

Lykos-Redemption

\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\Act III\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\

Ch. 3: Cacumen Hastae

Coulter DarkClaw

The skies over Attica were stormy. Zeus was angry, to be sure. The priests were sure that his wrath would be felt before long. By whom was the question that they asked. They watched on from under the roof of their temple as sheets of rain fell from the heavens in prelude to Zeus letting loose his anger on whomever it was that had gained his ire. It wasn't something that would be described as auspicious. In fact that would most likely spell the end of any's career. If they survived. They muttered amongst themselves, wondering who in the city of Athena would have angered her father so.

Apollo watched on from the house as the field around the house flooded. He knew today would be the day. He'd heard from one of the muses that had remained his friend that Demeas was approaching the city with his pack. He watched on, anxious. He hoped that this wouldn't be as bloody as he'd been seeing in many of his dreams.

As if to give a capstone to his week of evermore depressing moments, Demeas had to show up today. With his entire pack. All fifty of them. Including his brothers-in-law. He knew this was why Zeus had decided to bring forth this storm. He was going to visit righteous justice upon the darkwolf. That was what Melaeneus had called his brother's pack after the split. Darkwolves. That's truly what they were from what he'd heard from Olympus. He just hoped that he would be able to determine who it was would be the two to die to make the *fifteen in Hades meet*. He knew that it could be Nyctimus depending on how the Styx had interpreted his oath. He also knew that it could be fifteen more of his brothers-in-law. He didn't want that possibility to happen, but he knew the atrocities of war. The *Gigantomachy*[†] saw the death of many of his friends. Each one's death's ache had dulled with the passing of the years, yet still he felt that ache now.

The wolfmen that he had grown to call friends were going into their own war now. Multifaceted and long, this war could very well drain them. This, the *Lycanthropomachy** would last several years. It would be interesting to watch and see what would happen. What he did know was that he needed to protect this race from the wrath of humankind. He wouldn't see them wiped out after so long a time helping them establish themselves.

Mel's pack had been originally made up of the thirteen of his brothers who had stayed with him. Then they had found their life-mates. Soon it wasn't too long before many of the straight couples had children—lycan children. Apollo felt proud, proud to be a part of this family. They now numbered a good forty-five people. Including him and Nyctimus. How they would survive this long drawn out war was beyond him, but he would let the Fates take him if he let this war be the destruction of his new family.

[†] Gigantomachy = Latinization of Gigantomachía. Literally Battle of the Gigants. War between the Giants and the Gods of Olympus

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**1 Stadion =202.2yds=184.9m

It simply wasn't an option anymore. He'd given up his godhood for this family. To be with Nyctimus. To love him for as long as they were in this world. And as long as they were in the next. It wouldn't be fair to him or his husband to just sit idly while Melaeneus and Demeas were at each other's throats. He knew Nyctimus would do his best to keep the oath he'd given. The more he thought about it the more he realized that he wanted to become a Shepherd. He wanted to be a part of every aspect of Nyk's life. This would just be formalizing something that he'd been doing since he'd first laid eyes on his husband's beautiful form. He begged aid from his father. He wanted to know what he should do and how he should go about doing it. For the first time since the *Gigantomachy*, Apollo was afraid. He also begged the aid of his half-sister, Athena. Surely she would know how he should proceed.

"You are no longer a god, Apollo. What you do is of your own free will. I need not approve of your decisions anymore. If you truly want to go down this path allow Nyctimus the chance to know of your prowess in archery, pyromancy, and of course, divination," said the King of the gods and lightning and Lord of the Sky. He'd appeared behind the now-mortal son he'd watched grow into adulthood. He walked up to stand abreast of his son, who was now sitting on his and Nyctimus' bed.

Apollo sighed, "I wish not to tell Nyctimus until I am absolutely sure that this is the correct course of action, Father. I love him. I do not want to disappoint him anymore than I would wish to disappoint you."

Zeus nodded, "Then you already know how you must proceed. You need not ask for my or Athena's help. Take the oath. Pledge yourself to the wolves of Lycaon and protect them from themselves and from the humans that would wish them harm. For it is true that Perseus' death has spread far and wide. People wish to kill the man and his family that could possibly have slain a hero. They will come, Apollo. And they will come in hoards." With that said, Zeus disappeared with a loud crack of thunder that reverberated throughout the bedroom.

Apollo sighed. He knew what he had to do. He knew its consequences and the risks he was taking. He was ready for this. So he got up from his room to go find his husband and tell him the news.

Melaeneus looked at the map of the city of Athens with a scowl on his face. They were in the best possible place that they could be. They had the high ground, they had every single advantage that they could find, yet something kept nagging him in the back of his mind. It was as if he knew that these weren't going to matter in the long run against his brother.

Mel heard Nyctimus before he saw his youngest sibling. The clacking of his Crook was unique. He could be heard from more than a half a *stadion*** away, for Melaeneus. The rocky terrain throughout the Greek peninsula meant that the wood-like substance that the staff was made out of clacked loudly every time it impacted the ground. When he was close enough to hear, Mel greeted him, "Welcome home, Brother. From what I overheard, I suggest that you and Apollo have a discussion."

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Nyctimus sighed, "You must stop eavesdropping, my dear brother. I know that you have the hearing to do it easily enough, but you must not do it. People enjoy their privacy a little more than you might think coming from this family.

"If Apollo and I have something to discuss he will bring it up with me in due time. I will be patient and allow him to work up the courage to approach me if he so chooses." Nyctimus walked by his brother and entered their humble home. Mel shivered to think that that building symbolized the last time that he and his brother had truly cooperated on anything. What happened to Demeas was still a mystery to the eldest child of Lycaon and it worried and frustrated him that he couldn't do anything but fight with his brother now.

As the youngest went toward the house he noted the respect with which he was being treated. It appeared that by having the gall to enact an oath on the Styx, he'd earned his brothers' respect on an even deeper level than he had by taking up the mantle of Shepherd. He had literally formalized his oath in a way that meant he would die if he diverged from the path on which he was currently set. It turned out to be the final act needed to gain the trust of his elder brothers. That more than anything made his pride swell.

Nyctimus opened the door to their home upon his arrival and as soon as he did so he saw a thoughtful, determined Apollo sitting, cross-legged on the ground of the main room waiting specifically for him. He noted that Apollo always sat facing west. It was completely subconscious but when the only direction you ever traveled was from east to west, that was the most comfortable direction for you to travel. Apollo turned his head and smiled brightly, yet there was a melancholic look to Apollo's eyes. His mind wasn't truly as happy as he was trying to portray. "Welcome home, my love. I have something about which I would like to discuss with you." He said.

Nyctimus smiled with no small hint of pride. The lengths which they had taken to ensure that this relationship would last were certainly being followed by his husband. He loved that about Apollo, he'd always tried to make him happy, "Speak, my love."

"Nyctimus, I wish to join you in protecting our ever-growing family. I wish to become a Shepherd. I wish to become a *Voskós tōn Lýkon****. I would like to take the oath."

Nyctimus looked to Apollo in something akin to shock. "By Zeus above! Are you serious, Apollo? You know that oath's requirements. You know what it means to become a *Voskos*. You still wish that upon yourself?"

"I do." Apollo Nodded.

Nyctimus then sighed, he whistled long and shrill. He heard a short while later the response howls pierce the early evening, only slightly quieted by the rain around them. The pack would assemble shortly.

In front of all of them he stood silently. He just stood surveying his army of wolves. A tear crept to his eye slowly. This was it. This might be the last couple of days in which he sees many of his brothers this

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side of the River Styx. He was worried. Yet at the same time he was more confident here than in any other position in which he'd ever been. He was in charge again. This time of a good fifty werewolves. Many more militiamen from Arcadia. It was time that this war got underway. He was done waiting. Done giving his brother time to prepare.

"Today my brothers and sisters, my loves and lovers... Today is the day in which we begin the journey to the top. Today is the start of a new era. One where strength and will overrule intelligence and cunning. A world in which a man may take any as his lover and not be judged. But most of all...Most of all a WORLD OF LYCANS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

There was cheering from everyone. Somehow, they respected him despite that many of his new packmates were forced into the pack, not given the choice of whether or not they wanted to become what he and his brothers were cursed to be, he seemed to have earned their respect as a leader when he overtook a legion of thousands with the aid of only fifty lycans. Many still held the look of caught prey, weak and defenseless animals. Yet at the same time, behind it he saw the fire of their anger toward him and he could use that to his advantage. He would. He definitely would.

"For some of us this battle will mean the Council of Judgment, I know. Yet for others still it means something a lot worse than the gavel to the Fields of Asphodel. For those of us directly cursed, we have a special place in Hades. A place to which we will all go, but I swear to my brothers, that today it will not be us who are the fifteen. Today... It. Will. Be. THEM!"

Again there are cheers from the crowd. Again Demeas smiles to himself. "Let us go, brothers..." another cheer, "Sisters..." screams and hollers, "Let us go..." here Demeas lets a growl build in his chest and lets it loose as he says, "TO WAR!" After which he turns and heads toward the other side of the hill on top of which his brothers live. He lets out a fantastic howl and soon after this he hears the others behind him let out their own.

Nyctimus beams brightly as the sun as he hands Apollo a simple wooden crook. Apollo smiles to his husband, and thinks how this day could be the last day he sees his lover this side of the Styx and he almost lets the smile drop. He picks it back up before Nyk notices, but Nyk is smart, and a year with the ex-god has given Nyctimus a great understanding of him and he does notice. Apollo sees it in the twinkle of his eye that says that they will discuss this later. He locks it away and then Nyctimus is speaking, "To be a Shepherd of Wolves we must attach ourselves to them in a bond stronger than even family. Yes it is family that kindles this bond, but it is our pride in them, our desire to watch them become something more, to protect them with everything we have, that solidifies that bond. It is that bond that I represent now with this the blood of our loved ones and the soil of the Mother of us all gods and man that will mark your forehead."

Nyctimus drew a simple circle, filled in with a slightly larger outline behind it. Then he drew in Lines surrounding the outline. "This symbol I give to you as a sign of your commitment to us. To this family. You have put the moon before the Sun in a definitely unexpected way. Those committed to the cause in this way will be marked as such in every Moon Night we practice. It will show your commitment and it † Gigantomachy = Latinization of Gigantomachía. Literally Battle of the Gigants. War between the Giants and the Gods of Olympus

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will show the others to strive that much harder. It shows you have given up something huge to be a part of this ever-growing family and that you will do as much if not more than anyone to protect those about whom you care. I mark you with the solar eclipse. It is a sign that will be highly respected by our cause. As it well should be.”

He then leads Apollo over to the middle of the pavilion where the words of the oath stand inscribed in the stone. Apollo looks at the oath and he smiles, He’s doing this:

“And with solemn Heart
I swear to protect and keep
My family no longer apart
In human form again shall weep.
"Love of a brother, love of family
To those in wolf's clothing shall I give,
With honor and truth I take this duty
And I will die that they may live.”

As Apollo is finishing he hears a low, angry sounding noise from the distance. It reminds him of the werewolves’ howls when they locate each other but it’s less hauntingly lonely and more terrifyingly angry. He looks above and he feels his father’s anger in the clouds and he looks to Nyctimus. Fear is definitely there in his eyes, yet there is still determination. The same determination that ended Perseus’ life. He knows where this is heading and he’s surprisingly no longer worried. He’s ready.

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