

A FLESH AND FIRE NOVEL

A
LIGHT
IN THE
FLAME

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JENNIFER L.
ARMENTROUT

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A Light in the Flame
A Flesh and Fire Novel
By Jennifer L. Armentrout

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Book Description

A Light in the Flame
A Flesh and Fire Novel
By Jennifer L. Armentrout

From #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Jennifer L. Armentrout comes book two in her Flesh and Fire series...

The only one who can save Sera now is the one she spent her life planning to kill.

The truth about Sera's plan is out, shattering the fragile trust forged between her and Nyktos. Surrounded by those distrustful of her, all Sera has is her duty. She will do anything to end Kolis, the false King of Gods, and his tyrannical rule of Iliseum, thus stopping the threat he poses to the mortal realm.

Nyktos has a plan, though, and as they work together, the last thing they need is the undeniable, scorching passion that continues to ignite between them. Sera cannot afford to fall for the tortured Primal, not when a life no longer bound to a destiny she never wanted is more attainable than ever. But memories of their shared pleasure and unrivaled desire are a siren's call impossible to resist.

And as Sera begins to realize that she wants to be more than a Consort in name only, the danger surrounding them intensifies. The attacks on the Shadowlands are increasing, and when Kolis summons them to Court, a whole new risk becomes apparent. The Primal power of Life is growing inside her, pushing her closer to the end of her Culling. And without Nyktos's love—an emotion he's incapable of feeling—she won't survive her Ascension. That is if she even *makes* it to her Ascension and Kolis doesn't get to her first. Because time is running out. For both her and the realms.

About Jennifer L. Armentrout

#1 *New York Times* and #1 International Bestselling author Jennifer L. Armentrout lives in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. All the rumors you've heard about her state aren't true. When she's not hard at work writing, she spends her time reading, watching really bad zombie movies, pretending to write, hanging out with her husband, her Border Jack—Apollo, Border Collie—Artemis, six judgmental alpacas, two rude goats, and five fluffy sheep. In early 2015, Jennifer was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, a group of rare genetic disorders that involve a breakdown and death of cells in the retina, eventually resulting in vision loss, among other complications. Due to this diagnosis, educating people on the varying degrees of blindness has become another passion for her, right alongside writing, which she plans to do for as long as she can.

Her dreams of becoming an author started in algebra class, where she spent most of her time writing short stories...which explains her dismal grades in math. Jennifer writes young adult, paranormal, science fiction, fantasy, and contemporary romance. She is published with Tor, HarperCollins Avon and William Morrow, Entangled Teen and Brazen, Disney/Hyperion, Harlequin Teen, and Blue Box Press; and PassionFlix recently made her Wicked series into a feature film. Jennifer has won numerous awards, including the 2020 Goodreads Choice Award in Romance for her adult fantasy, *From Blood and Ash*. She has also written Adult and New Adult contemporary and paranormal romance under the name J. Lynn.

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Acknowledgments from the Author

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Dedication

To you, the reader. Without you, none of this would be possible. Thank
you.

Map



To see a full version of the map, visit <https://theblueboxpress.com/alitfmap/>

Pronunciation Guide

Characters

Aios – a-uh-us
Andreia – ahn-dray-ah
Attes – AT-tayz
Aurelia – au-REL-ee-ah
Baines – baynz
Bele – bell
Dorcan – dohr-can
Dyses – DEYE-seez
Ector – ehktohr
Ehthawn – EE-thawn
Embris – EM-bris
Erlina – Er-LEE-nah
Ernard – ER-nald
Eythos – EE-thos
Ezmeria – ez-MARE-ee-ah
Gemma – jeh-muh
Halayna – ha-LAY-nah
Hanan – hay-nan
Holland – HAA-luhnd
Jadis – JAY-dis
Kayleigh – KAY-lee
Keella – kee-lah
King Saegar – [king] SAY-gar
Kolis – CO-lis
Kyn – kin
Lailah – lay-lah
Lathan – LEY-THahN
Loimus – loy-moos
Madis – mad-is
Maia – MY-ah
Marisol – MARE-i-soul
Mycella – MY-cell-AH
Nektas – NEC-tas
Nyktos – NIK-toes
Odetta – OH-det-ah

Orphine – OR-feen
Peinea – pain-ee-yah
Penellaphe – pen-NELL-uh-fee
Phanos – FAN-ohs
Polemus – pol-he-mus
Rhahar – RUH-har
Rhain – rain
Saion – SI-on
Sera – SEE-ra
Seraphena – SEE-ra-fee-na
Sotoria – so-TOR-ee-ah
Taric – tae-ric
Tavius – TAY-vee-us
Thad – thad
Theon – thEE-awn
Veses – VES-ees

Places

Cauldra Manor – call-drah [manor]
Dalos – day-los
Iliseeum – AH-lee-see-um
Kithreia – kith-REE-ah
Lasania – la-SAN-ee-uh
Lotho – LOW-tho
Massene – ma-see-nuh
Pillars of Asphodel – [pillars of] AS-foe-del
Sirta – SIR-ta
Triton Isles – TRY-ton [Isles]
Vathi – VAY-thee

Terms

Arae – air-ree
benada – ben-NAH-dah
Cimmerian – sim-MARE-ee-in
dakkai – di-ah-kee
eather – ee-thor
graeca – gray-cee
imprimen – IM-prim-en
kardia – CAR-dee-ah
kiyou wolf/wolves – ki-you [wolf/wolves]

meeyah Liessa – MEE-yah LEE-sa
sekya – sek-yah
sparanea – SPARE-ah-nay-ah

Chapter 1



“*You are the heir to the lands and seas, skies and realms. A Queen instead of a King. You are the Primal of Life,*” Nyktos—the Asher, the One who is Blessed, the Guardian of Souls and the Primal God of Common Men and Endings—rasped. Those lips of his that had whispered heated words against my skin and had also spoken cold, brutal truths were now parted. Wide, silver eyes churning with streams of luminous ether—the essence of the gods—fixed on mine. A sort of awe and wonder softened the cold lines of his high, broad cheekbones, his blade-straight nose, and cut jaw.

Wavy, reddish-brown hair fell against golden-bronze cheeks as he lowered himself to one knee, placing his left hand flat on the throne room floor and his right palm over his chest.

Nyktos was *bowing to me*.

I recoiled from him. “What are you doing?”

“The Primal of Life is the most powerful being in all the realms, usurping all other Primals and gods,” Sir Holland said. Except he was no longer the man I once knew as a knight of the Royal Guard of Lasania, or a mere mortal. He was one of the Arae—an actual, godsforsaken *Fate*, neither god nor mortal. Able to see the past, present, and future of all, the Arae weren’t beholden to any Primal Court.

Fates were as terrifying as any Primal, and I couldn’t even begin to count how many times I’d kicked him.

“He is showing you the respect you are owed, Sera,” Holland added as I continued staring at Nyktos.

“But I’m not the Primal of Life.” I stated the obvious.

“You carry the only true embers of life inside you,” Nyktos said, and that deep, softly spoken voice sent a myriad of shivers over my skin. “For all intents and purposes, you *are* the Primal of Life.”

“He speaks the truth.” The goddess Penellaphe drew closer, coming to stand beneath the open ceiling. The star-strewn sky cast a soft glow over her warm, light brown skin. “Denying it isn’t a luxury which can be afforded.”

“But I’m just a mortal—” My lungs felt as if they’d been filled with

tiny holes, and Nyktos was *still* bowing to me. “Can you please stand or sit? Anything other than kneel? It’s really weirding me out.”

Nyktos’s head tilted, sending several strands of hair against his cheek. “You are the *true* Primal of Life, just as my father was. As Holland said, it’s a show of respect.”

“But I don’t des—” I cut myself off, my heart thumping and chest squeezing. The eather in his eyes stilled. “Can you just not do that? Please.”

The Primal rose quickly, the wisps of essence in his eyes brightening so vividly they were almost painful to look upon. He towered over me, his stare seeming to peel away the layers of my very being, seeing...*sensing* what I felt.

I stiffened, my skin becoming hot and prickly. “You’d better not be reading my emotions.”

Nyktos arched a dark brow. “Your accusatory tone is unnecessary.”

“And your response wasn’t a declaration of innocence,” I retorted. Penellaphe’s eyes flared wide.

“No.” His voice had dropped, but it still somehow thundered through me. “It was not.”

“Then don’t do it,” I snapped. “It’s rude.”

Nyktos’s mouth opened, likely to point out that I was the last person who should speak on rude behavior.

“You have never been just a mortal, Seraphena.” Holland stepped in smoothly, just as he’d done dozens of times in the past whenever I’d descended into a rant spiral. “You are the possibility of a future for all.”

He’d said a version of that before during training, but it took on a whole different meaning now. “But I haven’t completed any Culling, and you just said that I would...” Closing my eyes, I didn’t finish the sentence.

Everyone here knew what had been said.

Breathe in. My mortal body and mind wouldn’t be able to handle the power of the embers once I began the Ascension. The only chance I had of surviving wasn’t even a hope. *Hold.* Because it required the blood of the Primal that one of the embers of life belonged to—that and sheer will powered by *love*.

The love of the Primal I’d spent the entirety of my life planning to kill. It didn’t matter that I’d believed it was the only way to save my kingdom.

The irony of it all made me want to laugh, except I was going to die. Likely in less than five months and before I turned twenty-one, taking the last true embers of life with me. The mortal realm would be hit first and the hardest. Eventually, the Rot would spread beyond the Shadowlands to

all of Iliseum.

I exhaled long and slow, just like Holland had taught me many years ago, when everything became too heavy, too much, and the weight of it all choked the air from me. My impending death wasn't something new. I'd always known. Whether I failed or succeeded when it came to fulfilling my destiny, I knew I would die in the process.

But it felt different now.

I'd finally had a taste of being something other than a means to an end, a weapon to be used and then discarded. I'd had a taste of *realness*. I'd finally felt like a fully formed person, not a specter soaked in blood. Not a liar and a monster who could kill without all that much remorse.

But that was who I was underneath it all, and Nyktos now knew that, too. There was no more hiding that truth—or any truths.

My lungs started to burn as tiny bursts of light danced across my vision. The breathing exercises weren't working. A tremor hit my hands, and panic unfurled in my chest. There was no air—

Fingertips touched my cheek. *Warm* fingertips. My eyes flew open, locking on features so finely pieced together I should've known the first time I saw him that he was more than a god. His touch startled me, not only because it was warm instead of shockingly cold as it had been before he took my blood into him, but because I still wasn't used to *touching*. I wasn't sure I ever would be when it had always been so rare that anyone allowed their skin to contact mine.

But he touched me. After everything, Nyktos touched *me*.

"Are you all right?" he asked, his voice low.

My tongue was heavy and useless, having nothing to do with my too-tight chest and everything to do with his concern. I didn't want it. Not now. It was wrong on so many different levels.

Nyktos stepped in close, lowering his head until his lips were mere inches from mine. A shiver followed his hand as he curled his fingers around the nape of my neck. His thumb gently pressed against my wildly thrumming pulse. He tilted my head as if lining up our mouths for a kiss as he'd done in his office before meeting with Holland and Penellaphe. But that would never happen again. He'd told me that himself.

"Breathe," Nyktos whispered.

It was as if he'd compelled the very air itself to enter my body, and it tasted of his scent—citrus and fresh air. The darts of lights cleared, and my lungs expanded with breath. The shaking continued in my hands as his thumb swept across my pulse, now racing for entirely different reasons. He stood so close to me that there was no stopping the flood of memories—

the feel of his mouth against my throat, and his hands on my bare skin. The pain-tinged pleasure of his bite as he fed from me. Him moving *inside* me, creating the kind of pleasure that wouldn't be forgotten and warmed my blood even now.

I'd been Nyktos's *first*.

And he...he would be my *last*, no matter what happened from this point forward.

Sorrow crept in, cooling my heated blood and settling in my chest with a different, thicker kind of pressure. At least I no longer felt as if I couldn't catch my breath.

"She has trouble slowing her heart and breathing sometimes," Holland shared quietly—*and* unnecessarily.

"I've noticed." Nyktos's thumb continued those featherlight sweeps while I inwardly cringed. He probably thought...only the gods knew what he thought.

I didn't want to know.

Face heating, I backed away from Nyktos's touch, hitting the edge of the dais. His hand hovered in midair for a few seconds, and then his fingers curled inward. He dropped his arm as I turned to the raised platform. I focused on the hauntingly beautiful thrones sculpted from massive chunks of shadowstone. Their backs had been carved into large and widespread wings that touched at the tips, connecting the seats. I wiped damp palms against the patches of dried blood on my breeches.

"You are both positive that no one else knows what she is?" Nyktos asked.

"Besides your father? Embris knows the prophecy," Penellaphe answered, referencing the Primal God of Wisdom, Loyalty, and Duty as I pulled myself together. I faced them. This was too important for me to miss while having a mini breakdown. "And so does Kolis. Neither knows more than that."

The eather stirred once more in Nyktos's eyes at the mention of the Primal Kolis, who every mortal—including myself until recently—believed to be the Primal of Life and the King of Gods. But Kolis was the *true* Primal of Death. The one who'd impaled gods on the Rise surrounding the House of Hades just to remind Nyktos that all life was easily extinguished—or so I assumed. And it was a logical assumption. Nyktos's father had been the true Primal of Life, and Kolis had stolen Eythos's embers.

I fought the shudder, thinking over the prophecy Penellaphe had shared. The part about the desperation of golden crowns could be related