

TLOA Lycan 521

Chapter 521 - CRAZY IDEA

Hope was more than glad to hear that, but at the same time, it was the opposite for the two boys in front of her.

"She won't go anywhere, witch!" Ethan stretched out his arms to reach for Hope, yet the girl dodged him swiftly and took two steps back, so she was out of his arms-reach. "Hope!" he called her name in frustration.

It was rare for Ethan to lose his calmness and it could only mean, that he was very upset at the moment.

"Hope, come back here!" Ian did the same thing, his tone was hardened, but his eyes locked on the witch.

Hope bit her lips and gritted her teeth, actually she didn't wish to have this talk in front of Ethan and Ian, but the situation didn't allow her to have much choices, so she ignored the twins and turned her attention towards the woman.

"Tell me what do you want from me?" days ago she said she would help her if Hope was willing to give her something, and until now she still didn't know what did the witch wanted from her in return.

"Are you sure, do you want to talk about this here?" she squeezed the wrapper in her hand and it disappeared within her palm. "I don't think we should discuss it here."

All of a sudden, that woman did the same thing she did when she visited Hope's school. Not exactly like the last time, this time, in a blink of an eye, they were inside the pine forest.

"We can talk here," her clothes changed as well. Seconds ago, she was wearing blue t-shirt and leather jacket with the mask that matched her washed-off color jeans, now she was wearing a long white dress with yellow shawl around her neck.

The ambience that she gave off also changed, she looked more serious and resolved.

"Where are we!?"

A screech voice sounded from their left side and from a big pine tree Ian and Ethan came out with dreadful look on their faces.

"You brought them here?" Hope didn't even flinch when she realized her surrounding had changed, but the appearance of the twins made her frown.

"Yes, I did," she said languidly. "Just in case they want to accuse me for kidnapping you." She smiled but it didn't reach her eyes as they stared at Ian and Ethan, who were running towards Hope and stood beside the girl.

"Where are we!?" Ian repeated his question, shielding Hope behind his back.

Actually, Hope wanted to push him away, since she was impatient to know what kind of deal that the witch wanted from her. However, she appreciated the twins' gesture. They always acted like brothers, and as someone who didn't have any siblings, Hope cherished them so much.

"Near the border of the Northern Coven Realm." That woman waved her hands and pointed at a peculiar tree that was standing behind the three teenagers in front of her. "That tree is the passageway for us to go to the other realm. "

On sync, the three of them turned their body and stared at the tree behind their back. Among the pine trees that surrounded them, this tree was similar to apple tree, only there was not a single leave to be seen that grew from its dry branches, as if this weird-looking tree died long time ago.

From afar—though Hope couldn't hear it, but the twins were able to pick up the noises from the festival. They were not teleported that far.

"What do you want from me?" Hope became impatient to know what this witch was up to. She was worried if her request was something that she couldn't fulfill, as she wanted to go to the other realm so badly.

Not only because she wanted to know what had happened to both Kace and Lana, but also her sense adventure pumped her up. She was thrilled to know that she would go beyond this boring village.

"This is something easy." She shrugged her shoulder. "I want your blood, which taken willingly," she said lightly, as if this wasn't a big deal.

Probably not, but Hope knew what her blood means for those creatures. A long time ago, Kace had recklessly let her blood being drawn and this caused the wrath of Serefina.

Kace once told her that her blood held a significant power and was dangerous. It could be used for something outrageous and the result would be the worst beyond words.

Meanwhile, for the sibling, they didn't know the catastrophe that could be brought by Hope's blood. The only thing in their mind was that clearly this witch would bring nothing but harm to her and they wouldn't allow that.

"We are leaving," Ethan said coldly, he grabbed Hope's wrist and was about to walk away with Ian followed behind him when Hope pulled her hand off from his grip.

"No, wait!" Hope used all of her might to free herself from Ethan and took another step back to prevent herself being caught again. "Explain to me, why should I give you my blood willingly? What do you want to do with it!?"

If the witch wanted, she could draw her blood anytime. She could do it when they were inside Hope's school, during their first meeting.

After all, Hope didn't have that kind of strength in her to protect herself from the magic that the witch was capable to do.

There was no need for her to go that far to bring her there and promised her anything. Why would she go through some hazards that could be waiting for them, just to help her?

"The blood, that is drawn willingly, is more powerful than the forced one." She shrugged her shoulder as if that was an easy question and Hope should have known that.

This was the worst part.

Hope frowned.

If the forced one was enough to make Serefina and Kace tracked down the creature, who had stolen it, then what about the blood which was taken willingly? Could it be somehow lethal?

However, some crazy ideas flashed in through her mind. Crazy enough to make her heart beat so fast.

Chapter 522 - HIS TRUE INTENTION

"What's your name, you haven't told me yet." Hope was trying to buy some time for her to think about any idea to control the situation, as it was quite tricky. If this witch realized it, then Hope didn't have any other choice but to obey to her demand.

"Oh, how rude I am," That woman looked apologetic, but if one took a closer look, it was only someinsincere empty words that she said to them. "I am Lidya."

As expected, Hope never heard Serefina mentioned her name at all. But, it was also true that Serefina had never mentioned anyone at all.

"Well, Lidya." Hope cleared her throat to hide her nervousness. "All you want is my blood, right?"

"That you have to give me, WILLINGLY." She emphasized this part. It would be useless if she took it by force.

"NO!" Ian roared, he stepped forward and glowered at Hope. "Don't be stupid!" he hissed viciously, his eyes turned black, the same color as Kace's eyes when his beast came to the surface that one time he lost his patience.

Ignoring Ian's protest, Hope focused her attention to the witch and said, "Alright, I will give you my blood willingly, only if you'd take me to where Kace and Lana are. And you have to keep me safe until I meet them." Hope crossed her arms, "Do we have our deal?"

"Deal," Lidya said without hesitation. But, without her knowing it, she had fallen into Hope's cunningness.

"How much blood that you will draw from me?" Hope asked suspiciously, she didn't want to be sucked dry by this witch.

"A small bottle of this," Lidya conjured a bottle out of thin air.

"No, smaller than that." Hope shook her head, disapproved it.

Sullenly, Lidya made the bottle, which was floating in the air, smaller. However, Hope kept shaking her head until the size of the bottle was no bigger than Lidya's thumb. Only then, the girl nodded.

"This includes protecting me from any harm." Hope wanted to make sure that she was safe with Lidya.

"Okay," Lidya agreed quickly, she waved her hand and conjured a dim blue light, which turned into a rope made of smoke.

Lidya held the end of it while the other end of this smoke-like-rope, circled Hope's wrist and tied them together before it disappeared magically.

It was the way witches made vows, as if it was a way of reminder for them to keep their own words.

Ian and Ethan witnessed what the witch did, their eyes widened in disbelief. They were trying to stop it but that translucent thing couldn't be touched. The smoke was a symbol of a deal that was made between Lidya and Hope.

On the other hand, there was a slight smirk on Hope's lips. Thanks to the lack of light on her surroundings, no one noticed that.

"Alright, let's go." Hope was about to go with Lidya when Ian stopped her.

"Hope, you are not serious about this, right?" Ian narrowed his eyes dangerously, he was upset because of her decision. "You will go out of nowhere with that woman? You don't even know her!" he shouted in frustration, struggling to make his point clear to her.

Ian was right about this, but Hope knew better about the witches' vow.

Witches' vow was not a trivial thing and the consequences would be dreadful when one failed to keep their words, that's why Hope emphasized her other demands of condition was that she wanted to be protected.

"I will be fine, I know what I'm doing." Hope leaned over, as she tiptoed, she whispered something to Ian's ear. "I have a plan, you don't have to worry about me."

Ian couldn't be happy that Hope had her own plan and that she was aware about this whole situation, yet he couldn't help but became restless.

"Hope, I promised Kace to keep you safe." Ian's expression froze as he gritted his teeth. "My father is coming here to look for you, there was a commotion inside the house when we realized that you were not at home."

Ian's words made Hope felt guilty. "I am sorry for causing so much trouble for your family." Hope frowned, "But, I have to do this. I can't wait any longer in this absolute uncertainty."

They shared a tacit understanding, but for Ian, letting her go just like that, was beyond complicated.

"I will go with you." Ian nodded his head as if he was trying to convince himself for saying that. "Ethan and I will go with you."

"Did I say something that I want to go?" Ethan protested.

However, Hope was so excited to know that the twins wanted to go with her, "Really? Of course I would love to have both of you join me on this journey!"

"What? No!" Lidya disliked the idea too. "Did I say I want to bring extra baggage with me?"

"Why? You don't want to bring them with us?" Hope snapped her head at Lidya. "They are strong and reliable, they could help you more than what I could offer."

"They are shapeshifters," Lidya pointed the fact. "And shapeshifters are not welcomed in this realm we're about to go."

"Kace and Lana went there." Hope didn't want to let go of the opportunity of bringing the twins with her. action

"That is a different case!" Lidya was upset. She looked like someone who would stomp her feet out of deep vexation. But, seeing the determination on her face, she relented. "Fine! But, if something happened to them, I refuse to take responsibility at all. They could come with us, but I can't guarantee their safety."

Hope was unsure if what's ahead of them would be dangerous for them or not, since Lidya refused to protect them. Hence, she glanced at Ian.

"Fine." He said resolutely. "We can protect ourselves."

Ethan, who was standing behind Hope and his twin, could only shake his head as he took steps forward. "Aside from protecting her, it is because you are also curious about Northern Coven Realm, right?"

He could read his twin's true intention like an open book. This adventurous side of Ian was on the same energy as the girl. There was no chance for Ethan to talk him out of what was decided.

Chapter 523 - TWILIGHT

Kace gulped down the water that cooled and smoothed his throat. He woke up nervously and scanned his surroundings while Lana put down the glass on the table next to the bed, she helped him to sit down as she put more pillow to support his back.

"What happened?" His voice came out raspy and hoarse, Kace couldn't recall what had happened to him and the cause of his aching head.

"Don't move so much, you've been out for three days." Lana informed him, but she didn't spot the reaction that she expected.

Lana thought Kace would jump from his bed and roared anxiously, because they had wasted three days when they supposed to be back around this time as the festival would be held tonight.

However, Kace just held his head and closed his eyes, he seemed in pain.

"Where are we?" he asked again, his voice still liked someone who was scratching glass with their nails.

"Inside the shop of the candlemaiden," Lana told him, her eyes focused on Kace's knitted brows. Did he forget about what had happened?

"Candlemaiden?" Kace opened his eyes and they fixed on Lana's.

The reality hit Kace hard. His eyes grew wider and, as if he forgot about his aching head, Kace jumped from his bed, but his body couldn't take that sudden move as he swayed and almost fell on the floor.

There.

There was the reaction that Lana expected. Probably, because of his headache, Kace's memories didn't work that well the first time he woke up. However, since he remembered their priority to come to this place, nothing would stop him from leaving.

Lana quickly held him back, so his body wouldn't hit the small table beside the bed. "Are you alright?" she frowned, worry was written all over her face.

"We have to go now!" Kace straightened his back and looked at Lana sternly. "When will the festival begin?"

"Tonight." Lana answered immediately.

"We can't go to look for the priestess, we have to go back to the village." Kace's expression turned hard.

"No, we have to continue our journey to the priestess place!" Lana objected the idea fervently. The Candlemaiden had agreed to help find the priestess and the only thing left was going to the direction that Christal had told them.

Why they had to return when they already half way there? Kace's wound needed to be treated and the fact that he was unconscious for three days, was the proof of how serious the wound was. Lana wouldn't let Kace returned when they were already that close to find the cure for him.

"No!" Kace glowered at Lana. "Hope will unnecessarily worry about us, I promised her to come back before the festival!" he was flustered to find out that he had been passed out for three days straight. What was happening to him?

The last thing he remembered was the vision about Hope and his beast. His beast turned into fireflies and everything went dark before he was in this shop again.

Kace remembered Christal was talking about his beast was asking for help and it asked his mate for help. What was that even mean?

Kace didn't have a chance to ask before his body shut down on him and the next thing he knew, he was dead asleep until he woke up a few minutes ago.

"Stop thinking like she's only the little girl that you used to tease! She had grown up now, she is able to take care of herself!" Lana shouted at him.

Half of it was because she could no longer tolerate the way he spoiled her, it was getting ridiculous, but the rest was due to her jealousy. Lana had to admit it, probably she had turned into someone like Serefina.

Someone who was not able to be with the person they cherished the most, but was forced to see how devoted he was to another woman. The worst part, she had to help him and be supportive.

Lana was bound to help Kace and protect what dear to him because of the stupid vow that Serefina forced her to do it. Well, at that time she did it willingly.

"She would do something stupid," Kace said grimly.

Upon hearing this, she let out a helpless sigh. "She stays in the house that packed with a family of werewolves, do you think it's easy to sneak up behind their back? Think about that before you decided to go back!" Lana snapped at Kace. action

What Lana was saying actually made sense. Hope had near to zero chance to escape the house and go to the festival, no matter how hard she tried to.

"We need to go once you have felt better." Lana tried to persuade him again, seeing Kace was doubting all she said earlier, she added more. "We have come this far, it would be a total waste of time, if you are being determined to go back. And Kace, remember, your wounds need to be treated, if we go back now we must repeat what we have been through to go this far. Hope will not be happy to know that you have to go for the second time."

Maybe what Lana said was right, Hope would be safe there. Kace just needed to make up with her later with a bunch of apologies and dates. If that wasn't enough, he would let her to tell him all she wanted and Kace would grant all of her wishes.

Sounded sweet, but naive at the same time. For some reason, Kace still felt unease, despite what he already knew that Hope wouldn't be able to go out by herself. He hoped that was true.

"Fine." Kace relented. He stared at the sky, the soft glowing light when the sun was below the horizon, reminded him of her. This kind of twilight was a perfect symbol of loneliness. He missed her so bad. He wished she was here with him...

"Alright, we will leave tomorrow morning." Lana was relieved because he had agreed.

Chapter 524 - THE LOST SOULS

There were noise from afar that reached the four people inside the pine forest. It almost sounded like hundreds of people were celebrating on something.

"What is that?" Hope frowned, she turned around to see the direction of the festival.

"I think they found the three small golden balls," Ian answered. By finding the three golden balls, it meant the festival came to end as they had found the witches among them.

Hope smiled sullenly, "I hope on the next festival, I would be able to participate. I think it will be nice," she murmured regretfully. She hoped to come with Kace for the next festival. action

"Everyone, listen carefully." Lidya stopped all of a sudden and turned around to face the three teenagers behind her. "The portal to the Northern Coven Realm will be opened once the torch went out. I need you to wear this."

Lidya handed Hope a purple cloak. This cloak looked shabby, the supposed to be bright purple color had faded, and it almost turned into brown color.

"Why should I wear this?" Hope held the cloak with both her thumb and forefinger, in arm-length. "This doesn't look wearable."

"You need that to cover your scent, no one should know that you are a guardian angel." Lidya explained briefly.

"Guardian angel? What is that?" Ian and Ethan asked simultaneously. They directed their eyes on Hope, yet Hope ignored them.

"Why? Because we will enter the territory of witches and vampires? How about them?" Hope pointed Ian and Ethan with her chin. "They're not welcomed in that realm too, right?"

"They will be fine." Lidya rolled her eyes. "But, we will be in great danger if they know your true self. No—YOU will be in great danger."

"Hold on!" Ian raised his hands, as he was confused with this conversation. "What do you mean with guardian angel? And why would she be in great danger?"

"This is a long story." Hope patted Ian's shoulder. "I will tell you on our way to find Kace and Lana."

"I think I have read something about a guardian angel," Ethan touched his chin, contemplating. As expected from someone who befriended books. "Isn't guardian angels are the creatures that had extinct centuries ago?" He directed his question towards Lidya.

"She said she will explain it to you, why don't you ask her instead?" Lidya raised her left brow, nodding at Hope. "We don't have much time for this. Wear your cloak now before those creatures come! You must hide your scent this instant!"

Hope was lucky enough the vampire from earlier couldn't pick up her scent, due to the werewolf's scent around her body and the flowers that she stuffed on her pockets. However, she couldn't hope for the same thing to happen.

Though Hope was still unsure what kind of danger that would happen if they knew about her true identity, but she was not in the mood to find out.

Thus, reluctantly, Hope wore the shabby cloak. "This looks like a gunny sack," she complained.

"Don't worry, you look perfect." Lidya smirked, enjoying Hope's misfortune. "Actually, this cloak is imitation, because the real one had long gone since the last family of pure blood witches nearly extinct."

It would extinct with Serefina carried the last blood of it. She was the last pure blood that was still alive now.

Hope and the twins didn't pay attention to Lidya's words, as they were not interested to know the origin of this cloak

Suddenly, there was something in this dark forest that caught their attention.

"Do you hear that?" Hope stood closer toward Ian, she narrowed her eyes to find the source of the sound that she heard. "Footsteps?"

"Yes," Ian nodded, "and there are many of them."

"Vampires... witches..." Ethan sniffed the air, but then he scrunched his nose. "There are so many of them..."

"Of course," Lidya walked in circle around them. "The festival has come to end. It's time for 'them' to go home."

"I don't know if this kind of thing would happen. I went to the last festival and didn't even realize there were this many of those creatures visited the village." Ethan could see now. Those creatures were approaching the spot where they were standing.

"Don't move, don't talk and don't walk out of the circle," Lidya stepped out from the circle that she had made.

Only now Hope and the twins realized the circle that Lidya had made glowed in dim yellow light around their ankles.

"What?" Ian knitted his brows, but Ethan stopped him by placing his hand to cover his mouth. He sent him a warning glare.

From inside the circle, Hope stood closer toward the twins as she watched in awe, one by one, people were coming out of the bushes and behind the pine trees.

If Hope didn't know better, she would assume they were human, but no, she knew they were not. From their cold eyes to their rigid nature, those people walked with dignity and were looking arrogant.

There were ten... twenty... forty... seventy... one hundred... Hope couldn't count anymore...

She realized that the festival was indeed packed with many people, but seeing them now, Hope started to think that those people from the festival were all supernatural creatures.

How could it be possible?

It took around twenty minutes until all of those creatures walked past the dying apple trees, as they were heading towards the part of the forest, which was darker.

"I don't know there are this many of them..." Hope murmured under her breath, but it was loud enough for the last two people to turn their head and looked at Lidya.

"Did you say something?" the man with bald head scanned his surroundings with his dark eyes.

"You heard something?" Lidya acted innocently.

That man narrowed his eyes at Lidya. "What are you doing here? The portal will be closed soon to keep those lost souls."

"I will be right there," Lidya gave him and his companion a fake smile.

Somehow, Hope had a bad feeling when he mentioned 'the lost souls'.

Chapter 525 - A SACRED PLACE

That man didn't move after he told Lidya about the lost souls, his arms sneaked around the blonde woman beside him, but his eyes stared at the spot where Hope, Ian and Ethan were standing.

Seeing this situation, apparently this glowing circle that Lidya created previously, made the three teenagers invisible. However, that was not the time for them to let their guards down and take the situation lightly. Because it was still a possible threat

That man moved closer towards Lidya and sniffed her.

"Are you a dog?" Lidya crossed her arms as her sharp eyes, glared at him, loathing his rude, unacceptable gesture.

"You smell like one," that man countered. "Don't play with shapeshifters too much, I almost mistaken you from them," he sneered and walked away with the woman in his arms.

Hope's shoulder, which was pressed against Ian's chest, could feel the rumble of rage inside. Ian truly hated the way that man said about his kind. Fortunately, Ethan's temper was not as bad as Ian, he put his hand on his twin brother's shoulder to stop him from shaking out of anger.

Once that man and his woman were out of their sight and the glowing circle around them had vanished, Ian roared, expressing his anger.

"Why didn't you say anything when he insulted us?!" Ian stepped forward and stood in front of Lidya, trying to confront her after what just happened he could not let go of.

Meanwhile, the witch only stared at the angry teenager, fully unconcerned. "Why should I say anything?" she walked past him. "You are not my kind and we barely met for me to stand up for you."

Hope now understood why Serefina could be friend with Lidya. Although Lidya was not as sardonic as Serefina, but in terms of insulting people, both of them were on the same level.

How frustrating it would be to have the two witches around at the same time. Hope started to think of some unpleasant scenes would possibly happen once their temper flared at the same time.

"Can we go now?" Hope grabbed Ian's arm to stop him from unnecessary argumentation that he definitely couldn't win it. Hope knew better not to argue with a witch.

Lidya gave them last glance before she walked ahead. "Stay close."

They walked towards the same direction as the other witches and vampires ahead of them. The dead apple tree beside them. Its dried branches canopied them, looked frightening as if it were alive and the hole in the middle of its trunk, looking like an eye that followed them.

"Ian, are you sure we have to go to the other realm?" Ethan stopped his twins from following Lidya and Hope.

"Do you want to leave her enter the realm alone?" Ian answered him with another question.

"You know that's not what I meant." Ethan frowned. "We can convince Hope to go back with us." But his voice sounded hesitated.

"Even you know what the result would be." Ian picked the doubtful tone in his voice.

"How about father and the other? They will look for us." They came to the festival with their father, but split somehow when looking for Hope, while their mom and Rossie stayed at home.

"We wouldn't be gone for long," Ian reassured him. "Once we find Kace, we'll ask him to talk father out, so that he won't beat us to death." He patted his twins.

"How do you know that we won't be gone for long?" Ethan squinted his eyes. "Don't tell me you just made it up."

Ignoring Ethan's protest, Ian smiled cheekily. "Besides, don't you want to know about the world outside of that village? You've been reading thousands of books, but has zero experience. This is the right time for you to experience something real, in actual real life!"

They knew each other so much that Ian knew the right words to say and what was his twin brother's deepest desire. Well, it was not only Ethan who had gotten bored with the life in that village, but Ian as well.

"Guys! What are you doing there?!" Hope shouted a few meters ahead from them. "Come on!" she was afraid Lidya would leave the two of them alone.

"Let's go!" Ian slapped his brother shoulder and ran towards Hope happily.

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"Stay for ten minutes more and then leave after midnight." Christal eyed the lycan before her eyes. Her attitude didn't warm up a little bit even after what had happened.

Kace was putting on his shoes. Though he still wasn't fully recovered, but he didn't want to stay there any longer. He wanted to meet the priestess as soon as possible, so he could return to Hope immediately.

For some reason, he felt restless knowing he had broken his promise to her. He didn't do it intentionally, but after the vision that he saw, as if his strength was sucked out from his body, Kace collapsed and fell unconscious for three days straight.

Christal shrugged her shoulder, "I just want you to know that the land where the priestess lives is not the place for shapeshifters like both of you." She sat down on her old squeaky rotten chair, supported her weight.

"What do you mean?" Lana took her backpack.

"That land is a sacred place, where many weak creatures seek asylum from those vampires and witches. I am sure you have seen what those weak creatures turned into after failed experiments," Christal said, her eyes turned a few shades darker. After all, most of the creatures were human-shape like her. If she was not gifted as a candlemaiden, she would be one of those poor victims.

What Christal said, reminded Kace and Lana about those people that they met in the border between two worlds. The feral beast...

The witches and vampires never considered them as beings, they were just guinea pig...

Kace didn't show it on the surface, but there was a rumble in his chest that showed his resentment.

"What I want to say is, you need a human to ask for permission from the priestess to enter the land." Christal added.

But, before she could talk further, there was a knock on the door.

Chapter 526 - A SHOP WITH A SIGN

"There is no different between the village and this place." Ian examined his surroundings with his eyes, the darkness of the night didn't seem to affect and limit his vision, though there were only a little light in the almost empty street. "Just... this place reeks of witches and vampires." He scrunched his nose disgusted by the unbearable smell.

Hope pulled Ian's sleeves, trying to stop him from getting to Lidya's nerves, but apparently the witch in front of them has a better temper than Serefina, because if it was her, she would have turned this strong-headed young werewolf, into something beyond their imagination.

However, aside from his endless complaint, Hope could see in their eyes that the twins were enjoying this new environment, so did she...

After crossed through the portal near the almost died apple tree, they entered a village with colorful rooftop and cheerful children roamed around the street, the ambiance was very warm, as if happiness floated in the air, but Ian and Ethan found it strange because they didn't have any scent on them. From their feature alone, they were almost certain that they were human.

Hope couldn't argue with that because she didn't have a remarkable nose like them.

However, even the moment they entered this realm, they couldn't see the people that came earlier.

When Hope asked about those people, Lidya only explained that they went to a different place from them, because she was clueless and didn't want to ask more questions before.

Hope had seen how irritated Lidya was with Ian's endless chatter. However, the further they walked, the more frightening the places they surrounded with.

"Lidya, are you sure, Kace and Lana went into a place like this?" Hope tightened her cloak around her body as she looked at her surroundings worriedly.

She was beyond grateful that the siblings took the initiative to come with her, or else, probably Hope would have cursed herself right now for taking such reckless decision like this.

Being with Lidya alone in a creepy place like this was a nightmare she did not wish to experience any time soon.

"I don't know which path they took." Lidya, who had been walking two steps ahead, flicked her fingers and the torches along this street were lit up, yet when Ethan walked past them, the torches went out automatically. That was a beauty of magic that Hope really wanted to possess.

Fortunately, she couldn't. Being a guardian angel, didn't make her life easier. What a shame...

"There are three ways to come into this realm and I am not sure which one they took." Lidya added. "Moreover, there are many streets that would lead us to that place."

"What place?" Ethan asked from behind Hope and Ian. He kept looking at his back and felt there was someone who was watching them.

"The candlemaiden's place," Lidya replied, kept flicking her fingers to conjure another flame on the torches along their way. "Serefina told Lana to come to see the candlemaiden. If you are lucky, we can find Kace and Lana there if not..." She didn't continue. action

"If not?" Hope demanded. She really hated when someone didn't finish what they were going to say.

"If not..." Lidya drawled. "We have to use all kinds of methods to make the candlemaiden tell us where they are. And by 'all kinds of methods', I mean anything at all."

Hope didn't want to know what Lidya meant by anything.

At this moment, the street was empty and they were like walking in an endless passageway.

"You don't have any other route?" Hope crept closer toward Ian and he placed his hand on her shoulder. Ian could feel the girl anxiousness. "You said there are many streets could lead us reach the candlemaiden place, but why did you choose this creepy one?"

"Because..." the flames from the torches provided them with warm, yet it couldn't get rid of the eerie feelings that this place was a scene of a nightmare. "Aside from this route, other streets would be more dangerous for the three of you and I don't want to get unnecessary trouble because of you. Tonight is the festival, we should wait for midnight to roam around this place with shapeshifters and a guardian angel, but I don't want to waste our time. Thus, try not to complain so much. You would see something creepier than this if I chose another route. Trust me. It'll be worse."

Lidya ended her preach. Probably, that was the longest sentences that she ever said since the first time Hope met her.

Hope moved away when she felt someone rushed beside her, as it turned out, it was Ethan. He strode past Hope and stood beside Lidya.

At first, Hope thought Ian wanted to say something harsh to the witch because of her preach, but he talked in low voice, thickened with obvious anxiety.

"You felt it also right?" Ethan's hazel eyes examined his surroundings. "We have been followed."

"What?" Hope turned her body to see behind her, but only darkness that greeted her. She could feel Ian's grip on her shoulder tightened as they walked a little bit closer towards Lidya.

"What do you mean with that?" Ian demanded, his eyes wandered. "I don't see anyone."

Ignoring Ian, Lidya nodded at Ethan. "You have a very sharp sense," she said. "Yes, we are being followed."

"What is that? I couldn't see or hear anything," Ian said with frustration, there were less than a handful people who knew that Ian was afraid of ghost.

Again, ignoring Ian, Lidya talked to Ethan. "Don't worry, all of you will be fine. Those creatures dislike the brightness from this light." She flicked her fingers again and conjured another flames on the torches to illuminate their path.

"What kind of creatures are they?" Ian shuddered. He didn't want to meet something that he couldn't hear or see.

"We are here." Lidya didn't bother to answer Ian's question, as they reached a shop with a sign next to its door. It read:

Christal.

Candlemaiden.

"That's very obvious..." Hope murmured. She would have never thought the house of the candlemaiden would be obvious like this.

"Why don't you knock the door?" Lidya eyed Ethan beside her.

Chapter 527 - WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!?

"What I want to say to you is, that you need a human to ask for permission from the priestess to enter the land." said Christal as the knock on the door interrupted her.

"What do you mean with that?" Kace tried to ignore the knock on the door, he was too absorbed and focused to find out what this candlemaiden meant with they couldn't meet the priestess without a human? Why things seemed to get out of hands and turn more and more difficult for him now?

"Like I told you before, the place where the priestess lives is a sacred land. Except human with no bad intention, while other creatures need permission from the priestess herself to enter that land." Christal glanced at the door, which was being knocked.

"Didn't you say before that place is an asylum for weak creatures? Do you mean that all weak creatures are human?" Kace couldn't comprehend this logic. "This makes no sense," he hissed while looking puzzled.

"No. You misunderstood what I've said." Christal shook her head. "But, as shapeshifter, you are absolutely, undeniably, has a high spirit energy. That is the thing that will hold you back. That land is a spiritual place, built with pure spell, which is different magic than those possessed by witches."

The knock on the door, now turned into banging, suggesting that whoever the person at the door, was eager to come in.

"But, maybe you can enter that place since your spirit is vulnerably weak now." Christal contemplated her own words for a while.

The banging on the door was getting louder. action

"Are you expecting a guest?" Kace felt irritated by the sound.

"No, I don't." Christal shook her head. Despite what she said, she didn't look surprised to find someone was looking for her in the middle of the night.

Kace and Lana glanced at the door with knitted brows.

"But, why don't you open it? Maybe these guests will help you." Christal added.

Kace and Lana didn't miss the plural words used by the candlemaiden. How did she know how many people were out there?

"I'll open the door," Lana murmured, she was about to approach the door when Kace held her back.

"No. Let me," he said while pulling Lana away from the door. If these guests were some hostile creatures, at least, Kace was stronger than Lana, though the beast inside of him was in weak state.

The door was being knocked from someone outside, that person apparently had lost their temper as the banging sound was increased.

However, upon a closer distance, Kace recognized the scent of this visitor—

No way! What they are doing here?!

=====

"Maybe there is no one inside this shop." Ethan turned to look at Lidya. He had been knocking the door for some time, but no answer from inside. He couldn't hear anything.

"Or, maybe they are sleeping," Hope chimed in. She tightened the cloak around her body, had mixed feelings about this gloomy surroundings. If it was not for the flames that Lidya had conjured, this street would be dark and frightening, and for Hope would have rushed to the door and forcedly kicked it open.

Well, she was not sure if she could do that...

Moreover, Lidya had said there was something in the dark that had been tailing them, although she didn't explain what it was, but Hope didn't really want to find out what kind of creatures they were. She was sure it wasn't something she'd be thrilled to find out about.

"No, they're not," Lidya replied confidently.

"Are you sure this is the place where we can find them? They had gone for almost a week and us..." Hope tried to count the time that had passed of their journey. "Four? Five hours? There is a long gap between us and them."

"Like I told you before," Lidya glanced at the door again and Ethan was still trying to get attention from whoever inside by knocking it harder. "If we can't find Kace and Lana here, we will ask the person inside to tell us where they are going."

Just like Serefina's instruction, they definitely stopped by here first, aside from Kace's issues, there was something that Serefina had to return.

"Besides," Lidya added. "There are three ways to come into this realm. What we took is the easiest way because you came with a witch like me, and since the other one is not possible, even for us to take, they must've taken the last, and took shelter here."

"Is that the hardest way?" Hope frowned, the thought of Kace and Lana had gone through such struggles made her feel uneasy.

"If you want to say so," Lidya replied. "But, that is the safest way for shapeshifters to avoid the unnecessary clash with witches and vampires."

"They don't open the door." Said Ethan as he kicked the door harshly. Annoyed.

Hope really wanted to go inside and find out whether Kace was there or not, she became impatient.

However, before Hope could walk forward and kick the door, Ian had done that. He banged his fist against the wooden door with all of his might.

Hope was surprised the door was still standing and didn't collapse under Ian's strength.

Ian kept banging and kicking the door for some time until they could hear a weak rustling sound from the other side of the door before it threw open.

"You!?"

The familiar voice and the figure that Hope had been missing for more than two weeks now, standing tall in front of her, framed with the dim light from the room inside.

Ian's shock expression shifted into a big wolfish grin. "Hi!" he raised his hands awkwardly.

"What are you doing here??!" Kace's bafflement was overlapped with another sight that was caught by his eyes.

He didn't say anything, but strode in large steps, approaching Hope as he pulled her into his big-bear hug.

Kace buried his nose on the curve of her shoulder. The spark erupted, dancing on their skins and he could feel his beast hummed in satisfied

However, there was something odd that Kace realized. The spark was there, but he couldn't smell her scent.

Abruptly, Kace let go of her and put her within his arm-length. His brows knitted while his ocean blue eyes stared at the girl in front of him.

Chapter 528 - NO WAY!

"Kace?" Hope was confused with the stare that Kace gave to her. "What happened?"

"I can't smell you..." he said in hesitation. This fact bothered him.

"Oh," Hope realized what was bothering him. "This probably because of this cloak." She pointed the purple cloak that she was wearing.

"Where did you get this?" Only then Kace looked around towards the people who had come with Hope. There was no way this girl could enter this realm alone.

And when Kace's eyes fell on the woman witch, he sighed deeply, as if there was a huge burden that was thrown at his face. "You..."

"Yes, me..." Lidya nodded her head slightly, but her eyes shone defiantly. "Serefina's order."

"I knew it," Kace said grimly, "If it was not for her, you definitely wouldn't come. But..." his voice became stern. "What the hell are you doing?! Why did you bring her here!?"

Just like Serefina, Lidya also had gotten used with Kace's erratic temper whenever he faced some absurdity.

"She missed you and you missed her, don't you think you should thank me, for reuniting both of you?" Lidya twirled her hair between her fingers. "I didn't force her, she wanted to come."

Kace shifted his attention towards Hope and glared at her.

"She came to my school to meet me and gave me an offer to come to meet you, of course I'd go." Hope hugged Kace.

Hope couldn't believe what Lidya had just said, she literally put the blame on her and made it sound like she was the one who proposed this idea.

It was true that Kace wouldn't scold her whatsoever like he'd do to the other people there, but Hope still didn't want to be in his bad side at all and get scolded even for just a little, especially after two weeks they didn't see each other.

"She came to my school to meet me and gave me an offer to come to meet you, of course I'd go." Hope hugged Kace tightly, she stared at Kace with her puppy eyes, pouting her lips and Kace was tongue-tied. "I won't be here if she didn't come to me firsthand with that offer."

On the other hand, Lidya was surprised by the way Hope switched her words, but then she smirked, as expected of someone who was raised by Serefina. This girl was quick-witted.

Seeing Hope was hugging him like this, Kace gritted his teeth. He was mad, but couldn't say a word to her, thus he turned his head bellow at the twins.

"Why didn't you stop her!!?" He roared at them.

The poor siblings moved away upon hearing the harsh tone in Kace's voice, "We tried!" Ian whimpered, "Do you think it's easy to stop her?"

Well, that's true, even Kace couldn't do much when he had to face the girl directly.

"Aren't you happy to see me?" Hope asked sullenly, placing her hands on Kace's face, so they could talk eye to eye.

Kace's hard expression softened. "Of course I am happy to see you..." he said immediately, didn't want to aggravate her further.

"Good. That's all I need to know." Hope nodded on her own words.

"Hope... I don't mean to say that I'm not happy to see you, but the situation is different. It's not safe for you to be here." Kace tried to persuade her.

"If I'm not mistaken, you always say that you will protect me. Has it changed now?" Hope let go of Kace and crossed her arms.

"Of course not," Kace replied without hesitation.

"Good, then we don't have any problem anymore here," Hope smiled sweetly as she walked past him, "Now, can we come inside?"

"Hope..." Kace felt helpless. He missed her, indeed, and wanted to be near her. However, the situation now was different.

"Kace." Hope turned around and glared at him. "You were so close on breaking your own promise again." she said menacingly.

With that one sentence, Kace became speechless.

"Alright, let's go inside. It is scary out here." Ian shivered when he watched Lidya put out the flame on the torches.

The three teenagers went inside the shop happily, just like when Hansel and Gretel found a house made of cakes and candies. The three of them were very excited to see what kind of person a candlemaiden was.

"What were you thinking inside your head when you decided to bring her here?" when it was only Kace and Lidya alone, both of them strolled inside the shop with slow steps. "I'm absolutely sure, Serefina didn't ask you to do this."

Even with Serefina's absence at the moment, that requiring her to go to Torak's place, to take care of his mate. Kace knew for sure Serefina wouldn't risk to expose Hope like this. Even she herself never wish to ever be there again and had been trying to avoid entering this realm as much as possible.

"No she did not," Lidya admitted.

"So, why did you..."

"I improvised." She winked at him and rushed toward the house, leaving Kace behind. Of course Lidya wouldn't say anything about the deal between her and Hope

"Damn. I hate witches," Kace grumbled.

Kace was happy beyond words when he saw Hope was there, but the fact she was here to accompany him to meet the priestess, didn't feel like the right thing for him. He didn't want his mate got involved in this mess ahead of them. action

From inside the house, Kace could hear Hope's squeal when she called out for Lana. He could imagine Lana was being squeezed by that girl and this brought a smile on his lips.

Actually, that wasn't because Kace didn't realize it, he knew that Hope was slightly jealous towards Lana, yet she seemed always forgot about her feelings from time to time. Only when she witnessed Kace and Lana interacted with each other then she would throw them a glare, otherwise, she always thought of Lana as her older sister.

It was cute to say anyway to see how Hope could get jealous, yet Kace wouldn't provoke it intentionally. He didn't want his mate to feel insecure.

Chapter 529 - SET OFF

Kace leaned against the wall behind him as he watched helplessly how Hope, Ian and Ethan observed the room. Their eyes wandered from corner to corner of the room.

"Is she the candlemaiden?"

Kace could hear Hope whispered to Lana beside her and when she nodded her head, Hope's expression became confused. At this time she must have felt the same thing as Kace before, even the twins stared at Christal in disbelief, their imagination about a cute girl as a candlemaiden must have shattered by now.

"Lidya..." Christal ignored the stares that was thrown to her and shifted her attention towards the witch. "It's been a long time since the last time we met."

"For you yes," Lidya replied casually. "For me forty years are only a speck of time."

"Indeed." She agreed and then her grey eyes found Kace across the room, she smiled, but this only gave the lycan a goosebumps. "You can go now, the people that you need are already here."

Kace frowned, "what do you mean..." he lost his words when finally understand what she said.

Christal's words echoed in his head; 'As I told you before, the place where the priestess lives is a sacred land. Except human with no ill intention, other creatures need permission from the priestess herself to enter that land.'

The only human here aside from Christal was...

Kace stared at Hope, who blinked her eyes innocently, asking for the meaning of his gaze.

No way!

"No way!" Kace knew where this conversation would end. He strode across the room and pulled Hope behind his back, as if the white-haired old lady could harm his mate. "Do you think I will let her to come with me?! I will send her back to where she should be!" His grip on Hope's wrist tightened. Even when the girl grimaced in pain, Kace didn't realize that his grip was hurting her.

"I didn't say you should bring her with you to find the priestess who can help you to treat your wound, though it would be dangerous if you prolong your treatment." Well, Hope didn't know Hope about this before, but she did now.

"Christal!" Kace couldn't say anything anymore, except calling her name with resentment at the tip of his tongue. Hope, who heard what she said, wouldn't let this slip away just like that.

"Shouldn't you thank me because I made your journey easier?" Christal huffed. "In this case, I want to thank you because you had brought back my candle."

"How do you know she will come?" Kace narrowed his eyes dangerously at the candlemaiden.

"I am a candlemaiden," she smiled righteously, her lips pulled into a proud smile, which was directed to herself. "I am talking to the spirit. A helpless delicate being which none of you could see... they tell me everything as they are everywhere."

"Like a ghost?" Ian chimed in, he shuddered with his own words.

Christal chuckled upon hearing that. "No, my child... they are not a ghost. They are spirit. Everything has its own soul, even grass in the meadow." action

Ignoring the puzzle behind what Christal said, Hope swung Kace's hand from her wrist and stepped forward. "Really? Do you think I can help him?" this was another twist she didn't expect to find out. For her to be able to help Kace, was her only wish. She wanted to do this for a long time, but the fact that she was only a human without any supernatural power, held her back.

She didn't really consider her own blood to be a supernatural power, since it was not really useful in her opinion.

"No!"

"Yes!"

Kace glared at Christal because of her answer. "Hope, listen..."

"No!" Hope turned around and glared at Kace. "I don't want to listen to you!"

Kace realized if he kept pushing her away he would upset her, thus he looked around, looking for a possible back up. Unfortunately, there was none among them were looking to his direction.

Ian and Ethan seemed enjoying their best time here by completely absorbed by a flower vase on top of a table, Lana ignored him by standing a little bit away from him and Lidya—the witch didn't care much about all the conflict ongoing, after all, she was the one who had brought Hope here.

"Tell me what should I do to help him?" Hope walked closer to Christal and sat down on a chair beside her. She had come so far to this place and finally met with Kace, but the fact that he had not been treated yet made her deeply concerned.

Turned out something happened here and Hope found out that she could help him. How great does that sound?

And then, Christal ended up telling her everything. Kace tried to interrupt them, but one look from Hope, stopped him from saying what he meant to say.

Kace had never thought that Hope could be very forbidding if she wishes to.

"Take this candle with you and this will guide you to the sacred place." Christal gave Hope a white candle, which was not bigger than her thumb, the wick blazed with blue flames.

"What if the fire died out?" Hope took the candle, but it didn't provide any warm even when she ran her fingers on the blue flames, she could touch it without getting burned.

"The fire will not die out." Christal informed her.

And as soon as the candlemaiden told her that, Hope tried to blow the candle, "Oh, it really doesn't die out."

"You don't need to blow it too," Christal giggled. She liked this girl, but since she knew Hope's true- self, she pitied the fate destined for her.

"I will go with you," Hope decided. She jumped happily toward Kace and smiled innocently, as if she was not aware that Kace objected her decision. "Let's go!"

"I don't think this is a good decision for the three of you to come with me." Kace gave a hard look to Ian and Ethan also.

"Why don't we do vote?" Ian suggested courageously. "Whoever don't agree, raise your hand."

But, no one budged.

"That's not fair." Kace protested, crossing his arms, but he still didn't get the support that he needed.

Chapter 530 - VACATION

"I don't know if this is the right decision to let her come with us." Kace pushed away a strand of hair from Hope's sleeping face. The girl used his laps as pillow for her to sleep, apparently the trip to get here had taken a toll on her.

Hope could barely open her eyes when they were inside this carriage, despite her strong will to go on this long journey to the sacred land, to meet with the priestess.

Inside the carriage, there were only Kace, Hope and Lana while Lidya, Ian and Ethan were in different carriage behind them.

This realm was something one could only imagine, even the carriage was pulled by two strangest animals that some of them had never seen before. They were like horses, but white, with fat yellow stripes.

The first time Hope saw them, she scurried away behind Kace's back, even the twins jumped and hid behind Lana.

Kace chuckled when he watched Hope widened her eyes, drowned in between curious and scared.

Only when Kace reassured her that those animals wouldn't bite, Hope took a step forward to observe the strange animals, yet she still didn't want to touch them.

Maybe, having Hope in this boring journey was a great idea. At least, his focus wouldn't be distracted by thinking of her every seconds of his breath.

He liked it when Hope was close to him and he could touch her rosy cheeks or played with her soft dark hair every time he wanted.

Hope was surrounded by many shapeshifters and despite the fact that Lidya was not a pure blood witch like Serefina, she was quite reliable. Kace had known her for years already and she was the only witch friend that Serefina had. Even so, it was rare for Serefina to talk about Lidya or what she was doing the last time she came to visit her.

"If she's here to help, then it is the right decision to keep her here." Lana propped her chin with her fist as she stared at the trees along the road outside the carriage. The sky started to turn bright as the sun, surely yet very slowly, rose at the horizon.

"We don't know what we're about to face," Kace muttered. "I just don't want see her to get hurt."

"She won't. And you don't need to worry about it. Because there are many of us here will protect her." There was this thick sarcasm detected in the way Lana answered him.

Since they set off in this journey to the sacred place where the priestess lived, Lana turned a little bit cold towards Kace. Almost like she wished she was not there.

Kace could feel it, but he knew her reason, thus he tried to act as if nothing happened. Initially, Kace suggested for Lidya to be in the same carriage as him and Hope.

However, Lana didn't want to be in the same carriage with the teenagers or to be in the same place with Lidya. Facing a witch like Serefina was enough for her to have to deal with a witch. She didn't wish to face another witch. Because for her, to deal with one witch was enough experience of a lifetime.

Therefore, the only option left for Lana, was to stay with the couple. It was really a tight spot for Lana to have to deal with the situation and her own feelings too, but Kace couldn't do anything about it. It was her battle, she should have known from the beginning that her feeling was forbidden.

Along this journey, it was so quiet, either in Kace's carriage or in Lidya and the siblings'.

The witch had fallen asleep when they were inside the carriage, Ian followed after that. It was only Ethan who was still awake until they reached their destination.

They arrived at a place similar to a harbor with many big ships were moored to the pier. People roamed around with loud yowl and yell filled the air.

The noise from outside their carriage brought those sleeping people inside back to the reality.

Hope rubbed her face as she wandered her eyes sleepily. "Where are we?" she yawned. "Have we reached the sacred place?"

"Of course not yet," Kace tousled her hair and made it messier, "We have to take a ship to go to the other land."

The candlemaiden told them the raw directions, but she couldn't give the exact location, therefore, the candle that Raine brought with her, would tell them where they had to go.

Hope yawned and stretched both of her arms.

"My neck is hurt," she complained. With the way she was sleeping in this small carriage, of course she would hurt her neck.

"Don't be such a baby. You will be fine once we are out there." Despite what he said, his hand rubbing her neck softly to lessen her pain.

After Kace said that, the carriage stopped.

Hope still couldn't understand how these strange animals worked. Those animals could actually know where to go without anyone guided them and they didn't get lost at all.

How these animals could be smarter than her? As someone who would often get lost in direction, Hope was slightly irritated.

And when Kace helped her to get down from the carriage, the animal turned its head and gave Hope a smirk.

Hope wasn't sure if that was the right term. However, one thing for sure, she was quite interested in them.

But, there was another thing that picked Hope's interest the most, it was her surroundings. Ian and Ethan joined her when they had gotten off their carriage.

"I have never known that there's such a place like this exist," Ian murmured and Ethan couldn't stop himself from observing his surrounding too.

There were shops along the front-shore that were just now opening for the day.

Hope practically squalled as they walked along the displays and sitting in the front of the stores with Kace beside her and Ian was on the other side.

However, in their excitement, Ethan dampened their mood by saying. "We have an exam in four days."

"Oh, please, shut up!" Ian growled.

"Don't spoil the fun, we are in vacation now!" Hope grunted.