

# The Lycan Princess & the Lethal Potions Wiz

## – Chapter 2 –

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“Who was that?” Reida’s brother, Ken, asked, protectiveness lacing his voice despite being the younger sibling.

“I don’t know. He didn’t give me his name.”

Ken sighed, looking around and dropping a low murmur of dissatisfaction, “This place just gets weirder and weirder.”

Their parents were still stuck in the political chat that Ken felt had *some* intriguing updates, but the young prince had to forgo tuning in when his father gave him the look to watch over his elder sister.

Reida gave her brother an arched scowl. “We’ve only been here for an hour, counting the time we arrived at the teleport station.”

Ken checked the time on his phone. “An hour and six minutes. I still don’t understand why they don’t just plant teleport tubes here.”

“What part of *it-has-to-be-in-the-most-strategic-locations-due-to-the-scarcity-of-materials-and-high-cost-of-maintenance* do you not understand?”

“It’s hard to believe the realm of Incanta is dying in lack of resources and expertise when there are things like...” His eyes wandered and settled on the perfect example. “...those trees. Look at them. We don’t have trees with pink leaves and those...what are those? Those red, dangling things like banana peels.”

“Flowers – louloúdia.”

Ken heaved a sigh. “Weirder and weirder,” he murmured.

“And leaves and flowers don’t make a teleport tube.”

“How enlightening,” a deep voice they grew up with interrupted. The lycan duke turned to Ken and added, “Though common sense would’ve told you what your sister just did.”

“Uncle Greg, you made it,” Reida greeted him with a hug.

“Of course we did, princess.” Greg squeezed her in return, eyeing Ken with an *are-you-stupid* look.

Ken threw his hands in the air. "Have you seen this place, Uncle Greg?" As the Head of the Secret Service, of course their uncle did. But that was beside the point.

"*Nothing* subscribes to common sense here. I mean, you've heard what their chancellor has for a pet – a bunyip. A *bunyip!*" Ken repeated just to emphasize his point.

Greg's brows raised when his gaze went to his niece. "A what?"

"A bunyip," Reida said with an innocent blink. "I sent you and Aunt Sush a picture a few weeks ago. You know, that thing with webbed feet, sharp teeth, and lives in a swamp?"

"Ah," Greg nodded, internally agreeing with his nephew about common sense being inapplicable in Incanta, but refusing to concur aloud, knowing the boy had grown sharp enough to read it from his face. "Your aunt tried to talk me out of calling it a bunny. But your sister and I..." He revealed a guilty smile, not something he'd show anyone beyond the family. "Old habits die hard, princess, let's just put it that way."

"Harder when it's being kept alive by your favorite niece," Ken added just to drive the point home.

"Jealous again, big brother?" Enora, youngest of three siblings, appeared next to her favorite uncle, smirk tugging high and proud, eyeing her older twin the same way she always did when she was pushing his buttons.

"Oh, please," Ken muttered, not saying more when their parents were within earshot.

"Well, that's done," Lucy, the queen and mother of the bickering siblings, announced with relief.

The king, Xandar, was still cooling down from the agitation, letting the sparks from the mate bond ebb away any desire to be uncivilized (or murderous). "We should've put '*no political chatting*' on our agenda."

Greg numbly said, "I did offer to kill them."

His mate and duchess, Sush, added, "And I offered to bury them *and* handle the media storm that would follow."

Sush's favorite nephew, Lewis Blackfur, recounted his gardening experience and chimed in, "I've helped Mom in the greenhouse and nursery often enough. I think I can handle a shovel."

The queen's firm gaze began with the duke of L'ouest when she uttered a firm, "No." Then the duchess of L'ouest. "No." And then softened considerably at Lewis. "And no, Goddess," Lucy sigh.

The duke of L'est, Christian Blackfur, saw it necessary to look his son in the eye and chide, "Your mother did not teach you gardening to bury politicians, Lewis. The only creatures you're allowed to bury are your sister's suitors, if you know of any, in which case, let me know because I'll buy the plot, soil *and* a new shovel."

"Christian!" Annie, his duchess, chastised while their daughter, Ianne, chuckled, thinking her father was joking when her mother could tell he was dead serious.

Not wanting to waste more time, Lucy wrapped her eldest pup in a brief embrace and said, "So sorry for delaying this, cupcake. Come, let's go before your uncle, aunt, and cousin decide to start a murder expedition that'll most likely involve your sister. Goddess knows your father and I won't be getting any sleep if that happens."

They walked through the lowered drawbridge held by the boughs of the two pink-leaved trees bookending each side of the entrance. Its red, slender flowers attracted an array of birds with dual-colored eyes and butterfly wings. A red bird with purple wings dotted with black blots leaped from a branch and soared. Reida's eyes followed it as the animal made a smooth flight around the courtyard swarmed with students.

"Weirder and weirder." Her brother's brows creased at the birds with more askance than wide-eyed wonder.

"They look better than they do in books! Their wings really are thicker than the usual butterflies we're used to seeing. Look – that one." She pointed at a pearl-white bird with black and gold butterfly wings. "It's beautiful, isn't it?"

"It's also extremely rare," the voice she'd heard just moments ago echoed.

Her family turned to the source, eyes converging on the two young men, one of a larger build in a gray shirt and jeans; the other of a slightly narrower frame in a dark purple button-up suit.

The one in gray beamed and offered the queen the usual hug. "Hey, Aunt Lucy."

"Liam, have you grown taller *again*?" his favorite aunt teased.

He chuckled. "I doubt it. You just saw me last week."

"And yet it feels like you've grown a few inches already."

With a hand on Ken's shoulder, Liam said, "Well, I'm still shorter than my little cousin here, so I doubt I've grown *that* much. Oh," Glancing at his purple-suit friend, he introduced, "Aunt Lucy, everyone, this is my postgrad roommate and accompli— I mean, best friend – the one I told you all about – Theodore Ischyrós. Theo for short."

Theo allowed himself not more than a glimpse of Reida, practising a level of restraint like he never had to in a long time, yet couldn't help his peripheral vision from catching the way her lilac eyes widened in realization, unable to help his lips from curling in a way that spoke for his amusement.

He only looked away when Liam stood aside, and Theo put on his best smile for the queen, offering her a slight bow – following his best friend's advice in offering her the highest form of respect to please the king, but not take the bow all the way to keep the queen comfortable. "Your Majesty."

"Aw, you don't have to do that, Theo," Lucy said, offering him a quick hug. "We've heard so much about you that you're practically family. And Liam mentioned you're big on volunteering," she noted with a knowing gleam in her eyes.

Playing by ear, Theo replied, "Well, I do my best to support the causes I believe in, Your Majesty."

Lewis and Enora snorted in unison, exchanging a conspiratorial look, everyone in the family being familiar with Theo putting Liam's name down for that *one* volunteer list.

When Theo moved on to greet the king, Xandar shook his ready hand, pleased to feel the strength in the shake, not knowing the wizard practised the gesture at least fifty times with Liam before this day as the king built on his wife's praise. "Your service to those in need is deeply appreciated, Theodore."

"I do my best to help, Your Majesty."

"Mm." Bringing himself nearer to the boy's ear, Xandar added, "As long as you know when to step in and when to keep your distance, we'll be fine."

Xandar didn't fail to notice the way Theo looked at his daughter in that split second, and since the overprotective father knew how one's title, wealth, and influence attracted flattery and interest of both the authentic and inauthentic kind, he made it a point to keep these admirers in their lane.

Though daunted, Theo managed to reply, "I've been brought up to be quite skilled in achieving that particular balance, Your Majesty. I won't do more than necessary."

*'Xandar, stop scaring him! He's Liam's friend!'* the queen admonished her husband through their mind-link.

Their eyes cleared and Xandar let go of Theo's hand, turning back to his mate, softening entirely and planting a kiss on her head, gazing into her disapproving glower with a compliant tip of his lips, looking nothing like the beast who'd frightened someone just seconds ago. "As you wish, my queen."

“With all the weirdness, you’d think these weirdos would have something else to look at,” Greg murmured to Sush, having caught Theo’s glimpse himself. And unlike his cousin and cousin-in-law, Greg’s eyes hadn’t been resting, considering the number of “boys” of every age glancing or outright staring at his little sweetheart to the point he was casting glares across the courtyard, almost releasing a growl on numerous occasions.

Enora didn’t seem bothered though, knowing she was safely tucked under the blanket of her uncle’s protective glare and aunt’s murderous wrath, so she and Lewis simply looked around the courtyard, judging either the odd-looking trees, flowers, birds, or creatures, whispering between themselves and chuckling quietly until it was time to get Reida and Ianne registered.

At the registration booth Liam and Theo led them to, the volunteer on duty dipped the tip of her green-stained fingernail into more green ink and tapped twice in the space next to Reida’s name, making it disappear from the sheet on her left headed “Students To Arrive” and appear on the sheet on her right headed “Students Who’ve Registered”, then repeated the process with Ianne Blackfur. The green ink synchronized student records not just in the entire row of registration booths, but also in the filing system of the university, so every member of staff would know – in real-time – which students had arrived and which hadn’t.

“Professor Ischyrós is asking for you, Theo,” the volunteer said, flipping the yellow scriblet toward him, showing the emerging scribble of, “*Someone*, get my nephew to my office. I need to reach the crystal ball one of you *flatworms* put on the top shelf. Prof. H.I.”

While those in the kingdom, empire and human territory sent messages through texting with a device; incantas sent them through the process they called scribbling – because they were literally scribbling on the scriblet in their own handwriting with the attached pen (that had been enchanted to attach itself back even if the owner dropped it by accident). The sender’s name appeared at the end, so when inexperienced beings signed off at the end of their message, their name would appear twice at the recipient’s end. Messages didn’t appear until it came into contact with the rightful recipient’s touch, which made the contents secure even if someone dropped their scriblet.

At the sight of his aunt’s name, Theo’s brows furrowed, and he did an instinctive sweep across the courtyard, knowing the message was appearing on every scriblet in every volunteer’s hand since professors used this way of communicating with them. Some met his hard gaze because of the message, others mouth his aunt’s name to convey it.

Lips pulled into a grim line, he merely gave them a nod and continue his scan. When Theo found nothing, he turned back to his best friend. “I better go help her.”

“Yeah, or she’ll give us both detention and we’ll be dusting all her crystal balls and tarot cards,” Liam tried to make light of the situation, but Theo’s mind was still on identifying the culprit, so he only managed a small smile.

Turning back to the princess’s entourage, which seemed to be getting bigger when her extended family arrived, the wizard offered a curt bow. “Please excuse me, Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, and Your Graces, Professor Hexena has sent for me. I must take my leave. It was an honor to meet all of you today.”

“You don’t have to bow, Theo,” said the queen with a friendly smile. “Especially not in an informal setting like this.” Pivoting to her husband with a coaxing gaze, she prompted, “Isn’t that right, my king?”

The king beamed, and murmured more to her than to Theo, “Of course, my queen.”

Theo managed a more genuine smile at witnessing the couple’s interaction, feeling the radiating love that he’d only ever heard about before today. He then took his leave. His smile faltered as soon as he turned around. His sharpened purple eyes were kept on full alert, scouring for suspects who pulled his aunt’s cloak.

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