

Lykos Redemption

Ch. 6: Espoir

Coulter DarkClaw

Melaeneus howled into the night. It was a lonely, mournful sound. He was soon joined by one, two, three, then four, then five. Soon there was a choral, howling requiem filling the Attican mountainsides. All of the men releasing their sorrow solely through the howls that left their mouths. Only Nyctimus cried openly. He stopped though as he heard his wolfish brethren begin to quiet down.

Nyctimus stepped forward in front of a crowd of men who were no longer men. They were of human form, yes, but they didn't belong to the same race as he. He stood there looking across the small crowd before him. Amazed he could see his brothers again. He may have hated what his brothers had done to him when he was younger, but in their absence he had gained an understanding few, if any truly understand without the accompanying loss of an immediate family member. Yes, everyone acknowledges the importance of family. It is said without them truly understanding what they are saying. Nyctimus knew this concept. Truly understood what he was saying when he said that he loved his family. That he had missed them despite their cruelty. He had missed the random insults as much as he missed the brothers who threw them. It were these thoughts that flowed through Nyk's head as he looked through teary eyes at each and every one of his brothers. He remembered the times they had shared before he learned the true extent of their cruelty.

"I stand before you now, the last human descendant of Pelagus. The last human son of Lycaon alive. I stand before you who are indeed my brothers. I stand here because over the last seven years, our family has been targeted, hunted even. I stand here in memory of the four and twenty brothers that have died over the last several years. To mourn their loss, to shed tears. I stand here because this world has done something terrible. They have killed the members of our family. But mostly I stand here because I *love* each and every one of you. You are all my brothers and I missed you all greatly over the last seven years. I stand here because tonight is not a time for mourning. The last seven years have been harsh on our family and we will celebrate our return." Nyctimus spoke clearly and eloquently.

"That it is dear Nyctimus. It is indeed hard to lose family but reunion is a time for celebrating, a time for hope. A time to reflect on times gone and a time to look towards the future with glee. I am sorry that I left you last night. Father is an insistent one, I can give him that." Apollo showed up by his side. He snapped his fingers and a banquet appeared behind the large crowd of his brothers, "Come, and let us eat. It is time I had a proper dinner with my love."

Nyctimus giggled, "Oh Apollo, you should not have. I appreciate the sentiment, but what of your family?"

"Father acknowledges that you and I were targets of Eros. That we indeed have feelings for one another. He let me do this." Apollo soothed Nyctimus' Doubts, "My father realizes that he will be hard pressed to stop me from seeing you my love. So he has allowed me every night where we do not have a meeting of the Twelve to come and see you."

* Greek word for mile. 1 milion=1479m=1617yds.

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Nyctimus' smile just grew wider, "You really are going to be a part of my Life, Apollo?"

"Naturally. I love you. Remember?"

The two followed the other twenty-six men that were heading to gather around the tables that were set for them. It was a beautiful area in Attica that they had found to stop that night. Around less than a few *milia** south from the outskirts of the city of Athens had they found a place to camp set upon a hill overlooking the great city. There was enough room for all of them to sleep in their own space. However, only Nyctimus was going to sleep apart from his brothers. He assumed this was much to do with the whole being half-wolf now.

The simple little shelter he had set up was big enough for two people, if they were really intimately familiar with each other. And were comfortable cuddling. He built it this way because he had a fairly good feeling that Apollo would show himself before too long. It was a simple enough structure made from spare pieces of wood that he found in the area. It would keep the rain off of him while he slept without keeping in too much heat.

As they walked toward the newly set up pavilion, Apollo kept his arm protectively around Nyctimus' shoulders and again Nyctimus' hand was resting securely on the small of Apollo's back. They watched as the twenty-six wolfish brothers raucously and wildly roughhoused like a group of children. Nyctimus chuckled. He hadn't felt this at home since he was a kid. Sure his brothers used to treat him like shit, but they were his family, and they all seemed to pretty much not give him as much as a second thought, which to Nyctimus was a huge improvement. He felt that these oafs were more his family now than they ever were before. It probably helped that he was lovers with a god. An important god.

Apollo looked down at Nyctimus and saw the thoughtful expression on his face. He laughed, "Of what are you thinking, my love? It is a time for joyous rapture, not thoughtful rumination. Please, Nyk, enjoy this party. Think not of the future or of the past, think only of now. I am here. For you. For your family I am here."

"I cannot help but think of how awesome it is that I have my family back. Which brings up questions of why they are treating me as they are. This is the only reason that I am ruminating on anything."

"They are treating you this way because you are the one to set them free from their eternal punishment," Apollo intoned, "Now they can finally enjoy living again. And it is because of you. Be proud, be happy; you are finally reunited with family something not everyone is able to do."

Nyk sighed exasperatedly, "I guess you are right. It is as though I am missing a valuable piece of information."

"What might that be?"

"That is what I am trying to figure out."

"Well put that problem away for now and enjoy tonight. It is time for celebration. I expect we will get very, very loud, tonight." Apollo finished the conversation as they walked into the pavilion where many

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of his brothers were already destroying the feast which had appeared upon the tables within the pavilion. Apollo lightly grabbed Nyctimus' chin and pulled him up into a deep, passionate kiss, before he went and joined Nyctimus' brothers as they tore into the large amount of kid flesh*. There was also large amount of fish and squid. There was also a lot of wine, and goat milk.

Nyctimus took a moment to appreciate just how much and rich the *symposion*** was. Then he chuckled at the crassness and eagerness of his wolfish brothers. "Stop, everyone stop. We are forgetting the libation***."

"Very good, Nyctimus. It is good to see that at least one of the sons of that snake Lycaon know of me. However, seeing as you are dating one of my superiors, I guess I truly cannot ask for you to pay homage to me," slurred the voice of a man that was standing behind Nyctimus.

Nyctimus didn't even turn around. He already knew which god was barging in upon his life now, "Dionysus, my lord, may I ask why you are here?" he forced, barely able to keep a polite tone with the perpetually drunk god.

The god walked up to his side and put his hand on Nyk's shoulder, "I know that I am your least favorite of the gods. I can *hiccup...* see the contempt you have for me on your face. It is only for fear of receiving the anger of Apollo and Zeus that I don't shift *hiccup...* your shape," he voiced into Nyk's ear. Then shambled past the young man.

"And it is only because you are a god that I do not dare to voice my true opinion of you," Nyk muttered under his breath.

"To answer your question *hiccup...* I am here because Zeus wanted to check on Apollo. He does worry about him. Like a *hiccup...* true *hiccup...* father should." Dionysus said before continuing to shamble to a table where he joined in the partying.

Nyctimus sighed, trying to ignore the jab at his father. As evil as the man was, he was still Nyk's father. *What can I do? He isn't wrong.* Nyctimus thought. He went into the party and decided that he'd let the comment go. It was only proper that he celebrated. He was reunited with his family that were treating him the best that they had ever done. He had a lover, and a god at that. His life was starting to go swimmingly.

He found Apollo and sat down next to him, and soon he was joining in the raucous, drunken cacophony. The rest of the night went by in a drunken haze. He had to admit that this was turning out to be the best evening he'd had since his tenth birthday, the last birthday that he'd had where his family didn't feel like a bunch of rowdy delinquents.

Soon he and Apollo were bidding the others good night before retiring to Nyctimus' makeshift shelter.

Apollo looked down upon Nyctimus' nude, sleeping form. He leaned down and kissed Nyctimus upon the brow before he disappeared in a splendorous display of flashing lights. It was at this and the fading

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music of a flute that Nyctimus woke up. His first thought was that he was cold. He felt empty and not physically, though that was also true. He felt emotionally drained. "Make it beautiful, my love." Nyctimus whispered.

He walked out into the field in which he and his brothers had settled. He saw said brothers in a giant mass of tangled bodies. He was sure that nothing occurred between them, but it was still quite interesting to see twenty-six sleeping men all in a gigantic pile. He chuckled to himself. So the extent of the wolfishness went as far as the pack mentality.

He sat next to them facing south east hoping to watch the sunrise. And watch it he did. He sighed as he saw the midnight-blue sky brighten to a brilliant aqua before the sky turned slowly into a fiery orange casting the innumerable clouds in the sky in shadow. The long shadows that cast from the mountains around the city of Athens covered it. It was amazing to watch that giant orb of burning light ascend into the sky behind Apollo's chariot. He sighed. It was going to be difficult being in love with a god who had to leave every morning in order to cast the sun across the sky.

"Father, I wish it were not at your hand that I was killed. I wish you could meet Apollo. I wish you could see me now. I have finally found love." Nyctimus spoke to himself quietly. He didn't dare think what it would mean to wake one of his brothers.

Today was going to be busy. He needed to find work in the city. He also required supplies. He didn't want to lean too heavily on Apollo's charity. He, after all could be self-reliant and had been for the last seven years of his life. He didn't want to all of a sudden become co-dependent. He stood up and went back to his little shelter and donned his chiton. He also wore his *chlymus*****. He grabbed his bag. Then he left for the city.

Melaeneus was the first to wake from the massive wolf pile. He groaned as he woke and extracted himself from the wolf pile. Especially after the *symposion* that they had the night previous, Melaeneus was regretting always being an early riser. As he got up, so too did Demeas. Demeas was right next to him in the giant pile of bodies that their wolfish brothers now slept in. "Good morning, brother. How did you sleep?"

"Well. I slept well." Demeas replied curtly, "And you, alpha?"

Melaeneus heard that and reminded himself that that title had a lot more weight now. He was in charge of a large pack of currently twenty-six people. He decided to do something at that moment for which many of his brothers would have killed him eight years ago. "I slept well, brother. Help me wake the others."

"Why, alpha? They partied hard last night. We are the first ones up; let us enjoy the time to talk with one another."

"Because it is time that this family starts pulling its own weight in the world. We *were* royalty. We are now in the position of non-working poor people who have no land. We have no power, Demeas. We are

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going to build this plot of land into a suitable living area for us and Nyctimus. And in order to do that I need all of you.”

Demeas huffed. He didn't like the idea of changing their lives so much. They'd moved from Arcadia to Athens. They'd gone from living the lives of wolves to not knowing what they were. They'd been dropped out of their nobility and became suddenly very, very poor. They had not a single drachma to their name. So his brother honestly had a point. However something about their current situation honestly made him feel comfortable. Maybe it was their ability to live alongside of nature. He did not know, but that's how he felt.

Reluctantly Demeas obeyed his alpha and woke his younger siblings. Each of them growled when woken. To which he responded in kind. Letting them know of the alpha's wishes. Soon six and twenty men aged twenty-three to thirty-five.

Melaeneus looked at all of his siblings. Each and every one of them hairier than he remembered them, with significant facial hair, untamed and untrimmed. Long, lustrous hair grew from each of their heads and they were all built like Olympic athletes or warriors. They each were in the nude, something that bothered none of them. Some of them held their heads obviously in pain from the night before. He sighed, “Brothers we are no longer royalty. We are no longer wolves. Nor are we human. Rather, we are something in between. We no longer belong in Arcadian lands and have been guided by our brother...and his mate, Apollo...to the land of Attica and therein the city of logic, Athens. I stand here before you acting as leader. I first ask if any of you has an issue with this,” Melaeneus waited to hear an affirmative response. When he heard none, he continued, “I, then, ask you to assist me and our youngest brother, Nyctimus, in establishing our livelihoods in this city. The start of that is establishing a dwelling. As much as many of you would prefer to stay in the open air and sleep as a group under the stars, we cannot do this. We need to establish a place of residence. For the sake of Nyctimus who has watched over us on our journey from Arcadia to Attica, let us build an abode of which we can be proud.”

Melaeneus shifted and ran into the forested area that surrounded the clearing in which they had taken residence. His brothers followed. They ran through the forest as they awaited instructions from their eldest brother—and now their alpha.

Nyctimus looked toward the assembled council before which he stood. “My brothers and I only seek residence and employment, nothing more. We have come because our home is that no longer.”

A portly-, older-looking, tall man stood from his seat and looked at the formal-royal, “Pardon our reluctance, your majesty. We have a hard time believing that the children of the king of Arcadia would no longer consider their city their home. Could you explain this?”

“Please, just call me Nyctimus. I am no longer a prince of Arcadia. Solely a poor shepherd without his flock. My brothers were turned into wolves by our lord, Zeus. They have only recently become human again and have never known a life outside of royalty and wolf-hood. I need them to feel like they can and will hold citizenship in their hands again. So I ask again, may we have entrance into the city?”

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"I say nay. You are trying to take over the province. I do not trust these Arcadian intruders. I do not dare listen to these lies. I fear that they solely try to gain our trust in order to gain an upper hand and grasp the city from underneath us."

"A valid opinion, citizen, however can you indeed back it up on more than just heresay?" A smooth feminine voice was heard from behind Nyctimus. A tall, graceful woman with a full head of gilded, golden locks strode forward. She wore a *himation*[^] of a luxurious silver with golden borders. It was held up by a brushed silver brooch in the shape of an owl. Her entire presence felt commanding and unnerving, "Unless you can, without a doubt, prove that Nyctimus and his kin are indeed here to take my wonderful city, I say allow them entrance. Allow them to obtain work and show them that those of my city are not only logical but kind."

"Lady Athena?" Nyctimus questioned, while bowing.

"Be quiet, young one. I argue for you because they will listen to their matron. Will you not?" She replied.

The council was soon rampant with whispers and discussion. Nyctimus looked at Athena. She was indeed gorgeous. He also knew her to be intelligent and very much a goddess in every sense of the word. He could see how men could fall in love with her, though he felt no attraction himself. He then saw the logic of Eros' argument before. If he was bisexual, like his brothers, he was sure that he'd feel some form of attraction for the goddess before him. He felt no such thing and therefore was in no way bisexual. He was indeed homosexual.

The realization struck a chord in Nyctimus' heart and before he knew entirely what was going on, he was crying into Apollo's chest. Apollo hugged him tightly as he shushed him. "Everything is going to be alright, my love." Apollo whispered as he leaned down and kissed Nyctimus on the crown of his head.

Athena looked over her shoulder at the two. She sighed as she realized what had just happened for Nyctimus. That the realization would ultimately make him illogical and beholden to his emotions for quite some time. "Athenians, behold the 'man' you considered a threat. He is smitten with my cousin, Apollo. His brothers are of no threat to you. Believe you me, his family is no threat." Athena said before leaving in a cloud of raining owl feathers.

The same tall man as before stood up and said to the still crying Nyctimus, "We will allow you residence in the city or anywhere nearby. It is through Athena's blessing that you are given this right. Do not abuse it," He turned to leave, "This council is dismissed."

Apollo thanked him and continued to comfort Nyctimus. "I apologize, my love. I must leave you. The sun requires a driver. I would rather not have Helios get any ideas."

Nyctimus replied by nodding in understanding and hugging Apollo tightly. "You are the best thing to ever happen to me, Apollo. I love you."

Apollo cupped Nyctimus' cheek in his hand before he replied, "And I you, my sweet. You have held my heart since your thirteenth birthday. As I have said before. Know, Nyctimus, that I love you and you

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alone.” With that said, Apollo disappeared in his brilliant lightshow. Nyctimus hummed along with the flute’s notes as wiped the tears from his eyes.

“Thank you, Apollo. You know not what that means for me to hear.” He turned around and exited the amphitheater where the council had met. He knew he had not done everything that needed to be done in order to secure his Athenian citizenship, “Now to look for a form of employ.” Nyctimus said and went to do just that.

“So you and that human, Apollo? What do you really think that will lead to?” came the voice of Helios.

“Be quiet, Titan. I care not what you have to say. I am in love with him. You have no right to judge. For if I remember correctly, you had a thing for Ouranos. Am I wrong? Diephillic relationships are common and we know what we risk when we fall for them. Your crush was your own father. Do you understand how that seems to me?”

“You know not of what you speak, child.” Helios responded promptly.

“Yes nor do I want to know. Now shut up and do your job.”

Nyctimus trudged up the hillside. To return to the clearing that he and his brothers currently called home. While doing so, he ruminated on his final realization of sexuality in the amphitheater. He was so distracted that he did not realize when he crested the hill and as he went to take another step he stumbled forward as the level ground threw him off balance. “By Apollo!” He shouted.

As he regained his balance he finally looked up and what he beheld struck him as so odd and out of place that he struggled to grasp what he was seeing. What was once a plain clearing in the forest was now fairly large wooden structure in which reminded him of a typical Grecian home. Excepting the fact that it was built solely from timber, the house looked quite normal.

“What in Hades? Mel, Demi, Ori?” He cried out to his three eldest siblings who stepped out of the doorway and saw Nyctimus.

Melaeneus noticed that Nyk had been crying recently and asked, “Why were you crying?”

“Because...I am solely homosexual.”

“We have known this for some time. Why is this affecting you only now?”

“Because before today I deluded myself into thinking that I had just not found a woman attractive enough to me. However at Athena’s presence today I could no longer deny that I held no attraction to even the most beautiful of women. The realization struck a chord so deep that I was not ready for the welling of emotions that followed. It did not help that Athena used my relationship with Apollo to say that our family is no threat to this city.”

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Melaeneus put his hand upon Nyctimus' shoulder and led him inside their new home. They led him to a room that stood apart from the other on the opposite end of the main hall. Inside Nyctimus beheld a room that was fit for royalty and sitting on a makeshift mattress was what appeared to be a shepherd's crook. However this shepherd's crook wasn't round as was typical. It took the shape of five sides of an octagon. It was made of a darker wood and was hewn masterfully. He picked it up. "Who?" was all he said. Then without further warning, Hephaestus appeared in the room.

"I made you that staff. You were a shepherd before and so too shall you be again. This time of wolves. Specifically of your lycan brothers." He disappeared a second later after the deafening peal of a hammer on an anvil.

He held the god-hewn staff in front of him. It felt different. Like it held more secrets than he would ever know.

//////////--END ACT I--\\\\\\\\\\\\\\

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