

## PART 11: DISCOVERY

Catra watched her curiously as she rummaged through her nightstand and drawers.

"Where could it be? I swear I left it here last night..." she mumbled frustrated to herself.

"What are you looking for?" Catra asked.

"The storybook you left me."

Adora had bent down and was now looking under the bed. With the movement, her camisole had become wrinkled at the waist and Catra had a rather suggestive view of her behind. She averted her gaze in embarrassed.

"Aha, there you are!" she stood up with a triumphant expression, not noticing that Catra was barely able to look her in the face, "I was reading one of the stories last night and..."

"Didn't you say they were children's stories? I thought you didn't like them" Catra said, raising an eyebrow. Adora blushed slightly.

"Yeah, well. They're not that bad." she cleared her throat uncomfortably. "As I was saying, while I was reading last night I came across a drawing that caught my attention. Take a look".

She flipped through the book quickly until she found the picture she was looking for and showed it to Catra. Catra saw that the illustration depicted the transformation of a lycanthrope.

"I don't see what's so special about it." she said after looking at it for a few seconds.

Adora let out an exasperated sigh and pointed to the circle in which the creature had been trapped. It was made up of luminous symbols. Runes.

"I still don't understand what you're trying to tell me, Adora. It's just an illustration of a story," she said as she straightened with a frown.

"It's a magic circle! A circle of witches! I went to the library because I wanted to investigate how they worked. In the treatise I found last night it explained that spells can be broken if the magic that is anchored to the circle is unbound. That is, in the case of the werewolf, the source of power of the runes comes from the moonlight, which in turn is what causes the transformation into a monster. In your case it was most likely....

"Blood." Catra concluded.

Her heart was racing with anticipation. If only it were possible...but no, she didn't remember any circles around her when her curse had been activated. It had been different. She folded her arms and began pacing the room as she tried to remember. She had never liked her mother's advisor, and she had tried to avoid her as much as possible. The feeling had been mutual, of course, but she clearly remembered the moment when she was certain she was dangerous. How could she forget; a flash of red light and terrified screams echoed in her mind. She shook her head to get rid of the memory.

Adora realized something was up but said nothing. She watched Catra's body tense as she paced the room until she stopped in front of the window. She watched her take a deep breath and then exhale it slowly, trying to relax. When she turned around her expression was serious.



"You may be right, but in my case I wasn't trapped in any witches' circle. It was the sorceress who cast the spell on me," Adora thought for a moment at those words.

"Maybe the circle could be her source of power. If we were able to break it, I could undo the spell. We don't lose anything by trying, do we?" Adora said, "All we have to do is find the place where it's anchored. It should be in the area around the castle; being such a powerful spell, the source of power would have to be nearby. Can you think of any place?"

Catra pondered for a few moments. She remembered it perfectly; a game in the forest, her friends and her following the witch through the thicket, excited by the prank and trying to keep quiet so she wouldn't discover them; a temple of immaculate white in the middle of a clearing; the sorceress kneeling as she traced unknown symbols in the damp earth; sharp green eyes piercing her with their gaze and the feeling of absolute emptiness in the pit of her stomach. She didn't want to think about what happened next.

"Yes" Catra said "A small temple near the river" Adora's eyes lit up with excitement.

"Perfect! Then we just have to go there and..."

"Not so fast, Adora. It could be dangerous." Catra said very seriously.

"Dangerous? The witch is gone, there's nothing wrong with going to investigate, look for hints..." said Adora resolutely.

"Witches hide their secrets very well, we don't know what we might find. It's better to continue investigating here before rushing into anything," Catra reasoned.

"Continue...? But, it doesn't make sense! Searching the books was supposed to be about finding some kind of clue and we already have it! We have to act! You said it yourself, we don't have much time."

"I said no!" Catra shouted as she snatched the book out of her hands and threw it on the floor.

Far from being intimidated, Adora got angry.

"But why?!, it's absurd! I refuse to think that you'd rather be locked up in that library searching through dusty books forever when we have the solution right under our noses," Adora replied angrily "If you don't want to go, I'll do it by myself," she said with determination.

"I don't want you to take any more unnecessary risks because of me, okay?!" Catra exclaimed at last.

Adora was left speechless. Catra's breathing had altered, and her chest was heaving up and down. When she looked at her, her eyes again reflected the anguish of the night before.

"No... If anything happened to you again because of me, I couldn't bear it," she said in a choked voice. "Promise me you won't go. Please," she begged her.

Adora could not bear the intensity of her gaze so she averted her eyes. She tried to calm her racing pulse before replying. Just as she was about to answer she noticed how Catra passed by her side almost without looking at her.

"I... I'm going to wash up. I'll let you rest." She said quietly before opening the door and leaving the room.



Adora stood watching the door close behind her. She let out a tired sigh and began to pick up the mess of blankets and comforters that were piled up at the foot of the bed. Why did she have to be so stubborn? Sometimes it seemed like she didn't want her to help her. Adora understood that she felt guilty about what had happened the night before, but that wasn't going to make her relent in her efforts to break the curse. She wasn't doing it just for Catra; her people needed it too. If the vampire wouldn't let her help, there would be no point in her being there.

She went about piling things on the bed, until she came upon the book of legends lying on the floor. Its pages had crumpled slightly, but it was still open by the illustration of the lycanthrope. She was absolutely convinced that the circle was the key, she had to try. It was settled then, she would go back to research the witchcraft treatise to find out how they worked and go look for it alone. She just had to find a convincing excuse so Catra wouldn't get suspicious, but she would come up with something.

After all, she hadn't exactly become a village leader by following anyone's orders.





