

Lykos Redemption

\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\Act II\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\

Ch. 2: Serena Ist jetzt Voller Licht. Freut Euch!

Coulter DarkClaw

The next day Nyctimus woke up feeling rather refreshed. He sat in his bed newly made as it had been last night. The sheets were still crisp and fresh. They smelled of his love, he thought; they smelled of a summer's day, of a crowded amphitheater, of wine and of olives—something that all gods carried in their scent. He just wanted to lay there in the comfort of his simple bed, but he knew that he had to start preparing for the night. So with a heavy sigh he flipped back the sheets and rotated his legs so that his feet hit the floor. He picked himself up and donned his *chiton**. Then went over to grab his *baxeae*** and then the Shepherd's Crook. As his fingers entrapped the bronze of the magic staff his reluctance to meet the day left him. He sent a silent prayer of thanks to Hephaestus before he walked out of his room. As he exited he put on his *baxeae* and grabbed his new *himation****. As he pinned on a new brooch—a gift from Apollo—he heard footsteps approach him.

"Brother, it is good you are up. You know what must be done?" Melaeneus asked. After receiving an affirmative from the First Shepherd he continued, "Then I will leave you to your work. Make sure you are ready."

"I will be brother. With this staff and Apollo by my side, guiding you tonight will be nigh on childishly easy." Nyctimus replied, a confidence entered his voice with which his brothers were unfamiliar.

"I hope that is the truth, Nyk. For if you lie now, it could cost the lives of many Athenians." Melaeneus responded darkly before continuing through the hallway.

Nyctimus huffed to himself before following after his brother. They soon entered the main room of their wooden house. It was still little more than just a large space to gather. They hadn't had the opportunity—as of yet—to purchase furnishings. It struck Nyctimus though, that maybe the lack of furnishings may have been a good thing. It allowed a more natural, cave like atmosphere to their place of residence and considering his fellow denizens he understood that this fitted the house better than some tacky Attican furnishings.

As he walked into the main room, his brothers greeted him amicably and allowed him some space. They did this because of his staff. It was a weapon created by the gods they had no idea of what it was capable. That frightened them a slight amount. Nyctimus smiled internally. Even if it was because of his staff, his brothers were treating him with some modicum of respect. That respect he received with internal pleasure.

"Good morning, all of you. I hope Apollo greeted you well upon this morning." Nyctimus now smiled outwardly and brotherly toward his siblings. He walked toward the central fire, unneeded in the temperate Mediterranean climate for heating but an undeniably useful gift from the family of the gods.

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***Himation= Greek cloak usually worn by grown men

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^ 1 drachma=4.31g=.152oz./used also to denote a currency. Which was 1 drachma of silver

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He looked at Harpalykos, who was currently stewing some form of meat, “What is for breakfast, brother?” Nyk asked.

“Venison and Bread, Shepherd.” Harpalykos replied. His tone professional, respectful.

“In what way was this hunted?” The First Shepherd asked.

“The way a wolf hunts, brother.” Mel replied matter-of-factly. Nyk looked back at Melaeneus with a contemplative look.

After a pause that stretched nigh on too long, Nyctimus looked back to Harpalykos and said, “Well, brother, I look forward to the meal. Venison is not the easiest for shepherds like myself to afford. Five *talents***** per *drachma*[^]. The kings of most of the Aegean see it as a meat specific to royalty. I am sure you remember how father would treat us to venison once in a blue moon.”

“That is why this is so special. Today we celebrate our rise from beasts, from men, to something better. Shepherd, we see this day as a momentous occasion. We are ascendant beings. We will be better than man, better than wolves. We will be a perfect harmony of the two.”

Nyctimus looked at Harpalykos. His eyes seared disappointment into his elder brother. “Pride will get you nowhere in this life, Harpalykos. You must do things every day to humble yourself. Tomorrow you are becoming a servant to an Athenian.” His eyes told the proto-werewolf that he wouldn’t take argument. He turned to the other wolves gathered around the fire, “That is what tomorrow shall be. Today shall be a day of realizing *why* Zeus turned you. Each and every one of you was turned because you had committed some act of evil. To truly show that you were beasts among men, Zeus turned you.

“Melaeneus and Demeas gained their humanity by rectifying what it was that had made Zeus change them. You shall now experience their path in redemption. I thought Apollo had only turned you that were solely cowardly followers of Demeas and Archeus[†]. As this is not the case, you will be told why you were turned and how you may redeem that act.”

A resounding groan followed Nyctimus’ statement. That was until Melaeneus let out a subtle growl. Melaeneus walked up next to his brother and spoke loudly and clearly, so that all six-and-twenty wolf-men could hear what he would say next, “Listen to the First Shepherd. He is our protector, and more than that he was spared the curse we now must experience every day of our lives. Listen to Nyctimus, because he is the only one of our family that retains his humanity. Solely our appearance is yet human, brothers.”

Another quieter set of grumbles could be heard. Nyctimus’ sole response to his eldest brother’s aid was a small and quiet thanks. Nyctimus then spoke up to speak directly to his brothers, “I have much to do today other than preparing for the full moon. So in that respect, I leave Melaeneus in charge of you, as is his right as alpha. Though I do have one request of him.” At this Nyctimus lifted off his pack. He handed it to the eldest wolf-man, “Inside this bag is a checklist. Ensure that everything on that checklist we have for tonight. Can you do that, Mel?”

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"I can. I will." Melaeneus took the bag and nodded his head in ascent.

"Good. I will see you all tonight." With that said, Nyctimus left the house. He made his way down to the city to his place of employ in order to continue his apprenticeship. Watching him from the climax of the hill upon which their house sat was Melaeneus.

"Let us hope, for all our sakes, that tonight goes well, brother."

The *drómo*[^]* was packed with people as Nyctimus tried to navigate his way to the physician's lodge. There were so many people that it was slow going. He didn't understand why there were so many people. It made no sense to him. Yes Athens was a large city, but this was getting ridiculous. He waded through the large crowd to arrive on the doorstep of the lodge. He knocked three times on the door and waited.

"What is it?" came the gruff reply to his knocking. Nyctimus rolled his eyes. His master was an interesting sort that after years of dealing with death had become callous and highly antisocial outside of his profession.

"Solely your apprentice, master." Nyctimus replied trying to hide his annoyance.

"The full moon is nigh, people will be crazy, my young apprentice. Be ready. Be vigilant. Today will be long and tiresome." The ornery old man said as he opened the door to allow Nyctimus entrance into his home.

"Yes, master. I am prepared, sir."

As soon as Nyctimus shut his mouth, the door of the physician's home burst open. Standing there in the doorway were three guards, one supported by his arms being wrapped around his comrades' necks. His knee had been brutally torn open and his face was bruised and torn up. "Androcles! Come and help us. Akakios has been gravely injured."

The old man rushed over and with surprising strength gathered the man and walked him further into the shop where he laid him down on an empty, ratty cot. "Nyctimus! Come over here, boy!"

Nyc rolled his eyes before going over to his master. "Yes, master. How may I be of service?"

"See to it that these men's wounds are tended." The man commanded.

"I can take him from here, sir." Nyctimus politely spoke to the guard who was carrying the injured one.

"Please save him." The guard said, barely hiding something more than just friendly compassion in his voice.

"Even in the city guard..." Nyc muttered to himself. He then shouldered the man and took him into the back of the Apothecary. Today was going to be a long day.

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Apollo sat on his throne as his father droned on. Sometimes being a god wasn't all it was cracked up to be. All he wanted to do now was take care of his beloved Nyctimus but at the moment he could not. He had to sit on his throne, listen to all the bureaucratic nonsense to which his father insisted he be there to listen. So there he sat as Nyctimus no doubt stressed about Artemis bringing Serena to bear upon the earth.

One of the four muses, his personal servants, came up to him and whispered musically in his ear, "Nyctimus is busied by his master as you have asked."

"Thank you." Apollo whispered.

When he returned his attention to the council, he had garnered all of the Twelve's attention. "Do you have something of more import to which you must attend, my son?" Zeus questioned with a note of annoyance in his voice. It was made all the more apparent by the smell of o-zone that poured from his direction.

"Than you, father? That would be nigh on impossible." Apollo nervously joked.

"It is that boy, is it not?" The Lord of the Skies raised an eyebrow.

Apollo sighed. "I love him, father. I cannot keep my mind off of him for very long."

At this Zeus brought forth an image of the young man about which they were speaking. "I understand, my son, but you have duties to which you must attend. Here. On Olympus. Not counting the fact that Heilios needs to be kept on a short leash." The boy in the ghostly image appeared to be tending to some minor injuries on a slave.

"I am not a youngling any longer, father. I know my duties well. Heilios contained is high on my list of priorities."

The smell of o-zone and burning silk seethed from the two gods in excess. It was good that Nyctimus was not here to bear witness. He would have been burned to ash. "Do NOT talk back to your *king!*" Zeus chastised his son.

Apollo's anger was barely contained as well. He radiated a deadly amount of heat and strangely enough a Spartan marching beat could be heard as well. "Father, if there is nothing of further *actual* import to discuss Heilios has to be tended. I take my leave of this council." With that Apollo about-faced regally and left the Pantheon of Olympus. He went to his Chariot and galloped his horses off the Mount.

Melaeneus shaded his eyes as he looked to see how far along Apollo was on his daily journey. It appeared to be close to the end of Nyctimus' shift. He'd be arriving home soon. He sent up a silent

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prayer to the god of prophecy, song, art, and the Sun. 'Please be here when Nyk arrives. I am sure he has had a rough day.'

As he lowered his gaze he saw a small speck at the bottom of the path to their home. It was gradually growing larger until Melaeneus saw the silhouette of a man with a shepherd's crook. That was definitely Nyctimus. Slowly Nyctimus ascended the path and slowly his form came clearer.

"Is the Shepherd on his way?" came a voice with which the Lykaonids were becoming extremely familiar. Mel turned and lo and behold was Apollo standing abreast to the alpha.

"My lord, you already know the answer. And what of Heilios?"

"I am not abandoning my job. I am here and I am there." There was a hint of indignation in his voice that was accompanied by a slight burning sensation on Melaeneus' arm. He looked down, and indeed there was a large ovoid red splotch upon his arm on the patch of skin closest to the sun god.

Nyctimus soon crested the hill and came to the two other males. "Welcome home, brother."

"Thank you." Then Nyc turned to Apollo, "My love, it is good to see you."

"I am glad to be here, my sweet. Artemis shall bring Serena to bear in a few hours. We need to get you ready." Apollo replied, smiling. A radiant smile fit for any deity and as bright as the sun.

"Then let us go, my love. We shall see you for a moment tonight." Nyctimus said.

Nyctimus sat in silence on the edge of the hill. Apollo was there beside him and sat with him. He would lend but a sparing amount of his power to the barrier. Nyctimus knew that this would be the best way to keep the children of Lycaon contained as they transformed to their beastly states. He looked to Apollo who nodded and then began writing in the rocky soil at his feet with the Shepherd's Crook:

The Twelve keep us. Hecate give me strength.

Athena help me to build this great wall.

The final period came down as a loud smack. When all went quiet Nyctimus looked up. What he saw astounded him. It was a wall of pure magical energy. It stretched high into the heavens and domed around the entirety of what the Lykaonids began considering their property. He excluded the house and made sure to give the brothers plenty of room to roam. His thinking was that these creatures were large wolves and they needed to be contained. However they needed space so as to allow them to be as free as was safe. In this process Nyctimus excelled.

Everything was prepared. Now all that remained was to find something to pass the time until morn. He looked over at Apollo. There was that smirk. The smirk that had led to Nyctimus' first time, the smirk that had led to every time since. Nyc just couldn't help but fall for that smirk. It was every bit as

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reassuring as it was lewd and knowing and that more than any words his brothers had promised eased his mind.

He ran over to sit in Apollo's lap. Apollo chuckled, "Well someone is eager."

Melaeneus paced back and forth while he awaited the rising of the moon. He'd found himself a decent tree to place his garments. He'd removed them earlier. The thing that Nyctimus had been worrying about the entirety of the week prior now became Melaeneus was wrong? What if Demeas was wrong? What if they did not change back? These and many other uncertainties were coarsing their way through Mel's head as he paced.

"And what if you do not change back, Melaeneus, Son of Lycaon?" said a sly, eerie voice behind Melaeneus. Melaeneus turned around and was faced with a fury.

"Away with you, demon. I need not your mischief."

"I bear a message for you from Hades." she replied simply.

"Speak then, demon."

"Your family's place is down here in the Fields of Punishment. Not on the mortal plane masquerading as wolves. I await your arrival."

Melaeneus chuckled, "He expects a reply?" The demon nodded, "Tell him that we will arrive in due time. We have a life to lead first. So we beg he be patient."

The demon nodded as she memorized the message. Then she headed off.

"Why did Hades not use Hermes?"

Melaeneus thought on this as he continued waiting for the moon to rise. He didn't need to wait long, though because just minutes after the fury left, the moon crested the hill.

Nyctimus lay atop Apollo's chest. Nyctimus was content. His brothers would be safe from the outside. He was with Apollo and he didn't have to worry about anyone catching them. Only the gods could see them now. As Nyctimus played with the hem of Apollo's *himation*, Apollo played with his hair. His eyes were half-lidded and he had not a care in the world.

He then heard twenty-six howls off in the distance, low, dreadful noises that permeated the night. They were different, though. They weren't the sound of a lonely wolf. Rather, they sounded more appeased, or pleased. "That is them, is it not?" Nyctimus asked.

"Yes. They have just completed their first primal change." Apollo sighed, "You did well, my sweet."

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"The night is not over, my love."

"That it is not. We must be awake the entire way through."

Demeas sniffed at the air. He sniffed long and hard, trying to find a certain scent. When he caught the scent he sped off throwing up a cloud of debris.

He ran throughout the closed in area his youngest brother had set up before he ran into Melaeneus' wolf. When he found it he ran directly towards his elder's flank.

He ran into the elder werewolf full force. Biting down on his left rear leg, crushing the bones inside. Mel yelped.

"What the hell, Demi?" He shouted as he managed to shove the other wolf off of him.

"You were never fit to be our alpha! I challenge you." Demeas replied.

"I accept your challenge! If this is truly what you wish, then let us fight." Melaeneus replied before lunging at his head beta. He tried to bite down on Demi's neck but didn't manage to get a good enough hold on it. Demeas easily flung his alpha off before he pounced.

He went to bite the alpha's throat before Melaeneus swung a forepaw and scratched Demeas' muzzle with his long claws. Melaeneus righted himself and tried to get an advantageous position, but Demeas followed his every move. He was about to lunge again, when he decided to fake it. He moved forward in a way that would appear to be a lunge and saw Demeas move to pounce. Demeas sprung forward and was met with another claw to the face. He tumbled to the ground at Melaeneus' paws and soon the alpha had his throat between his jaws. The head beta went stiff as a board.

The fight was over. Melaeneus looked to his brother and said, "Know your place. Do not think to challenge me again." and stalked away.

"Oh next time it will not be a challenge, brother..." Demeas mumbled to himself.

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