

TLOA Lycan 571

Chapter 571 - WHY DID YOU HELP HIM?

"Don't you feel this scene is similar?" Chiron asked Kace. His eyes stared at the scene before him with a gloomy expression.

Kace gritted his teeth when he heard that and tightened his grip on Raine's waist. The girl felt that and raised her head to see Kace's face had turned pale and rigid with bulging veins.

Only then, Hope realized that Chiron was talking to Kace.

"This also happened a long time ago, centuries ago when you killed those creatures' mates without second thought." Chiron was talking in an impassive tone. He recalled those moments in his head. "This, what happened to me, my people and those creatures when they lost their mate."

Beside Chiron, Carina intertwined their hand silently as a form of support, as she felt the same. Her mate was killed at the same time in the past. That was a devastating time for them.

"Could you imagine if the same thing happened to you, and you don't have your mate right now?" Chiron's eyes locked on the flames that engulfed those bodies, and the sound of the crying people, asking their loved one to come back.

Those people didn't know that the murderer was among them, standing, watching in silence while listening to what the centaur said.

Holding his mate close to him and thinking that he couldn't lose the essence of his existence when at the same time he killed theirs.

It was selfish of Kace to think that he could live with his mate, and didn't want any harm to befall upon her when those people were stripped from that privilege by his own hands.

The story repeated itself.

"The moon goddess bestowed this precious girl to you, cherish her." Chiron received a black stick from Leroy that he had to throw into the flame.

It was a symbol that the living had said their farewell to the dead.

However, instead of throwing that black stick, the centaur gave it to Kace beside him. "You do it."

Kace couldn't understand why Chiron wanted him to go through all of this. Watching the bodies being burned, listening to the sound of their family's cry, and now he wanted him to say farewell to the victim of his brutality?

"Stop it!" Hope swatted away Chiron's hand, which was holding the stick, away from Kace's sight, the girl glared at him. "You're making him uncomfortable."

Chiron frowned slightly, this action caught a few centaur's attention as they turned their head towards Hope.

"He doesn't deserve to be comfortable after what he had done." Chiron said in a low and forlorn voice. "At the very least, he had to feel what we feel, though what he feels now will not fix anything. The damage had been done."

Hope wanted to retort.

If this was what Chiron intended for Kace to feel, Hope regretted her decision to take Kace with her to attend this funeral. She should've been more sensitive and knew that Kace would feel this way.

They could find another way to meet with the priestess, not at times like this. Hope cursed herself for her stupidity.

"You can't..." Hope didn't have a chance to let out her protest when Kace took the stick and pushed her towards Lana beside her. "Kace, you don't have to do that." Hope hissed as she watched Kace don't listen to her, and took one step at a time to climb the stairs to go to the podium.

"Let him." Chiron said in his calm voice, but his eyes followed every move that Kace took.

"What do you want from him? What is your true intention by forcing him to do this?" Hope glared at the centaur. The solemn expression on Chiron's face made her even angrier.

Lana kept Hope closed to her, as she listened to everything that they were talking about, but her eyes fixed on Kace. The sight of his back was so lonely, as he climbed alone to the flame of those dead bodies.

Lana really wanted to go to Kace and walked beside him, at least he didn't need to walk that path alone, yet she couldn't muster the courage to do that.

Even after what Kace had done and what he had said, Lana's heart ached for him. It was so stupid of her to feel this way when the man that she loved didn't even give her a glimpse of hope.

"I am not forcing him to do anything." Chiron, finally, tilted his head to look at Hope, whose height was slightly higher than his h.i.p.s. "He chose to do it."

"You don't give him a choice!" Hope tried to lower her voice and not to draw unnecessary attention towards them, but it was hard to contain her anger when all she wanted to do right now was to lash out to Chiron.

"He could reject my offer. I did not threaten him to accept all my offers." Chiron held Carina's hand tightly. "He chose to come here because he wanted to be with you, to protect you and now he chose to come to the podium because he chose to do it, for whatever reason he has."

Actually, what Chiron said was true. He didn't threaten Kace or forced him to do what he was doing now.

"Let him have some time alone with the dead. Maybe he has something to say to them for the last time, and if he is lucky, the dead could hear it in their afterlife. I think that's what he needs. Time."

It sounded ridiculous, yet Hope couldn't find a word to retort him.

Chiron shifted his gaze from Hope to Kace, whose now had reached the last stair and was about to throw the stick.

Hope followed the centaur's line of sight while listening to Chiron's calm voice. "He will never be able to protect you when he can't protect himself. He will never heal if he always refuses to see his wound and fix it."

Hope knitted her brows when she asked. "Chiron, why did you help him, when he was the one who killed your mate?"

Chapter 572 - YOU ARE TOO SOFT

Chiron shifted his gaze from Hope as he answered her question with the same tone that he always used. "Because killing him directly is too kind for him."

In other words, Chiron wanted Kace to feel all the heart breaking moments, feeling how devastated those people who lost their loved one, and so that he felt the same agony that he had created upon them.

Killing him was too kind, because Kace would just experience one pain and then he would be free, but by living, he would feel worried over his mate, witnessed the death of the creatures that he had killed, and watched a life that he thought was meaningless turned out to be so meaningful in the eyes of others.

Sometimes, being alive was worse than death.

That was the punishment Chiron wanted for Kace. If he could survive through all of this, he would find peace with himself and with his past. But if he couldn't, no one would be able to save him.

Kace was not a monster that he once used to, now he was just a broken creature with a wounded soul. The wound that he inflicted to himself through centuries.

Meanwhile, upon hearing that, Hope had mixed feelings. She was glad that the centaur helped them in their most crucial moment, but if Chiron's true intention was to punish Kace this way, Hope didn't know whether she should thank him or not.

Hope shifted her attention back to Kace. Even the sight of his back told Hope of how much pain Kace was enduring and she felt it in her soul.

In front of them, Kace had reached the podium, the heat of the flames before him licked his skin as he walking closer.

And Kace smelled it, the air filled with the stench that was like rotting meat. Despite this strong unpleasant scent, the lycan didn't even winch or wrinkle his nose when he took one more step closer.

From that distance, he could see those dead bodies were half burned, scarred and hardened from burn marks. Their skin was peeling from their flesh, in the process of it became nothing but ashes.

Kace had seen something like this countless times, but it still didn't help himself to feel what he felt right now.

That was what his father told him. Long time... a long, long time ago... action

There was a moment in the past when the three of them went to see an execution of traitors that was placed in one of the villages in their territory.

As the sovereign of that realm, there were many creatures under the rules of their father.

Kace was only a small child, barely able to shift into his beast form for the first time, when their father brought the siblings to see the execution.

Little Kace didn't know what he was about to witness. All that he knew was that his father had finally brought him together with his older brothers to go out of the kingdom.

This was the first time for Kace, because back then, he would always be the one that was left behind while Jedrek and Torak would follow their father everywhere he went.

"Torak, what sin those people committed?" Kace asked his second brother, slightly tilted his head since Torak was much taller than him.

Kace watched there were five men, kneeling on the ground, with a silver stick stabbed on their tight, to prevent them from shifting or fighting back, as if it was used to weaken them.

Little Kace only knew the execution was about punishing people who broke the rule and the highest penalty was death.

Kace heard that from Torak's story whenever he came from his long trip with their father and Jedrek. He didn't really know how it felt to witness the real gruesome scene.

After all, as the youngest of the siblings, who had never taken a step out of their beautiful kingdom with everything was provided for him.

No one would hurt him and their mother would be there to provide some comfort whenever he needed.

"Treason," Torak answered his little brother curtly as they followed their father and Jedrek, who were walking in front of them.

Kace's memories were blurred about all the details of what his father said when he started the execution.

The first time Kace witnessed an execution, he turned his head when the red color of blood pooled on the ground, yet Torak talked in his low voice.

"Don't avert your eyes or father will know." Torak fixed his eyes at the scene, but he knew Kace had turned his head again to see the second execution.

Kace remembered clearly how the executor killed the two of five traitors, and left the three to the siblings.

First, the executor gave a silver sword to Jedrek, as per their father's order.

Patting Jedrek's shoulder, their father spoke with pride. "Show no mercy to your enemy. They don't deserve kindness."

With that being said, Jedrek walked forward and made a clear cut on the third traitor's neck as his head fell on the ground and blood spurted from his headless body.

Jedrek didn't even flinch when he had done that, and walked to Torak. He gave the silver sword to him to kill the fourth person.

Just like Jedrek, Torak did it smoothly and walked back to give the sword to Kace.

Little Kace received it. The sword was too heavy for him, but he managed to carry it with both of his hands.

However, Kace at that time, didn't know the burden that he must carry after that, was even heavier than the sword in his hands.

Kace stood in front of the traitor, as that man begged for his life. He could feel his fear that sipped from his eyes.

His voice was trembling, as he kept banging his head on the ground, asking for forgiveness.

Kace hesitated, he didn't move for some time until his father walked and approached him. He took the sword from his hand and slashed the last traitor in front of Kace.

"Never hesitate." His father's voice was very stern as he continued. "You are too soft."

Chapter 573 - MEMORIES FROM THE PAST

Little Kace lowered his head as he looked at his father's shoes that walked away from him, and told the other people to prepare their departure.

What Kace felt at that time, after a long waiting moment and finally his father took him with him along with his brothers, he felt that he had failed his first performance, he had left a bad first impression to his father because of his hesitation.

However, if he was given a second chance, and if he could turn back time, he was still not sure whether he would kill that person unhesitatingly or not.

Kace stood there, remained there as he could hear people were carrying those dead bodies away and burned them.

The unpleasant smell from the burning flesh invaded his senses. Kace disliked it.

He stood there unmoved until Torak approached him and patted his head. His second brother didn't say anything as he gestured to follow him, meanwhile, Jedrek had entered their royal carriage together with their father. Kace and Torak took the second one.

Inside the carriage, Torak didn't say anything until Kace opened his mouth and spoke.

"Did you kill the first person immediately?" Kace looked up to his brother, who was looking at the scenery out of the window, with a boring expression.

Torak gazed Kace lazily as he propped his chin in the palm of his right hand. "I did."

"You don't feel the slightest doubt?" Kace was amazed. After all, aside from those stories that Torak told him about his journey with their father and brother, this was the first time Kace witnessed people get killed right before his eyes.

"No." Torak answered readily.

"Oh," Kace hummed, now he felt weird because he was the only one who failed his first attempt.

"You are from the strongest Alpha bloodline, the sovereign of this realm, if you show any signs of hesitation when you execute those traitors, they will strike you back without holding back," Torak said in his nonchalant tone.

In a world that is full of beasts, you don't have a lot of options except to be the beast of your version and as one of the sovereign, the burden was far heavier.

"We protect our family, not those who backstabbed us when we turned around," Torak shifted his eyes back to the road. "Remember that."

Of course, Kace remembered all of that, since that day, many things happened and they had to go through many gruesome decisions and actions.

Now, Kace was standing in front of some other burning bodies once more. He sighed deeply as he could taste the unpleasant stench in the air. His grip on the black stick tightened. The heat licked his skin as he moved one step closer.

When Kace was close enough, he threw the black stick to the flames.

But, no words came out from his mouth or said in his heart as he knew those words were meaningless.

Those words wouldn't bring back the dead to life and those words also only made Kace feel like the real moron and hypocrite.

After that, Kace turned around to walk back to the crowd as he caught a sight of Chiron, who was looking at him with the same gaze that he had centuries ago.

Kace remembered that day as though that just happened only yesterday.

They just won over the centaur's territory in an attempt to expand their own, it was Kace who led the army of lycanthropes to bring down the old race of this supernatural creature.

The order from Jedrek was very clear, he wanted all the mates of those centaurs to be killed, no females and children were allowed to live, but Kace didn't oblige that.

While the other squadron of lycanthropes fought a bloody battle with the centaurs, Kace and a few of his men looked for the shelter of those warrior centaurs' families.

After hours of searching, they found their shelter and held them as hostages to make those centaurs bow their head without a fight.

Kace supposed to kill them, but he didn't.

A new life was born at that time. The mate of the centaur's chief just gave birth to their firstborn.

A son.

When there was no one there to protect anymore, the lycanthropes that Kace brought with him killed them all, it was so easy to put them to death.

However, that wasn't what Kace did.

He let them live, putting them inside ten big cages, to show to their mate and told them to stop fighting.

Of course, with their mates being held captive, those male centaurs came to their knees and threw their bow and arrows.

Kace remembered the agony that flashed in Chiron's eyes when he could only stare at his firstborn and his mate, but was not able to touch them, to carry his son, because they were being separated.

He even remembered that there was one night when the baby cried on the top of his lungs, asking to be fed, but there was nothing he could eat.

And then this news traveled fast to Jedrek's ears, as a new sovereign, having his own brother disobeying his direct order was a disgrace.

Kace kept the situation that way and separated those mates for days, until Jedrek himself came to take care of what his brother couldn't finish.

"Kill them," Jedrek said in his usual commanding tone, but Kace was not any Lycanthropes, they shared the same blood, so it didn't affect him like the others.

"We kill traitors, but they are not." Kace objected to Jedrek's order. He could tolerate killing other creatures when they meant dangers for his family, just like what Torak said years ago, yet this situation was different. action

However, of course Jedrek couldn't take rejection very well.

With the same words, he roared to his men. "KILL THEM!"

Kace closed his eyes and when he opened them, Chiron was there, standing a few meters away, staring back at him.

And when Kace returned to stand in his position before, next to Chiron, Hope squeezed his hands and asked in concern. "Are you alright?"

Chapter 574 - SHE IS NOT THE PRIESTESS

"I am fine," Kace said in a low voice. He didn't sound convincing at all for the girl, but Hope remained silent as their fingers intertwined to each other while Carina and Chiron did the same. Their eyes were on the podium, but their mind and soul were somewhere else. No one would know what they were actually thinking at that moment.

The procession of this funeral ended uneventfully, which was one hour later. As odd as it sounded, this was the first funeral that was attended by the whole race of the centaurs' altogether.

On a normal occasion, Chiron would attend a funeral with Carina or Zarrn and be the representative of the centaurs, or he would not come at all.

That was why the whole village couldn't help, but take a second glance towards the horde of the centaurs among them. No one really paid attention towards the extra people that those centaurs had taken with them, which was Hope—who was really grateful for that.

Kace had been through so much, he didn't need that kind of attention that could possibly make his feeling even worse.

The last part was to have the priestess to end the procession. In that case she had to make an appearance.

However, it had been a year since the villagers saw her in person after the battle with the demoness.

Therefore, not only the villagers were thrilled to see the centaurs, but this also would be the first appearance of the priestess after such a long time.

The priestess was the guardian of the village. The village itself was a place where many creatures lived. These were the creatures who managed to be saved or escaped from the vampires and witches from the mainland. In other words, this village was a shelter for those unfortunate, innocent creatures. Their new home.

Beside Chiron, Leroy walked away towards a building on their left side, which would be the place where the priestess made her first appearance and ended this whole procession.

In front of a massive white door, there was a little girl around the age of twelve, standing there, waiting for the priestess.

The little girl was the young maiden, who had been taking care of the priestess and relayed her order since the priestess secluded herself.

"Terra, how is the priestess?" Leroy asked the young maiden while his eyes kept looking at the white door, waiting for it to be opened.

"The priestess is fine, but her appearance will be very short, because she still needs to recuperate." The girl called Terra answered him, her voice didn't suit her age. She looked mature and calculative at the same time.

Since Terra was holding an important role as the priestess's trusted right hand, people from the village always treated her with the utmost respect, just the way they treated the priestess.

"It is rare to see the whole race of centaurs here," Terra remarked. Since the centaurs, with their body form, looked taller than the rest of the villagers, they looked undeniably outstanding among them.
action

"Wasn't the priestess who wanted them to be here?" Leroy asked, his brows slightly knitted together.

Terra frowned as well as she said. "No, the priestess had not given any order since four days ago."

Four days?

"Wait?" Leroy seemed to remember something. "Didn't the priestess give an order to the centaurs to stop me from killing the murderer of the hunters?"

This became very weird for Leroy.

"You almost killed the murderer of the hunters?" Terra slightly raised her voice in disbelief. "So, what made you stop?"

Leroy was at loss. He remembered clearly what Chiron said that night. "Because Chiron came to say he was sent by the priestess to let the beast alive."

Shock was written all over Terra's face. "Of course not! Why would the priestess stop you from doing so?"

"I don't know," Leroy and Terra shifted their eyes toward the chief of the centaur, "But, why did Chiron lie to me?"

The centaurs had a high morale, it was unheard of that they were lying about this kind of matter, moreover to save the killer of the people from this village.

Though Leroy was a human, thus he didn't have a life span as long as the centaurs, but he heard the loyalty of the centaurs from his father and people before him.

"I think you need to talk to him about this," Terra narrowed her eyes towards the people beside Chiron. "Who are those people? I had never seen them before. Are they new here?"

Leroy knew who Terra was talking about, but he didn't have a chance to tell her about Kace and the rest of these new people either. He could've let her know about the fact that Kace was the one who killed those hunters, the reason why they were here, attending this mass funeral, because at the same time the priestess came out.

The white door was being pushed open from the inside, as a woman in her white dress and long silky white hair waltzed out of the building.

The aura that surrounded her was amazing, she looked like a goddess herself with the way she carried herself and how she glanced towards the podium through her white mask.

"Is she always wearing a mask?" Hope asked no one in particular.

At first, Hope thought the priestess was a young lady or at least not someone with white hair, but on second look, it was not the body of an old woman. But, she was definitely not old enough to have all of her hair white.

Did she dye her hair? Hope thought to herself.

On the other hand, Chiron heard her mumbling questions and he answered her. "She is not the priestess."

"She is not? What do you mean?" Hope tilted her head to see Chiron, even Kace also frowned upon hearing Chiron's statement.

And then Hope remembered about the conversation between Chiron and herself when Carina was trying to bring Kace back from his unconsciousness.

The centaur pointed at the direction of the mountain Uzu, not to this village.

"It's the demon who has been pretending to be the priestess," Chiron said curtly as he freed his hand from Carina's and touched something on his h.i.p.s, this gesture was followed by the rest of the centaurs.

Chapter 575 - A SHRILL SCREAM

Hope darted her eyes at his gesture and watched a shiny metal on his h.i.p.s, it was a dagger. When some of the centaurs touched their dagger on their h.i.p.s and waited for Chiron's cue. Some of them were ready with the arrow on their right hand, while their left hand touched their bow.

What is it?!

Hope thought in panic. What are the centaurs trying to do here? Weren't they one of the guardians of this village aside from the hunters? Why would they want to attack this village?

"What are you doing?!" Kace, beside Chiron, hissed in anger. Even Lana and the siblings could feel the tense in the air from the centaurs that surrounded them. They were aware about the things that those creatures wanted to do, as fear and trepidation flashed in Lana, and the siblings' eyes.

"She is not the priestess," Chiron repeated what he had said and turned his head towards the lycan. "If you want to see the priestess, you have to help to take down this imposter."

"What?!" Kace's eyes grew wide when he heard that. "What makes you think that I want to get involved in your battle?"

Chiron's eyes followed the priestess every move as she walked up to the podium and positioned herself in the middle of it.

This time, she would pray for the souls of the dead hunters and then they would let the fire live for seven days until nothing was left.

"Because you need the priestess in order to heal your wound and find your witch friend," Chiron unsheathed his dagger and was followed by the rest, at this point there were some of the villagers that were aware about their weird gesture. "And I need your mate's help."

"If you thought that the priestess up there is an impostor, you can talk to those imbecile hunters!" Kace gritted his teeth, "Don't involve my mate on this!"

"I have talked to him." Chiron shook his head. "We will not resolve it this way if we have another way."

"It's your business!?? Kace seethed.

Hope was startled by the hostility that showed from Kace's words, the lycan was really angry when Chiron dragged Hope in his messy situation.

"I will go now." Kace grabbed Hope's wrist and held her close to him as he talked to Lana and the siblings. "We're leaving now."

Lana, Ian and Ethan looked at each other and followed Kace and Hope silently.

At first, Hope thought Chiron would stop them and asked them to stay and helped with whatever plan he had in his head.

However, the chief of the centaur didn't. He didn't even turn around to see where Kace and his small group went, neither tried to stop them at all, despite what he just said that he needed Hope's help in this matter. action

"Kace..." Hope wanted to say something, but Kace glared at her and this efficiently shut her up. He knew what Hope wanted to say.

If it was about treating Kace's wound and to find Lidya, then Hope must be foolish to think that Kace would agree with her.

It was hard to move among a lot of people when all the villagers packed in one place and it was harder when those centaurs started to do whatever plan they had in their mind.

Kace thought Chiron had set them up to come here with his hidden agenda and got them involved, especially when they would go into a chaotic situation with Hope being there. He really didn't want to get his mate in danger, for whatever reason there was.

On the other hand, Chiron was waiting for the right moment to strike. He wouldn't resolve this with force if Leroy listened to him.

However, the head of the hunter brushed off his warning and let the impostor live for a year inside their community.

Although the centaurs were respected by the villagers, they would listen to the hunters more than the centaurs. Because the villagers lived in the same place, and met with each other every day with the hunters. And with that, they've built this strong bond to one and another, while the centaur lived apart from them in the wild.

When the priestess almost finished with her silent pray and was about to leave the podium, Chiron hurled the dagger in his hand.

The small metal pierced the mask that the priestess was wearing and made her fall to the ground. It was unsure whether the dagger injured her or not, but a wave of loud shrill scream from the villagers and hunters filled the air as the mournful atmosphere turned into horror.

"Chiron! What are you doing?!" Leroy led the hunter to the podium and shielded the fallen priestess behind their body as they unsheathed their own sword and sickle.

"She is not the priestess!" Chiron's voice was very loud on top of the commotion that happened around them, but his calmness was something that they couldn't comprehend, even in that situation, he was unfazed.

"What do you mean she is not the priestess?!" Leroy roared. He didn't believe Chiron would come to this argument again. He thought their dispute about this had come to end. But seeing what Chiron was about to do now, the hunter realized that the chief of the centaurs still persistently assumed the idea of the priestess was an impostor.

However, why do they have to do this at this moment? They were holding a funeral!

Of course, the answer was because this was the first appearance of the priestess after she fought the demon woman in the mountain of Uzu, and hid herself for one long year with reason to recuperate her strength, inside her well protected place.

"I have warned you more than you could remember!" Chiron shouted back. "Open the mask and you will know!"

Leroy gritted his teeth, everybody knew that they couldn't touch the priestess casually. When the priestess decided to wear a mask, Leroy thought it was because there was something she wanted to hide.

Such as a scar, after all, the priestess was badly injured.

Another shrill scream came from behind the hunter.

Chapter 576 - UNDER ATTACK

When Terra watched what was happening to the priestess, she was screaming and was about to dash towards the podium, but Leroy grabbed her hand and pulled her back.

"Wait!" he said while giving the other hunter a cue to follow him. "Stay behind me!"

Leroy and the other hunters made a human barricade in front of the fallen angel and Terra sneaked behind them to check on the priestess.

The girl was slightly relieved when she didn't see blood on the place where Chiron's dagger stabbed the head of the priestess, probably it couldn't pierce the thick of the mask that she was wearing.

With trembling hands, Terra tried to remove the mask from the priestess while listening to the arguments that were going on between Chiron and Leroy.

However, when the girl managed to remove the mask from the priestess, the scene that she watched before her eyes was too frightful for her to see.

She didn't even realize when her ear-splitting scream interrupted the hostile exchange between the centaur and the hunter.

"What happened?" Leroy turned his head to Terra, and found the girl was pointing her trembling finger towards the priestess's body.

"The priestess..." The girl stuttered and Leroy didn't need Terra to finish her words to see what the thing that scared the hell out of her.

When Leroy's eyes landed on the priestess, he himself shrieked and he could hear a loud gasp from the other hunters beside him.

What he watched was something beyond his wildest imagination. Even though the centaur had warned him about the priestess being an impostor, this was far from what they expected.

The skin on the priestess's face was peeling from her flesh with yellow eyes and blood-red pupils that were engorged from its socket. The scene was simply too terrifying to see.

The priestess's condition now was akin to the dead hunter's body that was being burned, her body was scarred and hardened from burn marks. Those marks couldn't be seen before, but now everything was deeply surreal, despite the fact that she was very alive only a few minutes ago when she led the prayer for the dead soul, now with that condition, she must be dead.

How could she be like this?!

Leroy immediately reached Terra and covered her eyes from the dreadful scene as he shouted to Chiron. "Chiron!!! What is going on with the priestess!?"

Hearing the way Leroy called his name and how the other hunter's reaction, even though he couldn't see the priestess now, the chief of the centaur knew in an instant that they finally found something, which baffled them.

Gracefully, the centaur climbed the stairs towards the podium as the hunters dispersed and gave him a way while lowering their weapon.

This was not the time for battle yet.

"What have you done to the priestess!?" Leroy seethed to the centaur. He thought the dagger was coated with some dark magic that could harm the priestess. "You used a black magic on her? You cursed her!?"

Chiron didn't answer his accusation immediately when he kneeled beside the 'priestess' charred body.

"Don't come close to her!" Leroy was about to grab his sword again, but one look from the centaur was enough to make him stop his obtuse action.

This was the first time Chiron glared at him, even when they were in argumentation, Chiron barely raised his tone to talk to him.

It showed how Leroy's foolish objection annoyed the chief of the centaurs.

"You know my people will never use dark magic such as curse." His voice was very deep, yet laced with warning and impatient. "I have told you many times, but you keep ignoring me."

This past year, Chiron had tried to make the hunter take the priestess out of their protection, but they kept refusing his demand.

Chiron didn't want to fight them just to reach the fake priestess.

That was why during this funeral, when the priestess in obligation had no other choice, but to come out in person, was the perfect time for them to show those hunters that they had protected the wrong person.

"But... but..." Leroy stammered. Deep inside, he knew that Chiron's words did make sense, but his pride prevented him to admit his wrong decision.

Meanwhile, the other hunters were flabbergasted to see how the situation unfolded.

"The priestess is still in the mountain of Uzu." Chiron said. "Our people can't go through the barrier, that's why we can't do anything if you don't trust me." action

"What is—"

As Chiron and Leroy were speaking, the girl in Leroy's arms moved, and two things happened at the same time, it happened so fast almost simultaneously.

The girl made a swiftly slashing move as she pushed Leroy's body away from her.

With a knife in her hand, Terra had slit Leroy's throat and his blood spurted from the opened wound as he gagged on his own blood, his mouth opened wide, but wasn't able to form a single word.

Terra kicked Leroy's body down from the podium into the dirty ground.

At the same time, there was another wave of shrill scream from the villagers, from the direction of the entrance gates. The sound grew louder.

"CLOSE THE GATE! CLOSE THE GATE!"

Many people yelled the same order when the men rushed toward the gates to close it, the women gathered their children and rushed towards the safety of their home.

Among the commotion, Hope, Kace, Lana and the siblings were caught in the middle of this messy situation.

They had not yet reached the gates when they closed it.

"What happened?" Hope, in the safety of her mate's embrace, watched in dismay to the crowd of people.

Kace sniffed the air and Hope could feel the rumble in his chest when he growled. "Damn it!"

"We need to go back to the centaur." Lana suggested.

??Why? What happened?" It was so silly for Hope to try to sniff the air too when she didn't have the shapeshifter's remarkable nose.

"This place is under attack!" Ethan answered her.

Chapter 577 - UNDER ATTACK (2)

When Ethan's words sunk in Hope's understanding, over the gates, which only a few meters away from her. Hope could see the same creatures that had attacked her and Carina previously this morning, as the creatures drew closer and tried to force enter the protection of the village.

"Let's go," Kace said grimly, as his grip on Hope's shoulder tightened. At this rate, it was going to be impossible for them to be able to get out of the village safely now.

Kace's face turned unsightly as his eyes turned dark, Hope, who caught the sight of his expression shuddered involuntarily.

Before, it was rare to see Kace in this gloomy mood. Until recently, he had been in this kind of mood again and again, as if everything around him was nothing but a complete shambles.

Kace and Hope walked in front of Lana and the siblings, while the lycan tried to make a way back to the village square, which was also in the same chaotic situation.

When they walked back, not only they had to squeeze themselves with the villagers, but apparently the Centaurs and the hunters worked together to rush towards the gate to provide some help in order to keep the demon wolves out of their stronghold.

It seemed because of the urgency of the situation they put all their egos aside, and worked together for once. Kace and the rest didn't know what had happened when they left Chiron before he could carry out his plan.

But, one thing for sure was; it was not a good thing to be caught in the middle of their business.

After a lot of effort, Kace managed to see Chiron, he was standing tall in the podium, surrounded by some hunters that still stayed there when the rest of them had left to the gates.

"You are back," Chiron said, visibly relieved.

However, Kace didn't take that welcome nicely as he grunted at the chief of the centaurs. "IS THIS YOUR PLAN?" Kace seethed, he was too angry to be civil with Chiron.

It was also him, who saw it first when he climbed the stairs to the podium for the second time this evening.

Kace watched the supposed to be the priestess, was lying on the tiles of the podium with charred burns all over her skin, and her body had turned into something that was too horrible to see.

Swiftly, before Hope could see it, he hugged her and pressed her head against his chest, "Don't look," Kace grumbled in warning when Hope was trying to free herself.

"What? What is it?" Hope was so curious, especially when she heard Lana's breath hitch and the siblings let out a loud gasp upon seeing something that Kace prevented her from seeing.

"Don't look." This time, Kace's voice was sterner as he hugged Hope's body to prevent her from moving around recklessly. Hope couldn't help it, because she was a curious little creature. "Can't you cover her body with something!?" Kace shouted at Chiron.

For the centaurs, the dreadful scene was not something that could make them feel uncomfortable, but Chiron did what Kace asked him, he nodded to the centaur next to him.

The centaur took a cloak from the hunter and covered the unsightly dead body of 'the priestess', while Leroy's body had been carried by the other hunter, they didn't know whether he was alive or not. In this kind of situation, the most important thing in their mind right now was how to survive.

"Of course this is not my plan," Chiron said as his eyes fixed on the gates, from where they were standing they could hear a loud growl and snarl, the street almost empty when most of the villagers had sought safety inside their houses.

Only the hunters and a few men were there to block the gates and prepared their weapons, just in case the situation became worse.

"Is that her body?" Kace released Hope from him when he watched the body had been covered.

Hope rubbed her neck, Kace held her too tightly, because she kept trying to free herself. But when she turned around to check what kind of scene that Kace hid from her, she could see nothing, because it was already covered by a brown cloak.

"The impostor, yes." Chiron nodded. "I think the demon had called them..." he mumbled and shifted his eyes to Hope. "And there is something else they want."

"What do you mean?" Subconsciously, Kace pulled Hope behind his back as his black eyes turned even darker.

Out of instinct, Lana stepped forward and stood beside Hope.

"You know what I mean," Chiron stared at Kace meaningfully. "You know what she is. She shouldn't be here in the first place. I don't know how she could survive and venture until this part of the realm."

There was tacit understanding between Chiron and Kace as Lana became anxious. This whole situation was simply beyond unpredictable. She thought they would finish their journey within a week, but seeing the situation now, she wasn't sure anymore when will all of this over.

Not only they had not yet meet the priestess, because apparently there was an impostor who had been pretending to be her, but now the situation became more complicated than what they imagined. Nothing could ever be predicted when it comes to this realm. action

"The cloak," Ethan suddenly said, "The witch, Lidya, she gave her a cloak before we entered this realm and she warned her a few times to not take off that cloak."

Chiron stared at Hope once again before he looked at Kace. "That must be it."

"Where is that cloak?" Kace asked Hope, but his mate shook her head.

"I don't remember, I took it off 'that night'," Hope said carefully. When she watched how Kace became angry, she hastily added. "Sorry..."

However, Kace shook his head as he tousled her hair like usual. "No, little one, I am not mad at you." He was mad to himself.

"Let her be with my people to the hiding place," Chiron said as he tensed.

At the same time, they could hear a loud outbreak as the gates collapsed.

Chapter 578 - UNDER ATTACK (3)

"I will not let her go alone." Kace glared at Chiron as he spoke sternly. This chaotic situation was way out of his expectation. He didn't want to let Hope out of his sight. Not at times like this.

"She will be fine, the centaurs will protect her." Chiron unsheathed his sword when the demon wolves went berserk into the village as they managed to break down the gates. "I will need you here."

"What makes you think that I want to be involved in your battle?!" Kace seethed. He was still upset because Hope was in this dangerous situation. If only he knew this would turn out like this, he would hoist her away despite her protest.

"Because this will be your battle too," Chiron added immediately when he watched Kace was about to retort to him. "Those demons are looking for your mate, if we fail to hold them back, do you think you and your little group could do that?"

It was true, if the centaurs and the hunters were not able to fight the demon wolves, Kace and Lana would be too overwhelmed to fight them all and Hope would be in more danger.

Especially when their target was Hope. Whether or not what Chiron said was true, but it seemed the scent of guardian angel in Hope had drawn those dark creatures to look for her.

Had it been really a catastrophe in this realm for someone like Hope? How could those creatures tell that she was different?

Gritting his teeth, Kace growled. "You go with her!" he talked to Lana and the siblings.

At that time, the demon wolves had reached halfway towards the village square, as the people at the podium could see how the hunters tried to fight them back. But there were simply too many of them.

It was Zarrn, who approached Hope and stretched out his hand, "This way." He gestured for her to follow him.

"Kace?" Hope became anxious, she didn't want to leave Kace. He was still not completely healed, but if she stayed, there would be nothing she could do except to be a burden for him.

Hope really wanted to cry, she clutched on his shirt. She didn't want to let go, yet she knew she couldn't do that. Kace couldn't fight them properly if he was distracted.

He couldn't do as much as he could if she stayed there. Because he would be busy protecting her, and besides he wouldn't let her see him that way. He would be consciously hesitant during the fight.

"Go with them, okay? Lana, Ethan and Ian will go with you." Kace caressed her cheeks, he could see how stubborn Hope to hold back her tears and tried to look strong. action

Hope was all Kace wanted for life, the mate that he thought he would never have for his entire existence, after the punishment of the dreadful sin that he had committed. But now, he had her. The fear of what might happen to Hope if he fail to protect his mate seemed to overpower everything else.

"Be careful," Hope's voice was barely a whisper as she stood on the tip of her toes, and kissed his cheek before letting him go.

"I will," Kace kissed her forehead softly. "Now, go!"

Lana grabbed Hope's hand and together with the siblings and three centaurs, they went to the direction where Zarrn led them.

While running down the stairs, Hope could see Kace was still staring at her until she disappeared at the corner, as they entered a building where the fake priestess came out before.

But, before they could enter the house, Hope stopped running and turned back to face Lana. "Do you want to go and help him?"

Vaguely, Hope could sense how Lana's feeling for Kace. She just didn't know how deep it was, because she thought it was only a crush.

Like this time, Hope could see how worried Lana was for Kace, she wanted to go to him and fought alongside with him, yet because Kace ordered her to go with Hope, she couldn't do otherwise.

"Lana, do you want to go to Kace?" Hope became impatient.

"He told me to go with you," Lana averted her eyes to hide how upset she was for Kace to order her like that.

"No. Go to him please, and help him." Hope urged her as she pushed her hand away from her.

It was dangerous out there and Lana could get hurt too. But she wanted to be there, and Hope wanted to be of help. It was such a pity that Lana had to stick with her, when she actually could be of help for them out there.

"Kace..." Lana looked eager, but she still didn't want to disobey Kace.

"You know that he is not completely healed yet, I will be fine with Ethan and Ian," Hope spoke urgently. "Also, there are some centaurs with me."

Now, Hope could see Lana was faltered. It seemed she really wanted to go to Kace. Only a little bit of push was needed...

"We have to go inside now!" Zarrn grew impatient when the women still had not come to a settlement.

Hope took a deep breath. "Lana, there are too many of them. Leave me here with the centaurs, I will be okay," She spoke calmly. "You are not helping anybody by standing here with me."

"Are you sure?" Lana bit her lips. She really wanted to go, though she knew Kace would scold her to no end when he found her there, and not being with Hope.

He could be angry for as long as he wanted, but for now, Lana just wanted to ensure his safety. Just like what Hope said; Kace was still not ready for another battle.

"I am sure," Hope nodded. "Be careful." She added.

She held her gaze for a moment longer, but then Lana nodded and rushed towards the battle ahead. Where the sound of vicious snarl and roar, also throes and agony could be heard.

This place would be ruined beyond recognition when all of this ended.

After Lana was leaving, Zarrn ushered them to enter the safety of this huge building. "Close the door!" He said loudly to the hunter, who was guarding the door.

Chapter 579 - UNDER ATTACK (4)

They didn't stop running, instead, Zarrn led them to the backyard where there were few hunters busying themselves preparing their weapon.

They dipped their arrow, sword and dagger into a green liquid inside a large basket.

They were facing demons after all, with those hunters being merely human. They wouldn't be able to fight them if they didn't have the proper knowledge about their weaknesses.

"What was that?" Hope mumbled under her breath when Zarrn opened a secret door on the ground, lifting its heavy lids, so Hope and the twins could go inside.

"Poison that could harm the demons," Zarrn answered her. "Now, get in."

The three centaurs who came along with them, had stepped inside this secret passageway, followed by Ethan and Ian. action

"Careful Hope," Ian reached out for Hope to help her step down the stairs.

Zarrn didn't go down with them, but when he closed the lids, everything was pitch-black and silent.

"Ethan?" Hope went panic because she couldn't see anything, she knew Ian was holding her, but she couldn't see Ethan, she didn't want to lose anyone again.

"I am here, Hope."

Hope felt there was someone touching her left shoulder, knowing it was Ethan, then she became slightly relaxed.

"You can see in the dark?" After a moment Hope realized, aside from her, the other could walk just fine with the lack of light.

"You will be able to see inside the darkness if you get used to this," One of the centaurs replied to her question.

Hope wanted to say that she didn't want to get used to it, because in order to do so, she needed to stay in this kind of environment for a long time. No, thanks.

"Supernatural creatures have better eyesight than humans," Ethan chimed in. "But, if you get used to this kind of environment, I think you can."

They chatted to each other about this for another minute before finally, Hope could see some light in the distance. The light sourced from three torches, lining up beside the right side of the stone wall.

A centaur named Biryon moved a statue that blocked the small wooden door and when the statue jerked away and started to slide over, Hope could hear voices coming from the other side of the door.

And there, they were not inside some place like a cave anymore, or an entirely closed huge room like a hall for a refugee. But they were outside. They were in another part of the forest.

Apparently, every house in the village had a secret passageway that led them to this part of the forest. Hope and the other only knew about this later.

"Where are we?" Hope asked Biryon beside her. Aside from the three centaurs that came with them, there were another five more of them there.

The other five centaurs and three hunters, they could be easily recognized because of the brown cloak that they were wearing. They gave one or two instructions to the villagers to follow them.

"We are near the centaur's den," Biryon said. "We will be fine there."

Hope followed the horde of the people to go to the direction that the centaurs showed them. Occasionally, Hope would look back to the secret door.

The moon shone brightly above them as its light illuminated their path.

She hoped everything would be fine with Kace and Lana too...

She couldn't bear any bad news.

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Kace watched with Chiron beside him, as all the demon wolves propelled forward, their beady dark eyes showing no sense of mercy at all.

The lycan knew the ten demon wolves were no match for his strength. After all, he had killed that same amount of demons earlier this morning when they attacked Hope and Carina inside the forest.

But, now before their eyes, it seemed the whole race of demon wolves had flooded the village. They were like mad dogs, uncontrollably biting and clawing everything that touched them as their snout sniffed the air as if they were looking for a certain scent.

His mate's scent.

This thought alone made Kace boil in anger. How dare they target his mate!? If there was someone behind this attack, they would pay severely for their intention.

"If this is not your plan, who do you think behind this attack?" Kace asked Chiron beside him.

There were the whole centaurs and dozens of hunters behind Chiron and Kace, ready to enter this battle. They only waited for their leader's cue, which was the two people in front of them.

"The demon woman," Chiron replied simply, there was no other than that demon, who fought with the priestess a year ago, who would be able to control these demon wolves.

They shouldn't be here in the first place because the village was very far from their habitat.

Kace's bones snapping and his muscles expanding as he turned into the white beast once again. The wounds on his back were visible to see and Chiron slightly knitted his brows upon seeing that.

"ONWARDS!" Chiron shouted and then the centaurs and the hunters ran full force with unsheathed swords, or bow, and arrow in their hands, they had come prepared.

It didn't take a long time before they were already deep in the throes of sparring.

Chiron was holding the demon's head in one hand and a bloody dagger in the other. While the white beast was lunging head first into two demons by himself.

He dove his teeth into the first creature, sinking them into their black fur, and crushed their flesh along with their bones.

The demon wolves let out a disgusting, gut-wrenching squeal. But the white beast didn't let go. Instead he used his back leg to kick the second creature in the face, causing him to fly backwards a few meters away only then to be taken care of by the other hunters.

The white beast removed his teeth from the first demon wolf and swiped his claw against the second wolf's face.

Those demon wolves then puffed into black smoke. Disappeared.

Chapter 580 - UNDER ATTACK (5)

Hunters' bodies lifted into the air, massive talons digging bloodily into shoulders and backs as those demons killed a lot of hunters before they could be killed.

More screams and shouts. Tearing sounds and sickening noises. Crunching, when the centaurs' bodies were thrown and bit.

Fear and blood could be smelled in the air. Not from the demon wolves because they didn't bleed, but from the other party, who tried to defend their territory against this attack.

On the other side, a black demon wolf was about to swing his huge talons onto the centaur chief when a massive white fur beast leapt into view, its large mass was tackling the demon wolf to the ground.

However, there was something really wrong with his movement as all of a sudden, the white beast felt a searing pain on its back, and for a moment lost his concentration over the pain.

It was only a second that was needed for the demon wolf to turn the table and dig his huge talons on his neck instead. Then, angry red spattering across the ground. Blood.

With an ear-splitting roar, the white beast raised his sharp claws against the demon wolf and put the fight to an end.

Yet, before the white beast could scramble on his feet, there was a second attack from another demon wolf.

Fortunately, out of instinct, the white beast stepped aside just in time before he got another serious injury. Despite the pain on his back and the almost healed injury on his neck, the white beast still held his bearing as the two creatures were baring their teeth and glaring murderously.

The demon wolf lunged forward again, moving to bite the white lycan on his neck. However, before he could do that the white lycan had barreled over him and managed to bring him down, his claws raking across the demon wolf's face and making him howl in agony then disappeared into a black smoke.

The battle of the lycan, the centaurs, and the hunters against the demonic beast took a long time before the horde of the demon wolves stopped coming and they could catch their breath.

Apparently, among those creatures, there were two feline shifters among them. It was rare to see feline shifters these days after the massacre that the Donovans had done to the other shifters' mates.

By then, the village around them would need a serious reconstruction, because there was not a single house that was not damaged.

The only good thing that came out from fighting those demon wolves was, because they didn't leave piles of carcasses when those demons died as their bodies would turn into smoke and disappear with the wind, yet the destruction and casualty were surreal.

There were dozens of hunters that breathed their last and more, who got badly injured, not only that, there were three centaurs cease to exist in this battle.

Chiron was standing tall while looking down at his people. His expression was stoic, but the sorrow in his eyes was visible to see. Carina was beside him to share their pain.

Meanwhile the others looked frustrated when they had to hold another funeral, a huge funeral than the one they had just hours ago.

This chilly night felt more mournful when soft groans filled the air, as the cold wind was blowing and made the trees rustled like living things. The light from the moon above them was covered by dark clouds, thus they had to light the torches.

Even when they won this battle, no one shared laughs or even a small smile.

The white beast shifted back quickly, ignoring the pain of his bones snapping and his muscles expanding into place. Despite the fact this was the most painful shifting back that Kace had ever experienced, maybe because of his condition that led to this pain, but there was no time to focus on pain.

Kace walked towards Chiron as his wounds started to heal, except the wounds on his back that kept throbbing.

"I am sorry for your loss," Kace said when he stood beside the centaur.

Chiron glanced at him and nodded solemnly. "Their time has come to end."

Kace wanted to say more, even though he knew it wouldn't change the fact that the race of centaurs had decreased in number once again, but he caught a figure that was not supposed to be there.

Lana.

She just shifted back into her human form, away from him, but Kace was able to recognize her right away.

Blood rushed to his head when his body moved on its own toward the female werewolf, who was clutching her injured hand.

"What are you doing here!?" Kace snapped harshly while grabbing her hand and turned her body. "You are not supposed to be here!"

Lana was startled when she was being caught. She was fighting far enough for Kace to realize that she was there, but not too far until she couldn't see him.

"Where is Hope!?" Kace was furious because Lana didn't answer his question immediately. This female werewolf shouldn't be here.

"Don't worry, she is fine, the centaurs took her to the safety. Ian and Ethan are with her." Lana tried to answer him calmly, but her heart was beating as fast as she realized how much Kace was angry at her. "We can ask Chiron where they take them."

"You don't even know where they are!" Kace spoke through his gritted teeth.

Kace's eyes flickered back to the color of red, before they returned to its black color. Once again, Kace was fighting the beast in him. It was unsure, until when he would be like this. It seemed, there would be another problem that Kace had to face after he got his wound treated, if he kept doing so.

Without words, Kace turned around to approach Chiron with Lana following behind him.

Lana had known Kace long enough to understand that it was best to not interrupt him when he looked like that.