

Sun and Moon, Lord and Lady

by WaterSinger

When a land falls away from the true worship of The Light, the Sun Lord and Moon Lady each send an emissary to save the troubled land. But even divine emissaries can have troubles getting along.

Moon Lady

Chapter 1 of 4

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Chapter One ~ Moon Lady

In her mind Isadora walked the path to the moon. She did not slow, nor look from side to side to see the beautiful scenery, as she had the first time she had made this journey. Instead, her entire focus was on the end of the path; the crystal arch that had just risen over the horizon. The moon was close now, no longer the snow-white goddess that it seemed to be from the ground, but a dusty grey desert, pockmarked with crevasses and caverns.

As she stepped off of the path onto the moon's surface, a faint tingling sensation ran through Isadora, and she knew that the Moon Lady had been summoned. She made her way to a crystalline boulder, where she draped herself comfortably and prepared to wait. Minutes faded into hours, all with a sense of not really having passed. Isadora's eyes began to droop, and she lowered her guard slightly.

At that moment she heard the sound of horses galloping and leapt to her feet, readying herself for the arrival of the Moon Lady. The horses came into view, four of them, bright silvered white, with their heads tossing, manes and tails flying. Behind them they pulled a carriage that matched their colours, made of silver so bright it seemed white. The windows were covered with white velour, masking the identity of the passenger.

The carriage slowed then halted directly in front of Isadora, the horses throwing their heads up, though there were no bits in their mouths. The door to the carriage swung open slowly, and the Moon Lady emerged, descending to the dusty ground with liquid grace. Her vestments matched both carriage and horses, the silks whiter than snow embroidered with silver threads that seemed to emit a light all of their own. The small pendant hanging at the centre of the Lady's forehead did produce light, a soft glow that made the Lady's silver eyes luminescent. Although the Moon Lady's hair was covered by a veil of white lace so fine that it was opaque, Isadora knew it to be a silver matching the Lady's eyes.

Without a moment's pause Isadora dropped to the ground in a deep curtsy, spreading her white skirts about her. Ever did she find herself matching the Lady in her apparel, although the reason for this was not apparent. Perhaps the Lady sought to make her feel that she was an equal. If this was indeed Her goal, it was as of yet unattained, for Isadora could never feel an equal to such perfection, no matter her clothing.

"You know why you have been called, Isadora." The Lady's tone brooked no argument; Her statement was absolute.

"Indeed I do, My Lady Soma." The Moon Lady insisted that Isadora use one of her names, and she could do naught but obey. She had chosen one of the least common in order to maintain the formal balance she thought precious. "You have summoned me to do your task however simple or difficult it may be." Isadora was more comfortable with these words; they were ritual and fit neatly into formality. The Lady nodded Her head in graceful acceptance of her vassal's loyalty and, with a gesture of Her hand, bade Isadora rise.

"My Lord has brought to my attention the failure of one of our lands to pay proper homage to both Himself and I. It is to this land that I send you now, as my brave servant. Your task is to bring them back to the light of our worship, however you may choose to do so. With every step further from us they take, they fall deeper under the shadow of heresy. Do what you may to save them before they are lost to just cause forever. You will have a companion in this endeavour, the emissary of My Lord; a young man who is in his way as deeply in the service of me as you are in mine and that of My Lord. Go now, back to your dreaming self, and remember this when you awake. You must save this land and bring it back to righteousness, whatever the cost." Isadora curtsied again, dropping down as far as she could and sweeping her skirts as wide as possible. The Lady reached out one of Her fair hands and touched Isadora gently in the centre of her forehead, just where Her pendant sat on Her own forehead. Warmth radiated out from Her touch, relaxing Isadora's mind as surely as a sleeping draught.

"May thou walk forever in The Light, and may all thy services in Its name be aided by both Lord and Lady Above." As the Moon Lady pronounced the customary blessing Isadora's awareness began to fade. She had only enough time to reply; "In the Name of the Lord and Lady of Light, I will act as They would have me," before she withdrew from the moon. She walked the path back down to her sleeping body in contemplation, for this was the first task the Moon Lady had given her that she was not prepared for. To turn an entire land back to the true worship of The Light, that was a monumental task, and it would require much skill and care. She only hoped that she and the Lord's emissary could rise to the occasion.

Sun Lord

Chapter 2 of 4

When a land falls away from the true worship of The Light, the Sun Lord and Moon Lady send an emissary each to save the troubled land. But even divine emissaries can have troubles getting along.

Chapter Two ~ Sun Lord

Alfrothul responded to the summons from his Lord by secreting himself in his chambers with orders that he was not to be disturbed until he emerged, even for the greatest of emergencies. Once alone, he closed his eyes and allowed himself to enter the meditative state where he would approach the sun. His mind slipped sideways, and he was walking the path to the sun, casually ignoring the wonders on either side that had so transfixed him the first time he had come this way. Now his attention was riveted upon the end of the path and the fiery arch that lay there. He was nearing the sun, no longer a faceless yellow ball but a field of fire that ran every imaginable colour.

He stepped off the fire path, feeling the tingle that meant that the Sun Lord had been alerted of his presence. Alfrothul simply made his way to a mound of fire where he sat, unaffected by the heat, waiting for the Lord. Slowly the minutes passed by, fading into hours without seeming to pass by in reality. He began to grow weary, his eyes drooping and his guard dropping.

He leapt to his feet at the sound of horses galloping, readying himself for the arrival of the Sun Lord. They rounded the bend, golden manes flying and golden coats shining, all four of them perfectly matched. They towed a carriage of matching colours, all gold. Gold drapes covered the windows, hiding the passenger.

The carriage slowed and halted in front of Alfrothul. The horses snorted and tossed their heads, although no bits were in evidence. Slowly the door swung open and the Sun Lord descended, moving with absolute grace as he stepped onto the fiery ground. He was dressed to match his carriage, in silks of golden brilliance embroidered with gold thread. A small golden pendant hanging in the centre of the Lord's forehead emitted a gentle glow, matching those of His eyes. The Lord's golden hair worked perfectly with his skin of nearly the same colour.

Alfrothul bowed deeply without hesitation, noting his clothes. He was ever dressed the same as the Lord, to what purpose he could not tell. It was perhaps that the Lord sought to make him feel as though he were an equal. If His goal was indeed this, He fell short, for Alfrothul would never feel equal to his perfection, regardless of what he wore.

"You are aware of why you have been called, Alfrothul." The Lord's words were incontestable; He spoke truth.

"I am indeed, My Lord Atid." The Lord insisted that Alfrothul use his name; in order to maintain the balance he found dear, Alfrothul had chosen one of the least common. "You have summoned me to complete a task, however simple or difficult it may be." These words were formalities, reassuring Alfrothul as he spoke them. The Lord nodded. His head graciously in acceptance of his vassal's loyalty and, with a simple gesture of His hand, bade Alfrothul rise.

"My Lady and I have noticed the failure of one of our lands to pay us proper homage. It is there that I send you now, as my brave warrior. You must bring them back to the true worship, however you may wish to do so. Every step they take further from us they fall deeper into the shadow of heresy. Do what you can to save them, before they are lost to just cause forever. You will have an accomplice in this fight, the emissary of My Lady; a young woman who is as deeply in service as you are in mine and that of My Lady. Go now, back to your true body, and remember this when you awake. You must save this forsaken land and return it to righteousness, whatever the cost." Alfrothul bowed again, bending over as far as possible. The lord reached out one powerful hand and touched Alfrothul in the centre of the forehead, exactly where the pendant sat upon His own forehead. Warmth radiated from his touch, soothing Alfrothul as surely as any draught.

"May thou walk forever in The Light, and may all thy services in Its name be aided by both Lord and Lady above." As the Sun Lord gave the customary blessing, Alfrothul's awareness began to fade. "In the Name of the Lord and Lady of Light, I will act as They would have me," he had time to reply before he withdrew from the sun. He walked the path back down to his meditating body in silence, contemplating his first task from the Lord that he was not ready for. Turning an entire land back to the true worship of The Light was a monumental task, to say the least, and would require much skill and care. He only hoped that he and the Lady's emissary could rise to the occasion.

~~~~~ A/N: I know this chapter seems a lot like the last one, but there is a reason for that!!! It's supposed to show how similar Alfrothul and Isadora are, and you'll see why that's important later. Hope everyone is enjoying it.

## Isadora

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#### Chapter Three - Isadora

Rough hands shook Isadora awake as she returned from her meeting with the Moon Lady. She struggled fiercely out of her stupor, slapping the hands away with more force than necessary.

"Easy there, Isa, no need t' be pushy. Just wakin' you up, s'all. Lady 'bove, but you're snappy in t' mornin'." Miliani wandered away to wake the other servants, muttering to herself. Isadora sat up with care, her head passing below the ceiling by a few sparse inches. She rolled out of her bunk and seized her grey cotton dress, pulling it over her head with a minimum of movement. She tied back her long black hair with a strip of worn leather and, slipping her rough wooden shoes onto her feet, clumped down the stairs from the servant's dormitory to the mess hall directly below.

There, she seized a wooden bowl and spoon from the drying trays and went to line up behind those who had been ready more quickly. Most, like Isadora herself, were dark skinned with black hair and dark eyes, although there were a few who looked more like the masters. Those were the servants taken when their lands were warring with those of the masters, and they were generally given the higher-ranking jobs. Isa didn't know where her ancestors had come from; rumour had it that her people had been brought from a land far away across the sea, but she had never met any who knew of this mythical place.

"Isa, wait up!" The dark woman turned in time to duck out of the way of an enthusiastic hug from her younger brother.

"Julen!" she snapped at him, drawing a few glances that quickly slipped away in seeing who it was. "I've told you before not to run in the mess. You could slip and hurt yourself or someone else!" The boy-and he was still a boy for all of his fifteen szen-made a half-hearted attempt to look like he was apologetic, but it was ruined by the wicked grin he wore.

"I don't know why you're so uppity now that you've passed eighteen szen, Isa," he said as he slipped into the line beside her. His dark eyes sparkled with barely contained mirth. "After all, it's not like you've tied the veil with anyone yet-no one's expecting you to act like a wife or anything."

"Whether or not I've tied the veil is not what we're discussing here, Julen," she said, pinching his ear lightly. "What we're talking about is proper behaviour. If Mama or Papa had seen that act, they would have whaled you, fifteen szen or not. You know they don't hold with that sort of foolery." The boy looked down at his feet, a barely discernable blush mantling his dark cheeks.

"Ayah, Isa. I'll be good." She smiled at him.

"Just stay out of trouble. I'd be the last to ask you to be an angel like Harlai there." She made a wide gesture in the direction of another boy, this one slightly lighter in skin. Julen's mouth twisted in a slight grimace. None of the boys particularly liked Harlai, branding him as too much of a good person. Sadly, their analysis of the boy was correct-he would report even his own parents if he thought they were doing wrong.

She and Julen took seats together once they were served their morning bowl of thick stew. Isa tried every morning to identify the meat in the stew; today she was relatively sure it was beef, as opposed to the usual venison. She savoured each mouthful, knowing they would not be fed until the noon meal. The servants ate well, but sometimes she wished she could just have that bit extra so that she didn't get so anticipatory for the next meal. Still, at least I do get enough to eat, she thought. I could be in a much worse situation.

"Isa, you're on clean-up duty today, 'right, hon?" Miliani asked as she passed their table. Isadora nodded to the older woman then proceeded to scrape her bowl with the chunk of dark grain bread they were given with their stew. The bread was incredibly filling, and today she saved a small piece to munch on during her ten-minute morning break.

"Oh well," she sighed under her breath, tucking the bread into the pocket of her dress. "I suppose it's on to another day of work; at least until the Lady calls me to meet with the Lord's emissary." And, standing up and taking her dishes with her, she headed out into the kitchen to wash dishes.

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A/N; If any of you have read Alexander Solzhenitsyn's classic One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich you'll kind of get the meal thing. Don't worry; the servants are treated much better than poor Shukhov. I wouldn't do that to our heroine...or would I?!?!?!

## Alfrothul

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#### Chapter Four-Alfrothul

Alfrothul opened his eyes to the blinding light of the noon sun shining through the window of his room. He blinked quickly to adjust his vision to the brightness then swung his legs over the side of his bed and stood up, allowing the silk sheets to drop from his body. He stretched indolently, flexing each hardened muscle in turn. Long szen of battle training had given him those muscles, along with the scars that ran along the outside of either arm from the wrists to the elbows. He remembered that fight vividly: a training session become deadly when his opponent had pulled live blades. Alfrothul had emerged with scars; his opponent had lost his life.

"Sir, are you awake?" a soft voice called through the door. He grunted, knowing that his maid would hear it and proceeded to unlock the door for her. She scurried in, a little black woman in the grey servants' uniform, and rushed to throw back the curtains to the remaining covered window. Alfrothul narrowed his eyes as yet more light streamed into the room.

"Blasted sunlight," he muttered, not really meaning it. "Hurts like a knife in the eyes." The maid gave a soft reassuring noise, a blatant attempt at soothing him. He sighed gently, relaxing with a conscious effort. The woman moved around in the background, although his ears barely registered the noises she made.

"Alfrothul, my good man," a deep voice boomed, not twenty feet away from the warrior. The owner clapped a heavy hand onto the other man's shoulder, startling him slightly. "Come, get your lazy body out of your rooms and venture outside for once. The day is fine, the birds are singing and the servants are working the fields. Is there anything finer?" Afrothul restrained himself from making any mention of the Sun Lord's charge; if the men of his rank had known the true depth of their warrior lord's dedication to his god they would have been very antagonistic. Instead, he gave the redhead who had spoken a tight smile and turned to look out of the now opened window.

"It does seem like a fine day, Heolostor. Give me a mark at most to wake fully, and I will join you." The man nodded respectfully to Afrothul, who was his commander and, with a sharp turn, left the suite. They had been friends for nearly five szen, even after Afrothul had been appointed commander of his family's armies one szen ago. He was only eighteen when that had happened, but after ten szen of training he had been more capable than many men who were far older than him. Even Heolostor respected his abilities, despite the fact that the older man was half again as old as him.

"And if I am not just the perfect figurehead for them then I do not know what I am," he muttered, feeling slightly hurt. "That's really all they need me for; we haven't had a war in over fifty szen." Sun Lord grant that we never have need for another, he thought silently, not daring to trust it to words. The men under his command were anxious for a battle, clamouring at him every time word came of one some countries away. And every time he managed to hold them back by reasoning that by the time they arrived at the site the battle would be over.

With a slight shaking of his head, Afrothul broke out of his thoughts. He dressed quickly, not noticing that the maid was still in his rooms and, after throwing a light jacket over his shoulders, strode out of his room, heading for the bathing rooms. He washed his face and hands neatly without splashing a single drop of water on his clothes then, with a flick of his fingers to dry them, departed. He marched outside to meet up with Heolostor, the strikes of his boot heels ringing loudly in the silent halls. Not for the first time was he grateful that he was a younger son. His elder brother was cut out to be a lord but Afrothul himself had been far too interested in the fighting arts since his youth to concentrate on the running of a holding. Instead, he had been allowed to indulge in his interest, to the point where his teachers had reported him so proficient that they could teach him no more. In response, Afrothul's father, Lord Irfan, had sent his son to the most prestigious battle training school known for two szen. When said son had returned he had been ready to take charge of his family's warriors, and his father had been happy to oblige. Now Afrothul was known for his training methods and for his battle knowledge, although he had never had to prove their worth.

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A/N; This chapter took me forever because I got hung up on the part just after Heolostor left. Hopefully that doesn't happen again although, knowing me, it will. I think Afrothul and Isadora will meet soon, like in the next two or three chapters.