

## Chapter 60 We May Begin

It took Roxanne about forty-five minutes to get dressed and organize Lancelot's suitcase, as well as hers. Peter joined in fifteen minutes later, while still making calls and hotel reservations for them, in Greece.

Peter was very hard-working and passionate about his job. And sometimes, Roxanne wondered if she could take on all the responsibilities that he did. But, she would often remind herself that this was temporary, and it was for her good as well. They left the hotel by 9:30am, got to the airport by 10:00am and their flight was scheduled to leave by 10:30am. For the thirty minutes they spent in the waiting room, Roxanne stayed silent. She and Lancelot were not really on talking terms and Peter was still very busy answering Lancelot's calls. So, she was more or less on her own.

Finally, they boarded the plane and Roxanne managed to get a few hours of sleep, before the plane landed and they had to board another limousine again. She had boarded many flights and entered more luxurious cars in the last few days than she had done in her entire life. It was both thrilling and tiring for her.

Athens, the capital city of Ancient Greece was more exciting than she had seen in Greek mythology books and movies. Granted, Zeus wasn't in some palace screwing Medusa and Athena at the same time, but something about the city seemed so magical and breathtaking. If she didn't know

better, her mind would have tricked her into believing that the Greek locals actually did perform magic.

As she fixed her gaze upon the window, she wanted to ask the name of the royal family they would be meeting today, and what business Lancelot would have with them. At least, if she was going to watch another gladiator fight, she had to be more prepared than before. But, when she turned to Lancelot's absentminded gaze and Peter's busy eyes fixed on the laptop on his lap, she decided against it.

She would just have to wait and see for herself.

After what seemed like hours, the vehicle came to a halt in front of a large tower and Roxanne got down from the car after Lancelot and Peter.

The palace, which spread all over the vast expanse of land like a semi-circle, stood tall. From the look of the walls, she could see that it hadn't been polished in at least, 50 years, and she could only wonder why.

Around the palace were tall and dead trees, each looking scarier than the other. The sky above the palace was dark, darker than it had been on the outskirts of the palace.

From the people who walked around in cloaks of different colors, to the guards all dressed in black in front of the palace doors, everything about this place crept her out. What was Lancelot's deal with weird royal families anyway?

"Do you suppose they are in the council meeting already sir?" Peter asked, looking up at Lancelot.

Roxanne recognized it as their first verbal interaction since this morning. Yet, neither of them seemed very excited about it. Her violet orbs danced between their faces. Even Peter lacked his usual cheerful demeanor this morning. Roxanne couldn't help but feel like the two men knew something she didn't.

As they walked to the palace door, a strangely dressed female in a red cloak approached them. She was very tall, and Roxanne knew this because the lady almost shared the same height with Lancelot.

The lady in red bowed before Lancelot.

"Your Highness." She raised her head up and looked over at Peter and then to Roxanne. When her eyes caught Roxanne's, a frown formed on her face.

Roxanne didn't know what to make of this gesture, so she turned away from woman and tried to focus her eyes on more pleasant things.

"The council meeting would begin shortly. We are glad to have you join us so early."

"His grace is punctual in nature," Peter cut in. He wanted to get this meeting done and be out of here as soon as possible. Something about the witches' palace unnerved and seemed to drain his energy out of him, even more than the vampires.

"Of course. Follow me."

The lady in red turned her back to them and led through the large doors, into a dark hallway.

Roxanne wanted to roll her eyes so bad that it hurt.

What was the deal with European palaces and dark and weird hallways anyway? Every palace she had been to since she stepped into this continent seemed to have a secret of its own, a history that was not opened to outsiders such as herself, and it bothered her.

When they got to the front of a large door, at least eleven feet tall, the red lady turned to them, before opening the door in front of her. Peter stepped-in, Lancelot was to go next. However, when Roxanne took one step forward, the lady snapped at her with an even deeper scowl.

"Stop. You're forbidden to step inside."

The disdain in the woman's voice was so obvious, Roxanne felt herself flinch. The stare in the woman's eyes was deadly, sending shivers down Roxanne's spine.

"Wait here for us," Lancelot spoke calmly to her.

She cast him a questioning glare, before forcing a polite smile.

"Of course, Your Grace."

With that, Lancelot stepped into the room and the door was shut firmly in front of Roxanne's face.

Immediately Lancelot and Peter stepped into the room, the witches, all dressed in blood red robes, rose up to chorus their greetings.

Lancelot bowed in courtesy.

The room was built with circular walls, and a high roof. Seven tall pillars built with skull shaped stones were arranged in a straight line, demarcating the council of seven witches, from the throne of the King of Witches, Grand Master Ahab, and his first queen, Diana. To their left, was a silver haired elderly woman, she was the only one who was seated on the floor, with her legs folded beneath her, and her eyes closed.

Her glowing and flowing silver hair, and her black robe told Lancelot one thing; she was the great sorceress of the witches' kingdom. The one who could see into the future and manipulate the past. The one with powers no mortal mouth dared to speak ill of. Athaliah, the great sorceress wasn't powerful, she was power herself.

Lancelot bowed before the king and his queen with greetings.

Ahab, the elderly king and grandmaster of the witches, bowed his head in courtesy as well.

"We appreciate you joining us so early, Prince Lancelot," Ahab spoke aloud. His words were accompanied by his wife's polite smile. Lancelot

looked at them, from what he had heard, Ahab was supposed to have two wives, where could the other one be? He thought.

"Now that the crowned Jewel of the werewolf realm is here..." Athaliah finally spoke. Lancelot could not miss how the room suddenly became quiet, and the way her voice echoed even though she had spoken calmly. When she opened her eyes, they were a shade of glowing red, and they rested on Lancelot.

"...we may begin."

Outside the room, Roxanne continued to pace about, restlessly. She was very uneasy. Everyone who had walked into the room had cast her ugly snares. Roxanne was frustrated! She did not understand why she always got one strange form of reception or the other. Did Americans really irk Europeans that much? If so, they had no reason to worry. Once her three months here are over, she would return to her land, her home.

Behind her, an anxious woman hurried over to the door she was currently standing in front of. When the woman saw her, her senses told her to stop.

Hera, the younger queen of Ahab, stood behind Roxanne, watching her keenly. Her nostrils twitched and her eyes glowed faintly. There was no mistake in the aura around this strange woman, she was definitely human. And from the looks of it, an ignorant one.

The thought of having a human in her kingdom seemed to excite Hera, so she burst out in cheers as she smiled.

"Wow! Wow! Wow!"

The strange voice caused Roxanne to turn sharply, with the slight panic that washed over her. She felt slightly elated when she saw a smiling woman, clad in a black dress and a black cloak. Roxanne's eyes swept through her briefly.

"I am hoping to the goddess that my eyes are not deceiving me."

Roxanne found the woman's enthusiasm strange. She sounded excited, yet very surprised to see her. And Roxanne could swear she had never set her eyes on this woman in her entire life. Her brows narrowed as she leered at the woman.

Hera chuckled and placed her hands on Roxanne's shoulders. Was this human really clueless of where she was?

"Dear, whatever are you doing here?" Only a foolish human would come into the land of witches, Hera thought.

Still puzzled, Roxanne answered the question.

"I am here on a business trip, with Prince Lancelot."

Hera arched an amused brow. Business trip? Is that what she thought this was?

"You know Prince Lancelot?"

"I am his assistant," Roxanne replied, with an air of confidence that Hera wanted to laugh at. This human was really clueless.

"Just that?"

"I do not believe there's anything else I need to know." Roxanne had grown fairly irritated now, and Hera chuckled. "Of course, there certainly isn't."

She moved past the human female, pulled the door open and stepped into the throne room.

When the door closed, all eyes turned to her. Hera giggled with excitement and amusement.

She pulled the hood of her cloak down and managed to flash everyone a smile at once. "My apologies for coming in late."

"Again," Diana snapped.

Still, Hera ignored her older colleague and walked past Lancelot, but not without giving him a courtesy nod.

Immediately her eyes caught Peter's, he was entrapped in her stare. His cobalt blue eyes held hers with an intensity that he had never known before. Her round face was made up of other beautiful and delicate features like her brows, and perked lips.

Hera held the kind of beauty that you wanted to hold and never let go. The type that you wanted to keep away from the jealous eyes of the rest of the world, and in that brief moment, Peter felt the forbidden urge to want to hold her. As she walked past them, Lancelot couldn't help but feel like her long stare was because she had seen Roxanne. He wondered what could be going on behind the walls.

Peter followed Hera with his eyes until she was seated beside her husband, whom she was much younger than.

Athaliah looked around the full room one last time and smiled.

"Now, we can begin." This test was going to be different from the ones she had given to Lancelot's father and the fathers before him. She wasn't going to drive Lancelot to the edge, she was going to push him from the cliff, just to see if he had the endurance of his father.

"We saw your match with the vampire king," she started.

"I was impressed. I did not expect a prince as young as yourself to defeat a supernatural being over 700 years old."

"It was very interesting. It was a pity it had to be so short," Ahab cut in, very pleased with Lancelot's success.

Athaliah cast a knowing look on Lancelot, a widespread grin appeared on her face.

"The same reason it was interesting, was the same reason it ended so soon."

Immediately, Lancelot felt a brief surge of nerves from within him. Of course! She had to know Roxanne was here, she had to know who Roxanne was.

"You are one brave prince, Lancelot, because that would be the only explanation as to why you brought a HUMAN here." She did not yell, but she said the word "human" like it was a taboo.

The King looked at him in shock, Diana shared her husband's sentiment, while Hera wondered what Lancelot had been thinking. The rest of the council murmured.

"But!" Athaliah's voice silence the room once more.

"You are Alpha King, so have it your way. Oh well, you have always been destined to be the Alpha King, even though you were not the first seed. Some unplanned obstacles just got in the way of your destiny..." Her voice stung his ears like a scorpion's bite.

As he made sense of her words, Lancelot's jaw hardened. By "obstacles", he knew she was referring to Bran and it angered him.

Athaliah saw the look on Lancelot's face, the burning rage that surfaced in his eyes. Her smile deepened. One more push, and he'll fall off the cliff, just what she wanted.

"But you are quite the relentless soul, are you not? You got rid of the obstacle without even second thought, and made it look like an accident. Brilliant move..." Her eyes darkened on him.

"Alpha Lancelot Dankworth."

Ziko growled within him. Lancelot felt his blood turn cold with rage, resentment and anger festered in him.

All these years that he had spent in therapy, trying to convince himself that he was not the reason Bran had died, that he would have saved his brother if he had the chance. All these years that he had fought hard to



forgive himself for not being strong enough to save him, this demonic sorceress had managed to pull him back to the beginning, to the root of his PTSD.

He wanted nothing more than to smash her head against the royal seat and watch her blood seep away from her skull.

But, he remembered Eloise words and fought hard to stay calm. Beside him, Peter flinched, he was going to speak but Lancelot held his wrist, signaling for him to be quiet.

He was going to finish this test and come out victorious. He had to.

Athaliah was faintly pleased by his endurance, but she wasn't done yet.

"Word of advice from a sage..." she spoke up again.

"If you continue in the path you're treading, the ground would open up and swallow you along with everything you love." While she warned him, her eyes drifted to the door. Lancelot knew exactly what — or rather, who she was talking about.

Still, he remained quiet and said nothing.

When Athaliah concluded on Lancelot's results, she looked back at him and tilted her head to the side.

"This was a great meeting. But, I'm sure you must be on your way now."

Ahab's eyes moved to find Athaliah. The prince of the werewolves was here, he was supposed to be treated to a feast, and even beautiful maidens before he left. But, Athaliah ignored the king's stare.

She had gotten what she wanted, he was done with what he came here for.

Lancelot had passed the test.

On hearing this, Lancelot fought to keep his fists by his side. He bowed to Ahab and his queens, then to Athaliah.

"I must be on my way now."

"Indeed," she replied.

Without looking at Peter, Lancelot turned on his heels and charged out of the room, while his blood still boiled with rage and the vapor escaped his ears and nose. He wanted so desperately to drive his fists into anything, preferably a wall. But he couldn't do that yet, not now.

Not until he was out of this place.

For now, he had to find other ways to get rid of his evaporating rage, he had to run.