today.”

They entered the Alpha Convocation Hall and found them all in the same places at the long table, discussing something vigorously. Vidar stood near a large interactive screen and sneered when they walked in.

“Welcome,” he greeted the group. “We were about to invite you in any way.”

“Excuse us,” Fenrir strolled in, offering Astrea the seat at the head of the table just like the last time. The seat that was supposed to belong to the High Chancellor. “We were busy getting your people from under the rubble of destroyed buildings while you were — here.”

Astrea glanced around quickly, noticing that Joran was missing.

“The Southern Lycan Republic thanks you for your help in this time of need,” Vidar smirked, bowing his head respectfully. “However, a few things were brought to our attention that we like to discuss.”

“Where is my wife?” Gideon gritted his teeth, clenching his fists so tight his knuckles turned white.

“The last time I checked, she was helping the survivors.” Vidar shrugged his shoulders as if it wasn’t a big deal.

“Well, she is not there anymore,” Astrea chimed in, hoping Gideon could hold it together. “Her room is also empty.”

“It’s a bit chaotic right now because we were under a terrorist attack,” Vidar tried to downplay it, “but I am sure she is safe and sound. After all, the Queen of the West has so many people who care about her. I assure you, no one disappears in the South without a trace.”

It wasn’t really a threat, but it sure sounded like one to Astrea. Vidar knew about their connection.

Forrest cleared his throat, typing something on his phone. “I am sending my people to look for her right now.”

“Now, if you will allow me to continue,” Vidar changed the image on the interactive screen to showcase the projected Northern flag on one of the buildings in the capital. “Since it’s a direct attack of the North on the Republic, I suggest—”

“One picture doesn’t prove that the North was behind the attack!” Astrea interrupted his undoubtedly well-prepared speech. “They are obviously being set up!”

“I have to agree here,” one of the women at the table interjected. “It’s not enough to accuse them.”

“They literally have an army on our doorstep!” a councilman with grey hair added, rubbing his thick silver moustache. “We can’t ignore that.”

“But they didn’t attack, did they?” Fenrir leaned over the back of his chair. “Now would have been the perfect moment to attack, when the country is already devastated by this — disaster. Yet the North army didn’t move.”

“Well, this is simply because we took countermeasures!” Vidar said in a smug tone, adjusting the lapels of his jacket. “And thanks to those measures, I have concrete proof that we are under a deliberate attack of the North.”

Astrea tensed in her seat. This couldn’t be good.

“What do you mean, Vincent?” Forrest furrowed his brows.

“Let me demonstrate!” He clicked his fingers, and the side door swung open, letting in two men dragging a woman dressed in red. They threw her to the ground in front of everyone, her ebony black hair covering her face.

Every muscle in Astrea’s body strained because she did not need to see that face. She knew exactly who that was.

“Meet the witch behind the atrocities performed by the Northern Lycan Kingdom!” Vidar lifted his chin, smug at his little victory. “Salome Gray.”

AUTHOR'S NOTE: If you are new to my work, it's time to join Marissa Gilbert's Reading Circle group on Fa.c.e.book . A new giveaway will start very soon, and you don't want to miss it. Join now!