

TLOA Lycan 601

Chapter 601 - WE WILL GO HUNT

The blue flames of the candle flickered by the wind when Hope took it out from her pocket on her jacket. It was afternoon and the sun was above their head. If it wasn't because of the lushes of leaves from the trees that canopied them, it would be too hot for her to wear such a cloak.

"Here," Hope showed the little candle and gave it to Kace. The size of it was only as big as her thumb. "But I don't know how it works."

"The Candlemaiden didn't say anything to you?" Kace took the candle and watched it closely, scrutinizing it from different angles. But nothing, it looked just like how any candle would look like. The difference was only at its strange blue flames that looked like it wouldn't be extinguished when one blew its fire.

"No." Hope tiptoed to see the candle in Kace's hand as he raised up his head to the glimmer of the sunrays.

"Let's figure this out while walking." Kace handed the candle back to Hope and rested his hand on her wrist while they ventured inside the mountain.

"Up or down?" Hope listened to the chirping bird around them, it was relaxing and like a picnic to be honest.

"Down," Kace said.

And with that, they walked to the base of the mountain, though the gigantic mountain was before their eyes, but the track to reach the land of its base was very vast.

Hope thought they would reach there before the sun set, but even when the sun kissed the horizon and the forest was no longer beautiful, as it turned out to be a little bit creepy in this dimly lit place. They were not half way there, especially when they walked in Hope's pace. After two hours, she needed to rest for fifteen to twenty minutes before they could continue.

Fortunately, Kace didn't say anything about her snail pace, and instead he was unexpectedly very patient. Well, he was always very patient towards her. It was Hope, who felt a little bit sorry for slowing them down.

"We will continue tomorrow," Kace called it a day.

Upon hearing that, Hope slumped to the ground. Her feet ached. She couldn't imagine if she had to venture in this uncertain place, and didn't know which direction she had to take, alone. She would have been crying now, and would rush back to where the centaurs were waiting for them.

She was grateful that Chiron's theory was right that Kace was able to enter the barrier in his human form.

"I am hungry," Hope whined when Kace passed her a bottle of water. Fortunately, they didn't have to worry about their water intake for the journey, because there were several tributaries along the way.

Kace took off the big backpack that he carried and put it on the ground. From the inside he took out the packed food and gave it to Hope one, while he took another for him. "Let's eat, after that we can sleep."

Kace chose to stay at that spot, because he couldn't pick any suspicious smell of wild animals, and also because the ground was dry over there, since they didn't have any tents and just bought a few blankets for sleep. The weather was also great, so Hope wouldn't freeze when the night came.

"What will we eat for tomorrow?" Hope was concerned about their rations as they didn't bring much food to last for days.

"We will hunt tomorrow," Kace winked at her as he took a mouthful of roasted chicken thighs.

"You can't shift into your beast," Hope frowned, "We don't know what will happen if you did." The centaurs had made it clear since the beginning, that supernatural creatures were not welcomed there.

"Oh, right..." Kace nodded his head. "So, why don't you hunt for me? You know, sometimes female lions hunt."

Hope rolled her eyes, "I am not a lion and you are not either."

Kace chuckled when he watched Hope give him a look. "You are right." He leaned over and kissed Hope chubby cheeks when she munched on her food.

"Don't disturb me, I am eating." She pushed him away. "Once we return you have to treat me to a lavish meal."

"Alright," Kace continued to savor his food. "Everything for you, my lovely."

Hope had to bite her tongue in order to stop her from smiling. No matter how many times she heard that endearing words from Kace, she loved it to the bone. action

After they ate and chatted for a little while, Hope yawned. She was exhausted. These past four days were the most tiring days in her whole existence, she had never walked in such a great distance.

"Come here." Kace put the blanket on the ground and beckoned Hope to lie down.

"Should we take turns to stand guard?" Hope asked sleepily, since it was only the two of them, it was only right for Hope to take turns with Kace.

"Just sleep, I will wake you up when I am sleepy," Kace sat down and leaned over to the tree behind him, as he gestured for Hope to rest her head on his lap.

Hope did and yawned again when she rested her head. "Okay, wake me up when you are sleepy," she reminded him.

"Of course," Kace nodded to assure her.

Hope closed her eyes and was about to sleep when she said softly. "It's a good thing that the fireflies are surrounding us, they are beautiful," she mumbled.

"Fireflies?" Kace frowned, "what do you mean with fireflies?"

Kace wanted to ask what she meant with fireflies because Kace could see nothing around them. However, Hope had fallen asleep.

Maybe she just talked in her sleep. With that thought, Kace raised his head and looked up the starry night sky. There were many things roaming around his head. Many questions without answers.

The beast felt restless.

Sometime through the night, when the cold wind blew Hope's sleeping face, she felt her body ache because of her sleeping position, yet when she turned her body around to find a comfortable position, she realized one thing; Kace was not there.

Chapter 602 - BUT, I AM NOT

Hope remembered that she fell asleep on Kace's lap, but there was nothing under her head when she was awake.

She gasped loudly when she opened her eyes, and she realized that she was no longer in the place where she was falling asleep previously. And worse than that, Kace was nowhere to be found.

"Kace!?" Her voice filled with panic when she scoured her surroundings hastily, but nothing changed, she couldn't see anything except the pitch-darkness surrounded her.

Hope moved her hands and her fingers and palms touched the hard cold concrete beneath her. The wet and chill atmosphere in the air reached her face, as she felt her throbbing shoulder, the pain that woke her up earlier.

Panic rushed in her system as she tried to sit up, but the motion made her head spin. Leaning on her forearms, Hope forced herself to breathe in deeply, to calm her thumping heart.

Where is she now?!

Hope blinked a couple of times, willing her eyes to adjust to the darkness that engulfed her. But there was no light that could help her in this case.

Hope gritted her teeth to suppress the sudden panic and fear that she felt. This was not the time for it. She must pull herself together in order to be able to function during that critical situation, in that unknown, mysterious environment.

She sat up then began feeling the floor around her, stretching out her hand in the dark, trying to reach out onto something, or touching anything that could help her to understand her surroundings better.

Is she in a cell? A room? Or what?

Should she call Kace again? But, what if she notified her kidnapper?

The floor extended beneath her bare foot, apparently her kidnapper took good care of her as they removed her shoes. But thankfully they didn't take away her cloak. Hope didn't need another trouble for now.

Her fingers extended until they touched a cold concrete wall. "Hello?" Hope whispered and called to the darkness, unsure whether she wanted someone to answer her or not.

No one answered her.

Hope spent the next twenty minutes searching for a door, window or anything that she could use to escape from this unknown place.

And weird enough, there was nothing. Literally nothing. So, how could they put her inside this place? This was so weird.

Or, maybe...

They put me in from above?

Hope raised her head to see above her head, yet, of course the darkness prevented her from seeing anything.

Finally, frustrated with her situation, and couldn't find a way to escape from this place she called out once more. "Hello?!"

No one answered.

"Is there anyone here?!"

Silence greeted her.

"Hey!!!" Hope shouted on top of her lungs. "What do you want from me!?"

And then another fear crept in when there was still no answer or any movement.

Did they just leave me here?

That thought created another ripples of fear in her blood and her system. It seemed to notify her kidnapper that she had woken up was not a bad idea.

"Hey!!!" Hope pounded the concrete wall beside her to create a loud of noise except her own voice that echoed creepily. "Is there anyone here!? HEI!"

It took a while for Hope to hear a voice from a distance. And just as he had expected, there seemed to be a door or a hole in the ceiling above her head.

There was a rattling sound.

"Who is out there?!" Hope shouted to the source of the sound from above her head, her voice tinged with fear, as she didn't know whether that person would open the door or maybe they wanted to lock her up in this darkness.

Just the thought alone made her shuddered.

However, a second later Hope covered her eyes with her hands when the light suddenly hit her eyes, illuminating the place in front of her from a square hole, two meters away, above her head.

The way the light illuminated this place was akin to the movie that she watched when the main character had just been enlightened.

At least, that was how Hope portrayed her situation now, as she walked hastily under the light.

"Who is there?" Hope's body was basking under the light, yet she couldn't see anyone there because it was too bright for her eyes.

"So, you are awake now?" Came a girl's voice that Hope had never heard before.

"Where am I?!" Hope's eyes still couldn't adjust with the light. But all of a sudden she felt everything around her turned so bright.

The source of light was no longer the light from above her head, but it was almost like there was someone who turned on the lamp inside the dark room that she stayed in.

"Ugh!" Hope grunted, her head spinning. However, not only that, when she took a few steps back, she couldn't find the concrete wall behind her to lean on.

Hence, Hope could only use her hearing to identify the movement around her.

"You can go now."

There was the second voice, a woman too, but from her voice, Hope could tell that she was more mature than the first one.

Hope blinked her eyes rapidly and rubbed her eyes hastily when she felt someone walk closer to her direction, and when she felt the woman touch her shoulder, Hope swatted her hand away and moved to the side only to bump into something.

It was a table, from the sound of the shattering glass, apparently Hope had created some mess there.

"Dear, dear... careful with your steps."

Hope opened her eyes and this time she could see well. At first the figure in front of her was only a blur and she couldn't identify who the woman in front of her was, until her vision became clearer and her brows knitted together into a tight knot.

She remembered this woman!

How could she forget about her!?

She met her when she was only thirteen years old, four years ago, her encounter with this woman was the reason why Serefina had to move her from Fulbright City to the remote village.

Her golden eyes stared at her mockingly.

"I remember you," Hope said.

"I am glad to hear that," she replied.

"But, I am not."

Chapter 603 - THE DEMON WOMAN

"But, I am not." Hope retorted fiercely when she remembered what had happened the last time she met with this demoness.

There was a frown that crossed her expression when she heard the way Hope replied to her. "You grew up to be a very insolent girl," she scoffed and turned around, facing her back to Hope.

Though she did that, it was out of question that Hope would be able to take a slight advantage the moment the demon woman was looking the other way. It was a reckless move.

Hope's eyes landed on a square wooden lid on the floor. As an understanding dawned on her, the demon woman had moved her here from the room down there.

And then her eyes scanned the room around her quickly.

Except the table that Hope just bumped, there were only two chairs and a big window inside this room. The room alone was actually very big with a brown door opposite from her. Was this a hall of a building? Hope didn't have any idea, where she was or what this demoness would do to her. action

Where is Kace?!

Hope was trying to see whether there was some spot that she missed, where probably this woman hid him somewhere.

But, nothing. This room was as vacant as an empty aula, without anything that Hope could use as a weapon or for her protection.

However, a second later, she remembered something that she could use. This one definitely could ward off the demoness, yet when Hope thought about hurting herself intentionally, she frowned.

Accidentally bleeding was one thing, but to purposely bleed it was a very unpleasant feeling.

"Where is Kace?" Hope asked in a demanding tone. She walked slowly and swiftly, creeping across the room to the brown door.

The demon woman turned around and faced Hope once again, her golden eyes shone brightly under the beautiful crystal lamp above their head.

"I wonder..." her voice trailed off, she was ignoring Hope's question as her eyes studied the girl in front of her. "What are you to that lycan?" she tilted her head.

Hope was unsure of how she was supposed to answer that question. That's why she remained silent. She remembered what Lana said to her about the Moon Goddess' curse. And the fact that the extremely few numbers of people who knew that Kace had a mate. Because of the curse that was bestowed on him by the Moon Goddess, it was well known that the Donovans would never have a mate for their entire eternity.

And another reason why they kept this as a secret, because Hope's life would be in danger if Kace's enemies found out about this. Thus, she needed to be careful to not reveal that information.

Hope thought, this was the moment when she had to keep her mouth shut about her being Kace's mate. She decided on that.

"What do you think I am to him?" Hope answered her question with another question, she didn't know how long this conversation would go. But she was pretty sure, the next thing that the demon woman would do to her wouldn't be a pleasant experience.

The demon woman chuckled lightly. "You are so brave, do you know that? But, bravery alone is not enough to save you now." The woman raised her hands and stared at her long, red nails. "Yet, I still wonder, what are you to him? Except a guardian angel..." she lifted her head, just in time to see a slight furrow on Hope's forehead.

Hope didn't say anything about it, as she kept her distance from her and took a few steps back, nearing herself to the door.

"Oh, yes... of course I know what you are," the woman smiled creepily. "I heard that prophecy. No wonder I am so drawn to you... your scent is so different even when you were only an infant. I love infants," she said in this tone like she was talking about her favorite food, and this made Hope feel sick.

"Where is Kace?" Hope asked the same question through her gritted teeth. "What do you want from me?"

The woman shrugged her shoulders in a nonchalant manner. "Apparently, his injuries are pretty bad. It is already good enough for him to manage to come so far."

"Where is he!?" Hope roared, this woman really tested her patient.

"He is in this place, of course." She chuckled. "Do you want to see him?"

Hope didn't answer that childish question.

"I can let you see him, but what about you do me a favor?" The woman's eyes shone brightly. "Why don't you give me your power willingly?" she suggested.

'What did she mean with giving her my power willingly? Do I even have power?' Hope thought to herself, if she knew what kind of power that she held at this moment, definitely she wouldn't waste her time talking to her. Especially, when the demon woman looked very eager to have it.

"Sure," Hope said lightly as she nodded. "I will give you everything you want with conditions. First, I want to see Kace. Second, I want to find my friend Lydia, the witch. Third, I want to meet with the priestess so she can heal Kace's injuries. Fourth, I want the priestess to return to the village safely. Fifth, I want to go back to my realm with all of my friends. Sixth—" Hope crossed her arms in front of her chest. "—if you can fulfill all of my requests then I will give you my power willingly."

The demon woman's expression turned unsightly the more Hope was listing her wish. "Do you think I will do that?"

Hope shrugged her shoulder in a nonchalant manner. "Then we don't have the deal." The way Hope was talking now didn't let the demon know how her heart was pounding inside her chest nervously. "I guess you will not show me where Kace is, therefore, I will find him myself." she said confidently. At least as confidence as she could.

Hope was walking to the door, her paces neither slow nor in a hurry. Yet, when Hope reached the door, there was one thing that was strange about the situation, and it stuck in her mind; the demon didn't stop her at all.

Chapter 604 - THE MAGIC AROUND THE WATERFALL

It was so strange to begin with for the demon not stopping her. But Hope didn't want to turn around and showed that demon how nervous she was. She knew that the demon's golden eyes were glued on her back. If it was possible they could bore some hole behind her skull. Fortunately, they couldn't.

At first, Hope thought, she wouldn't be able to push the door, but as it turned out she managed to move it effortlessly.

This is weird.

Was the thing behind this door scarier than the one here?

She wanted to not go, but to turn around just to see the demon woman looked at her mockingly, was not a good option either.

Finally, bracing her heart, Hope went out of the room, leaving the demon behind her. If she said Kace was here, then Hope would find him no matter what. Moreover, there was no use from staying there.

It was very quiet inside the room, after Hope was no longer there while the woman just stood, staring at the closed door with a creepy smile etched on her red lips.

"Beelzebub, do you let her leave just like that?" There was a girl's voice echoing inside that room, her figure appeared out of nowhere, as if the air around them condensed and formed her body.

At the same time, the big room turned into a blurry image until everything just faded away. The crystal lamp, the two chairs, the table and window, everything just dematerialized and left them with the scene of the forest, at the base of Mount Uzu. action

It was bizarre, but that was how magic worked.

"How long do you think she could survive out there?" The demon woman named Beelzebub, the Gluttony, who had her eyes on Hope since the time when she was only an infant. That demon smirked devilishly as she turned her body around and faced Terra, the little girl who served the priestess.

She was one of the reasons why the devil could manipulate the whole village for such a long time, and as well as the downfall of the priestess.

The felon who had killed the priestess.

Terra appeared as only a little girl, but her devilish nature was on par with the true devil before her eyes.

The priestess kept Terra next to her because she could sense her demonic aura, trying to suppress and helping the abandoned little girl to fight her own demon. Yet in the end it seemed all of that came to naught.

"Not long... but, it doesn't matter. She can roam around out there until the next decades, and I will sap her power whenever I feel like it." Beelzebub let out a cackling sound.

Terra shrugged, her usual innocent eyes turned sharp when a wick smile spread on her lips. "The children are ready for you..."

"Hmm, I love children. They are so pure and innocent." She remembered after she met Hope for the first time, she came across an eight year old girl, who had the same intoxicating scent like Hope.

However, the two supernatural creatures that she sent to figure out what the girl was, never returned to her. Even now, she wondered if that girl was also a guardian angel.

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Hope was flabbergasted when she closed the door behind her body, she was utterly speechless with what she saw before her eyes.

Her normal human brain thought she would meet a corridor or a passageway or another room or anything, but not this.

An unseen moonlight threw its light above her head, causing the waterfall to glow.

The majestic waterfall looked magical, it was swishing over the rock. Thundering down into a pool, like a gigantic water spout. When it toppled into the pool, it foamed at the bottom while the rest of the pool was as clear as cellophane, enabling Hope to see down into the rocky bottom.

Hope gasped in astonishment at the clarity of it.

Such beautiful scenery she was seeing. With this vociferous sound, how could she didn't hear anything from the other side of the door?

However, it didn't last for long, when Hope realized the door behind her had disappeared. She knew she was teleported to another place again, just like how the demon had teleported her from the dark dungeon to the bright room before.

Hope didn't waste another time when she started her search.

She had seen this waterfall from afar before with Kace. Maybe, if she could pinpoint her location now, there's a chance that she would be able to go back to the place where she was with Kace before.

Of which the chances were almost zero because Hope knew that her sense of direction was beyond bad.

Hope began to walk restlessly, and her anxiousness only grew bigger as she kept circling in the same place over and over again.

It seemed like she walked at the same place because no matter what direction she would take, or how long she would walk, she would end up at the exact same place.

This made her very angry and frustrated. And on top of that, she was tired.

"Argh!" On her attempts, her legs gave up as she slumped down on the velvety grass, kneading her aching legs as her eyes scanned her surroundings once again.

Yet, nothing has changed.

Her fear had been pushed behind her back, clouded by her irritation. What the hell that the demon wanted from trapping her inside this kind of magical place?!

Hope stared at the starry sky above her head as she squeezed her brain to think of a solution. Any solution, the craziest one would also sound good.

Yet, nothing crossed her mind.

But, then she remembered one thing. "If I can't find Kace, maybe he could find me," Hope mumbled to no one in particular.

She sat up straight and looked at the cloak that she was wearing.

As long as Kace was not bound, or chained somewhere, he could find her... probably. At least, this was something—the only thing that Hope could try.

However, if Kace could smell her, so could other creatures.

Chapter 605 - LED BY THE SOUL OF THE DEAD

Hope grunted, but to think about it again... the demon wouldn't let her die under the hands of her underlings, right? For instance, the demon wolves perhaps, or the troll?

Hope was unsure.

However, there was no harm in trying, or maybe there was?

"Whatever," Hope hissed as she took off her cloak and folded it beside her. Now, all that she could do was to wait, whether this would work or not.

When Hope folded the cloak, her fingers brushed against something hard inside the pocket, only then she remembered about the candle.

Hope took it out and stared at the blue flames. "Really..." she sighed in frustration. "I don't know what I should do with you." Since there was no one to talk to, Hope had a monologue to herself. "Why didn't the Candlemaiden make it easier? She could just give me something more useful, or something that can tell me directly where the priestess is, not a candle which I don't even know what it does."

Hope blew out the candle, but like what had happened, the fire still didn't go out. Then she lifted the candle in her hands at eye level, and pondered what she could do with it when the corner of her eyes caught something.

At first, it was just one flickering thing, but then there were two, three, and five—and in a minute, the whole place was filled with them.

The fireflies.

Hope was dumbstruck by the amount of the fireflies around her, this was twice the number of fireflies she had last seen and they were utterly beautiful.

Hope had seen them since the first time Kace and she parted ways with the centaur, but because their number was not significant, she didn't say anything about it and just thought it was only an ordinary thing.

Then Hope remembered the last thing she saw before she fell asleep, and before she was captured by the demon woman, she saw those fireflies too.

"What is this?" Hope whispered and asked no one in particular.

Some of the fireflies perched gently on the branches trees as the wind stirred them gently and some of it flickered around Hope.

"How beautiful..." her voice was a soft whisper. However, the thing that made her gasped loudly was when her eyes caught the blue flames in her candle turned into the color of red.

It could only mean one thing; the priestess was near.

But where?!

Hope whipped her head from left to right, trying to see if there was someone there. She stood up and stepped on a big rock near the pond that was made because of the waterfall.

Hope craned her neck and sharpened her sight and hearing, yet there was nothing. She was still alone there. The priestess didn't suddenly appear from the bushes or out of thin air, neither from the pond.

Hope clicked her tongue, annoyed. The last thing that she wanted now was another riddle. She jumped down from the rock and picked up her cloak.

When the beautiful fireflies flickered away right in front of her face, Hope realized the movement from them.

The fireflies that were previously scattered around Hope, now gathered in one direction. Hope tilted her head as she put the pieces together, and with hesitant steps, she followed the firefly in the same direction she had taken before.

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Just like what she thought, the fireflies wanted her to follow them, yet Hope was unsure where they were taking her, as she kept walking to the different part of the mountain.

But, one thing made her mood better, the fact that she was no longer circling the same area. This told her that her decision was right.

Hope didn't wear her cloak on purpose, maybe this way, Kace could find her faster before other supernatural creatures did.

And one more thing that Hope noticed was the more she followed the fireflies the more their number increased, and their light under the sun rays were akin to such a beautiful speck of dust that was glimmering, floating in the air.

"What are those fireflies?" Hope mumbled to herself as she quickened her steps to keep up with them.

She remembered a past chat with Ethan about the fireflies when Hope had just gotten a dream about Kace's beast. He said that based on ancient stories about the supernatural creatures, those fireflies were symbols of spirit, the soul of the dead.

Hope didn't know what he meant until she entered a cave where the fireflies led her to.

She was standing at the cave mouth when the wind shrieked through the hollows and gaps of the cave like banshees haunting a graveyard.

"Is there a ghost inside?" Hope hesitated to take another step, but then she shook her head vigorously, after seeing the demon itself, and surrounded by supernatural creatures, and had a life and death experience, a ghost wouldn't scare her anymore, compared to what she had been through. Hope was at the point where she would befriend with the ghost just so that she wouldn't feel alone.

Bracing her heart, she took a decisive step into the cave. The cave was built of the muddy brown rock of the cliff, the stone that was guarding the entrance, was jagged and uneven, arranged in such a way that it would be difficult for passerby to spot. If it was not for the fireflies that led her, she would miss this place entirely.

Inside, only the flickering of the fireflies that illuminated the dark place.

Hope moved around by following the damp wall of the cave with her hands, when all of a sudden, flaming torches sparked to life, lighting up the tunnel ahead and bathing the entire cavern in a flickering orange glow.

And the fireflies vanished...

Hope frowned when her guide disappeared, yet when she saw there was an open area ahead of her, she kept moving forward.

Only then, she understood what Ethan meant with the fireflies were symbols of the death. Because right before her eyes, there were thousands of carcasses scattered on the cave's ground.

Chapter 606 - THE SORROWFUL SOULS

Hope stared apprehensively at the scene before her eyes. Her breath quickened as her legs gave up her weight, and she fell down to a ragged ground of the cave.

There were around thousands of carcasses there. Hope closed her eyes and hoped, whatever she saw now would disappear the moment she opened them.

Unfortunately, that didn't happen when she peeked through her lashes.

Closing her eyes again, she leaned her body against the damp wall of the cave while adjusting her breath.

Those fireflies...

"I really met with the ghosts," Hope whined. Why did she have to see all of this?

It took a while for Hope to set herself out and opened her eyes again. The flames of the torches danced in her eyes, as she stared at the cave ceiling and proceeded to turn her head and looked at the piles of bones on her left side.

That part of the cave was in an oval shape with a hole in the center at the ceiling of the cave. The bright sunlight highlighted those poor dead bodies.

When Hope managed to calm herself down, she could see that they were children's bodies. Their tiny head and tiny arms were akin to those human skeleton models.

If Hope didn't see the clothes that they were still wearing, she wouldn't be so sure like this. Those ragged clothes and cloak were the distinguishing clothes in this realm.

Hope didn't have any idea what those poor children had gone through, why their corpses looked like that.

But then, another thing happened. The fireflies came back. But not only that, they morphed into something.

Hope could see the presence of someone or... many of them...

Right before her eyes, hundreds of ghostly children were standing. Floating above the carcasses, staring at Hope with their, almost translucent eyes.

Hope's breath caught in her chest. What she was seeing couldn't possibly be true... could it?

"I can't believe it..." Hope whispered in disbelief. "You are... ghosts?"

In all honesty, Hope had not seen this many ghosts, besides the ones from her nightmares. But she didn't know what else to call them.

Hope was pretty sure that her face was horrified as the children looked at her sadly. She felt bad for that.

"Why are you taking me here?" Hope wished they could understand her. She waited for any response, but it didn't come.

"They couldn't talk."

Coming a soft voice like a breeze from the back of the crowded children. Those children dispersed and gave a way to a beautiful young woman, with white hair and a crystal blue jade on the center of her forehead.

Her hair was extremely long, and she was wearing a white cloak. Adding to the fact that she was also a ghost, her body was completely like a white thin smoke, floating in the air.

Even so, her voice was strong and gentle at the same time. She walked, no, she glided from the back of the crowd straight in front of Hope.

"You are... dead," Hope stated in a low voice. When the priestess smiled, Hope grimaced with her own words.

"Yes, I am." She nodded to emphasize her statement.

If the priestess was dead, then why would Chiron say that she could meet her in this mountain? Kace wouldn't agree to come here if the only person that they were looking for was already dead.

Hope wouldn't agree to go too.

However, in a way, Chiron didn't lie, Hope indeed met with the priestess. Her spirit...

"What happened? I come to..." Hope stammered, she didn't believe her journey here was a naught. Not to mention she was separated from Kace.

"I know what your purpose is to come to this mountain," the priestess kept a sad smile, "unfortunately, I no longer belong to this realm."

Hope was crestfallen. She threw the candle off her hand angrily. Ghost or not, the fact that the sole reason why they were here right now, had gone, Hope was mad beyond words. Their time and efforts were wasted. So many unfortunate things happened for nothing?

However, she didn't know to whom she could vent her anger.

"Don't be so upset," the priestess frowned when she watched Hope's body was shaking from head to toe. "If the only reason for you to see me is to heal your mate's wound, then you already had the cure for it."

Hope raised her head. "Where?"

"Before that, will you take a walk with me? There is something I want to show you." The priestess opened her arms, in an inviting gesture.

Hope didn't immediately follow her, she was hesitant. She didn't want to walk among the ghosts, yet there was something in the way those children stared at her. The sadness from their eyes crept in her heart and she could feel it in her soul.

"What do you want to show me?" Hope knitted her brows, averted her eyes from those children.

"Your friends," but before Hope could interrupt her, she added. "Don't worry, your mate is on his way."

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Kace didn't believe it that he lost Hope right under his nose. He didn't feel anything when he realized he had dozed off. How could he be so stupid to fall asleep?!

"Hope!?" the beast roared "HOPE!"

He had been running without stopping for this whole morning, and afternoon. Sweat dripping from his forehead as his clothes stuck uncomfortably to his skin.

"SHIT!" he cursed loudly.

His heart was beating fast, and his whole body was trembling. His instinct forced him to shift and scour the entire mountain in his beast form. Yet the moment his bones began to dislocate, wave after wave of strange pain washed over him.

He couldn't shift, or the pain would be so unbearable. This was what Chiron was talking about. No supernatural creatures were allowed to enter this place.

Whether this barrier was put by the priestess or the demon woman, but it sure worked.

Kace cursed again, again, and again.

His mind was in complete disarray when he caught her scent. The only scent that belongs to her...

Chapter 607 - CONFUSING ANSWER

Kace sharpened his hearing as he heard the strange sounds of the insects and other animals that resided there. The smell of rich soil, and vegetation permeated the air as he watched the large green leaves and twisted trunks of this part of the forest.

Kace became restless and impatient. The fact that he couldn't shift was a cherry on top of his anxiousness. He could do more than this if only he could transform to his beast form.

And then it hit him gently, the wind that carried the scent he longed for. It was her scent, no doubt about it.

Gritting his teeth, he picked the faint scent and let his instinct take control. He couldn't lose it.

The wind that carried Hope's scent, led Kace to the other part of the waterfall. The place he had passed twice when he was looking for Hope.

Her pleasing scent grew stronger when Kace came near a strange cave. He sniffed the air and without any doubt, Hope was there not so long ago. She was close.

Without a second thought, Kace went into the cave. Only he didn't know that it wasn't the wind that brought Hope's scent to him, but the thousands of fireflies that surrounded the beast, which he was not able to see.

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"Where are you taking me?" Hope followed the priestess, she was a step behind her, surrounded by the children whose bodies are translucent. She could see the other children behind the other one through their being.

It was frightening enough for one to see it, but at the same time fascinating in a strange way. They looked like smoke that usually came from boiling water.

Yet, their eyes... the way they stared at her... the sadness in those innocent eyes were palpable.

Hope was trying hard to not look at them, but there was something that forced her to turn her head again and again.

Curiosity? Hope was unsure.

There was a part of her that wanted to console the children. Yet, she didn't know how, and what should she say? She was sorry for what had happened to them?

Hope shook her head and focused on the answer from the priestess for her question.

"To your friends," the priestess turned around and grinned. "I saved your friend when I still had enough energy to roam outside of the barrier."

Her smile was contagious as Hope reciprocated it without even realizing it. The priestess looked so young, no older than twenty five years old. How cruel the demon woman was to kill her.

"How do you fight the demon?" Hope asked, she was curious. Maybe she could use her method instead of her blood when the time needed, just in case.

At least, she knew how to protect herself instead of waiting for someone to save her ass.

She tapped her chin with her forefinger and smiled softly at Hope as she slowed down her paces, even though it actually looked more like she was floating.

Despite the fact that Hope had just met with her for less than ten minutes, she could tell from her gesture alone about how beautiful and warm her personality was. No wonder the whole village loved her.

"Every creature... or human," she added, "had their own spirit, this is the power that comes from inside of you." the priestess touched Hope's chest. "Something that the demons don't have. The true battle with the demon was a battle of will. So, if you ask me how I fought her, actually, even you have been fighting your own demon."

Hope frowned. "I don't think I understand what you are saying..."

The priestess chuckled, the sound was like a chirping bird in the morning.

"The demon or the devil will always feed you with fear, anxiety, doubt, distrust and all the negative feelings. It is up to you whether you will surrender to that or you will fight for your own light."

She continued to talk to her as they walked deeper into the cave.

"In times of desperation, the devil will grow stronger, and do you know why you are still able to see me and these children? Even though we are no longer in this world, and our souls should have perished and disappeared." she asked rhetorically.

Hope shook her head, actually, she was not sure that she could grasp half of her explanation.

"Because these children still hope that one day they can meet their families again," the priestess waved her hands towards the children around them, "they are the children who went missing during the last year, both from this realm and from your realm."

Hope looked at her surroundings. "Your answer confuses me," she mumbled, yet she felt the sadness that was not her own feeling. Ever since she saw the children, she had been feeling that way. "So, what do you want me to do? You will not ask me to resurrect them, won't you?"

The priestess giggled and shook her head. "Of course not, you will not be able to do that even if I ask."

"Glad you know that," Hope muttered. They had reached the end of the tunnel that Hope could see. There was another flickering light from its left side, it seemed there was another space there. "The devil woman doesn't know about this place?"

"She knows, but she can't enter." The priestess turned to the direction of the light, as Hope jogged after her. "I personally guard this place, and used my last strength to cast a spell around this cave."

"You casted the spell around this cave to prevent the devil from coming inside, but the devil casted the spell around this mountain to prevent anyone from helping you," Hope stated.

"That is not true," she looked at Hope meaningfully. "You are here to help me, to help these children. Chiron told me that you will come."

And when Hope walked into a bigger space after the long tunnel, her sight fell on Lydia's body, lying on the ground.

But, not only her, there were also two other people beside the witch.

Abby and Leon.

Chapter 608 - DISTRUSTING EACH OTHER

"What happened to them?" Hope hastily approached Lydia's body and knelt beside her.

The first thing that Hope did was to check whether Lydia was breathing or not. Then she sighed in relief when she felt Lydia's shallow warm breathe under her forefinger.

"Don't worry, the three of them are alive, just lost consciousness." the priestess also knelt beside Hope, and stared at the sleeping Lydia with contemplated expression.

Hope glanced at Abby and Leon then nodded. Actually, she didn't really care for the witch sibling, especially Abby. She thought the two of them had long gone with the next ship and had already half-way back to wherever they were heading initially. action

"What happened to her?" Hope grabbed Lydia's hand. They were exceptionally cold.

"She fell off of a cliff," the priestess replied.

"Fell from a cliff?" Hope raised her eyebrows, "how could she be like this just by falling?" it didn't make sense for Hope. With the power that the witch had, she should've been able to prevent any major damage to herself.

"She fought ten hunters at that time," The priestess explained, but when she saw Hope's expression, she continued her explanation. "Yes, the hunters are merely human, but they were also armed with knowledge about the weaknesses of all supernatural creatures."

And then Hope remembered how they expertly handled the white beast, and could stand the battle for such a long time. Moreover, they managed to cage the beast inside a silver cage, even though the aftermath of it was not a pleasant end for the hunters.

Hope underestimated them, those hunters were actually more capable than Hope expected.

"How do we wake her up?" Hope needed Lydia to be fully awake to help their situation right now.

The priestess caressed Lydia's cheek and said softly. "She will wake up when she feels better, for now the energy from this place is enough to replenish her strength, this also applies to both of them." The priestess nodded to Abby and Leon.

So, the point was, it's only a matter of time until they all wake up.

Hope pulled her legs closed to her chest and hugged them while resting her chin on her knees. "You said, Kace will be here soon?" Hope glanced at the priestess. "How do you know that? How did he know this place?"

"Every creature has their own magic. A priestess's magic like mine is something that the devil woman didn't expect." The priestess also sat beside Hope. "Your mate will come the same way you found this place."

"You guide him here?" Hope concluded.

"They guided you here..." The priestess waved her hand to the translucent children that surrounded the two of them. As they morphed into thousands of fireflies again, illuminating that place with their yellow flickering light. "Oh, right. The devil woman, her name is Beelzebub, The Gluttony," she told her.

"Beelzebub?" Hope's eyes flashed with curiosity.

"She is one of the seven deadly sins," the priestess paused for a while to see Hope's reaction before she continued. "I guess you already know who you are, am I right?"

"A guardian angel?" Hope answered her immediately.

"Yes, there is a purpose of the resurrection of your race," the priestess said softly as she closed her eyes, apparently tired.

"The war with the devil?" Kace had already told Hope about this casually back then.

The priestess opened her eyes and smiled. "I think you are well informed."

For the meantime, the war, which remained unknown when it would occur, did not interest Hope at all, there was one thing that was more important for her now.

"How can I help Kace? The reason why I came here to see you was to seek help from you, but with your current condition..." Hope's voice trailed off, she couldn't finish her sentence.

Yet, the priestess knew what exactly she wanted to know. "Actually, you didn't have to come here and see me for my help, because the cure is already with you."

"You said it before and I don't understand it at all," hope said honestly.

"You are the cure that he needs, Hope. Be it the wounds on his back, or the deep scar in his tender soul." The priestess touched Hope's hair lightly. "You are all he needs. The perfect soul for him."

"You still don't answer my question about how to heal him," Hope added with an uncertainty in her tone. "If it's true that I can cure him."

"As a guardian angel, your blood is always what the other creatures want, because it carries more power than you can imagine. Though the devil can't touch it, it is still highly useful and valuable for them. And for his broken soul, haven't you already worked on it?" the priestess raised her eyebrows suggestively, her face looked more cheerful when she did it.

The blood.

Should Hope let Kace drink her blood? Hope grimaced with that thought, but then she asked a different question. "What do you mean I already worked on it?"

"The dream, of course!" The priestess beamed at her. "You didn't think those dreams were ordinary dreams, did you?"

Actually... At some point, Hope did think that way, but before she voiced out her thought, the priestess said. "He is here."

"Who?" but, then Hope realized. "Kace?"

Somehow, Hope knew the answer as she stood immediately, so did the priestess.

Hope rushed towards the door and in no time already half running through the same tunnel that she had passed before.

"Actually, the fastest way you can do to heal his wound is to let him mark you," the priestess said in a teasing tone.

Hope almost tripped on her own feet when she heard that, and replied timidly when she already got her balance. "Well, I want to... but, Kace said it would be dangerous for me... if we are not careful enough."

"Trespassing the barrier that The Gluttony casted is a dangerous thing, but here you are." The priestess chuckled. "Nothing is more dangerous than distrusting each other. Hiding your feelings, and the truth when you thought it's best to do that. And based on the extent of my understanding, the marking process is a sacred thing that requires a lot of trust from both parties."

Chapter 609 - GUESTS FROM THE MAINLAND

"You should tell that to him," Hope mumbled, it was Kace who was always hiding his true feelings. Even now, Hope was still slightly upset whenever Kace refused to share the burden to his problem with her. Because he thought it was the best way to protect her.

"He heard it," the priestess said, as she stopped jogging behind Hope and tilted her head to the side.

Hope skidded and followed her line of sight when they fell on his favorite person in the whole world. However, before Hope could approach him, the lycan had rushed towards her and wrapped her in a big bear hug. Hugging her so tightly as if Hope would disappear if she didn't do so.

Hope giggled when his hair tickled her face and ears, as he buried his head on the crook of her neck. She circled her arms around his waist while stroking his back.

"I miss you," Hope said, but Kace didn't answer it.

Yet, her giggle died down when she felt his whole body was trembling.

"Kace... what happened?" Hope blinked her eyes, confused with his strong reaction. He wasn't crying, was he?

Behind him, the sunset blazing with magnificent colors through the hole of the ceiling of the cave, dipped below the horizon as the last breath of beauty before the death of the day.

Around them, the thousands of fireflies flickered splendidly and illuminated the impending darkness from the absence of the light of the sun, as the moonlight was covered behind the cloudy sky.

"I thought I lost you..." the beast said it with difficulty.

At this point, Hope thought it was Kace human's side who spoke to her, yet somehow, she knew it was the beast. However, at the same time, they were one. Either it was the beast side or his human side, they were both Kace.

Perhaps, this situation had put the both sides on the same page, synchronizing their own feelings, for the first time in a long time.

"I am alright," Hope patted his back, letting him to hold her a little bit longer. "I am okay,"

"Where were you? You just disappeared." Kace's voice was rough and hoarse, while still holding her, didn't want to let go of her yet.

"I was captured by the devil woman, and was put under her spell near the waterfall. I couldn't go anywhere, no matter how long I walked or which direction that I took, I would always end up at the same place again and again," Hope complained sullenly.

"You met her?!" Kace growled, but he still refused to let Hope see his face, as he pressed her head against his chest and wrapped his other arms protectively around her waist.

"She is the same woman that I met when I was thirteen," Hope told him, trying to steal a glance at his expression to no avail, Kace insisted to hide his face and rested his chin on top of her forehead.

Well, he was taller, bigger and all. But the way he kept Hope in place was swift and effortless.

"I should have not let my guard down," Kace said grimly. Now his body was shaking in anger. Hope could literally hear the grumble from inside his chest.

"That's not your fault," Hope consoled him, "Moreover, if that didn't happen, I wouldn't have met with the priestess."

"You met the priestess too?" Kace frowned, his eyes were red. Not because he was drowned in anger, but from the emotions he was trying to hold back from surfacing; the waves of relief, the fear that had plagued his whole being because of the absence of his mate.

"Yes, she is also the one who guided me here and..." Hope started to tell him everything that happened. From when she was put in a dark room that was similar to a dungeon, until that time when the fireflies came to her when she took out the candle, "...Lydia, Leon, and Abby are at the end of this tunnel, they are still unconscious."

At the end of her story, Kace released Hope. Allowing her to see the red circle around his black eyes.

"Where is she now?" Kace looked around, but there was nothing he could see, only the empty cave with piles of skeletons behind his back.

"She is there," Hope pointed to Kace's left side, as she frowned. Why couldn't he see her?

"There?" Kace pointed at the same direction, but he stared at Hope incredulously. "But, there's no one there."

"Huh?" Hope narrowed her eyes, "but, she is there." She insisted.

The priestess was there, as translucent as a ghost would be. Basking under the first moonlight that fell on this cave after the cloud blew away by the wind. But Kace was not able to see her. How could that be possible?

"Hope, I don't think he can see me," The priestess said softly as she shook her head, "After all, I am already dead, remember?"

"But, why can I see you?" Hope wanted to walk closer towards the priestess, but Kace held her back, because in his eyes, Hope was talking to nobody and this worried him.

"You are a guardian angel, you have your own magic," the priestess winked at her, but then her expression turned serious. "Will you come with me? I want you to know where the devil put my body. So when the help comes, they could bring me back to the village, I feel my energy is draining out."

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A loud shriek and other shattering glasses could be heard from a particular room.

Terra rolled her eyes when she found out the reason for Beelzebub's gloomy mood.

"What happened to her?" a man with straight black hair that was combed to the back of his head and tied into a man bun, asked the girl in front of him. He was a vampire from the mainland, and he didn't come alone.

"I guess something is not going according to her plan," a witch with dark lips, who looked like she was always smiling, answered him while giggling.

"You two better keep that opinion to yourself," Terra said in a warning tone, and this earned a vicious hiss from the vampire.

Chapter 610 - THE YOUNGER DONOVAN

"Alright, there's no need for having an argument here..." the witch held her hands up as she chuckled. "We have more important matters to worry about."

"I would be more than glad to kill this little human girl myself." The vampire huffed, he was wearing a red turtleneck sweater, which reminded everyone about blood color.

"Unfortunately, you can't," Terra said confidently, because she knew her value. She was right. The vampire wouldn't be able to kill her. Because the truth was that this human girl was more useful alive than dead, at least based on Beelzebub's judgement.

Terra ignored the grumbling vampire when they reached a certain door, from where the sound of loud shattering glasses, and angry roar were more prominent.

The girl knocked three times, and only pushed open the door when The Gluttony grated her to come in.

"They are here," Terra said as she walked ahead and started to do her job, to clean the room from the broken glass on the floor.

The room was not that big with only a table, and a dozen of glass on top of it. Apparently the devil conjured it for herself to vent out her anger. There was also an exquisite fireplace with a few spare logs that had been placed on the brick hearth and a set of flint rocks nearby.

"What a nice place." Sarcasm in the witch's voice when she complimented this almost-completely-empty room.

Since there were no chairs for them to sit, as to proceed to a decent discussion, the witch kindly conjured three arm chairs out of thin air. Those chairs looked very comfortable for them to sit on, so without thinking, the witch sat on one of them.

"Please." She waved her hand to the two vacant arm chairs for the vampire and The Gluttony. "No need to thank me," she smiled harmlessly.

Dmitri rolled his eyes at the witch's arrogant personality when he sat down on her left side.

Not only that, the witch also conjured a square table complete with various kinds of drinks on it, in the middle of the three arm chairs.

However, Beelzebub was too angry to sit down, as she was pacing back and forth, grumbling and swearing.

"Can we talk about our plan? How long will you act like this?" Dmitri was getting impatient when two minutes had passed, and Beelzebub the Gluttony was still in her current mood, not willing to start the discussion. "We don't have time for your bad mood."

"Your comment really doesn't help her," the witch clicked her tongue and shook her head, then shifted her eyes on the devil. "What happened to you?"

"The girl is missing," Beelzebub answered through her gritted teeth. She felt utterly stupid when she heard that Hope managed to escape her spell.

How could she escape that place!? It was still a mystery. Logically speaking, with no particular power that she possessed, Hope would've never been able to run away when her life was within her grasp.

"What girl?" the witch frowned, "Is there anything special with this girl? You can have all the cute girls that you like in no time, so just sit down."

The Gluttony was too petty to tell them that she had a guardian angel under her toes just an hour ago, before she magically disappeared.

Seeing this wouldn't go anywhere, and her bad temper didn't help the situation, she sat down on the vacant arm chair. While saying in, still, angry tone. "Let's talk about destroying that village while the centaurs aren't there, and hunting down the youngest Donovan."

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The priestess took Hope and Kace to the place where she was being killed, it was in another part of the cave. action

Kace didn't agree with it, because he knew Hope would feel uncomfortable and sad. Moreover, it wasn't the sight that he wished for Hope to see, regardless of how the condition of the priestess, but his mate insisted to go.

Kace was not able to see the priestess nor the fireflies that Hope claimed were surrounding them, but he believed her more than anything, and didn't slightly doubt her words.

If she said she saw it then it was really there, as simple as that.

The priestess led them to a place where the sound of the river flowing was clearer. There, near the underground river, among the big rocks and stalagmites, they could see the white cloak that the priestess was wearing.

From her position alone, they could tell, after the devil and her trusted maiden killed her, they didn't even bother to move the priestess and just left her dead body like that as it was.

"Stay here," Kace scrunched his nose when the smell from the body hit him hard. After all, the priestess had been there for a year, and they didn't know what was still left of her.

"But," Hope wanted to protest, yet the priestess stopped her.

"He is right, you don't want to see it," the priestess said sadly, her cheerful voice, and her bright personality dimmed at that moment. "Can you please tell him to take the dagger that was stabbed on my back? That's very precious for me..."

Hope nodded and told Kace the exact thing that the priestess just told her before he went to the body.

Respectfully, Kace approached the priestess and pulled the dagger. Afterward, he took off the jacket that he was wearing and covered her with it. Bending down, he carried the priestess and put the dead body at a better place on a big rock, under the ray of the moonlight that came through the crack above them.

When Kace walked back to where Hope was standing, he watched how his mate was crying silently, and wrapped her in a big hug. He didn't know what to say, and wished it was enough to ease her sadness.

"We will take her back to the village," Kace said as he felt Hope nodded lightly. "Let's go. We need to wake up those three." He was not really interested in waiting for them to recover. As long as they could walk, it was good enough. The beast would wake them up at any cost.