

Lykos Redemption

Ch. 3: Lýkos katá Lykánthropos

Coulter DarkClaw

Melaeneus and Nyctimus walked down the *drómo* to the main gate in silence. Both Nyc and Mel deep in thought, they walked abreast. It was nice for Melaeneus to be able to not have to wear a hood over his head anymore. He still required the cloak, though. Nyc was still looking at the new blade that Hera had given him. **Why this blade?** he wondered. His thoughts were a whirlwind. He couldn't quite figure out what Hera was playing at, but he knew that to refuse a gift from a god was about the worst thing one could do, so he took the blade in good faith. After all he wasn't one of Zeus' many paramours or one of his illegitimate demigod children, so Hera really had no reason to try and kill him. Still, he was wary. Hera didn't often come down from Olympus, but when she did it usually was followed by death. It was also scary that the blade was almost certainly made to kill wolves. Based on Mel's body's reaction to the handle, it was obvious why the blade was named after the plant that gave the blade its handle. Apparently dark wolves such as Melaeneus were allergic to Aconite.

He looked at his brother and saw that his eyes were still filled with pain. It was obvious that being here in the city was reminding him of the awful things that his brothers had done. "Melaeneus, how are you feeling?"

"Huh? Oh well, It is just strange how familiar we have become with the Gods. I feel like they just enjoy showing up and reminding us of their presence. It is kind of annoying, if I am being quite honest." Melaeneus avoided the question. It hurt Nyctimus to see Mel in such pain, but he couldn't do anything unless Mel was willing to talk to him.

"Well, it makes sense when you think about how this debacle all started. Of course the Gods are going to be involved in our lives much more than the average person, because our father decided to test their divinity. They are going to just rub that divinity in our faces now. The gods are many things but humble is not one of them."

~~~

\*drómo=road

\*\*1 plethron=100pous≈101 feet.

\*\*\*Akoníto=Aconite

\*\*\*\*Chiton=Grecian tunic usually of wool or linen

^Chlymus=Grecian cloak worn by young adults

“That we are not, young Nyctimus. I must apologize for our overt involvement in your family’s affairs, but we are just trying to make sure that you do not make the same mistake as your father,” a voice said behind them. They turned around and there in a bright silver toga held up by a bright silver brooch with the likeness of a howling wolf inlaid into the silver, stood the maiden goddess, Artemis.

“My lady, I am surprised to see you.” Nyctimus started startled by the goddess’ appearance.

“I must warn you that when the moon is next full that Melaeneus must be as far away from civilization and humans as possible. He will be a danger to himself and others during the full moon.” She said curtly and then her form shimmered like that of moonlight on the surface of a lake before disappearing into a moon beam.

“Again, that is not something a normal person would experience. I know our family’s history involves the Gods more than others, but I thought that the Gods were to ultimately avoid as much as possible contact with mere mortals.” Mel waved his hand toward where Artemis was before she had dissolved into the moonlight.

The younger brother sighed. “Mel, this is not really what you were concerned with, is it?”

Melaeneus sighed explosively, “No...There are still around thirty of our brothers who still are only wolves. I want to save them. I know that doing something similar to what I’m doing is the only way that they can regain what I have. I figure that one more act of redemption and I will regain fully my human body. With a few more maybe my wolf will talk to me. Again.”

They exited the city for the night and made camp about five *plethra*\*\* from the city walls was where they made camp. Melaeneus finally removed the cloak. He was completely nude underneath, but that was fine. It wasn’t as if the brothers hadn’t seen each other nude before. It was interesting looking at Melaeneus’ body after the change. Much more of the fur had receded. His feet had gone from digitigrade to plantigrade, however his tail was still there. It was perplexing. It was obvious that he truly was close to being whole again, yet there was still something holding him back. “Converse with your wolf, Mel. We need to see how much more he wants before he releases his grip on your body.”

~~~

*drómo=road

**1 plethron=100pous≈101 feet.

***Akoníto=Aconite

****Chiton=Grecian tunic usually of wool or linen

^Chlymus=Grecian cloak worn by young adults

“Sounds like a good enough idea. I will.”

Melaeneus looked around the empty space he occupied in his meditative dream. He looked for his wolf and saw nothing, so he called out, “What more do you want?”

The wolf walked up behind him and nudged his leg with his muzzle. The man looked down into the eyes of the wolf, **You are close. Close, but still not redeemed. It will take something large to redeem yourself fully. Yes, you have redeemed yourself somewhat by seeking forgiveness and facing some of your fears. However it's go...** the wolf took a few sniffs. **Something's approaching.**

“Huh, what do you mean?” Melaeneus looked stunned.

Take a whiff, the wolf said.

Melaeneus obeyed. He did indeed smell something. It smelled like, “Another wolf...Nyk!”

Go! the wolf ran back into the darkness and Melaeneus looked stunned.

Melaeneus' eyes shot open. He stood up and growled.

“What's going on, Mel?” Nyctimus asked, startled.

“Another wolf!” Melaeneus replied before—as if to confirm Mel's answer—a howl broke through the night.

Nyctimus grabbed *Akoníto**** and gripped the handle tightly and grasped another vial in his free hand as he stood up. After looking at Nyctimus to ensure he was prepared. Melaeneus responded with his own howl. It was a howl of challenge. Something about which Nyk had little knowledge.

~~~

\*drómo=road

\*\*1 plethron=100pous≈101 feet.

\*\*\*Akoníto=Aconite

\*\*\*\*Chiton=Grecian tunic usually of wool or linen

^Chlymus=Grecian cloak worn by young adults

“Stay behind me. I will protect you, brother.”

“Alright. I will stay behind you.”

“Good.” The wolf-man snarled. Nyctimus was startled by the ferocity his normally passive brother was displaying.

It wasn't a second later that a pure white wolf walked into the clearing. It wasn't any of the Lycaonids that was for sure. It was too gorgeous to be a dark wolf. It was also the color of newly fallen snow. Its eyes were the color of ice, a light blue so pale it was almost white. Its fur looked too perfect, as if it was brushed and shampooed every day. Nyctimus was bewildered that a wolf could hold such beauty. He looked again to his brother and asked, “That is not a dark wolf, is it?”

“No, it is one of Artemis' bitches.” Melaeneus snapped. There was an almost constant growling undertone to his voice now. It was as if his brother was embracing the wolf he had turned into a little too much. It was scaring Nyctimus to the point where he was backing away from the hybrid in front of him.

He looked back at the white wolf. It was staring at his brother intently. It was gauging the power of his will. “Melaeneus will you stop this nonsense. You are NOT an animal. You are a human being and you have for yourself a long future ahead. Please, brother calm yourself.”

“I cannot. She is challenging me. If I back down I am as good as dead. So please stay out of this.” Melaeneus replied. His voice was indeed calmer, but he was refusing to back down.

“This will not redeem you. If that is what you are thinking. If you are indeed trying to protect me, that is a fruitless endeavor, in this instance. I believe Artemis' liaison is here to protect us.”

“Shush, Brother. She is challenging me. I won't lose to a bitch.” Nyctimus was taken aback by his brother's aggressive attitude. It was a nice change from the cowardly man that he

~~~

*drómo=road

**1 plethron=100pous≈101 feet.

***Akoníto=Aconite

****Chiton=Grecian tunic usually of wool or linen

^Chlymus=Grecian cloak worn by young adults

knew as a teenager, but it was totally out of character and not at all like his brother and that worried Nyctimus.

Then he saw it: the white wolf charged forward. Melaeneus ran toward her in a burst of speed that couldn't be matched by any who played in the Olympic Games. This whole situation was completely alien to Nyctimus so he decided to not interfere and instead watched what would unfold before his eyes.

The wolves met at a spot that was approximately equidistant from their origins and they started the fight fiercely. It was Mel who landed the first blow with a powerful right hook into the wolf's side. The wolf flew from the surprising force of the blow. It was back on its feet within an instant. Its muzzle in an ugly snarl, it didn't move. Melaeneus bounded forward in order to continue the fight. As he rushed toward the white wolf, the creature leaped and grabbed Melaeneus' neck, causing Mel to tumble clumsily to the ground. Mel froze instantly. He mouthed, "How?"

The wolf that was now Mel's better let go of his neck and said in perfect Greek, "You are not a bad fighter, Melaeneus, son of Lycaon. However no beast is more powerful than a wolf of Artemis. I am their alpha, Lysaea. To have even withstood my will, to have looked directly into my eyes without flinching away, that is an accomplishment in and of itself. The darkwolves of Lycaon are indeed formidable opponents. Though they are not fully wolfish...None of them are." Her growling vocalization of the Greek language wasn't difficult to understand, though it sounded alien to Nyctimus.

"What are you saying, Lysaea?" Nyctimus asked tentatively.

"I have come in Artemis' Stead to provide you protection from any darkwolves who have yet to reawaken. Artemis cares for wolves in all their many forms. She loves them and though she despised the darkwolves originally, their continued homage to her every full moon, that is what softened her heart toward you, Melaeneus and Nyctimus," She continued without paying any attention to what Nyctimus had asked, though she acknowledged his existence, "You are still males, which she is not pleased with. However she will protect you and yours

~~~

\*drómo=road

\*\*1 plethron=100pous≈101 feet.

\*\*\*Akoníto=Aconite

\*\*\*\*Chiton=Grecian tunic usually of wool or linen

^Chlymus=Grecian cloak worn by young adults

as long as the wolfish children of Lycaon and their descendants continue to pay homage to her.”

Nyctimus was intrigued by what had just been said. Again he spoke up, “What does that mean, Lysaea?”

“It means that every full moon, the darkwolves will be at their most powerful. That is what that means. It is a gift from Artemis to them. It means that every full moon, if the darkwolves regain their humanity, they will revert to their wolfish form. It means that you, Nyctimus, have an extremely important job ahead of you, now both of you, go to sleep. Tomorrow comes quickly.”

\*\*\*

Nyctimus woke first. Or so he thought. He looked over at the white wolf. She inclined her head. “Welcome to the world of the living, young human.” She said in a manner which could very easily have been joking.

“What is the time?”

“It is midday. Your brother is still asleep. I did not think to wake him. He dreams as a pup would, it is adorable.” This caused Nyk to look over at the sleeping form of his brother. Every so often there was a small yip which was accompanied by a small kick. It was actually very cute, Nyctimus thought. It was as he was looking at the sleeping form that he noticed that much more of Melaeneus’ body was human in nature. The tail was gone; much of the fur that had remained from the first act of redemption had disappeared. Now he just looked like a very hairy male human, not the beast he was only two days prior.

It was this that caused Nyctimus to gasp in excitement. “He is becoming more human! He is on his way to recovery.”

“Yes, he does have a more human appearance now. However, make no mistake, that man is still very much a wolf. A proverbial ‘wolf in sheep’s clothing’ or human clothes as it were, he is still very much attached to the wolf born in his soul.”

~~~

*drómo=road

**1 plethron=100pous≈101 feet.

***Akoníto=Aconite

****Chiton=Grecian tunic usually of wool or linen

^Chlymus=Grecian cloak worn by young adults

“How can I mistake my own brother for a monster? He is returned to me. I am so grateful. To him for his work at redeeming himself, and to Zeus, Lady Artemis’ father, for granting us the possibility of reuniting.”

“Take heed of my words, young human: He. Is. A. Wolf. He. Will. Kill. You. As would I, if I weren’t sworn against it by Artemis’ hand.” The white wolf locked eyes with the human, to instill understanding into the young man.

“I still love him, I cannot help it if I am attached to him; he was and still is my eldest brother. I have sworn to protect him and his wolves against anything that may harm them. Promising my life in exchange of theirs.”

The she-wolf in front of Nyctimus looked at him, head canted to one side—a sign of confusion. She looked at him long and hard trying to understand the motivations of this young human, he who would swear his life to those who would just as soon kill him as save him. She was intrigued, and hazarded a guess that this human wouldn’t live to see his fiftieth birthday. Of course, she on the other hand had sworn her life to Artemis and would live a long life. Longer than her wild children. She would live to see too many moons to count. Of course she kept that morbid thought to herself. She looked at the lycan by her side. She knew that this man could end up seeing his curse from Lord Zeus’ curse in one of two ways: Just that a curse. In which case he and his wolf would never see eye to eye and would fight each other for control over their single body for the rest of their short lives. Or he could accept the wolf as a gift, in which case he and his wolf would agree to live in harmony and live life peacefully. From what she’d already seen she guessed that Melaeneus would see it as the latter and would accept his wolf. She smiled to herself at that.

The blackness surrounded Melaeneus again. He looked around and laughed at himself. “So we’re doing this again?”

The wolf stalked up to him slowly. **We are going to do this for a while unless you accept that this is going to be a part of your life for a long time coming. You have proven yourself to*

~~~

\*drómo=road

\*\*1 plethron=100pous≈101 feet.

\*\*\*Akoníto=Aconite

\*\*\*\*Chiton=Grecian tunic usually of wool or linen

^Chlymus=Grecian cloak worn by young adults

*me. I have given you back your form completely. Though, you will be a little hairier than before...It cannot be helped. That is a side effect of being a wolf. You're hairy...\**

"What did I do to become...The fight with that white wolf? I just wanted to protect Nyctimus..." Melaeneus' eyes brightened, "That is it is it not? That I tried to protect Nyctimus even though I lost?"

The demonic looking wolf in front of Melaeneus nodded. He had what Melaeneus could only describe as a self-satisfied smirk on his muzzle.

"If we are to live together for the rest of our life? I gladly accept you. No, that's not quite right. I ecstatically accept you. I do not want to fight. I want to be whole."

The wolf's form shifted in front of Melaeneus' eyes. It went from the form of the wolf that he had existed as for seven years, and shifted to that of a standard Grecian Grey. His luxurious coat was a dark gray, with a beautiful white underbelly. The wolf's ear flicked a little before in one surprising move it pounced playfully on Melaeneus' ethereal form. Melaeneus chuckled as the wolf on top of him licked at his face playfully. Mel started petting its side and laughed, "Okay, okay buddy. I'm excited too."

"I never want to be that afraid to act again. I don't want to fight you. I don't want to be a monster like my father, either. I want to live, laugh, and love like anybody else, but also enjoy the forest with you. If we live separate we cannot experience the world together as I wish to."

*\*Hug me.\** The wolf replied. So the man did. They fused utterly and permanently. For better or for worse Melaeneus the man and Melaeneus the wolf were now one and the same. He smiled and growled playfully.

\*\*\*

Melaeneus woke up to see that the she-wolf had left. So it was just Nyctimus and he. "Brother, I am the wolf and the wolf is I. I am one and the same. We no longer exist as two separate parts of my soul."

~~~

*drómo=road

**1 plethron=100pous≈101 feet.

***Akoníto=Aconite

****Chiton=Grecian tunic usually of wool or linen

^Chlymus=Grecian cloak worn by young adults

"Melaeneus, What do you mean?"

"The wolf and I communed during my slumber and we decided that we were better off as one entity instead of two entities sharing one body."

"What does that mean, brother?"

Melaeneus was growing frustrated with his brother's difficulty in understanding and growled, venting some of the frustration.

At the animalistic growl emitted from his brothers mouth it was hard not to balk. "By the gods! What in Hades has gotten into you, brother?"

"I told you, brother, I am the wolf and he is I. We are one being. I have no idea what it means in its entirety. We shall see..."

"Right. Any Idea what we should do now?" Nyctimus asked.

"I have an idea," said a voice that both brothers recognized as they turned around to address the intruder on their conversation.

Nyctimus bowed, and seeing who he was staring at and not wanting to end up a pile of ash, Mel followed suit, "Lord Zeus, we apologize for not acknowledging your presence earlier," Nyctimus apologized respectfully.

"Rise, young Nyctimus. Rise, Melaeneus." Zeus replied steadily. His voice sounded like it was barely repressing annoyance at the two brothers, "I did not come to be worshipped I would go to a temple for that. Now as I was saying, if you are wondering where to go from here, young ones, I suggest you find your brothers and save them from themselves. Hades has already gathered to many of your brothers in his special little Lycan Swamp. I admit that I am not happy to see you regain humanity, but at the same time I see that you have indeed redeemed your cowardice in trying to protect your brother something that you failed to do when you were younger. Now go find your other brothers. Lead them to a brighter future,

~~~

\*drómo=road

\*\*1 plethron=100pous≈101 feet.

\*\*\*Akoníto=Aconite

\*\*\*\*Chiton=Grecian tunic usually of wool or linen

^Chlymus=Grecian cloak worn by young adults

Melaeneus and Nyctimus, sons of Lycaon. Lycanthrope and his Protector and Redeemer,“ with that Zeus left in a puff of crackling thundercloud.

Nyctimus looked at his brother, who was still nude. “Let us find you a *chiton*\*\*\*\*, brother. In the meantime continue to wear the *chlymus*^.”

“What?...Oh...” Melaeneus looked down and realized that he was nude. He didn’t care that much. After all he had not worn clothing since the dinner with Zeus.

The two brothers one clad in a dirty, off-white *chiton*, the other a brown *chlymus*, walked down the road in the opposite direction as their old home and for the first time in seven years, they had a mission.

~~~

*drómo=road

**1 plethron=100pous≈101 feet.

***Akoníto=Aconite

****Chiton=Grecian tunic usually of wool or linen

^Chlymus=Grecian cloak worn by young adults