

Chapter 64 - The Alpha God's Luna

Joran was storming through the halls in the direction of the Convocation Hall, knocking a man off his feet on his way and making dozens of papers fly in all directions.

Usually, he would have stopped to fix his mistake and looked charming while he did it, but now... Now, he did not care about his perfect reputation anymore and had more important things to do.

After all, he was out for blood!

He was ready to knock the doors out when they opened in his face, and fellow Alpha Convocation members started walking out, most avoiding his gaze as if they had done something wrong.

Instinctively, he already knew.

“Where have you been?” A member of his inner circle seethed and walked past him, hitting his shoulder on the way.

Joran couldn’t care less. There was only one person he wanted to see now.

“Late as always!” Vidar sneered at him, making his fists clench in response. “Thanks to your incompetence, I am now officially the High Chancellor. And my first order was announcing the war against the Northern Lycan Kingdom.”

Although that silent prick was clearly behind everything, he still wasn’t the one who betrayed him.

“Congrats! You get to witness and hide in one more war!” Joran didn’t grace him with as much as one look, walking into the hall and seeing his target still in his chair with his eyes closed.

Betrayal wasn’t easy for Forrest Romero.

“You fucking traitor!” Joran was next to him in the blink of an eye, grasping his neck with enough force to make it hurt but not enough to kill him. Not yet.

Pinning him against the wall, he watched the southern Lycan struggle against his grip.

“Did you think I wouldn’t find out?” He lifted him so high that Forrest’s legs did not touch the floor anymore, using almost his full strength.

He trusted that man. Not entirely, but even the drops of trust he gave him were priceless.

“Because of you—” the dragon couldn’t finish that sentence. If he said that out loud, it would be real. “I lost Bjorn!”

“Just... because... you care about that one,” Forrest gritted his teeth, his breathing laboured as he grew his claws and pierced the dragon’s arm, struggling to get free, “doesn’t mean... you are suddenly... a good person and in the... right!”

“The audacity!” The Serpent scoffed, throwing him across the room and watching the muscular body knock out chairs on its way. The dragon shook his hand, healing the claw wounds like it was nothing.

To his credit, Forrest was back on his legs in seconds. He had nothing to fight against him but still took a battle stance.

This was going to be fun!

“Don’t blame me when so many suffer because of your actions!”

“You’d better shut up while you still have your tongue!” Joran took a slow, lazy step towards him.

“Or what? You are going to kill me?” Forrest let out a low chuckle, narrowing his eyes. A bruise was already forming on his sharp caramel cheekbone, and his lower lip was bleeding.

Jordan’s jaw flexed. “You are going to die either way. I don’t tolerate betrayal.”

“Why?” Forrest arched his brow. “You betrayed your brother, didn’t you? You aren’t exactly a moral compass to judge me!”

“Don’t compare us! We are not the same!”

“Yeah, I don’t take children from their parents and don’t turn them into my pawns! Seriously, Jor, you were nowhere to be found, and what was I supposed to do when a god approached me?! It wasn’t exactly a request!”

“You could have warned me! You could have lied to him!”

“Lied to him and get killed for you?” Forrest shook his head. “And who will take care of the county, then? You? Him?”

Joran did not respond to that. He did not give a damn about the country, and they both knew it.

“There is always a way!” The Serpent’s eyes glowed as he awakened the magic inside him, that ancient part that was the most powerful and did not require any stolen gifts or beads.

“For you — maybe,” Forrest rubbed his swollen cheek, ready to fight until his last breath. “For someone like me—unlikely! I can’t fight gods on my own! How long will a powerless lycan like me last?!”

A smirk curled onto Joran’s lips.

“Is it power that you want, Forrest?” He stepped towards the man, but Romero held his ground, brows furrowed. He knew he met the most dangerous predator in his life, and if he tried to escape, it would only be worse. “I’ll give you power!” the dragon god’s fingers clenched around Forrest’s neck again as magic illuminated everything around them. Blinding and all-consuming force filled every cell of the lycan’s body, burning it and replacing it.

Changing it.

“Since I lost a Champion, I need a replacement!” The words were clearly a threat. “I will give you the most powerful gift, Forrest! Enjoy!”

“No!” the wolf tried to struggle as much as he could, but it proved useless as immense pain overpowered him, submitting his whole being and breaking him.

Forrest’s screams echoed through the halls and corridors, making people stop and wonder what was happening until a dazzling array of light illuminated everything around them. Time seemed to stand still for mere seconds as the burst of magical energy consumed everything and everyone.

And when it was over, no one could remember why they paused in their tracks and what happened mere seconds ago.

Joran’s revenge was done.

Astrea and Gideon reached the Archives when the flash of light made a chill crawl down the Dragonfly’s spine. Gasping, she looked around, quickly realising that people had already forgotten about the occurrence and went on with business as if nothing had happened at all.

She knew that trick and looked at the Western King by her side, who didn’t seem to notice anything either, to confirm it. It was a typical reaction for a mortal, and only now had Astrea realised that she could see those little divine manipulations before but never really questioned them, assuming Joran wanted her to know when he used magic.

A part of her hoped that right now her Teacher and Vidar were kicking the life out of each other. This would have made things so much easier for them.

“What is it? Gideon caught her worried gaze.

“Nothing.” She shook her head, thinking that Joran could take care of himself. She had to concentrate on finding her sister. “We need to look in the property section. Since Vidar uses his identity as a Lothgar family member, Riannon is likely hidden nearby in one of their residences. The Republic has stringent laws. Every document has to have a copy in the Archives. So, all we need is to find the registration forms on what belongs to them in the capital, and we will have a shot at finding her.”

“Lead the way,” Gideon nodded, following her. She could tell this was not easy on him, but at the same time, he was holding up surprisingly well.

“Why do you think she didn’t warn us?” The words slipped her tongue before she realised it.

“Riannon—” The King rubbed the bridge of his nose. “Ria is the Moon Goddess’ champion. There are things she doesn’t tell, even me. Things that I don’t need to know. She only reveals what is of use to the ones who listen, and if she didn’t warn us, that means she either didn’t know or—”

“She believes we didn’t need to know,” Astrea concluded. “Does it mean that she is safe?”

They finally found the section of shelves starting with L and turned that way, seeing rows and rows of documents.

“Not necessarily.” A shadow ran over Gideon’s face. “If she believes her death is for the greater good, she would go with it. Of that, I am sure. And while Riannon makes the world a better place, my task is to ensure that nothing bad happens to her. As you can see, I failed.”

“You didn’t fail!” She shot him a reproachful gaze. “I don’t know if you noticed, but it’s not exactly a levelled playfield here.”

She was scanning the titles on the folders as she went. What they were looking for had to be somewhere here. In the meantime, Fenrir went to the underground level with Warg to get Salome out. Although they decided not to make a scene in front of the Alpha Convocation, there was no way they were leaving one of their own behind.

“I know,” Gideon admitted. “And I know what you are, in case you are wondering.”

“Can you tell me?” She let out a stifled chuckle that still echoed through the rooms with high dome ceilings. “I am not so sure myself what I am anymore.”

“You’ll figure it out soon,” Gideon assured her and paused briefly, a perplexed expression painting his face. “Can you promise me something, Astrea?”

“What is it?” She had to move to the next row, as she still didn’t find the correct folder.

“Save Riannon, please,” he said, a noticeable quiver in his tone. “Our son — He won’t survive without her.”

Her body went rigid hearing this, and she met his gaze, sensing that there was more than what he was telling her.

“So pitiful.” The snarky voice behind their backs made them turn on their heels and face Vidar, leaning against one of the tall white columns with his hands in his pockets. “Don’t worry, the blonde Queen is safe and sound. She is my guest, after all.”

A growl emerged through the halls.

“You got what you wanted,” Gideon seethed. “Give me my wife back now!”

“That does not depend on me.” The God of Vengeance pushed off the column and sauntered towards them, eyes fixated on Astrea.

Gideon stepped in front of her. “Don’t put the responsibility on a woman.”

“Boy,” Vidar’s eyes darkened, almost becoming black. “I am not talking to you.”

“Too bad,” the western king bared his teeth, “because I am not going anywhere.”

“Interesting.” Vidar’s lips curled into a smirk. “I wonder if you are simply stupid or don’t know who you are talking to right now.”

“Oh, I know,” Gideon flexed his jaw. “I am talking to a piece of—”

“All right!” Astrea squeezed between them, trying to distance her brother-in-law from her mate. “Let’s not go down that road, okay?”

Vidar and Gideon drilled each other’s skulls with their glares for a few more moments before the God of Vengeance lazily shifted his gaze to her.

“As I was saying, the Queen’s freedom is up to you, my love.”

Astrea cringed at the words, but Riannon was more important.

“What do you want?” She pursed her lips, waiting for the worst. And the God of Vengeance did not disappoint.

“I just want you to make a choice,” he taunted.

“Between you and Fenrir?” She arched a brow.

“No,” he interrupted her, fixing the lapels on his coat. “Between the Queen of the Western Kingdom and that girl... Nikki, was it?”

A shudder coursed through her body. Until now, she was sure Nikki was safe in the penthouse with Bjorn, where they left them.

“Yeah,” Vidar smirked, enjoying her reaction. This was precisely what he counted on. “It’s your real sister versus a chosen one.”

Gideon snarled, ready to charge at the man who would inevitably kill him, and Astrea grasped his hand, squeezing it as tight as she could to bring him back to his senses.

“What did you do to them? Where are they?” Her heart was racing.

“They are in my safe houses.” Vidar got a bent folder from the inner pocket of his black cashmere coat. “And both the addresses are right here.”

She stepped towards him, and he shook his head as a warning.

“Not so fast!” The deity sneered. “I decided that when you are back in Asgard, you need a friend there too. And there is only one way for a mortal to get to Asgard—”

The colour drained from her face.

“Don’t!” she warned him, growing her claws on an instinct. If it had been anybody else, she would have torn him to pieces.

“Choose one to get back to her life and one to join the gods!” Vidar grinned at her, maliciously enjoying all this.

“I will not choose!” Astrea pursed her lips. How could she? Both women were too important to her. Riannon was her sister by blood, but Nikki... she spent years with her as the only family she had.

“Then I will kill both,” Vidar promised, and she knew he would keep this word.

“Why would you want any of them in Asgard?” She gave him a withering glance.

“To help you with your choice, of course.” He couldn’t hold back his arrogance. “As well as with your life when you are finally where you belong — by my side.”

“You mean to blackmail me?” she scoffed bitterly.

“We don’t need to say that ugly word.” The God of Vengeance waved the folder before them, and Gideon charged, trying to get to it, shifting into his royal lycan form on his way to give himself a chance. Fenrir had already blessed him, and his magic was igniting inside. However, Vidar blocked his attack effortlessly and sent him flying across the room, knocking dozens of shelves with documents on his way.

Astrea decided against angering the spiteful god more and kept standing, eyes locked with her divine mate.

“That was rude,” he commented. “Now, do you have to be so stubborn? You can’t avoid the inevitable! This was always how it was going to end, and you are lucky I am allowing you to take a friend with you.”

“I’ll go if you—”

“No!” He interrupted her, raising his hand. His tone changed to a much colder one. “The time you could have asked me anything is long gone! I am offering you the Asgardian crown and your divine status back, and you are still playing hard to get!”

She pursed her lips. Arguing with him was useless if this was what he was thinking.

“I am not playing at all,” she tried to reason, but he wasn’t interested in listening to her.

“Choose, Astrea! The Queen or the Firstborn.” The words were soaked in venom. “I am counting. Five!”

The Dragonfly hectically tried to think of what to do. If she tried fighting him, both women would be dead. But he wasn’t letting her save a life. He was making her the executor of one of her two closest people.

“Four!” Vidar lifted his chin higher, looking down at her. He was letting her know that her memories did not give her any advantage. Between them two, he was a god and she was a mortal. They were no equals.

“Three!”

Panic struck her. She loved Nikki so much. She tried to save her all the time. Nikki was so young. She still had to experience so much. The poor girl barely got any taste of life.

“Two!” The God of Vengeance flexed his fingers, ready to summon magic and destroy what was so dear to her.

Gideon was running towards them, but she knew it would be for the best if he didn’t reach them in time.

Riannon was lucky to have him. Their love already was a source of so many modern legends. And their son... The family Astrea hasn’t had a chance to meet yet.

Right... Ria had a son. And she was a Queen of a nation. If she died, it would affect so many people.

Guilt prickled her for thinking about all this. Those were human lives!

“One!” Vidar’s smile turned into a menacing one as he raised his hand.

“Riannon!” Astrea screamed, covering her face with her hands. The pain washed over her as tears streamed down her cheeks. “Let Riannon go!” She repeated the words, glaring at her mate. “Are you happy now?”

“Not really,” Vidar stepped closer and cupped her face, running his finger over her wet cheek and then licking it slowly in front of her eyes. “But I will be soon.”

He threw the folder at Gideon, and his eyes shifted back to his beautiful mate.

“Go!” Astrea said to the lycan king. “I’ll be fine.”

Gideon hesitated. Leaving her alone was a horrible thing to do, but at the same time, it wasn’t like he could have been of much help when deities were fighting.

“This one will be fine, but anger me again, and your wife will be not!” The deity’s eyes threw daggers at him, and the lycan clenched his fists so hard his knuckles turned white.

“I am almost done here, Astrea,” Vidar said, pulling her closer. “The mortals are going to war, and they will end this world and destroy each other for me. Just the way the Moonrise Kingdom had already done once. Only with the weapons and powers they have now it will be quicker and more effective. At least a thousand years will have to pass for this realm to thrive again after I am done with them. Thanks to that, gods will replenish their powers, and I will rule them as their Saviour forever.”

“Why are you telling me all this?” She scowled at him, trying to distance herself, but he did not let her. It was unbelievable how much she hated him, yet felt all the tingles and sparks of the mate bond simultaneously. It was the cruellest form of a curse and the sole reason for him pursuing her.

“I am tired of waiting,” he confessed, studying her face. “I want to hear the words from you, but I don’t want to waste any more of our time.”

She swallowed the lump that formed in her throat.

“Therefore, I want to speed up your choice-making process too.”

Astrea didn’t realise what he was doing until it was too late. Vidar leaned down to her face, his palm curling around her neck and down to the back of her neck and shoulder.

Piercing pain rippled through her, and she screamed so loudly that Fenrir heard her underground, his heart hitching at the sound.

She finally grew her claws and slashed his face, making the God of Vengeance let go of her, shocked by her actions.

Blood dripped from his cheek to the floor as Astrea fell to her knees, feeling unwell.

“Too late!” the deity hissed, looking behind her. It took all Astrea’s strength to follow his gaze as searing agony coursed through her veins, draining her of power at the same time.

Through her blurry vision, she noticed a dull glow right next to her, moving hectically. She narrowed her eyes to see it better, gasping when she realised it was a small glowing dragonfly.

“What did you do?” She whispered, her fingers moving to her back to feel the scorched skin where her dragonfly tattoo used to be just a moment ago.

“It was about time,” Vidar said coldly, watching her kneeling on the ground. She didn’t even remember how she fell. “It’s your last life, anyway. I decided to make it shorter to speed up your decision-making. After all, this dragonfly held you in this world, Astrea. Now, without Freyja’s gift, you have days, if not hours. Your connection with the dragonfly is severed.”