

\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\Act IV

Coulter DarkClaw

“Enough! This is not going to help us any. Nyctimus and Melaeneus do not have the answers you are looking for. As you can see they are as shocked and dumbfounded by this as you all are. So please...just calm down. I’m sure I can get my father to explain.” Apollo finally yelled into the seemingly endless questions from the betas of Melaeneus’ pack.

With a loud, thunderous crash, Zeus appeared before them all. “—call for me?...No need, Nyctimus. I was already going to come here and explain the situation for you all.

The room was dead silent as the new information sunk in. Finally it was again Apollo to break the silence, “Father...Why?”

Nyk hearing that finally stirred, “So in order to...what?...discipline my brother you gave him the worst curse I have ever heard of from you? Does that honestly sound fair to you, *Lord Zeus*?” The emphasis on the word “Lord” hurt Zeus greatly. He thought he’d gained enough familiarity with the boy for him to drop the title. And indeed he had. However, it was the case now that whenever Nyk grew angry with Zeus or Apollo he’d over emphasize the title as he did now.

“Calm down, love. I thought you understood the severity of divine punishment by now. Yes this does seem extreme—even for my father—but I am certain that he thought he had no other option.”

The about face that Nyctimus did to face Apollo was so fast it could have given Apollo whiplash. "You are siding with HIM?!" Nyctimus pointed an accusatory finger at Zeus. Then brought his arm stiffly by his side and walked off in a huff, the Crook clacking overloud in the two gods' heads.

"He is still so immature at times." Said a voice which surprised the two deities. They looked to Melaeneus who smiled sadly. "You must remember that he is the youngest of us. He has had a huge burden placed on his shoulders by none other than you, Lord of the Sky. He covers it well, but my youngest brother has always been very fragile. Especially when in this angered state."

"Indeed. Yet that man is still our best hope, Mel. He will save your race from utter extinction. I just know it. How he does that I am not yet sure." Apollo responded, "Father, if I may speak to Melaeneus in private?"

"Of course, Apollo." With his usual dramatic flair Zeus left the room.

"You and I need to talk." Apollo glared out from the not-so-large overhang of his brow.

"This I know, Apollo. I know it well. This is something for which we had no plan, we knew that Zeus would likely strike but we did not know what exactly he would do. And this...Even for Zeus this is extreme. We will have to take the proper precautions now. Make sure that we know the ramifications of the bite and make sure that no one is uninformed."

"I agree. It is a bit extreme. But Father's flair for dramatics is well known. I wish he would have consulted me on the matter before being so...unkind to Demeas. I agree that he was out of control, but he did not deserve the fate so much worse than Death. I hope you understand that I would never have brought this to your kind, my friend."

"Indeed, Apollo, you would not have the gall to do something so blatantly cruel to my kin. Yet, at the same time I think this will ultimately be a good thing for us. My brother is madder than I had thought to have tried to attack us like that. It worries me more what he might turn into if he experiences this death more than once."

"Your brother's soul is already lost to us, Melaeneus. He is bound for that swamp in Tartarus. I have no doubt in my mind about that."

"So Hades said, so it shall be."

"Indeed."

"And Let this be known by all Lycans: The bite of a lycan brings with it three possibilities: A new Lycan, death, or those *things* we saw Demeas' pack turn into. It is easy to ignore these possibilities and create new Lycans on a whim, but remember the bite carries a heavier price than we yet know. Remember this, and remember it well." Apollo stated clearly so all of the forty-eight werewolves present could hear. Melaeneus stood silently at his side. Nyctimus was still in his room fuming over Zeus' punishment for his brother. Melaeneus and Apollo let him be alone with his thoughts for the time being. They knew well that some time alone would be the best thing for him at the moment.

They stood their ground as the crowd's angry shouts and questions washed over them. Both of them aware that they were meant to show strength in the face of adversity. They were leaders and leaders did not easily waiver, lest their dominance be tested. It was Phineus that was heard by everyone, though, he who lost the love of his life in trying to grant him the gift of lycan-hood. "Brothers and Sisters, allow me to share with you our reality. The bite and our bodily fluids carry a weight with them that no one on this earth truly understands. It is in retrospect painfully obvious to me that the bite should be feared and respected. The love of my life, Alkaios, died because I was not careful. Because I allowed myself a moment of irresponsibility and Hades did take him from me. Death has always been a part of this curse we carry. A strong heart of gold is needed now before we even think of the bite. More than that however is the understanding by the person to whom we wish to give the bite of its ramifications. Remember, brothers, sisters, that we are now more deadly to man than even the worst of miasmas. That our bite will take a man quicker than the blade. Remember Alkaios. Please."

The silence following Phineus' speech did not surprise Apollo, more so it made him smile. He knew that Phineus was a strong sort. He weathered the grief of his fallen lover better than any man he'd seen. He also knew the man to be a decent poet. So to say that the speech gave him hope may have been an understatement. "So, grand-nephew, how are things?" Eros spoke from Apollo's left.

"Well enough, uncle. What do you think of Zeus' punishment?"

"Kinder than Kronos was capable of, that I know. Yet still unbelievable from one such as your father. A human's soul is meant to die only once. For its vessel to gain life again and again. It is cruel and unusual. Yet at the same time, these are not humans anymore, Apollo. Their punishments must equal their crimes, and with this Demeas, I think that the punishment fits the crime aptly."

"So you side with father?"

"I do."

"Then so must I, Eros, why did I not see that coming? Am I not the god of prophecy? Am I not the one that has guided Nyk toward his ultimate fate? Should I not know what is coming in his future?"

"You must remember, Apollo you gave up your godhood the moment you proposed marriage to Nyctimus. You will slowly lose abilities as you age. Your gift of foresight is going away. That is why, my grand-nephew."

"So you are telling me that I will become a normal mortal with time."

"Yes."

"May the fates take me; that is not good."

"You will learn to cope, nephew. You must understand that you will also maintain some abilities."

"Like what?"

"Control over the Mist never goes away, child. Never."

"Magic?"

Eros nodded his head. "Magic."