

TLOA Lycan 591

Chapter 591 - YES, MY LOVELY

Though it sounded cliché, and Hope's behavior didn't reflect the urgency of their situation now. But, in reality, the white beast reacted to that. He snarled at the other centaurs that were still preventing him from approaching his mate. He bared his blade-sharp-like fangs as he tried to bite off the horse's body of one of the centaurs near him.

Fortunately, that young centaur had a good reflex to dodge the lethal attack that was thrown at him, or else, he would end up like the poor giant troll, whose body could no longer be recognized.

"Tell your people to move away," Hope said to Chiron, who was now following behind her closely.

However, when the beast saw this, he wasn't pleased at all as he shifted his attention towards Chiron. Then he sent a long vicious growl at the chief of the centaurs.

Chiron knitted his brows, since he could feel the hostility that the beast directed towards him. "Are you sure?"

"A hundred percent." Hope nodded decisively.

Chiron raised his hand and stopped walking to follow Hope, as he watched how the girl strolled across the clearing to meet her mate.

Chiron was aware that the mate bond was very strong, and this kind of gift was not something that could be taken lightly. He knew that there was something magical between the mate bond bearers. That one couldn't explain or put into the right word.

Hope stretched out her arms when she was close enough to the white beast. Even without amazing hearing ability, Hope could still feel the tension from the people, no, those supernatural creatures, behind her. She could hear their breath come to stop with every move that she took.

The white beast's familiar red eyes stared straight back into Hope's, after he made sure those lowly creatures wouldn't intervene anymore.

The moment when Hope's hand touched the white tufts of his fur, right away calmness washed over the beast. It was like a form of relief and something else that Hope couldn't put her finger on.

Though just a moment ago, this exact same beast just slaughtered a giant troll, whose size was twice as big as the beast' body. But Hope knew this was the same beast, who would allow her to scramble on his back and fall asleep covered by its warm fur. action

A part of Hope, no, the whole part of her believed that Kace would never hurt her.

Never.

Hope's stroke the beast's ears carefully. Sure this probably looked like a suicide mission. But, fear never came to her heart.

Kace growled loudly at Hope, causing all the birds and wildlife to flee at hearing such a feral and predator-like noise.

The centaurs and the shapeshifters behind Hope tensed as the hairs on their body stood on end in response, and had to stop the urge to cower back.

In spite of Kace's vicious growl, Hope could see all of the insecurities, worries, and love were shining in the depths of his beautiful eyes.

Hope held her ground and didn't even flinch when she wrapped her arms around the beast's neck.

"It's alright, everything is all right now. We are fine. I am fine," Hope whispered softly.

How could she be scared of the man who chose to love her so unconditionally, and doted on her with everything he had? The man, who literally had known her for her entire life.

Why would Hope choose to run from him, when he needed her the most at this time, just because of a mere menacing growl?

Regardless what form he took, whether it was the beast, or the young crying boy, he was still Kace.

Hope could feel the beast sniffing her hair, and then the air, as his snout lifted high, looking for any form of danger around them.

After a while, Hope released the beast and stared into his, still, blood-colored red eyes, while he narrowed down to meet hers. His head lowered until his snout was only inches from Hope's nose.

Hope reached a hand out to touch his fur again, but then his ears perked up because of the slight noise behind Hope.

It was Bree.

Apparently, the little girl had woken up from her unconscious state, and was looking for her parents.

It broke everyone's heart when the girl didn't stop calling for her mother and father. But Ethan, who was carrying her, couldn't let her see her parents in such condition.

The beast c.o.c.ked his head to the side, and trailed his eyes back to his mate.

Hope curled her fingers around a tuft of his fur, and cupped his wolf face as she stared directly to his red eyes. "Shift back for me, okay?"

The beast didn't respond to her plea, he was still alarmed by the centaurs' presence there. He seemed to not like it when the other creatures were too close to him, or too close to his mate.

But then, after a few words from Hope, Kace's paw turned into hands, which curled around her body, and his white fur turned into flesh.

Within seconds, Kace had shifted back into his human's form.

"Hope..." was all he said before he fell on her laps, with his eyes closed and shallow breath.

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Hope was sitting on the ground, beside Kace's body.

They were inside the Centaurs' den since they couldn't take her to the village, fearing her scent would drive another attack from the demon wolves.

The village was in complete ruined condition to be able to hold back the second attack. Thus, here she was, coiling her body beside Kace, who was still asleep.

This place was like a hut, an ugly one. Since those centaurs lived in the wild, so there was no way they could provide her with the luxury that humans needed.

Hope yawned because she couldn't fall asleep. It had been two days since that dreadful night, and Kace hadn't given any sign of waking up. And because Kace was in this condition, so did Lana.

"Hey, wake up." Hope poked Kace's cheek with her finger lightly, and turned around to look at the window when she heard a gruff voice.

"Yes, my lovely..."

Chapter 592 - HOLD BACK

Hope turned her head towards Kace, and watched how the big bad lycan tried to sit down with a groan. "My... lovely?" the corner of Hope's lips twitched with that endearing word. She had heard this before.

Kace supported his head on his palm while he was sitting crossed legs, and tilted his head at Hope. With his sleepy eyes, he stared at her. "Yes, don't you like it lovely? Lovely Hope, my lovely Hope," he mused with his own words.

"Oh, not this again," Hope groaned. She really wanted to face palm herself for this situation.

She thought after that night, the beast would stop and Kace would come back. But, after hearing the first sentence that came out from his mouth the moment he opened his eyes, Hope was a hundred percent sure that this was not the case she thought would turn out.

"Why? Don't you like to see me?" Kace frowned upon seeing Hope's reaction. "Aren't you glad? I thought you will be happy, and cry a river for me as you throw yourself and hug me tightly, the second you see me wake up, isn't that what you want?"

Hope rolled her eyes exasperatedly. "You need to get over yourself."

"Why?" Kace knitted his brows, apparently, his decision to sit down all of a sudden made him a little bit dizzy. After all, it had been two days since he was out, thus his abrupt move didn't help his case.

"Happy, yes. Cry a river and throw myself to you, no." Hope glared at Kace, pouting her lips. How could this beast be so daring to come up with that idea?

Well, normal Kace was also a bold person with such a tease personality, but this beast took it to another level. While Kace was a reserved man, even though he would tease her in every given opportunity, but his beast was...

"Don't you want to give me a kiss?" he asked sullenly.

He really had a serious case of split personality. Other people would think that he must be having two personalities that contradicting each other, living in one body. Which, at some point was not wrong, since his beast would see Kace's magnanimous human side, was a form of weakness.

"No," Hope replied readily.

"What a cold answer," he grumbled. "I remembered how bold you were when you approached me that night, weren't you afraid that I was going to tear you apart?"

Hope answered him without hesitation. "No, you will not do that." Then she added. "I will not be here if you do that."

"Right," Kace nodded. "You are right." and then he leaned over, and rested his throbbing forehead on her shoulder. "I will never have a shred of courage to hurt you even when I lost myself."

Hope already knew that. She had proved it herself.

"Oh, you smell so nice..." Kace dr.a.p.ed his strong arms around Hope's waist as he pulled her closer so his mate could lean back on his broad chest.

Hope was alarmed, yet the warm breath of him that brushed her nape made her body shivered involuntarily. "Kace..." her voice came out raspy. action

"I really want to mark you." His voice filled with longing as he grazed his teeth on Hope's neck.

"No." Hope's eyes opened wide. She was still reeling by the thought Kace would dig his canines beneath her skin, and tore her flesh. Moreover, Kace said it himself that the process could be dangerous if they weren't careful enough on handling it.

Feeling Hope's body tensed, the beast chuckled lightly. "Don't worry I will not do it without your consent." He kissed her hair. "But I can't promise you I won't, if you keep on seducing me."

"Why on earth do you think I seduced you?!" Hope's face burned red. This beast was really annoying! What made him get the idea that Hope was seducing him?! When they were just talking?

Hope felt there was a rumble on his chest when he laughed heartily. Well, at least there was one of them, which was in a good mood.

"I am hungry, let's get something to eat. I smell something nice out there, the centaurs must be roasting a rabbit right now." Kace raised his nose and sniffed the air.

Hope shrugged her shoulders and looked at the wooden door of the hut, "They will come to deliver food here."

Although Hope was saying that casually, Kace picked something out with her tone. "What happened?"

"Well, I can't get out of this hut, since my scent will invite another demon, beast, or troll again," Hope exaggerated the way she talked. She almost died of boredom for being inside this hut.

In order to mask her scent, the centaur put her in the middle of their den, and surrounded this hut. So that her scent would get mixed up with theirs. Not only that, they would often roast rabbit or chicken to add more smelly scent around the hut.

Hope could say that method was effective, because these past two days had been uneventful. No giant troll, no demon wolves. Great. However, Hope was really bored. She felt like she was a prisoner.

The centaurs said that they would try to find the cloak that Lydia had given to her, but it was unsure when they could find it.

From the window, she could see the sun had just risen, and it left a beautiful hue of orange color on the horizon.

"Don't worry, if they come, I will fight them again," Kace said with confidence.

"No!" Hope objected. "No more fight, you need to heal your wound!" she said sternly.

Hope had seen the wound on Kace's back, as it became uglier than before. Carina said it was because he had exerted himself.

"You are no fun at all," Kace grumbled, burying his nose on her shoulder sullenly.

Right at that time, Ian came inside the hut with a plate of breakfast for Hope. His cheerful voice travelled into the hut before they could see them.

"Hope! We roasted a rabbit for you!" He opened the door of the hut, and shock was written all over his face. "It's still early, can you guys hold back a little?!"

Chapter 593 - THE SLEEPING BEAST

The first thing that Ian witnessed was the way Kace cuddled Hope in his arms. This scene alone was very intimate to be presented early in the morning. What were the two of them thinking?

Hope just realized her position and struggled to free herself, only to be hugged even tighter. "No, this is not what you think!" she panicked. This was indeed a very awkward and suggestive position.

"Don't worry, I will not think anything outrageous." Ian held his right hand up as he walked with a plate full of roasted rabbit, yet his expression told Hope otherwise. This boy indeed had thought of something outrageous.

"Seriously!" Hope rolled her eyes exasperatedly. Kace also didn't help at all by being all clingy like this, hugging her, acting like he was a five year old boy. What happened to this man's personality and behavior?

There were many sides of Kace that Hope had discovered, but it seemed like it didn't stop there. Her gut feeling was telling her that there will be more to discover that would shock her.

"You are awake!" Ian spoke cheerfully, smoothly changed the topic as he put down the plate in front of Hope. action

This small hut didn't have a bed or anything alike at all. Thus, Hope and Kace had been lying on a stack of haystacks where they slept all this time.

Hope couldn't say it was convenient, but she knew she couldn't complain about their current situation. Or otherwise, she would look like an ungrateful brat.

"Bring another plate for me, pup. I am hungry," Kace said in his guttural voice, when he watched how Ian was sitting across from Hope. He didn't like this boy, because of the way he touched and being near his mate more than necessary.

He watched how intimate the two of them when they shared a joke or two. Or whenever they were talking, Hope would occasionally slap Ian's arms playfully and Ian would do the same.

Well, the beast didn't like it when another man touched his mate, especially when she had not bear her mark yet.

"Huh?" Ian raised his eyebrows questioningly. It wasn't the order that surprised him, but the hostility in Kace's tone that made him give Hope a look. "Sure."

"So, what are you waiting for!?" Kace glowered, and Hope pinched his arms to warn him.

"You don't have to snap at him." Hope frowned, and the beast hid his face behind her neck again, grumbling something incoherently.

"What happened?" Ian was at loss, but then he remembered. "He is..." his voice trailed off.

Despite Ian not finishing his words, Hope understood what he wanted to say. "Yes, he is," she said helplessly.

Ian grimaced when he heard that, he thought the beast wouldn't come to the surface again after that night. However, seeing Lana's condition now, it seemed Kace's human side was too weak to restrain the beast, thus his beast was the one who took his consciousness over instead.

At least, that was what Ian understood from Ethan's long explanation about there was the possibility of how the beast would be the one that they would meet, once Kace had regained his consciousness.

It seemed like constant battle had worn Kace out.

And now Ethan was following Carina, almost, everywhere. Talking about the constellations, and whatever the stuffs that Ian couldn't comprehend, leaving him alone to babysit little Bree.

"Alright, I will get you some food, and call Carina over to check up on Kace." Ian realized his presence there was no longer wanted from the way Kace behaved.

"Just bring the food. You don't need to bring the centaur." Kace scoffed. This beast was akin to a cranky little child, who just woke up from his sleep.

"Ask Carina to come quickly," Hope said, contradicting Kace's words. There was a grumble from Kace behind her. But she could care less about his dislike towards the female centaur.

If the beast wanted to take over Kace's consciousness, then he had to stop complaining and get along with the others as well. After all, they were in this mission together and plus, the centaurs were doing nothing but helping them.

"Oh, right." Ian turned around to say something that he almost forgot because of Kace. "The centaur went to the place where you dropped your cloak before, let's hope your cloak is still there."

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Carina came in after fifteen minutes Ian went out of the hut, she brought a concoction for Kace's wound. Though it didn't help to heal it, the female Centaur said that it would help keep the wound from getting worse.

The beast, of course, was being annoying and would growl threateningly when Carina came close to him.

It was Hope, who would glower back to stop him from making any scene.

And apparently, the beast's condition was not in a good state, because as soon as he ate all the food that was served for him, he would fall asleep again, exhausted. This made Hope even more worried.

Fortunately, after the exhausting morning and afternoon, there came good news from the centaurs. They succeed in finding the cloak.

In another word, once Kace had regained his strength for another long walk, they would be ready to set off to the Uzu Mountain.

Kace was still fast asleep when Hope used her cloak, and walked out of the hut, to feel the night breeze after two days straight she couldn't go anywhere. She wanted to see Lana's condition.

However, Hope missed little Bree, when she took a detour to go to Lana's hut.

Bree was walking straight to Hope's hut, there was a bucket of wild flowers in her little arms. Hope had said that once she found her cloak she would take her to her parent's grave.

On the other hand, the centaurs were used to seeing the little girl around. That was why no one would have thought Bree would come to Hope's hut alone, with the beast inside.

"Hope?" Bree called her when she entered the hut. It was her first time to come inside, because before they wouldn't allow her to come to this place. "Are you there?"

Chapter 594 - AGAIN!

The girl didn't see Hope, but she saw there was someone sleeping with a blanket covering the entire body.

Bree thought it was Hope, who was lying down, fast asleep as the blanket covered her body. Therefore, with a bucket of flowers in her hands, she walked closer while calling her name.

"Hope?" Bree blinked her eyes because the light in the room was dim. It was not enough to provide the light that she needed to see. The only light that illuminated the room was the flames from the bonfire outside, since the moon was covered by the cloud. "Hope, wake up, you have been sleeping the whole day."

The little girl took off her slippers when she got into the haystack and poked the person's shoulder, who she thought was Hope.

On the other hand, Kace was in his deep slumber, when a foreign scent invaded his nose. The smell of flowers and it was quite strong.

'Does Hope bring flowers into the hut?' Kace scrunched his nose, as the scent was growing thicker. 'Why would she bring something like that?'

The beast was not fully awake yet, thus he was still not aware when Bree came closer to him, thinking he was Hope.

Only when she poked his shoulder that Kace's eyes snapped open as he turned his body real quick and startled the little girl.

Bree fell on her back, and her mouth was ajar when she watched it was Kace.

But, the beast disliked this little human near him as his canines elongated.

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Hope was entering Lana's hut. It was Ian and Ethan, who would report to her about Lana's condition when Hope was still inside her own hut, and was not allowed to go out.

And now, Hope had her cloak back, she could roam around this place without being worried about those evil creatures that would hunt her down again.

Though this cloak already had holes here and there, it was clean enough for her to use, since there was a female centaur who had washed it for her.

"How is Lana?" Hope asked the moment she stepped inside the hut. Her eyes immediately found Lana's figure that was lying on the same haystack that Hope used to sleep back in her hut. But, because this place was smaller than hers, now with the four of them inside, Hope had to exchange places with Ethan if she wanted to see Lana closer.

"She has a fever," Ethan replied with his brows knitted together as he watched Lana's condition.

"It is not common for shapeshifters to have a fever," Ian explained. He was sitting beside Lana's feet, while Hope was sitting near Lana's head. "We don't easily get sick."

"Well, we know why she is sick," Ethan said as he sat, while hugging his long legs behind Hope. "I don't think she will be able to join us to Mount Uzu in her current condition."

Hope nodded.

Chiron said it would take four days to reach Mount Uzu. Lana wouldn't be able to withstand such a long trip. No, not when her condition was like this.

"But, how can we leave her behind?" Ian mumbled. He didn't want to be left behind, and took care of Lana. Especially if he had to stay with those centaurs, it would be the most uncomfortable experience for him. As selfish as it sounded, he didn't know Lana very well and didn't have that kind of bond that Hope shared with the female werewolf.

However, he would feel bad to voice out what he was actually thinking. After all, they were in this mission together.

"We'll talk about this to Chiron, and hear what he has in mind," Hope decided, since Kace was nowhere to be helpful to ask an opinion from for this moment.

There was a moment of silence after the siblings mumbled their agreement. Then, Ethan opened the hut's door, and poked his head outside as if he was trying to look for someone.

"What happened?" Hope caught that gesture, and became curious.

"Bree didn't come with you?" Ethan asked.

"Bree?" Hope frowned. "No. Ah, right... where is she? I had not seen her since this morning."

"She went with Carina to pick some flowers, she said you will take her to her parent's grave once you found your cloak. That's why, when she heard you had it, she insisted on going to pick some flowers," Ian explained.

"A moment ago, she said she will come to your hut, to show you the flowers that she had picked. You didn't see her on your way here?" Ian closed the hut's door again, and watched as Hope shook her head with knitted brows.

Hope gave some thought, "maybe because I took a detour to come here, that's why I missed her..." she contemplated.

"Hm, maybe..." Ian's voice trailed off, but then the realization hit him. "So, where is she now? Don't tell me..."

Ian didn't finish his sentence when he looked at the other two people there, but from the horror that flashed on their eyes, he knew they were in the same understanding.

Hope and Ethan sprung to their feet and rushed out of the hut.

It didn't mean that Hope believed Kace would do any harm on the girl, but... the beast... he had an unpredictable temper.

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When Ethan, and Hope reached her hut with Ian following behind them, they could hear a low whimper from inside.

Hope's heart pounded on her chest as she imagined the worst case scenario.

"Kace!" Ethan was the first person who opened the door hut, and readied himself to shift if the situation forced him to do so.

Hope came in second, and her eyes widened when she watched what was happening inside the hut.

Flowers scattered everywhere, while there the beast was, standing tall in front of them, with little Bree in his arms. Kace held her with one arm by the back of her cloak, now she looked like a little puppy that was holding its scruff.

"Take her out!" Kace grunted while throwing Bree towards Ethan.

It was a good thing that the werewolf had an amazing reflex, so Ethan could catch the girl just in time.

Yet, Bree squalled in delight. "Again! Again!"

Chapter 595 - LITTLE KITTEN

The little girl struggled to go down from Ethan's arms and was about to go straight towards Kace again with both of her hands held high, and a bright smile on her cherry lips.

"Again! Again! Bree wants to be thrown again!" she moved swiftly right under the eyes of the four people inside the hut.

Hope, and the siblings were too shocked to be able to get her back when she bumped into Kace's legs.

"Up! Up!" Bree squalled.

Before, every time she wanted to approach Kace, her parents would prevent her to do so. Because they were afraid of him. Different from her parents, Bree had always been curious about the beast since they lived under the same roof, but the two of them never interacted.

Kace looked down at the little human, who was trying to climb his body. His brows knitted, but he didn't move and just stared at her.

"Come here Bree, let's play with me," Ian hastily rushed forward and picked Bree up from the ground, before the beast changed his mind and did something outrageous to endanger the little girl's life.

"No!" Bree pouted and stretched out her arms towards Kace when Ian carried her out of the hut.

They still could hear her protest when Ian took her somewhere, only when Ian persuaded her to pick another bucket of flowers, then the girl stopped complaining and went along with him.

"Where are you going?" Kace asked Hope as he strode across this small room and hugged her tightly. "I miss you."

Hope rolled her eyes dramatically. He just woke up now and said he missed her? "I went to see Lana." There was a scoff from Kace as a reply. "She is sick because she is attached to you. It must be the result of the oath that both of you took."

"She is sick because she is weak, just like my human side," Kace grumbled and released Hope. "I see you got your cloak already," he said it distastefully since he couldn't smell Hope's intoxicating scent, it quite pissed him off. action

"Yeah, they found it," Hope mumbled.

Upon seeing the closeness between the couple, Ethan was slightly trapped feeling awkward to stay there, thus he cleared his throat and walked away clumsily while saying; "I will go to see Ian and Bree."

However, Hope chimed in. "I will go too, I don't want to be trapped inside this hut again, I need some fresh air!" She followed Ethan.

And of course since Hope was not there, the beast would proceed to go out of the hut too.

With his hand draped on Hope's slender waist protectively. The two of them and Ethan, who was walking two steps ahead from them, strolled towards the clearing where not many centaurs were there.

From this clearing they could see the village not too far from where they were standing and, the supposed to be the Loris' family house, was in the opposite direction. They could only see a pile of rubble from a distance.

In front of them, Ian and Bree were picking some wild flowers near the trees. Kace could hear what the little girl was rumbling about and how patient Ian was in responding to her every babble.

Hope swatted his hands away from her waist and raised her hands while stretching her tired body. "It feels so good!" Hope squalled as she closed her eyes to feel the chilly night wind swirled her hair and cloak.

Both of them walked slowly as they enjoyed the scenery, despite what had happened, it was a good thing that they could have some peace for themselves, at times like this.

"So, when will we go?" Kace broke the silence between them as he watched Ethan who joined Ian and Bree to pick up some flowers, not too far from them.

Hope whipped her head, caught off guard by his questions. "I thought you wouldn't like it if we went to find the priestess."

The beast scoffed, "You will not stop until we meet the priestess and find Lydia, right?"

Hope grinned. "This is for you too."

"Is there something that I can do to change your mind, and carry you out of this place?" Kace raised his brows, provokingly as he already knew what Hope's answer would be.

"No."

"Then, let's meet the priestess and find the witch, so we can go out of this damn place as soon as possible," he grumbled, actually he didn't like this plan.

"Good," Hope said cheerfully and hugged him. Finally they were on the same page. It was very tiring to have to argue with him all the time.

Right at that time, Bree screeched and let out a low feeble sound.

"What happened?" Hope mumbled, but Kace had grabbed her hand to approach the little girl and the twins.

Upon closer look, they could see Bree was on the verge of crying.

"What happened?" Kace asked with a frown.

Hearing his gruff voice, Bree put down her hands and ran toward Kace, hugging his legs while her hand pointed at Ian accusingly. "He scared the kitten," Bree snuffled.

Hope squatted down and pulled Bree close to her. Because the little girl didn't get any response from Kace, she let Hope hug her and said the same thing.

"No!" Ian waved his hands frantically. "I didn't mean to scare the kitten, how do I know that she wanted to catch the kitten."

However, Bree was crying again. "Bree was talking to the kitten, but Ian scared her."

"Ian!" Hope hissed.

"Wait!" he held his hand up. "Why do you blame it on me? I am innocent."

They were trying to make Bree to stop crying, even Ian was forced to shift into his beast form by Ethan, yet the beast was not as cute as the kitten, and Bree looked at him sullenly.

They didn't even realize that Kace wasn't there. Only when there was a rustling sound and his voice came all of a sudden, did they realize that he briefly disappeared and just came back?

"Here's your kitten, now stop crying." Kace held a yellow little kitten in his hand by its scruff.

Chapter 596 - THE STRONG PULL

Bree raised her head when she heard the feeble meow from the little kitten, which was hanging helplessly by its scruff.

A bright smile appeared on her lips as she approached Kace, jumping in happiness, stretching her arms to receive the kitten.

"Careful," Kace grumbled as he put the yellow little kitten in Bree's arms gently.

Ethan and Ian who witnessed this were exchanging a look, it surprised them that the beast would even bother to find the kitten inside the forest around this clearing. Moreover, they didn't know this beast had a soft spot for a little girl, as he always appeared snarling or growling to everyone except his mate.

Bree wiped her tears from her face and received the kitten as she cradled the little yellow fur creature in her arms. The little kitten seemed too scared of Kace as it snuggled to Bree's embrace. action

"Up!" Bree raised her free hand towards Kace. She wanted to be carried while holding her new pet.

"Up!" she said it again when Kace just frowned and did nothing.

Hope approached them and elbowed her mate. "Why don't you carry her, so she could stop screaming?" she giggled when Kace gave her a look.

"Do you think I am a babysitter?" he grumbled, yet he still bent his body and picked up the girl, cradled her in his right hand while his other hand entwined his fingers with Hope's.

Hope chuckled, but she was pleased with the beast's behavior towards Bree. At first she thought that Kace would treat Bree like the other creatures around them, with harsh words or eyes that filled with disdain.

"I didn't know that you have a soft spot for children," Hope teased him as she caressed the kitten's soft fur.

"She reminds me of you," Kace said casually.

Ian and Ethan were following behind them, yet far enough to give the couple some privacy. They couldn't help but think that they were looking to a family of three.

It looked sweet, but at the same time they grimaced when remembered that Kace was currently controlled by his beast, they didn't know how long he would be in the right mood to respond to the little girl's babbling.

"Me?" Hope widened her eyes and grinned. "Why? Because she is cute like me?"

"No," Kace shook his head and said straightforwardly. "A crybaby."

A slap landed on Kace's back when he finished what he was saying.

"What was that for?" He looked down at Hope. The slap was not even close to being considered painful, but he enjoyed the sight of how his mate sullen after hearing his tease.

"I am not a crybaby," Hope said irritably.

"Said someone who cried through the night because she lost her doll," Kace pointed out the truth.

At the age of eight, Hope lost her white wolf doll that Kace bought for her, it was her favorite after all. She was crying until the next day Kace came and brought the same doll for her.

"You were very stubborn even as a child," Kace spoke lightly.

"I was not!" Hope objected, puffed her cheeks and crossed her arms in front of her chest.

Kace chuckled lightly and his voice pleased Hope's ears, just like a beautiful melody in this starry night, especially when he bent down his body and whispered. "Don't worry, you are cuter than her."

Hope was surprised and whipped her head only to be kissed on her cheek by him.

"Kace!" Hope's cheeks blushed, he kissed her in front of Bree, and fortunately the little girl was too busy with the kitten to notice that.

Ignoring Hope's protest, Kace sighed deeply. "I should have just marked you when you ask me to. My human's side is too polite."

"You said that it is dangerous and complicated." Hope picked a red flower and played with it.

"Right," Kace mumbled, "It is indeed dangerous, especially when it is unheard of—it never ever once was the case—that someone of my kind has a mate from the human or guardian angel race."

Hope rolled her eyes. "You are talking about one thing, and contradicting it in the next second."

Kace shrugged his shoulder. "What am I supposed to do? I really wanted to mark you, since you have come to age. The pull is getting stronger."

Hope didn't know how strong it was since she didn't feel it, but her feelings for him were genuine. She loved him, even before she loved him as a man. She had loved him as a guardian, a brother, a friend, a protector, and whatever roles that Kace had taken throughout her seventeen years of life.

"I think I will ask the witch once we finish our business here." He was referring to Serefina.

Hope didn't answer that, and they continued to walk in silence. Occasionally, Bree would ask one or two things when she played with her kitten that she named Kitty.

"What kind of name is that?" Kace scrunched his brows in protest.

"She wanted to be named Kitty," Bree said gleefully, as she talked to Kitty. "Don't be afraid, Kace is a kind person, his heart is as soft as a tofu."

The corner of Kace's lips twitched while beside her, Hope was laughing heartily, even Ian and Ethan, who heard that behind them, were trying their best to suppress their laugh.

"I should just leave this girl inside the forest," Kace said grimly, but Hope slapped his back in return.

But, Kace didn't react to that as his eyes glued to the forest, this strange sudden behavior made Hope stop laughing, and followed his line of sight.

Not long after, Hope could hear hooves pounding the ground before them, from the lushes of trees, Chiron appeared, basking his presence under the light of the moon.

"I hope I don't disturb the two of you," Chiron said politely.

"You do." And with that, Kace received the third slaps from Hope.

"What happened Chiron?" Hope asked, she wished this wasn't another bad news.

Apparently, he didn't take the beast's words as something rude. Then he replied to Hope. "I want to talk about our journey to Mount Uzu with you two."

Chapter 597 - THE SOLUTION

Kace grabbed Hope's hand as they walked into the forest, where Chiron would like to explain to them about his plan for their upcoming trip to Mount Uzu.

Bree was still with them, she was very obedient as she hugged her new furry friend, Kitty and rested her head on the curve of Kace's shoulder.

It was a surprising thing that Kace didn't give back the little girl instead to the siblings and let them take her, just because Bree refused to be carried by anyone else except Kace, and clung her tiny arms around Kace's neck.

In front of them, Chiron took them to a place near a river, as they could hear the stream from where they were.

It was the same River, where Hope and Carina were attacked by demon wolves for the first time.

Chiron then stopped by the river and turned around to face the couple. As the chief of the centaurs, Chiron was taller and bigger than the rest of his kind.

But, Hope wasn't scared of him. For her, he was like that kind of person who would make you feel calm just by listening to his voice.

"About our journey to Mount Uzu," Chiron started. "We can't take you all the way to the heart of that mountain, the place I assume to be where the priestess is."

"What do you mean with that?" Kace knitted his brows.

"There is some kind of magic that protects that place since the battle between the priestess and the demon woman." It could mean either the priestess or the demon woman, who had casted that spell. "If I were able to penetrate that protection, I would have led my people in this rescue mission long ago."

The only reason why they needed to prove to the hunters that the priestess that was living among them all this time was an impostor, was because they couldn't enter that particular place in the mountain by themselves. That place was protected by some kind of magic that would not allow supernatural creatures to come closer.

"What kind of magic?" Kace squinted his eyes, as he felt a bad premonition with the way Chiron was talking to him.

"Supernatural creatures like us were not able to go in. We will feel this unbearable pain if we're persistent to go into the mountain," Chiron replied.

"If we can't enter the mountain, so how can we find that damn priestess?" Kace hissed in annoyance, but when he watched how Chiron's sight shifted on Hope, he immediately understood what this centaur was saying. "NO!" he roared.

Seeing how Bree was shocked by Kace's sudden outburst, Hope hurriedly took the little girl from the angry lycan.

"Do you mean that I have to go inside the mountain alone?" Hope asked incredulously, she realized the reason why Kace was angry all of a sudden. Even she herself disliked the idea.

"Forget it! Let's go back!" Kace was too angry to talk further, he really was ridden by the horrible urge to rip the centaur in front of him into pieces for suggesting that kind of idea.

"I am not done yet," Chiron said in his deep voice.

"Kace, wait!" Hope bent her body to stop Kace from dragging her away. "Let's hear him out first," she tried to bargain.

Of course the idea of entering Mount Uzu alone was very ridiculous. Just the thought of that, Hope could already feel the fear crept beneath her skin.

However, Chiron had not done yet, maybe he had another way out for this matter. Moreover, Kace was really needed in this.

"No!" Kace grunted when he watched how Hope was about to retort him again. "I am not going to let you enter that mountain alone! No!"

"I don't want to go alone too, alright!" Hope was exasperated. She was carrying Bree and had to stop Kace from ushering her away. If it was not because of the lycan's consideration that he would hurt Hope if he exerted more strength than this, probably now, Hope would have been swiping the dirt on the ground with her body. "Let's hear him first."

Chiron didn't intervene with the scene before his eyes, he knew his intervention would only aggravate the beast, thus he let Hope talk him out.

"Listen, if his idea this time requires me to go alone into the forest, we will go home first thing in the morning." Hope spoke in a hurry. She really hoped Chiron would give them a better idea this time or else, she wouldn't win the argumentation against Kace when she was not even sure if she had the courage to venture inside the foreign mountain filled with beast and strange supernatural creatures.

Only when Kace heard that, he stopped. His black eyes stared into Hope's deeply, as if he was looking for any sign of trickery.

"You better keep your words. I will not hesitate to put you into a sack and bring you out of this damn realm, if that is really what I have to do," Kace spoke harshly.

"Okay, okay!" Hope nodded vigorously, she wondered whether Kace would have the heart to really put her into a sack, yet she didn't want to find out. Turned around, she faced Chiron who had been waiting patiently with their squabble. "So? What are your suggestions? You really have a solution for this, right?"

Chiron nodded solemnly. "I do."

"Then talk," Kace ordered him impatiently.

If the normal Kace would restraint himself to order someone, especially to the creature whose mate he had killed in the past, then the beast Kace didn't even bat his eyes when he gave the order. He had that arrogant trait of an Alpha, after all, he was born as the son from the strongest Alpha. Therefore, the beast was really pissed when Kace just brushed it away, ignoring his own blood, his true nature traits.

Fortunately, Chiron didn't take offense to the beast's outrageous behavior. "I said, I can't enter the realm because I am a supernatural creature, but you as a shapeshifter are different." He took a step closer to them. "You can shift into a human form, and of course I will not let Hope enter the mountain alone, I will have the hunters to accompany her."

"Do you think I will trust those filthy hunters to safeguard my mate?"

Chapter 598 - OBSERVANT

"Do you think I will trust those filthy hunters to safeguard my mate?!" Kace spoke harshly as he glowered at Chiron.

What was this centaur thinking? Did this centaur expect that he would willingly give Hope to those hunters after what they had done to them? After they tried to take Hope away, and said they had done that to keep her safe from him?

Moreover, Kace had killed their fellow hunters, there was no one who would guarantee that they wouldn't take it out on Hope!

No matter what the reason was, the beast always thought that revenge was something that would easily manipulate people's state of mind. He would never have let Hope be in such a risky situation.

"Take out those hunters from your plan, I will go with her by myself!" Kace growled and Bree buried her face on the crook of Hope's neck, hugging her kitten tightly.

Chiron narrowed his eyes as he stared at Kace, "This is just my hypothesis. I don't know whether shapeshifters have the same effect as we do or not."

Chiron came clean with this. The thought that shapeshifters had human form aside from their beast form, leading him to think that way, but there was no proof that this was safe to try.

"I will take the risk," Kace said sternly, leaving no room for another argumentation as he took Bree from Hope. She had been carrying her for quite a while, her hand must be cramping by now.

At first Bree didn't want to let go of Hope's neck, "I don't want to be carried by you if you shout again..." said the little girl sullenly.

"I will carry you, or do you prefer to walk alone to the hut?" Kace glared. He was not in a good mood to have another argument, especially with a human whose age was nearly one-thousandth of his age.
action

"Kace, it's okay, I will carry her. You are scaring her," Hope complained, but received another glare from Kace.

"You won't be able to carry her any longer than this," he stated the fact, he could see that Hope was no longer comfortable to carry Bree. "And you, don't you know that you are heavy?"

"Kace!" Hope hissed. Why did she feel like the beast was way more childish than Bree?

"Come here!" Kace stretched his hands to carry Bree.

Pouting her lips, Bree let Kace to carry her. She mumbled, "No, his heart is not as soft as tofu, he is like a paprika." She was sulking. "Bree doesn't like paprika."

At first, Hope was afraid that Kace would do something to Bree when she heard that, but the beast just ignored the girl's sulking words and shifted his attention towards Chiron instead. "So, let's hear what your plan is?"

The night sky was cloudy, covering the light of the moon. The chilly breeze blew lazily, rustling the lush trees around them.

Though Bree didn't wear enough, Kace's body heat was able to make her comfortable in his arms, snoring when the discussion between a.d.u.l.ts became too boring for her to hear.

She fell asleep just like that, and didn't care for the world after she made sure the yellow kitten was secured in Hope's arms.

The discussion between the three of them needed a quite long time before it could reach a conclusion.

Actually, most of the time, it would be Kace and Chiron, who would meet a disagreement while Hope would only participate with 'yes' or 'no'. As long as Kace wanted to go, showed some effort for this mission and didn't suggest something dangerous, Hope would agree with whatever his decision be.

When they had passed the argumentation and disagreement, the three of them walked leisurely back to the centaurs' den.

"I hope you will take Bree with you when you go back to your realm," Chiron said all of sudden. "She doesn't belong here."

Kace glanced at Chiron, "Apparently, many things don't belong here."

The chief of the centaur knew what Kace was indicating. This realm was not their nature, this was not the centaurs' habitat, and despite they had resided in this land for so long, their heart still belonged to somewhere else, but not there.

This ground was not the same ground that their hooves touched for the first time when they came into their life. The wind, the sky, the stars... all of these would never be the same.

"She is not The Loris' biological child," Chiron said, staring at the snoring little girl softly. "I found her near the border between two worlds."

In his fuzzy human memories, Kace remembered it was the place where Lana and he were being attacked by the feral beast. The place where those guinea pigs of the witches and vampires lived.

"She was only five years old at that time and was not able to talk out of fear," Chiron reminisced. "Now she talks like there is no tomorrow."

Hope chuckled lightly when she heard that. What Chiron said was true. Bree was quite a chatter. She imagined if they really took her when they returned, it would be amazing for having her as her little sister.

However, Kace didn't immediately agree with that. "When the time comes, we will see the situation later, whether we should bring her with us or not."

"But, why?" Hope protested, she thought Kace liked her.

"If you think this place is not safe for her, then her being with us, will not be any safer." Kace caressed Hope's cheeks tenderly. "There are a lot of things that Serefina and I didn't tell you about yet, my love."

Hope knitted her brows, she was aware that there were many things that she didn't know. "Why don't you tell me then?"

"Of course, I will. But, first thing first." Kace nodded. He looked exhausted, it seemed that this long walk had worn him out.

"I understand," Chiron said solemnly.

"And for you." Kace suddenly stopped walking and faced the centaurs. "Do you think that I'm fool enough for not knowing that there is something you want in return for this favor."

Chiron was surprised, but then he nodded. "You are observant."

Chapter 599 - THANK YOU

"Speak," Kace spoke rigidly as he adjusted Bree's position in his arms. "What do you want?"

That thought had never crossed Hope's mind. She was not aware of it until now, that the centaurs had a hidden agenda as they helped them. But, what was it?

Hope crept closer towards Kace as she waited for the chief of the centaurs' answer.

"There is no need to be so tense, this is just a simple request and I hope you will consider it," Chiron spoke solemnly like always.

Kace didn't give any reaction to that, yet his austere eyes prodded the centaur to explain further of what he meant with his words.

Chiron took a step closer and voiced out his request. "I wish to go back to our land," he emphasized. "Our hometown, the original place where my kind should belong."

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The next day after the night Chiron said about his true intention for helping them, about how he requested to be able to go back to their original habitat along with his kind. Kace's condition dropped again, thus the trip to Mount Uzu should be postponed.

Carina said that this was one of the reasons why Kace's beast took over his consciousness. Because his human side was too weak to be able to bear the brunt, the pain.

Every shapeshifter normally had this kind of trait, their beast would take over when their human side was not in shape, or if there was a possible danger that their other side couldn't manage to handle.

And since Kace's human side was connected with Lana's soul because of the vow that they had made, Lana's condition was no different.

Her consciousness had been in and out constantly.

Only on the third day, Kace was a little bit fine for their long journey and the night before their trip. Kace went out of his tent to look for Hope only to meet with Chiron.

"Should we take a walk for a while?" he offered politely.

"No," Kace turned down his offer immediately.

"I think you need some fresh air after being trapped inside the hut for days," Chiron said, still in the same tone.

Kace knitted his brows, "I don't need fresh air, I need my mate," He said bluntly as he started to walk again, but Chiron followed beside him.

"What a coincidence. Hope is with Bree, and I wanted to see the little girl too," Chiron talked lightly as they walked side by side in complete awkward silence.

Apparently the girls and the twins were in the same open space place where Bree picked up flowers.

Yesterday, finally Hope took the little girl to her parents' grave together with the siblings and five centaurs to ensure their safety. Of course, Kace didn't know about that because he was still recovering his condition, otherwise, he wouldn't stay and insist to come as well. Not to pay a visit to the death, but to feed his protective trait, scared of leaving his mate out of his sight.

"About my request," Chiron said when they were halfway to the clearing, but from that distance they could still hear Bree's chirping voice, and laughter from the other three teenagers.

"I have told you that I can't promise you anything, I am not the sovereign of that realm." Kace glanced at Chiron with irritation. "You ask the wrong person."

Kace had told him about this that night. The fact that he couldn't possibly bring the whole race of centaurs back to their realm, definitely the reason behind it was because Jedrek was the king there. And with that, only Jedrek, the one who could decide on this matter.

Another reason was because Kace didn't have a plan to go back to that place.

Going back to the kingdom, and asking Jedrek to allow the centaurs to return? What a ridiculous plan... whether Jedrek would laugh at him, or he would slaughter these poor centaurs the moment he knew that they were still alive. Neither of which was a pleasant scenario for Kace, and he was not tempted to even try.

"I know," Chiron nodded. "But, knowing you will try, makes me slightly feel better."

"I will not try, so don't put your hope too high," Kace replied coldly.

Chiron sighed deeply as he stared to the sky, and continued to try to engage a conversation with the lycan beside him. "Thank you," he said.

"For what? I don't even say 'yes' to your request." Although Kace answered him impolitely, the fact that he didn't ignore Chiron like before was something that should be counted.

"No, not for that," Chiron shook his head, the sound of his hooves against the damp ground echoed in the forest. "I thanked you for what you had done to my mate." action

"What?" Kace knitted his brows, "You thanked me because I killed her?"

"No, I thanked you because you had given my mate and my son what they needed during the time you confined us." Chiron remembered it very clear what Kace had done at that time.

It was him, who gave food to his mate and their newborn son. When his son was crying on top of his lungs, asking to be fed, regardless of the situation or the strange look from the other lycanthropes and werewolves, Kace treated them very well.

The kindness that he showed was highly unlikely coming from a creature like him.

"Don't flatter yourself," Kace scoffed. "That's my human side, who had done that."

Chiron chuckled lightly.

"What? Is there something funny to you?" Kace glowered, he didn't like it when he heard that sound.

"You always said every kindness that you did was your human side's wrongdoing, and your human side will also say the same thing when he loses control over his animal instinct. However the truth is that you are one person. It is just you, who thinks that the either side of you, is another personality."

"I don't understand what you are talking about," Kace grumbled as he walked faster when he watched his mate was wearing a crown made of flowers.

It was Bree who saw him first, and with her short legs, she ran towards Kace, while hugging a bunch of flowers in her arms.

"For you!" Bree beamed at him.

Chapter 600 - UZU MOUNTAIN

All the preparation was completed and they were ready to go to Mount Uzu.

Because Lana had been unconscious, even Carina's magic couldn't help regain her consciousness, the twins were assigned to stay behind. At first, Ian would complain endlessly. But because Kace turned deaf ears to his whining, and Hope was not able to convince Kace otherwise, only then Ian stopped and resigned to his fate.

For Ethan, he didn't have a problem at all. Whether he had to stay or he needed to go. For him, as long as the decision had been made and that was the best that they could have in order to help the situation, he would follow.

Moreover, he had been addicted to Carina's story about the stars and learned a few things about herbs and magic. Regardless of how he would never be able to perform the latter, he liked to see how different centaurs' magic to the witches' magic.

Therefore, it was only a small group of centaurs, which included Chiron and Biryon and another ten more centaurs that would escort Kace and Hope to the border of Mount Uzu.

Since Kace didn't agree to bring the hunters with them, thus the hunter only watched their departure from afar.

The other night, Chiron explained to Hope of things that she missed, that Leroy had died during the invasion of the demon wolves, the girl who served the priestess was apparently an impostor as well. She had killed him and ran away.

Therefore, the head of the hunters now was a man named Delta.

Delta was a man in his early thirty with curly brown hair and neat beard. He was slightly bowing his head, followed by the rest of the hunter, when they watched Kace and Hope's small group depart on their journey.

At least, he respected the decision that was made, that Kace objected to their presence. After all, it was a journey to save their respected priestess, they must have had a great sense of responsibility joined in.

The fact that Kace had killed many of the hunters was overshadowed by this event. Especially when they learned that it was not only Kace's own deed, but there was also a great misunderstanding on Leroy's side that caused their loss.

The damage in the village was still apparent and many people had lived in fear of another attack. Not to mention the fact that the priestess, who they had served for the past one year, turned out to be an impostor. The true enemy, who lived among them and they didn't even know it.

The current head of the hunter, Delta, tried to learn the mistake from the previous leader by listening to Chiron's suggestion. Thus it was easier when Chiron talked to him to not come on this journey.

The four days journey ahead was something that no one could predict.

However, thankfully, four days passed without anything happening. Actually, it was quite a nice trip to Mount Uzu since Hope could see how beautiful nature there was, but because of the urgency of the matter at hand and also the uncertainty ahead, she couldn't really enjoy it as much.

Kace acted less hostile towards Chiron, and even helped them to make a bonfire or take turns to watch when the night came. Though he didn't have to do that, while grumbling he would insist on doing it.

Probably, it was his beast's side that softened since he was allowed to surface for quite a long while, or maybe it was his human's side that gradually healed.

Whatever it was, Hope was just glad that during this journey, the beast got along pretty well with the centaurs.

And finally, they came to the spot where the centaurs couldn't go through the barrier. Not only that, apparently this was the furthest that they could go. Because since an hour ago, Hope could see the centaurs were grimacing in pain as they staggered slightly.

They kept Hope and Kace accompanied until Chiron raised his hand and stopped the entourage behind him.

"I think this is the farthest part that we can go. Our people will not be able to go more than this." Chiron stared ahead where the mountain towered over them with white cloud around its peak. "Are you okay?" he shifted his attention towards Kace.

Just like what they had discussed before, the supernatural creatures wouldn't be able to enter this place, but shapeshifters were a different case since they could alter into human form.

"I am good," Kace replied rigidly. He held Hope protectively while staring at the lushes of the trees before his eyes, which hid many uncertainties in their path ahead.

"Are you sure?" Hope tilted her head to study Kace's facial expression to see if there was any sign of discomfort, but his face was devoid from any emotions.

"Let's go." Kace didn't even say a 'goodbye' to the centaurs as he ushered Hope to move forward. The faster they found the priestess, the faster they could figure out how to find Lydia and returned.

Hope turned around and waved at the Chiron, Biryon and the other ten centaurs. After four long days of journey, she had become used to having them near.

"We will wait here until your return," Chiron said.

At the very least, that was what they could do, since they couldn't accompany them to the heart of the mountain.

Hope kept waving at them until Kace turned her body around to watch her step.

"You will stumble onto something if you keep on walking that way," he grumbled. "So, do you know where we should go? To the peak of the mountain or under?"

Hope knitted her brows, "I don't know. Why don't we start with scouring the whole area?"

Kace knocked her head softly, "Silly head," he scoffed as Hope pouted at him, "How long do you think it would take us to scour the whole area? A month? Three months? I don't want to stay here that long."

"So, what should we do?" Hope frowned. action

"The candle my love, the candle that the Candlemaiden had given to you," Kace reminded her exasperatedly.

"Oh, right!" Hope slapped her forehead and searched on her pockets.