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Summary

The day after the Roman Senate voted to keep him alive, Tsunayoshi Noble watches as a flying ship descends into New Rome. Standing by his side is none other than Percy Jackson, his adopted brother and his new friends Frank Zhang and Hazel Levesque. Together, they join up with Annabeth Chase and the three other members of the Prophecy of Seven: Jason Grace, Piper McClean, and Leo Valdez.

When the ship fires upon the Roman city, Tsuna and his new friends escape and make their way towards Rome, where they have to not only deal with two prophecies, but also save someone important, someone who holds a key to stopping Gaea and her Giants from destroying the world.

That person is the most important person in Tsuna's life, the son of Hades and Ghost King, Nico di Angelo.

And Tsuna will do everything in his power to save him, all the while protecting his new friends from the many threats the literal world itself is throwing at them.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
I'm baaaaaaaaaaaaack!

It has been too long everyone. It's feels good to be here again.

At the time of this posting, it is my birthday, so I thought I'd celebrate by posting this chapter for you all.

Enjoy guys! I hope you like it.

A special shout out and big thanks to Aflashofthought for Betaing this project. If you like Young Justice and the Bat Family in general, you should check out his series The Luckiest Unlucky People Verse. It's really good and I am an avid fan of it.

It's such a beautiful day. The sun is shining, the grass is a nice dark green, and the only thing the sky was a giant bronze flying Greek trireme, and it was slowly descending. The Roman legion of demigods and legacies were sounding alarms and getting prepped for battle. The blonde weasel of a human being, also known as Octavian, was directing them.

“Man the catapults! Get into formation!” he yelled. “Be prepared for any Greek trickery!”

“Is he seriously going against Reyna’s orders?” I asked rolling my eyes.

“Did you really expect him not to?” Hazel asked. “He’s paranoid. Paranoia makes people over react.”

I rolled my eyes again. “He’s such a twat though, right Perce? Uh, Percy?”

Percy wasn’t in earshot. He was walking towards the ship. I can’t say I can blame him, his girlfriend Annabeth was on there. If I was in his shoes, if I didn’t see my girlfriend for ten months after pretty much getting together after a four-year war of divine beings, I’d be excited to see her too. I am also curious as to who exactly is standing on the bow of the ship. He was holding a gold sword that reflected the sun and he was wearing a purple cape that was fluttering with the wind. That must be the Jason Grace, who was switched with Percy.

Reyna, the other Praetor of Camp Jupiter, was standing by. Her purple cape was billowing in the wind. Her two metal dogs, Aurum the gold and Argentum the silver, sat by her side, looking like solid statues. She was staring right at the ship and looked tense.

“Tsuna!”

I looked over and saw one of my few actual friends here at Camp Jupiter. Anthony, the son of Ceres broke ranks and ran over to me. He gave me a smile that reminded me of Will.

“Hey Anthony, what’s up?”

“I just wanted to tell you that I believe you, you know, about that ship up there. That it’s full of
“Thanks.”

“I also want to say that I won’t fight your friends. I know that they’re good people.”

“That means a lot Anthony, it really does.” I said. “But you’re probably already on Octavian’s target list as it is for speaking up for me earlier. You shouldn’t do anything to draw attention to yourself right now, okay?”

“I can do that.” Anthony said. He waved as he turned around. “See you later Tsuna.”

Hazel and Frank walked over to Percy and watched as the ship stopped moving and I was able to get a better look at it. It was about two hundred feet long, give or take a few feet with a bronze plated hull. It must be Celestial Bronze to ward off monsters, although where did they get enough of the stuff? There was a series of oars that lined the sides of the ship. From here on the ground I could just make out what looked to be a couple of large crossbows. But the eye catcher was the figure head. It was a bronze dragon head that was spouting fire.

A ladder was thrown over the edge and people started to climb down. The Romans started to gather around, lined up in their formation. Hannibal the Elephant brought up the rear. As I walked towards the ship I could feel the stares of the Romans. Their eyes were boring into me. It made me uncomfortable, but I can kind of understand why they are doing it. I am a Shinto Demigod with Greek blood in my veins who also is the right-hand man of their newly elected Praetor. Despite what I did to help them in yesterday’s battle, most of them still don’t trust me.

In all honesty, I shouldn’t be hurt or surprised. From the moment I met Frank and Hazel I got the distinctive feeling that the Romans aren’t entirely trusting. I bet you could turn their entire city to gold and that still wouldn’t be enough to buy their trust. I just decided to simply ignore them and move on.

I felt this chill at the back of my neck. I quickly turned to see what could have caused it, but no one was behind me. It was such a strange feeling, like someone walked over my grave. A shiver ran down my spine, but it faded quick.

Running up to catch up with Percy I saw that he was smiling like a goofball. Following his line of sight, I saw why. Annabeth was halfway down the ladder, her blonde hair pulled into a pony tail.

“You’re excited.” I said.

“I haven’t seen Annabeth in months.” Percy said. “What memories I did have of her since I woke up are what kept me going. My training with Lupa, putting up with Hera, the Quest to Alaska and yesterday’s battle, the very idea of seeing Annabeth again gave me strength.”

“Trust me, she missed you too. You should have seen how distraught she was when I first saw her after you vanished. I never thought I’d see Annabeth so…broken. It just proves how much she loves you.”

“You’re not going to be…you know…” Percy gestured with his hands. “When you see her?”

I simply stared at him blankly before looking back towards the ship, where Annabeth just touched the ground. “You might want to be in the room.” I took a calming breath and smiled at Percy. “But until then, go to your girlfriend.”

I patted his back and gave him a little push. Percy smiled and gripped my arm in thanks.
before walking to Annabeth. The sea of Roman demigods parted like the Red Sea revealing the
daughter of Athena herself. Percy started to walk a bit faster. And then they locked their gazes.
They were both frozen for a moment. Other than the murmur of the surrounding Romans and
Reyna talking to the purple caped blonde, it was quiet. That is, until Percy and Annabeth broke out
in a run towards each other.

They wrapped each other in their arms and held each other as close as possible. Annabeth
shook against Percy’s shoulder while Percy buried his face in her hair. They just held each other
for a moment before pulling away. Annabeth grabbed Percy’s face and pulled him close. They
kissed, and from what I could see not even an asteroid could stop them at that moment.

Percy pulled away smiling. “Gods, I never thought-”

In the blink of an eye Annabeth grabbed Percy’s wrist and judo flipped him over her
shoulder. As his back landed on the ground with a loud smack I winced. I didn’t expect her to do
that with the way she was acting the last time I saw her. Then again, that was months ago…

Once I got over my shock I started chuckling. It was hard to keep it in. Frank looked back at
me as if I was being crazy, but I took some breaths to relax and calm down. It was then that I
noticed that the Romans were trying to get battle ready.

“Hold!” ordered Reyna. “Everyone stand down!”

As the Romans backed up a little bit, Annabeth climbed on top of Percy to hold him to the ground.
“If you ever leave me again, I swear to all the gods-”

Percy laughed. “Consider me warned. I missed you too.”

Annabeth let out a shaky breath and helped her boyfriend up off the ground. I decided to
stay hidden behind Frank and Hazel, not wanting to ruin the surprise. Now that she and Percy got
their reunion out for the way for now, my annoyance at her is building up again.

The blonde guy coughed. “Uh, so yeah…It’s good to be back.”

From over Frank’s shoulder, I looked at the blonde. I had this feeling that I should know
him. But why? This would be the first time I’ve ever seen him, since he hasn’t been in Camp
Jupiter for months. But there’s this feeling in the pit of my stomach that I knew him.

“Reyna, this is Piper, my girlfriend” Reyna stiffened at that. Piper is admittedly pretty. Even with
her tattered jeans and her Hello Kitty tank top, she made it work, and her Native features enhanced
it. “And this is Leo. He built the Argo II above us.” Leo, the Latino guy with a tool belt around his
waist, didn’t stop bouncing on the balls of his feet as he flashed Reyna a peace sign. I’m getting an
Impulse vibe from him. “And this is Annabeth. Uh, she normally doesn’t judo flip people.”

Reyna looked at Annabeth, sizing her up. “Are you sure you’re not Roman? Or an Amazon?”

“I only attack my boyfriend like that.” Annabeth said and offered her hand. “Nice to meet you.”

Reyna clasped her hand firmly. “It seems that we have much to discuss. Centurions!”

Several Roman soldiers rushed to Reyna’s side. Meanwhile, Frank and Hazel rushed to
Percy’s side, almost in a protecting manner. I don’t know why they would think that Percy needs
protecting. I mean, Annabeth can be intimidating, yeah, but she’s not a threat.

“…tell the legion to stand down. Dakota, alert the spirits in the kitchen.” Ordered Reyna to her
soldiers. “Tell them to prepare a welcome feast. And, Octavian—”

“You’re letting these intruders into the camp?” asked Octavian. “Reyna, the security risks—”

The two of them started arguing. They went back and forth about letting Annabeth and the others into the camp, and it was getting old real quick. I think they were coming into an agreement about having a large picnic of a feast.

“Uh, wow, okay.” Leo said. “This is awkward.”

“You’re telling me.” Piper said. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen anybody go at it like that.” Piper walked over to me and smiled. “Hi, I’m Piper. It’s nice to meet you.”

“Tsuna, Tsuna Noble.”

“Wait, did you say ‘Tsuna’?” Leo asked. I nodded. “So, you’re the guy Will keeps talking about.” My face felt warm. “Will talked about me?”

“Wouldn’t shut up about you.” Leo said. “He sounded worried about you, always muttering under his breath about you.”

“Note to self, contact Will ASAP.” I thought.

“Uh, you still with me ese?” asked Leo.

“Yeah, I’m here. Leo, was it?” I responded. “So, you built that ship? Amazing craftsmanship.”

“Gracias amigo!” Leo said. “You’ve got a good eye on you. The Argo II, my pride and joy.”

“I’d love a tour later, would you mind?” I asked.

“No problema.” smiled Leo. “I can give you one after lunch. Man, I’m starving.”

“Reyna, I don’t think you understand.” Octavian raised his shrill voice. “There is a warship right over our heads, and four Greeks, the enemies of Rome for millennia, are here in our Camp. Oh, and don’t let me forget that Shinto whelp over there.”

“Did he just call me whelp?” I asked Leo.

“He sure did.”

“That asshole.”

“Octavian, I’m going to need you to shut up.” Percy said. “Do what Reyna says without being such a brat for once in your life and go burn your bears.”

Octavian glowered at Percy before turning to say something to Reyna. “You have your orders.” She said. “Go.”

Octavian shot Percy a look of absolute, pure, unfiltered loathing. It’s as if he thought he could do anything to the Praetor himself. And I really didn’t like the way he was looking at Annabeth, in that creepy ‘I’ve got my eye on you’ way, but he finally stomped away.

“Don’t worry about Octavian.” Percy told Annabeth, slipping his hand in hers. “Most of the Romans are good people—like Frank and Hazel here, and Reyna. We’ll be fine.”
Annabeth looked to the Argo II and back to Percy, nodding. “We’ll be fine.”

“Excellent” Reyna said. She turned towards Jason, her gaze softening a little. “Let’s eat, and we can have a proper reunion.” On her orders, Romans brought out couches and low tables. As the Romans started to set up, Annabeth finally noticed me and covered her mouth.

“Oh my gods.” She said, eyes wide. I glowered at her, arms crossed. “T-Tsu-Tsuna—”

“Oh, so you do remember me.” I growled out. “Thanks Wise Girl, that…that hurts.”

“Di Immortales, Tsuna, how are you—” she started. “I mean, I- I’m sor—”

I raised my hand to silence her. “Yeah, just…no. Save it. You’re going to listen to me, and you better listen well, because this is your one and only warning. You and I are going to have a LONG talk, in private. You got that?” She nodded. “Good. Oh, and spoiler warning: it’s going to get loud.” She gulped, like, she actually gulped in fear.

“Uh Tsuna, maybe you should calm down a bit.” Percy said, uncomfortable laughing in his attempt to break the tension in the air. “I mean, we’re supposed to be friends here.”

“I gave you fair warning Percy. I’m also going to let you be there when I let Annabeth know how I truly feel.” I said. “But for now, fine. I’ll remain calm and let you and Annabeth have some time together.”

“Thanks.” said Percy. He took Annabeth’s hand and led her away. A smart decision since I probably would have let out all of my frustration out right here and now.

“Well that was, uh, weird.” said a new voice.

To my right was the blonde who was talking to Reyna. Jason, his name was. And holy crap, he looked like your ideal ‘All American Boy’. He wore a Camp Half-Blood t-shirt and jeans underneath a purple cape. His gilded hair was ruffled by the wind and he had such commanding sky blue eyes. But there was that itch in the back of my head that screamed that he was familiar. But why though?

“Sorry about that.” I said. “Annabeth just got on my bad side.”

“How, exactly?”

“She never mentioned you to me.” I explained. “And she never contacted me once since I went looking for Percy…I’m Tsuna by the way.”

I offered him my hand. “Jason Grace, son of Jupiter.”

“Yes, I figured. Nice to meet you though.”

“So, if it’s okay to ask, who are you exactly?” wondered Jason.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, who are you? Will talked about you sometimes, so you must have stayed at Camp Half Blood at some point. And—”

“Okay man, cool it a bit, will you?” I said. “You Romans are way too untrusting. Must be in all of you guys’ DNA. But I’ll indulge you. I’m a friend. A friend of Annabeth, Will, Chiron, Frank and Hazel, yada yada yada, so on and so forth, ad nauseum. Jason, you can trust me. I convinced your
entire Camp, more or less, to trust me, I mean, look.” I showed him the tattoo that was burned onto my arm. “I’m a member of the Legion, just like you are.”

“I see that.” He said. “Sorry about being so upfront man. I didn’t mean to come off as a jerk.”

“Trust me, I’ve been treated a lot worse lately.” I said.

“Let me guess, Octavian?”

“How’d you know?” I sarcastically asked.

“He’s been a pain in the neck for as long as I can remember.” Jason said. “But uh, could you tell me what he meant by you being a Shinto?”

“Oh, that. I’m a Shinto demigod.” I said. “Son of Susanoo, god of the sea.”

“There are Shinto demigods?” asked Jason.

I blew out a breath. “Yes. Yes I am.” Gods I was annoyed about having to recount this tale over and over again.

“Oh, okay. Wow.” Jason said. “Shinto demigods are a thing. Cool.”

“If it makes you feel better I’m the only Shinto demigod.” I said. “Long story, I can talk to you about it later.”

“Sure thing, if you want to I mean.” Said Jason. “It seems like you’ve been doing that a lot lately.”

“You have no idea.”

“Well, I’m here for a little bit before we take off.” Jason said. “It was nice meeting you.” He smiled, and it was a really nice smile. But then I noticed something on his upper lip, a small scar.

It was at that moment I knew why Jason looked so familiar to me. He was the boy who saved my life in San Francisco years ago. He looked a bit different back then, but there was no mistaking that scar. Seinaru jigoku! Jason grew up really nice.

“See you.” I said, feeling my face start heating up. Okay Tsuna, calm down.

Pretty soon the Romans finished setting up the forum for the feast. Romans lounged on benches or sat on blankets in groups of ten, maybe twenty. The wind spirits-Aurae- flew above us delivering food. Everything ranging from assortments of pizzas, sandwiches, chips, burgers, grilled chicken, cold drinks and some amazing fresh baked cookies and brownies. I have to admit, being a demigod has the great perk of the constant exercise, otherwise I’d never be able to prevent myself from gaining so much wait with all this fantastic food around.

Lares, the ghostly embodiments of previous legionnaires, drifted through the crowd wearing purple togas and legionnaire armor. The Satyrs- I mean, the Fauns- were going around asking for scraps. It made me feel bad seeing them being ignored and treated like they were nuisances. It made me wonder how Grover and the other Satyrs from Camp Half-Blood would react if they ever find out about this.

Hannibal the Elephant was playing in the field with Mrs. O’Leary. My dog was having a ball playing with someone as big as she is. There were some younger children playing tag around them and the statues of Terminus that make up the city limits.
There was so much going on. While there was still that feeling in the air of distrust (especially with the Argo II hanging over head), everyone seems to be having a good time. Well, I say everyone, but Octavian, who recently came back from burning a teddy bear looked miffed.

I joined Percy, Annabeth, and the others with Reyna and Octavian at the head table. Jason was talking excitedly with Piper, pointing to areas in the distance. From what I could hear, it was about the places that he wanted to show her. I noticed that Frank and Hazel were staring at Leo, but I don’t think the Latino Elf took notice. He was fiddling with something in his hands absentmindedly. I sat next to Percy and Annabeth, eating a grilled chicken salad. Yatagarasu was sitting on my shoulder looking around. I fed him some of the chicken and he nipped my fingers.

“I want to show you around New Rome.” Percy said to Annabeth. His smile was so genuine and filled with hope. “The place is incredible.”

Annabeth nodded, but it seemed like she was distracted by something. With how much she loves architecture, you’d think that she would love to see how New Rome was built and designed. All she did while Percy talked about New Rome was stare at him and nod.

“Okay. Sure.” She said.

“You know, I’ve been thinking.” started Percy. “I…I had this idea—”

“Romans!” yelled Reyna. All the noise around the feast stopped on a dime. Reyna stood to her full height. “Today, we welcome residents of the Greek Camp. Piper McClean, the daughter of Aphrodite. Leo Valdez, son of Hephaestus. And Annabeth Chase, daughter of Athena.” The crowd murmured at the end. What was that about? “With them, they have brought us back our other praetor, our friend and most loyal warrior, Jason Grace, son of Jupiter!” The crowd cheered. Jason stood and waved to his Roman friends, although his face looked a little red. “Let this show that the Greeks are not our enemies, but our allies against the forces of Gaea. Let this be the beginning of a new era of friendship! To our new friends!” With a raise of her goblet, everyone raised their own and cheered. Who knew that it only takes this for trust to be formed.

Octavian fake smiled after the crowd’s cheers died down. “So, our dear Jason, can you tell us what happened to you all this time?”

“Uh, sure.” Jason said. “One day, I woke up with no memories on a school trip bus to the Grand Canyon. Juno took me and altered my mind, placing me on that bus just so I could meet Leo and Piper. She gave the three of us fake memories of friendship and…other things…” he glanced over at Piper. “We were picked up after fighting Venti by Annabeth and a couple of other demigods, where we were taken to Camp Half-Blood. We were all claimed by our parents, and not long after we were sent on a Quest to save Juno, who had been captured by Gaea and the Giants. We traveled all the way to Mount Diablo and fought Enceladus, the bane of Minerva. Right after we defeated him, we had to go to the Wolf House, where Juno was being imprisoned. Her lifeforce was being used by Gaea to raise her son Porphyrrion, the king of the Gigantes, and the bane of my father.”

“Impossible!” Octavian broke in. “That is our most sacred place. If the Giants had imprisoned a goddess there—”

“They would’ve destroyed her.” Piper said. “And then blame it on the Greeks, and started a war between the camp. Now, be quiet and let Jason finish.” Octavian opened his mouth, but no sound came out. Now that’s a superpower, making Octavian shut up.

“We fought, but we weren’t able to destroy him and he ran away once we freed Juno. During the journey, I was regaining my memories.”
“Then why didn’t you return to Camp Jupiter afterwards?” Reyna asked.

“I…I felt that I had to stay at Camp Half-Blood.” Jason said. “Juno even told me that I had to wait until after Leo finished the ship. And I was hoping that I could help mend our two cultures for the better.”

“That makes sense.” I said. “For whatever reason, there is this animosity between the two groups, but if we all work together, then Gaea won’t stand a chance.”

“Tsuna’s right.” Percy said. “She knows that if we work together our chances of winning are so much higher. She’s going to do everything in her power to keep us separated.”

Jason nodded. “It was there that we found out about Gaea being the one who has been freeing monsters from Tartarus and raising the Giants. Porphyrrion said as he fled that he was heading to the Ancient Lands – Greece itself. He plans on awakening Gaea there and destroying the gods by…what did he call it? Pulling up their roots.”

‘Pulling up their roots?’ What does that mean? And how exactly will that kill the gods? You can’t kill the gods, they can Fade, or their essences are spread so thin that they can’t reform. But technically they are still alive that way. But killing them? What exactly does that mean?

“Gaea’s been busy over here too.” nodded Percy. “We had our own encounter with Dirt Face.”

“Perhaps you should regale us with your story Percy.” Reyna said. “Bring our new friends up to speed.”

Percy nodded. “I woke up a few weeks ago without any memories at the Wolf House, just like Jason. But, there was one thing that I remembered, one thing that drove me this entire time.” Percy looked over at his girlfriend. “One name—Annabeth.” The blonde girl stiffened a bit with a small gasp. The look in her eyes looked as if she was stopping herself from crying. “Not long after being trained by Lupa, I was chased by Medusa’s sisters all the way here. Frank and Hazel helped me out and accompanied me to free Thanatos in Alaska. When we got to Seattle, Tsuna found me, all by himself.”

“Well, I did have some help.” I said.

“But you found me, and that’s all that matters.” Percy said with a smile. He gripped my shoulder tightly. “Despite me not remembering you, even with Hera’s curse she placed on you, you accompanied the three of us to Alaska and helped us free Thanatos as Frank and Hazel defeated Alcyoneus. We then took as much of the Imperial Gold weapons and armor as we could along with the lost eagle standard and brought them back here right as Polybotes was attacking. We fought as hard as we could until I killed Polybotes.”

Jason whistled appreciatively. “No wonder they made you praetor.” He indicated to Percy’s robes.

Octavian snorted and crossed his arms. “Speaking of which, that means that we have three praetors! The rules state that we can only have two!” I rolled my eyes at the annoying blonde.

“On the bright side,” started Percy, “Both Jason and I outrank you, Octavian. So we both can tell you to shut up.”

Everyone started laughing. I had trouble breathing as Octavian turned as purple as the Roman Camp Jupiter T-shirt. Jason leaned over and gave Percy a fist bump. And remarkably, even Reyna managed a genuine smile.
“We’ll have to figure out the extra praetor problem later.” She said. “Right now, we have more serious issues to deal with.”

Percy shrugged. “I’ll just step aside for Jason. It’s no biggie.” I laughed really hard at Percy’s easy-going attitude at giving up his Praetorship.

“No biggie?” Octavian choked. “The Praetorship of Rome is no biggie?!”

“Calm down Plushy Killer.” I said.

“What did you just call me?” Octavian was seething with anger.

“You heard me.” I said as I sipped my cup of green tea.

“Why you little—”

Percy interrupted the blonde rat. “So you’re Thalia Grace’s brother huh? Wow. You guys look nothing alike.”

“Yeah, I’ve noticed.” Jason said. Was it just me, or did he look bummed out for second there? I couldn’t tell because he instantly perked right up. “Anyway, thanks for helping my camp while I was gone. You did an awesome job.”

“Back at you.” Percy said. “Ow!” He leaned and started rubbing his leg.

“We should discuss the Great Prophecy.” Annabeth said. “It sounds like the Romans are aware of it too?”

Reyna nodded. “We call it the Prophecy of Seven.” She looked over at Octavian and made her tone clear. “Octavian, have you committed it to memory?”

Octavian scoffed. “Of course I do.” He said. “But Reyna—”

“Then recite it. Please.” She ordered. “In English, not Latin.”

I saw Octavian glare at the back of Reyna’s head, but he sighed. “Seven half-bloods shall answer the call. To storm or fire the world must fall—”

“An oath to keep with a final breath,” continued Annabeth. “And foes bear arms to the Doors of Death.”

It was as if all the sound was taken away from our table. Nobody said anything, there wasn’t the sound of people chewing. The only one making any sound was Leo, who had constructed a pinwheel out of aluminum foil taco wrappers and he was trying to stick it into the passing wind spirits.

This is the first time I’ve heard the prophecy. I’ve had to deal with my own life altering prophecy last year, when I had to go to Japan to gather the Sacred Regalia and kill the Orochi. I know firsthand how hard it is to interpret them (although looking back mine played out pretty much like how it was said.) But there’s something about this prophecy that I don’t like.

I think it’s the storm line. To storm or fire the world must fall. It had to be talking about Percy, or maybe even Jason since he’s the son of Jupiter. Storm clearly mean Poseidon or the King Ass himself, so one of those two had to be the key to defeating Gaea. And I say Gaea because she is the world. But the rest of the prophecy, I’m going to need time to think.
Frank sat forward and stared at Annabeth. “Is it true that you’re the child of Min—I mean, Athena?”

I saw how Annabeth’s physicality became more defensive. “Yes…why is that such a surprise?”

“If you’re truly a child of the wisdom goddess—” scoffed Octavian.

“You might want to think carefully about how you finish that sentence.” I warned him.

“Enough.” snapped Reyna, clearly irritated. “Annabeth is what she says. She’s here in peace. And besides…” She looked Annabeth up and down again before meeting her eyes. I think there might be a glint of respect in her own black eyes. “Percy has spoken highly of you.”

Percy quickly looked down at his cheeseburger, a blush on his cheeks. Why would he be embarrassed of talking about Annabeth? There are times when you couldn’t get him to shut up about her. But then I saw how red Annabeth’s face got, and how she was glancing between her boyfriend and Reyna, and I figured it out. Reyna had been trying to attract Percy, and he turned her down because of Annabeth.

“Uh, thanks.” said Annabeth. “At any rate, some of the prophecy is becoming clear.” Oh, of course she has parts figured out already. “Foes bearing arms to the Doors of Death…that means Romans and Greeks. We have to combine forces to find those Doors.”

Hazel pockets a something before speaking up. “My brother, Nico, went looking for the Doors.”

My heart skipped a beat at the mention of Nico. It reminded me of what he went through. Of what he is going through.

“Wait,” Annabeth said, “Nico, as in Nico di Angelo? He’s your brother?” Hazel nodded, not understanding what was Annabeth’s issue. “Okay…you were saying?”

“He—” Hazel started, having a hard time saying the words.

“—was captured.” I finished.

Everyone turned to me. “How do you know that?” asked Annabeth.

“Because I had…a vision-dream thing, a little gift from Mother Earth herself.” I said.

“Visions from Gaea?” Octavian asked, intrigued. I did not like that glint in his eye. “And you said that you weren’t her ally?”

“In what world does her sending me threats make me her ally you ass hat?” I asked.

“How do we know that it was a threat?” asked Octavian. “She could be giving you orders, you could be relaying information to her.”

Okay, I’ve had it. “Octavian wa nanidesu ka? Watashi wa anata ga mite iru subete no hito ga tekidearu to omotte hontōni byōki ni natte imasu, anata no tekidesu. Anata wa gōman de, riko-tekina yatsudesu. Anata ga ima made no yō ni watashi o chiryo shi tsuzukerunara, watashi wa anata ga iru basho ya watashitachi ga iru basho o Shirasemasen. Watashi wa anata no tawagoto no anata o tsureteiku!”

I stood up and stared down at the gangly weasel. Yatagarasu was cawing right at him, his wings flapping and feathers puffed out. Octavian stood his ground, but he was shaking a little. I
could tell that he had no idea what I said, but the meaning of my words were quite clear.

Percy stood up and grabbed my wrist and pulled me back. “Calm down.” He said. “You too Yata. No one is accusing you of anything. Everyone knows that you’re our friend.” I let out a breath and sat down. “And Hazel, I promise we’ll look for Nico. We have to find the Doors of Death anyway. Thanatos told us we’d find both answers in Rome—like, the original Rome. That’s on the way to Greece, right?”

“Thanatos told you this?” Annabeth asked, looking confused. “The death god?”

Percy took a bite of her burger and nodded. “Now that Thanatos is free, monsters will disintegrate and return to Tartarus again like they used to. But as long as the Doors of Death are open they’ll just keep coming back.”

“Like water leaking through a dam.” Piper spoke up.

“Yeah, we’ve got a dam hole.” smiled Percy.

“What?” she asked.

“Nothing, inside joke.” Percy said, shaking his head. “The point is we’ll have to find the Doors and close them before we can head to Greece. It’s the only way we’ll stand a chance of defeating the Giants and making sure they stay defeated.”

Reyna stayed quiet for a moment, examining the apple she plucked from a passing a tray. “You propose an expedition to the Greece in your warship. You do realize that the ancient lands—and the Mare Nostrum—are dangerous?”

“Mary who?” Leo asked.

“Mare Nostrum. It means Our Sea.” explained Jason. “It’s what the Ancient Romans called the Mediterranean.”

Reyna nodded. After taking a bite of her apple, she explained how the Roman Empire was not only the birthplace of the gods, but for monsters, Titans, Giants, and everything bad from the pantheon. She stated that being a demigod here in America is nothing compared to being one back in the Mediterranean.

“You said Alaska would be bad, and we survived that.” Percy said.

Reyna shook her head. “Percy, travelling the Mare Nostrum is a completely different feat in of itself. It has been off limits to Roman demigods for many centuries. No hero…no person in their right mind would willingly go there.”

Leo smiled and clapped his hands. “Then we’re good!” he said. “Because we’re all crazy, right? Besides, I designed the Argo II to be to be a top-of-the-line warship. It has every defense a demigod could ask for. She’ll get us through.”

“We’ll have to hurry.” added Jason. “I don’t know exactly what the Giants are planning, but Gaea is growing more conscious and powerful each day. She’s invading dreams, like Tsuna said.”

“What’s odd is that she didn’t even mention about anything about Polybotes’s death.” I said.

“Really?” Frank asked. “After everything you did?”
I shrugged. “Her exact words were ‘You’re assistance won’t change anything in the end.’ As far as she’s concerned, I’m just an interloper who’s no real threat. I can’t wait to see that smug look fall off her face.”

“Okay, as I was saying, Gaea has been appearing in weird places, summoning more and more powerful monsters to her side. We have to stop the Giants before they can wake her up fully.”

“Seven half-bloods must answer the call.” Annabeth said with a shudder. “It needs to be a mix from both our camps. Jason, Piper, Leo, and me. That’s four.”

“And me.” Percy said. “Along with Frank and Hazel.”

“I think you’re forgetting someone.” I said.

“What are you talking about Tuna Head?” asked Annabeth. “Percy, Jason, Piper, Leo, Frank, Hazel, and me. That’s seven.”

“Yes, I know how to count.” I snidely said. “But you’re forgetting one important factor. Me.”

“You?” asked Jason. “You think you’re coming with us.”

“I don’t just think it, I know it.” I said. I turned back to Annabeth. “You know who I am Annabeth. You know what I carry. And I think the idea ran through your head the moment you saw me. So do the math. Besides, I have to go.”

“Tsuna, it’s going to be dangerous as it is with the seven of us.” She argued. “Despite the protections the Argo has, we figured that we’ll be attacked constantly, but with eight of us—”

“I don’t care.” I said. “I’m going.”

“But—”

“Annabeth, you’re not going to win this.” Percy said. “Tsuna is going, and we can’t stop him.”

“Why though?” Piper asked. “Why would you come with us?”

“I have my reasons.” I said. “One of them is that I refuse to let Percy out of my sight after all this time. I think you can understand that feeling Wise Girl. The other…I have to save Nico.”

“And who are you to decide that?” Octavian asked. “You might have been voted Jackson’s right hand but you don’t have any—”

“Shut up!!” the three praetors screamed.

“Praetors…” Octavian hissed out of grit teeth. “I must insist. Are we just supposed to accept that seven demigods, both Roman and Greek are to go to the forbidden Ancient Lands? And that this pest has the audacity to just force himself to go along? All of this without a vote in the senate? Without a proper debate? Without—”

“Percy! Tsuna!”

Oh, thank you Poseidon for Tyson. He came running towards us, Ella the harpy on his shoulder and Mrs. O’Leary practically on his heels. He still hadn’t fixed that purple SPQR flag. He was wearing it like a bib. But as he got closer, I realized that he was worried.

“What’s wrong buddy?” I asked, petting Mrs. O’Leary’s head.
“Ella is scared.” He explained, his big brown eye about to flood us with tears.

“N-n-no more boats.” said Ella. She was so nervous that she started to pull at her feathers. “Titanic, Lusitania, Pax... boats are not for harpies.”

Leo squinted and pointed at Ella as he asked Hazel loud enough for all of us to hear “Did that chicken girl just compare my ship to the Titanic?”

Hazel stiffened and glared at Leo. “She’s not a chicken.” She must have realized something because she averted her eyes from him. “She’s a harpy. She’s just a little high strung.”

“Ella is pretty,” Tyson said. Aw, he has a crush! “And scared. We need to take her away, but she won’t go on the ship.”

“No ships, no ships.” Ella repeated. She was shaking so hard that a few feathers fell off. “Bad luck.” She looked right at Annabeth. “There she is. Wisdom’s daughter walks alone—”

“Ella!” Frank jumped up. “Maybe it’s not the best time to—”

“The Mark of Athena burns through Rome,” the harpy continued, raising her voice until it was loud and shrill. “Twins snuff out the angel’s breath, Who holds the key to endless death. Giants’ bane stands gold and pale, Won through pain from a woven jail.”

Everyone was staring at Ella. No one said a word. Annabeth looked terrified, and Percy was holding her hand. The hell is a Mark of Athena, and what does it have to do with Annabeth? And is it just a coincidence that this prophecy is directly tied with where we’re heading to next? And why do we have to deal with two prophecies at once? That’s what I call a pain in the ass.

Percy stood up and took Tyson’s arm, trying to lead him away. “I know! How about you take Ella to get some fresh air? You and Mrs. O’Leary—”

“Hold on!” Octavian yelled. In his hands was one of his sacrificial teddy bears, and he was ringing its neck. The poor thing. “What was that she said? It sounded like—”

“Ella reads a lot!” blurted Frank. “We found her at a library.”

“Yes!” Hazel said. “Probably something she read in a book.”


“That was a prophecy.” Octavian insisted. “It sounded like a prophecy.”

Annabeth laughed, and it sounded forced. “Really, Octavian? Maybe harpies are different here, on the Roman side. Ours have just enough intelligence to clean cabins and cook lunches. Do yours usually foretell the future? Do you consult them for your auguries?”

The Roman soldiers that Octavian always had with him started laughing nervously. Some of them looked between Ella and Octavian and snorted. Clearly, they knew that Octavian was being ridiculous and paranoid.

“I, uh...” Octavian started, lowering the stuffed animal. “No, but—”

“She’s just spouting lines from some book.” Annabeth waved her hand in dismissal. “Like Hazel said. “Besides, we already have a real prophecy.” She turned to Tyson. “Percy’s right. Why don’t you take Ella and Mrs. O’Leary and shadow-travel somewhere safe for a while? Is Ella okay with
“Large dogs are good,” Ella said. “Old Yeller, 1957, screenplay by Fred Gibson and William Tunberg.” I don’t think I like the fact that she referenced Old Yeller when she’s sitting on my dog.

“Great!” Percy said. “We’ll Iris-message you guys when we’re done and catch up with you later.”

Everyone else looked toward Reyna. I mean, I get that she is the Praetor, but why is it that her word is law around here? Last I checked, both Percy and Jason were also Praetors, so they should get a say.

Reyna studied Ella for a moment. “Fine, go.”

“Yay!” Tyson yelled childishly. He ran around the couched and gave everyone a big hug. Octavian and his posse didn’t seem to enjoy it. Reyna was shocked, to say the least. By the time he got to me I attempted to hug him back as tight, but Tyson gives the best hugs, no doubt about it.

As he climbed onto Mrs. O’Leary I scratched her behind the ears and kissed her head. “Take care of them girl, okay? And stay safe at Camp. Also…” I leaned into her ear to whisper. “Look after Will. I have a bad feeling, and I know he could some support.”

Mrs. O’Leary barked, almost making me go deaf, before liking my face. I spluttered and wiped the drool off my face. Yata was annoyed because he was squawking at her. With another woof she bounded out of the forum. Tyson waved back at us and we waved back. They disappeared in a shadow on the Senate House wall.

“Well, Octavian is right about one thing.” Reyna said discarding her uneaten apple. “We must gain the Senate’s approval before we let out any of our legionnaires go on a Quest—especially one as dangerous as you’re suggesting.”

“This whole thing smells of treachery.” grumbled Octavian. He looked up at the flying ship. “That trireme is not a ship of peace!”

“If it will make you take a chill pill, fell free to come aboard man.” Leo offered. “I’ll give you the grand tour myself. I’ll even let you steer the boat, and if you’re really good I’ll give you a little paper captain’s hat with your name on it as a souvenir.”

“How dare you—” Octavian was seething, his nostrils flaring.

“I think it’s a good idea.” Reyna said. “Octavian, go with him. See the ship. We’ll convene a senate meeting in one hour.”

“But…” With one steely look from Reyna, Octavian stood down. “Fine.”

Leo stood up and led Octavian to the ship. Everyone had finished eating at this point and stood up too Frank and Hazel said that they were going to grab a few things and left. As I was stretching the invisible wind spirits came to clear the plates. Jason asked Reyna of it would be alright to show Piper around before the senate meeting. With how Reyna’s features hardened, I thought she was going to say no, but she coldly said they could go.

“Yeah, me too.” Percy said, taking Annabeth’s hand. “I’d like to show Annabeth arou—”

“No.” Reyna snapped.

“Sorry?” Percy asked, not understanding.
“I’d like a few words with Annabeth.” Reyna said. “Alone. If you don’t mind, my fellow praetor.” God, the ice in her voice chilled even my spine, and she wasn’t even talking to me.

“Uh…come on Perce. Let give the girls some private time.” I said.

“But—”

“Do you really want to stand between Reyna and Annabeth?” I asked. “I wouldn’t.”

Percy looked at Annabeth to see what she wanted. “Go on Percy. I’ll be fine.”

Once we left, Percy and I wondered around a little bit. It’s not like we had anything better to do. I saw a few clothing stores, so I had Percy come with me. He needed a distraction, and I needed more clothes. There’s no way am I wearing the same outfit for the entirety of this quest. What if it they get torn?

I ended up grabbing a few pairs of trunks, sleeveless undershirts, an extra pair of jeans and a few cargo shorts. I begrudgingly grabbed an extra Camp-Jupiter T-shirt because that’s the only kind they had. Maybe I’ll get a chance to buy something different on our way to Greece.

“Hey you getting hungry man?” Percy asked as we walked by a café.

“I could eat something.” I said.

“I’ll go grab us something.” Percy said. “I bet I can get a Praetor discount.”

“Looks like you might take a little while.” I said, seeing the line out the door. “I’ll meet you by the fountain, okay?”

“Sure thing.”

“Oh, and grab some extra Nectar and Ambrosia if you can. I bet that the ship is well stocked, if Chiron and Will had gotten their way, but with this quest…we’re going to need as much as we can get.”

Percy nodded and we fist bumped. We split up and I went to the fountain. When I sat down I took out the spell book and started reading through it. Yatagarasu hopped off my shoulder and perched himself right next to me. I stroked down his back as I read.

The Argo II was blocking the sun a bit, so it was nice and shaded here on the fountain. All around me were families marveling at the flying warship. Children were playing all around having fun. There were newly inducted members of the Legion enjoying a day off, but were prepped for battle, being fully dressed in armor, although that was more than likely due to Octavian.

All of the sudden there was this cold feeling at the back of my neck again. I whipped around, but there was nothing there. For a moment I entertained the thought that it was water from fountain sprinkling on me, but my neck was dry. Turning back around I noticed that Death’s ring was glowing faintly, just barely noticeably.

“What’s this about?” I asked, flexing my hand. The ring felt so cold but it faded. So weird.

Ignoring this, I kept reading through the spell book. I know for a fact that if I can get a hold of handling magic I will be much more help for Percy and the others. As I flipped though I found a spell that I was honestly praying would be in here: an invisibility spell. Now, I don’t want to be invisible myself, but there’s an eyesore of a branded tattoo that needs to be gotten rid of.
I read and reread the spell a few times over, just to make sure that I don’t screw it up. Magic can be very unpredictable after all. As I was about to perform the spell, Percy arrived and sat next to me.

“Here ya go, one white chocolate peppermint mocha.” Percy smiled.

“Thanks man.” I said. He had gotten a Coke and the two of us brownies. We clinked our drinks.

I took a few large gulps of my coffee. “How can you drink all that coffee? I had a sip of it earlier and I feel like I want to go a few rounds in the coliseum.”

“I’m from Seattle, coffee is our life blood there.” I explained after swallowing a bite of brownie. “That’s why there’s a coffeeshop, more likely than not a Starbucks, on every corner.”

“I’m just saying, you drink a lot of coffee for someone our age.”

“At least my drink is pretty simple. You should see the coffee snobs I have seen. Man are those people psychos.” I went back to reading.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“I’m about to see if this spell will get rid of this tattoo.” I said.

“Are you sure you want to do that?”

“Percy, you know my opinions of tattoos. I’ve never liked them. I get that it’s a sign of honor here or something, but I can’t stand it. Besides, what will Sally think when she sees us with these things on our arms? She’ll flip.”

“Yeah, yeah she will.”

“So we understand one another, good. Now if you excuse me for a second.” I took a deep breath and focused like I was taught to. I waved my hand over the brand, waiting for results. But the ink doesn’t fade. I let out a breath of annoyance. “Dammit.”

“I’m sorry man.” Percy said. “But I bet you’ll get used to it soon.”

“I hope so.” I said. “I need to get a hold of this magic thing. It can be of so much help once I do.”

“I have faith in you.” Percy said. “You tend to pick things up quickly and—”

There was a shrill sound that screeched through the air. The area brightened up noticeably as a large ball of fire soared above us. A large BOOM thundered the area, accompanied by a bright flash. Once the light cleared enough I saw a huge crater in the forum, wreathed in flames. A flaming couch crashed a couple of yards away from us. Percy and I didn’t have time to react, didn’t have time to help anyone, as a large bronze speak wrapped in Greek Fire blasted into the Senate House. The building blew up in an eruption of green flames.

“Di Immortales!” “Nanite kotoda!”

We ran towards the Senate House in order to help. I prayed that no one was on the building when it was hit. We didn’t get too far because the Romans were already getting aggressive and were rioting.

“This isn’t going to be good.” I said.
“Everyone, calm down!” Percy yelled. “This isn’t what it looks like.”

The Romans did not listen. Chaos was spreading. The crowds of Romans were starting to push and shove. Fistfights were breaking out. I had a feeling that everything was going to get much worse.

“Yata!” My bird cawed and flew right above us. “Take our stuff to the flying ship, we’ll be up there soon.” Yata nodded and grabbed the bags. He flew as fast as he could to the ship.

“It’s their fault!” screamed a Roman over the crowd’s roars. “They led the warship to us! Capere Graeci!”

“Capere Graeci! Capere Graeci! Capere Graeci!” The crowd started chanting.

“Percy, we need to go.”

“No! I can stop this.”

“No you can’t, we need to leave or else we will be killed!” I said.

“But—” I slapped him and started pulling him away from the oncoming crowd.

“Will you stop trying to keep the peace and think about your own life for once!” I screamed. “If we stay we will be executed, and then who will stop Gaea and the Giants?”

Percy scowled. “Dammit, fine!”

We ran back towards the Argo II. I could see the ballistae still smoking from here. Frank and Hazel caught up with us, looking scared and angry. As soon as we got back to the fountain we all tried yelling for everyone to calm down and think things through. But no one was listening. No one wanted to listen. They were just so angry, as if Ares, or I guess Mars was here yelling in each of their ears to fight and be pissed off.

I was so lucky weapons are not allowed in the city limits. Otherwise I think we’d be dead by now. But this angry mob of Romans, young and old, newbies and veterans of the Legion, were starting to throw plates, food, and rocks at us and the Argo II. That last part was almost funny, if the thrown items weren’t falling on us. I had to make a barrier out of the fountain water to keep us from getting hurt by falling items.

Percy kept trying to calm the crown, but with no success. They kept screaming and reaching for him, even managing to grab a few fistfuls of his toga and tearing it. It was around this time that Jason flew, I mean **flew**, to the middle of the crowd, Piper clinging to him. He kept screaming ‘I’m on your side, I’m on your side!’ but no one cared. They reached for him and pulled him into the crowd. He didn’t fight them as hard as I bet he could, probably because he didn’t want to hurt them. But by the time he was able to escape his purple cloak was torn to shreds and his forehead was bleeding.

Piper kept screaming at the mob, telling them to stand down, and her words were so appealing. Even I wanted to what she said. It was like she had some super persuasion powers. It was making my head feel foggy, so I shook my head and focused on keeping us safe. Unfortunately, the mob was screaming so loud that it was impossible for Piper’s ability to reach them.

The ship kept firing off flaming spears. What was going on up there? Oh, I swear to God that if Octavian did this all-in order to get the Romans completely on his side I will bring him to
Hades myself. Hell, maybe I can offer him up to Death on a silver platter.

“Percy, you need to push them back, or else we will get killed!”

“Right!” Percy used the water in the fountain to blast the Romans back, like how firemen and law officers do during riots.

“Oh gods, Octavian is trying to climb down!” Frank said. I spared a moment to look up and saw Octavian swing back and forth, probably yelling obscenities like a madman.

“Annabeth!!” Percy yelled. I turned back and saw her running and dodging between the mob. Percy blasted the Romans with more water to open up more of a path for her until she finally reached us.

“What—”

“I don’t know!” she yelled.

“I’ll tell you what!” cried Octavian’s voice from above. He was at the bottom of the ladder, his robes steaming and his face black with soot. “The Greeks have fired on us! Your boy Leo has trained his weapons on Rome!”

“You’re lying!” said Annabeth. “Leo would never—”

“I was just there!” the blonde Augur shrieked. “I saw it with my own eyes!”

“Â, anata wa watashi o jōdan ni shinakereba naranai! We’re just supposed to believe you after all the crap you do to get yourself ahead!” I yelled back. “For all we know you fired on your own people to cause a war!” The Argo II fired again, thus killing my theory. Shit.

“You see??” he screamed. “Romans, kill the invaders! But save Jackson and the Shinto for me! I will personally sacrifice them to the gods!”

“We have to leave!” yelled Annabeth. “Now!”

I nodded, as did Percy. “Frank, Hazel, you’ve got to make a choice. Are you coming?”

Hazel put on her helmet. “Of course we are. But you’ll never make it to the ship unless we buy you some time.”

After Annabeth asked how, Hazel whistled. In a blink-and-you-miss-it blur of beige, Arion appeared right in front of Hazel. He reared up onto his hind legs and whinnied loudly, making the crowd back off a bit. Hazel jumped on and raised her sword.

“Send me an Iris-message when you’re safely away, and we’ll rendezvous. Arion, ride!!” Hazel clicked her boots to Arion’s sides and he zipped through the mod, pushing the Romans back and causing even more panic.

“Romans!” Jason cried. “Please!”

He and Piper were still being pelted by plates and stones. They were too far away for me to help them. In order to protect his girlfriend, Jason shielded Piper. His selfless, heroic attitude cost him a brick right above the eye. He crumpled to the ground, blood already staining his face. If the brick had hit just a little higher—

“Get BACK!!” Piper screamed. It seemed to do the job. The mob stopped getting closer, hesitating. But they were slowly starting to get their courage back.
There was no way Percy or I could get there to help, so that meant only one person. “Frank! You need to save them!”


Unfortunately, the three of us weren’t able to get to the ropes. Percy and I were to focused keeping the mob away from us with water jets. But even them they kept swarming at us. I heard Octavian curse behind me, so I glanced back and saw that his foot was caught in the rope ladder, making him unable to get down. If it weren’t for the current situation it would have been really funny.

Screams of fear from the crowd drew my attention. As I turned to look I saw something huge, gray, and leathery in the middle of the mob. It was a dragon. Not the dragons that I was used to, more like a European dragon. It spread its wings and took off into the air. In its claws were Jason and Piper. Holy crap, that’s Frank! I didn’t know he could turn into creatures like dragons!

“Percy, get Annabeth to the ship, I’ll hold back the mob.” I said once Frank was in the sky.

“You can’t hold all of them back!” Annabeth said.

“Don’t doubt me sister.” I said. “Percy, go!”

“If you’re not following us real quick I swear——”

“Shut up and go!” I pushed him towards the ladder and turned back to the mob.

I summoned all the water of the well and made it form a dense wall. The mob started to pound on it, banging on it with their fists and rocks and whatever else they had on them. Octavian screamed behind me and there was this thump noise, so he had to have hit the ground.

All of the sudden there was this whistling sound coming from above. I looked up and saw a flaming ball miss the Argo and was heading towards me and the mob. I didn’t want the people to get hurt, so I made the water shield us from above. The ball hit the water shield and it exploded. I was barely able to keep the shield up for as long as I could. The explosion pushed me to the ground. I think I heard Percy and Annabeth calling for me. When I stood back up the mob was shaking their heads and coming back for me. I put my back to the fountain and held my hand up.

“Stay back.” I warned, my heart beating like crazy.

“You brought the Greeks here!” yelled a mob member. “It’s because of you our city is burning!”

“I have no idea how this happened, but I didn’t lead anyone anywhere!” I said. “I haven’t been in contact with the Camp Half-Blood in months!”

“LIAR!” The mob started towards me again.

“I told you to stay back!” I screamed. I thrust my hand out and a pulse of blue light pushed the mob several feet away.

“What was that?” I turned around and saw Octavian staring at me, eyes wide. My hand was still glowing, so I shook it to make it stop. “You…you FREAK!” Okay, that was rude. He drew his knife and stepped closer to me. “I knew you were hiding something. You can never trust beings of different pantheons, especially if they’re part Greek. I will have your head, and the gods will shine their graces on me as I lead Rome into glorious battle against the Greek camp.”
“If you so much as touch the people there I will drag you to *Hell* myself.” I said.

“I am going to enjoy giving your head to Lord Jupiter you piece of gar—” Octavian stopped midsentence and fell over. He was hit over the head by-

“Oh, Anthony?” I asked, seeing my young friend holding the pommel of his sword. “What have you done?”

“I-I couldn’t let him hurt you.” said the son of Ceres. “I saw his knife, and I know how he’s like.”

“Why? Do you know what’s going to happen to you now?”

“Because…because you’re my friend.” That struck me in the heart. Anthony is so kind hearted, always thinking of others.

I looked around to see if anyone else saw what Anthony did, and all I saw were Romans on the ground, some knocked out, others too distracted to have noticed. “Thank you Anthony. I’ll repay you soon.”

“You can do it now.” He said. “Make it look like I tried to stop you. Make it look like fight.”

I nodded and waved my hand over the fountain. The water started to swirl around. I looked at him and he nodded at me, giving me the go ahead. I swung my arm and a strong jet of water slammed into Anthony. I made it just strong enough to knock the wind out of him, and probably end up leaving a bruise, but it was weak enough that his armor absorbed the worst of it.

Percy was yelling for me near the top of the ladder. The Roman mob started to get back up, so I had to leave now. I gathered water at my feet and made it blast me into the air like a geyser just as a Roman got close. I reached for the rope and grabbed on tight as soon as I got near. The ladder swung violently so I held on tight.

Once it was more stable I started climbing. From this position, I could really see the damage that was inflicted on New Rome. It was horrible. Fires blazed all around. It’s going to take them awhile to repair all of this. And knowing Octavian, he was going to spin this into something so much worse than it is. I just hope that Anthony will be alright.

I looked down and could just make out Anthony from here. He was still on the ground, but he wasn’t being arrested, at least right now he isn’t. I sent a few prayers out to the gods to keep a watch other him.

“Arigatō Anthony. Please stay safe.”
In honor of our favorite Seaweed Brain's birthday, here's chapter two!

Happy Birthday Percy Jackson!

Again, thanks to Aflashofthoughtbehind for BETAing for me.

I continued to climb the latter. The ship had started to move, and with it dodging the catapult fire it was making it hard to climb. As I passed the broken oars Percy leaned over the edge and kept calling out to me.

“Come on man!” Percy said as he grabbed my hand. He helped pull me over the ledge of the ship. The rigging was ablaze in flame. The foresail was ripped down the middle, and the ship kept listing starboard.

“Holy crap, that’s fire!” I asked.

“The ship will be fine for a minute!” Percy said. “Annabeth get us out of here!”

Annabeth stood up from where she was kneeling next to Leo. He looked like he was tackled to the ground. What happened to him? Did he really fire on New Rome? He was lying next to a still smoking ballistae. Annabeth hoofed it over to the where I assumed the controls were.

Percy went over to get the fire to die down. At that moment, Frank the Magic Dragon flew around the ship once in a circle and then landed on the bow. As he started shifting like an Animorph back to normal he gently dropped Piper and Jason on the floor. The both of them collapsed.

I went over to check on them. Piper seemed shock about Frank, understandably, but Jason didn’t look too good. His forehead was bleeding from where the brink hit, and he was out cold. I tried to pick him up, but Frank came over and supported Jason on his shoulder. Piper led them down inside the ship. Hopefully there’s a sickbay on this ship.

I regretted looking over the edge of the helm. Legionnaires, now armed were closing ranks. I guess Terminus is now allowing weapons inside his borders. I saw lights flicking on around a group of legionnaires. Then flaming arrows are being fired at the ship. Great, just great. Luckily, they weren’t sticking into the ship, merely bouncing off the bronze hull. I saw Hazel riding Arion and raced out of the city with part of the mob trying to chase after them. The Legion was bringing in more catapults to try to take us down, and send us to the Underworld while they were at it. And around the Pomerian Line was this purple glow, and I had a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach.

“Annabeth! Get us out of here!” I screamed.

The ship started groaning and tilted up. It wasn’t a smooth transition, and I was tossed to the floor as the ship went up at a horrible angle. The mooring lines snapped as we flew above New Rome and into the clouds.
Yatagarasu cawed and dropped the stuff that Percy and I bought on the deck before landing on my shoulder. He seemed irritated that he had to fly into oncoming fire from the Romans. But from what I can see, he wasn’t even scorched and mine and Percy’s stuff isn’t damaged, so I think he’s just being overdramatic.

Once we were high enough the ship steadied and started heading East. We sailed for a little bit, trying to calm out nerves. I was half scared that Zeus was going to kill me and Percy being up here, but either we’re lucky or his Royal Highness is letting us do this Quest without any hindrances from him. Although the worst thing he can do to ship at this point was a mercy drop. The crossbows were piles of kindling, the foresail really needed to be repaired and—wait is that a satellite array? Even if it was, it was broken into bits and pieces. Either way, we have a job to do. But first things firsts, we need to find out why Leo attacked New Rome.

“Hey, wake up.” I said to Leo as I started shaking him. He was still knocked out. Annabeth walked over to me. “What happened to him?”

“Percy tackled him.” Annabeth said. “He was going to fire the ballistae again so Percy stopped him.”

“Why would he attack though?” I asked. “As far as first impressions go he seemed really friendly.”

“I don’t know.” Annabeth said. “When we found him he was acting odd, and he was moving like a robot, which knowing Leo if he was himself I would have brushed it off.”

“Son of Hephaestus, right?” she nodded. “Guess that would make sense.”

“How long until he wakes up you think?” she asked as I sat Leo up.

“Well, in my professional opinion—” I slapped him across the face. Leo instantly woke up and practically jumped out of his skin. His eyes were bulging.

“I’m sure the Apollo kids would be proud of you.” Annabeth said.

“It worked, didn’t it?” I asked.

“¡¿Qué demonios?!” Leo asked, rubbing his cheek. “What happened?”

“That’s what I want to know.” Annabeth said, her eyes going steely. “Why did you do it?”

“What are you talking about?” asked Leo, rubbing the back of his head.

“You fired on New Rome.” I said. “According to that twat Octavian you attacked the city. He now has the ammunition to practically do whatever he wishes. He’s going to twist this event around his finger and bend the entirety of Rome to his will.”

“No! I would never—”

“VALDEZ!!”

Out from the entrance into the ship came out a real-life version of Phil the Satyr from Disney’s Hercules. Okay, a bit of an overexaggerating, but you have to admit they look similar. He was five feet tall and admittedly buff for a Satyr, even having a wispy beard. He was wearing an orange polo shirt and he had a whistle around his neck. In his hand was a baseball bat. He stomped his hooves over to the three of us, followed by Frank.
“Uh, hey Coach…” Leo tried to smile.

“Don’t ‘Hey Coach’ me!” said the Satyr. “What happened to my Martial Arts show?”

“It looks like that the satellite array is busted.” Annabeth said. “We had a situation earlier and we weren’t—”

“There was a fight and you didn’t call me?” asked the Satyr. “I would have gladly busted up some Romans with my moves!” He attempted the Crane Stance from the Karate Kid and made stereotypical Kung Fu noises. I think I should feel offended. I’m not really sure.

“Yeah, I doubt that’s what was needed at the time.” I said.

The satyr looked at me. “Who are you supposed to be?”

“Gods this is annoying.” I told Annabeth. She rolled her eyes and turned back to the Satyr.

“His name is Tsuna.” Annabeth said. “He’s a close friend and Percy’s brother. Tsuna, this is Coach Hedge. He’s our chaperone on the Quest.”

“Chaperone? Really?” I wondered. “We’re old enough to go on this Quest in the first place, but we need a chaperone?”

“Your darn right cupcake!” said Hedge. “And don’t you forget it!” He pointed his bat at me.

“Anyway…” I started, “We were interrogating Leo about what happened.”

“I would really like to know why he attacked my home.” frowned Frank. It was almost funny seeing Frank be mad. It’s just hard for me to personally take seriously. He’s like Po the Panda.

Leo looked around at the ship he built. His eyes started watering at seeing the damage that had happened to it. He must have put his heart and soul into this thing. He leaned against the figure heard, where the dragon head was coughing up smoke. In the time it took for Leo to actually respond, I heard the ship moaning and wheezing, like it was struggling to keep moving.

Leo choked back a sob. “I don’t know what happened. It’s fuzzy.” It’s hard to tell if he honestly doesn’t know or that he’s nervous being started down at by the four of us.

Annabeth crossed her arms and her stare got colder. “You mean you don’t remember?”

“I…” Leo started. It was like he was trying to find the words, and it was painful for him to do. “I remember, kinda. But it’s like I was watching myself do things. I couldn’t control myself.”

“You couldn’t control yourself?” I asked. Leo nodded.

“Do you have an idea Tsuna?” Annabeth asked.

“Maybe, but I can’t be certain.” I said.

“Look, kid,” Hedge said. “You blew up some stuff. You attacked some Romans. Awesome! Excellent!”

“I don’t think it’s awesome.” Frank said, but the Satyr didn’t seem to hear him.

“But did you have to knock out the satellite channels? I was right in the middle of watching a cage match.” This guy seems pretty violent for a satyr. But I really don’t have much to go on,
considering I haven’t met many. I mean, I met Grover once, but it was only in passing the night Percy vanished.

“Coach,” Annabeth started. “Why don’t you go make sure all the fires are out?”

“I already did that.”

“Do it again. And check the engine room.” Annabeth ordered. Coach Hedge grumbled under his breath but he went downstairs. Once he was gone Annabeth kneeled next to Leo. “Leo, is it possible that Octavian tricked you? Did he frame you, or—”

Leo shook his head. “No. I wish it happened like that, but it didn’t. The guy was a jerk, no doubt about it, but he didn’t fire on the camp. I did.”

“On purpose?” Frank scowled. It was like he was trying to restrain himself.

“No!” Leo yelled. “I would never do that.” He squeezed his eyes shut. “Okay, yes technically I did, I mean…I didn’t want to. But at the same time, I felt like I wanted to. Something was making me do it. There was this cold feeling inside me—”

“A cold feeling?” Annabeth asked. She sounded scared.

I wasn’t at ease about what he said either. I’ve been having this cold feeling on and off all day since before Leo and the others arrived. I just brushed them off as nothing in the end. But if he felt it too, then something must be happening.

“Can you describe this feeling Leo?” I asked. “What was it like?”

“Yeah, sure.” He said. “Why?”

“Tsuna! Annabeth!” Percy yelled. “We could use your guy’s help!”

“On my way.” I called back. I looked at Leo and saw that he looked worried. “If you’re thinking about Jason, I’m sure he’ll be fine. He seems like a tough guy.” Leo nodded, looking as if he felt a little better.

“Frank, I’ll be back.” Annabeth said. “Can you just…watch Leo. Please.” Frank nodded, not looking to happy with Leo.”

Once we got to Percy, Yata took off to perch on a sail. Annabeth took the lead through the ship. I stayed in the back giving them some space to be together. I wasn’t able to get a good look at the ship as we were going too fast. She led us down two flights of stairs and to a room to our right, which was the sickbay.

With Will being in charge of all things medical and healthiness, it’s no wonder that this place seemed so well stocked. There were three cots with white sheets. Clear glass cases were packed with medical supplies. There was gauze, vitamins, Band-Aids, disinfectant, needles and stitching thread, everything you can think of. And as I suspected, it had a large cache of Nectar and Ambrosia.

Jason was sitting up in one of the beds munching on a piece of Ambrosia. Piper was wiping at his injury. It looked better now that all the blood is gone. Annabeth went over and took out some gauze.

“We should wrap that up.” She said. “How are you doing by the way?”
“Fine, just a little dizzy.” said Jason.

“I don’t think he has a concussion.” Piper said. “But he should rest for a little bit.”

“I’ll be fine Pipes.” Jason said. He tried to get out of the bed, but Piper held him down.

“It’s not going to kill you to rest Sparky.” Piper said. “Just relax, okay?”

Jason’s face had this dreamy look to it as he looked at Piper. “Yeah, okay.” Annabeth started wrapping his head.

“Are you going to do your thing, or not?” Percy asked.

“What?” I asked. “Oh, right.” I walked over to Jason and took off the Magatama. “So, Jason, I’d rather not take the risk of you having a concussion. Let me just—”

“What are you going to do with those?” Piper asked.

“I’m going to heal him.” I said.

“With jewelry?” wondered Jason.

“Yes.” I said. The Magatama began to glow. “Just relax.” The Magatama shined over Jason, and in no time, he looked a lot better.

“Hey, my head feels much better.” Jason said.

“You’re welcome.” I said, putting my necklace back on.

“How did you do that?” Piper asked.

“Does it have something to do with you being a Shinto demigod?” Jason asked.

“Yes.” I said with a pop of the ‘p‘.

“Shinto demigod?” Piper asked.

“Tsuna, should you really be telling people this?” Annabeth wondered.

“I don’t see the harm in it now.” I said. “It’s not like all of the Roman Camp doesn’t know at this point.”

“Isn’t that going to upset anyone?” asked the daughter of Athena.

“If you’re talking about the gods, I don’t think they care at the moment.” I said. “Otherwise, Her Royal Highness would have done something about me being here right now. But, since I hate to repeat myself, I can wait until we’re all in the same room to make an official introduction.”

“That would probably be better anyways.” Percy said. “Not a lot of people at Camp Half-Blood know about you, so everyone here, except for Jason apparently, know about your heritage.”

“Best to get their reactions out of the way so we can focus.” I said. “But in the meantime, Jason, you should rest up for a little bit. Just because I healed you doesn’t mean you don’t need it, okay?”

“Sure, I guess.” He said. “But I’d rather do it in my own bed.”

“I’ll keep an eye on him.” Piper offered, going over to a cupboard and grabbing an ice pack. I don’t
know if I should be offended that she doesn’t trust my healing of her beau.

“Good.” I said. We left the sickbay to let the two of them be with each other.

“Hey Tsuna, Annabeth and I are going for a walk together.” Percy said.

I raised an eyebrow. “And?”

“And nothing.” He said defensively. “It’s just a walk.”

I laughed a little. “If you say so.” I said. “I was hoping for a tour, but I can look around myself for a while.”

“Thanks man.” Percy said. His hand intertwined with Annabeth’s.

“We’ll see you in a little bit Tsuna.” Annabeth said.

With a smile, I waved goodbye at them. I couldn’t say no to them wanting to have some time alone with each other. Who am I to get in their way? They missed each other so much, and with how happy they look now that they’re together it was really beautiful.

Now all by myself, I decided to look around the ship. And since I’m on the lowest floor I decided to start there. Right across the hall from the sickbay was the armory. It was filled with armor and extra weapons such as swords, daggers, arrows (Frank would be happy to hear that), and even some stuff for the ballistae.

Down the hall was the main engine room. It looked really complex and way over my head. Coach Hedge was yelling at it because it was making noises that he didn’t like. I decided to just walk around and not disturb the goat with a bat. Further down the hall were two storage rooms, and nothing of interest was in them as far as I was concerned. Just beyond those was what I guess was a stable. What horse would willingly want to stay in a flying ship is beyond me. Maybe Pegasi, but they like to be free. But one thing this room did have going for it was the glass doors on the floor. You could make out the Californian landscape below us.

Turning around and heading upstairs I walked down the hall. Eight of the doors had labels on them indicating that they belonged to each of the chosen Seven and apparently Coach Hedge. It took me a moment to process that I don’t have a room. Don’t know why I was surprised, since I wasn’t expected, so I don’t know where I’ll be sleeping. But I’ll cross that bridge when I come to it.

At the end of the hallway was the galley and the mess hall. The galley was a rather surprisingly well stocked kitchen. Maybe I can cook something here for the others. When I was in Storybrooke, Granny taught me a couple of things, and I’ve always wanted to make a great Italian meal.

The mess hall was really nice. It was larger than I expected and had more of a lounge feel to it. There was a cupboard lined with cups, and there were plenty to use, so even with me here everyone could have a cup and then some. There was also a series of plates and bowls on it. Next to it was an ice chest that when I opened up has Coke, Pepsi, and other canned drinks. The chairs around the table were like cushy boujie recliners that had drink holders. There was even a small couch pushed up against a wall. On the walls were images of Camp Half-Blood. It made me smile seeing the scenery. The beach, the strawberry fields, the forest, it was so good seeing the place where I made some of the strongest friendships in my life.

I walked out of the mess hall and saw Percy and Annabeth making out against the door of
Annabeth’s room. It was getting pretty...NSFW. Awkward. I coughed to get their attention. They pulled apart from each other (more like jumped) and looked at me.

“Oh, Tsuna, we didn’t see you there.” Percy said.

“Clearly.” I said with a smug smile. “I’m going to have so much fun with the two of you.”

“You wouldn’t dare.” Annabeth glared.

“Don’t give me that look Wise Girl.” I said. “You have no right. Which reminds me. Let’s have that talk.”

Annabeth froze for a second before nodding. She must have forgotten what I told her earlier with everything that happened. She opened the door to her room and led the three of us in. This room definitely belonged to Annabeth. The table was covered in diagrams and notes. A laptop with a large blue Delta sat near the edge. A picture of her, Percy, and Grover the Satyr was pinned the wall. She sat on the bed and Percy joined her.

She let out a breath. “Okay Tsuna, let it out.” That got my eye twitching. All of my anger just came out at once.

“Let it out? Let it OUT?! ’Beth, do you have any idea what you did—I’m sorry, DIDN’T do?! It was stupid, stupid, stupid, and cruel, and very STUPID! You’ve known for months about where Percy would end up. Ever since Jason appeared at Camp you’ve known, and you didn’t tell me. I’ve been living basically in the streets, running from monsters that would not die. I’ve had my literal heart ripped out of my chest—”

“Your what ripped from where?!”

“—And all this time I could’ve been helping you get through this. I could have been with Sally and Paul, making sure she was okay. I could have helped you guys make this ship! But no, you didn’t even think ONCE about me. Me, the one who held you while you cried when I got back to camp after Percy was taken. You’re one of my closest friends Annabeth, and to see that you didn’t even think about me at all hurts. If you did, you would have contacted me. I have never felt this betrayed. You would’ve known that I would come along on this Quest to protect Percy. You could have made sure a room for me was built. But no. You didn’t do any of that. I am so pissed at you Annabeth. I’m tempted to smack you, but out of common decency and the fact that Percy would rip my arm off, I won’t, but know that I won’t easily forgive you. But you want to know what’s worse? None of my so-called friends ever said anything to me.”

I was out of breath. My throat hurt like crazy. As mad as I was before, I felt so good to let that all out. Annabeth just stared at me the entire time, taking it all in.

“I understand how you feel.” Annabeth said after looking at her feet. “And I’m so sorry.”

“Sorry doesn’t begin to make up what you did.”

“Dude, pull it back a bit.” Percy warned.

“Percy its fine.” Annabeth said taking his hand. “He’s right. I should have contacted him the moment I found Jason and the others. I should have told him about the Roman camp as soon as I found out about it. You know, there wasn’t a day that I didn’t go in the Poseidon Cabin or called or visited Sally. I looked at you in pictures, and Sally asked about you every time I saw her Tsuna. I don’t know why I never thought about you. I am your friend, but I betrayed your trust. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”
She started crying, and I felt bad for making it happen so I got on my knees and hugged her. “It’s fine. Just…talk to me next time, okay?”

Annabeth sniffled. “Yeah, I’ll do that.” She hugged me, and Percy hugged the both of us. I’m personally missing one specific person to make this hug circle complete.

“So were you the reason Will kept sneaking out of Camp?” Annabeth asked when we separated.

I could feel myself blushing. Why am I blushing every time Will is mentioned? It needs to stop.

“Will’s a great friend.” I said, backing away before Annabeth could catch my red face. “At least he thought about me enough to rendezvous with me every now and again…How is Will, by the way?”

Annabeth raised her eyebrow in suspicion as I nervously scratched my face. “He’s been busy lately.” She explained, keeping her eyes on me. “But with Chiron he made sure that the sickbay was properly stocked before we left. But he would talk about you and Nico every now and then.”

I smiled. “That sounds just like Will. He always thinks about others.” After a few minutes of everyone gathering themselves Percy spoke up.

“Let’s head outside. I want to talk to Leo.” Before I could ask why, he said “Annabeth told me what happened.”

“Oh…”

We walked out of Annabeth’s room and headed up the stairs. We passed Jason and Piper in what I think was Jason’s room. I waved at Piper as we passed. As we hit the top steps they creaked, alerting Leo and Frank to our presence. Leo looked worried.

“Is Jason—?”

“He’s fine.” I said.

“He should be resting right now actually.” said Annabeth. “Piper’s keeping an eye on him, but he should be fine, thanks to Tsuna.”

“Please, no autographs.” I said.

“Yeah, whatever.” Percy said. When he turned to Leo his demeanor darkened. “Annabeth says you did fire the ballista?”

“Man, I-I don’t understand how it happened. I’m so sorry—”

Percy growled. “Sorry?” I can see why Percy is mad. He saw New Rome as the safe haven that Camp Half-Blood never can be. A place to have a life. But he could go a little easy on Leo.

Annabeth stopped her boyfriend from throttling Leo by placing a hand on his chest. “We’ll figure it out later. Right now, we have to regroup and make a plan. What’s the situation with the ship?”

Leo looked scared to talk, not that I could blame him with the way Percy was glaring at him, his wolf stare able to stop most people instantly. But he swallowed the lump in his throat and explained the damages the ship had sustained. According to the Latino Elf, all he needed to fix the ship was Celestial Bronze, tar, and lime.

The bronze dragon mast head started to squeak. “Perfect.” sighed Leo.
“What’s perfect?” asked Annabeth. “I could use some perfect right now.”

“Everything we need is in one place.” smiled Leo. “Frank, why don’t you turn into a bird or something? Fly down and tell your girlfriend to meet us at the Great Salt Lake in Utah.”

A little while later we were flying over Salt Lake City. Leo started to descend the ship, but it was rough. He told us all to brace ourselves, except Coach Hedge didn’t listen. He was clinging to a rail outside screaming ‘YEAH!! Bring it on, lake!’ so loud that I could hear him from the second floor. With the way the ship was groaning, I thought it was going to fall apart. But I was hoping that between Annabeth and the children of Hephaestus the ship was more than sturdy enough.

The ship suddenly dropped and we hit the water. Luckily we were all strapped in or we would have been thrown to the floor. I felt how the Argo II listed a bit too much in the starboard direction before righting itself. I heard the whir of machinery activating once we were settled before a bell rang, signaling that we were in the clear.

“Oh thank the gods.” I said, unstrapping myself.

“Yeah, that was not fun.” Percy said. There was a clump-clump-clump above us. “Awesome, Hazel’s here.”

I went to the ice chest and started digging around. “Please tell me there’s Sprite. My stomach’s upset after that landing.”

“Coke me.” Percy said.

I grabbed his drink and tossed it to him, and he caught it one handed. He popped it open and took a long drink. Once he was done he stared at the pictures of Camp Half-Blood. He was staring at them longingly, and I felt bad for him. Camp was his home away from home.

Leo and Hazel, along with Piper, came walking in, taking Percy’s attention form the pictures. “So we’ve landed. What now?”

“We could figure out the prophecy?” suggested Frank. “I mean…that was a prophecy Ella spoke, right? From the Sibylline Books?”

“The what?” asked Leo.

“From what I understand they are a collection of books that contain prophecies written by the Sibylline Sisterhood.” I said. “Now they weren’t being influenced by the Pryoviles, but their prophecies are said to be accurate.”

“Oh great, a Dweek.” Piper said.

“HEY!” I yelled. “It’s Whovian, get it right.”

“Sorry, you just don’t seem the type to like Doctor Who.”

“Tsuna’s obsessed with that show.” Percy said. “Getting back to the subject at hand, Ella, the harpy that was with Tyson, has memorized a lot of books, including those Sibylline books. Since the books were burned around the fall of Rome, Ella is the only one who knows the prophecies.”

“That’s why you didn’t tell the Romans.” Leo said. “You didn’t want them getting a hold of her.”
Percy nodded. “Ella’s sensitive.” He turned back to the Camp Half-Blood pictures. “She was captured when we found her. I just didn’t want…it doesn’t matter now. I sent Tyson to an Iris-message a little while ago, told him to take Ella to Camp Half-Blood. They’ll be safe there.”

Annabeth leaned on the table and laced her fingers together. If she was in the right outfit she could almost pass for a Bond villain. “Let me think about the prophecy—but right now we have more immediate problems. We have to get this shipped fixed. Leo, what do we need?”

“The easiest thing is tar.” explained Leo. “We can get that in the city, at a roofing-supply store or someplace like that. Frank suggest Home Depot, so try that or Lowes. Also, Celestial Bronze and lime. According to Festus, we can find both of those on an island in the lake, just west of here.”

“We’ll have to hurry.” warned Hazel. “If I know Octavian, he’s searching for us with his auguries. The Romans will send a strike force after us. It’s a matter of honor now.”

“Guys…” Leo said. “I don’t know what happened. Honestly, I—”

“We’ve been talking.” Annabeth said. “We agree that it couldn’t have been you, Leo. That cold feeling you mentioned…I felt it too. Tsuna said he did too back at Camp Jupiter. It must be some sort of magic, either Octavian or one of her minions. But until we understand what happened—”

“How can we be sure it won’t happen again?” grunted Frank.

“We don’t.” I said. Everyone looked at me. “Whatever it is, Gaea, magic, old school pocket watch hypnosis, we need to simply let things play out and deal with it once we get to that point. We can’t prevent something if we don’t know what it is.”

“I’m fine now though.” Leo said, gripping the table so hard that his fingers were white. “Maybe we should use a buddy system. Nobody goes anywhere alone. We can send one team into town to get some tar, another team can go after the bronze and the lime.”

“Split up?” asked Percy. “That sounds like a really bad idea.”

“It’ll be quicker.” Hazel pointed out. “Besides, there’s a reason a quest is usually limited to three demigods, right?”

“You’re right.” started Annabeth. “The same reason we needed the Argo II…outside of camp, seven demigods in one place will attract way too much monstrous attention. The ship should protect us enough while on board, but if we go out like on expeditions, we shouldn’t travel in groups larger than three. No sense alerting Gaea’s minions than we have to.”

“So that makes me have to point out the elephant in the room.” Piper said. “Why is he here?” She pointed at me.

“Beg pardon?” I asked.

“No offense Tsuna, but I don’t understand why you’re with us.” Piper explained. “Don’t get me wrong. I’m grateful that you healed Jason with your necklace, but that doesn’t explain why you’re on the ship with us.”

“Great. Just great.” I said as I wiped my hands down my face. “I really didn’t want to deal with this. But everyone who doesn’t know is here, so I’ll get this out of the way. I’m not a Greek demigod. I’m the son of Susanoo, the Shino god of the seas and storms. I am the descendant of Poseidon on my mother’s side. There reason why I’m here? Him.” I pointed at Percy. “I am here to make sure that Seaweed Brain here doesn’t do anything stupid and that he gets home safely. I am
here to save my best friend from Gaea before he dies. So if you feel like you can’t trust me, get over it enough to know that I won’t harm any of you.”

It was quiet for a moment before Annabeth talked. “Uh, going on, I was going to say that, now that I have thought it through, having Tsuna on board with us, while adding to the danger, is going to be really helpful. He’s a really skilled swordsman, as good as Percy, and he has gifts that give him advantages over others. And then there’s the fact he’s as strong as Percy and Jason—”

“Okay, okay Annabeth, I get it.” I said. “We’ll go out—”

“WHAT?!?” Percy said.

“—At least break up with Percy first. Make sure you let him down easy though.” I laughed.

“In your dreams Tuna Head.”

I shrugged. “Yeah, you’re right. And it’d be awkward anyway, dating my brother’s ex.”

Everybody started laughing, except Percy whose face was read. It was nice to ease the tension around here. Once everyone calmed down, the groups were decided. Percy and Annabeth volunteered to go get the tar while Leo and Hazel were to get the lime and Celestial Bronze. There was this strange moment between Hazel and Leo, because they kept glancing at each other and Hazel was fidgeting. I don’t think Frank liked the idea of Hazel being alone with Leo.

Percy asked me to join him and Annabeth, but I told him that with Jason WIA and Piper taking care of him, that I would keep guard on the ship. I told him to go ask Frank, since Frank seemed worried about the whole Hazel and Leo situation.

Once everyone left to get the supplies I paced the deck. Yata followed me around, hopping along the railing. As I kept watch I looked over the weapons the ship had for self-defense. Mostly it was the crossbows, and they needed to be repaired soon just in case we encounter anything really dangerous.

The bronze dragon mast head kept blowing fire and coughing up smoke. It moved around as if it was also being a lookout. It was really intricate looking. Almost as if it could be a living, breathing dragon from afar. No wait, I have even a better comparison- a Transformer, yes. Now I hope it yells out ‘Terrorize!’ at some point.

After a while I felt that cold feeling again at the back of my neck. I quickly turned around expecting to find the source. There was nothing there, but before I could turn back around I heard voices, quiet barely there whispers. Whatever it was, it started to fade away, so I chased after it. This was something supernatural, I’m sure of it.

As I ran, I entered the ship and went down the hall, hoping to find the source. I passed Jason’s room, where in the corner of my eye I saw Piper holding something bronze and glinting. I backtrack until I was at the door, seeing her holding a bronze knife.

“Uh, hey.” I said. She looked up at me, her eyes never staying the same color. “What’cha doin’?”

“Nothing.” She said as she sheathed the knife. “Just watching Jason sleep.”

“Hm, romantic.” I said. “And not creepy at all.”

“And you’re one to judge?”
“Wow, okay, put away the claws kitty cat.”

“Sorry.” Piper said. She looked back at Jason, and her body relaxed a little. But there was something there that must have scared her.

“Are you alright?”

“Yeah, just saw something scary.”

“Want to talk about it?” I asked. “It might make you feel better.”

“I don’t know.” She said. “After the way I treated you back there—”

“Don’t worry about that.” I said. “Not the first time someone didn’t trust me. But you can trust me. Just let it tell me what you saw.”

“Okay.” Piper said. “I saw that blonde scarecrow looking kid Octavian with Roman soldiers gathered around him. He was speaking to the mob, and from what I could tell he was talking about killing us.”

“Not surprising form that asshole.” I said. “Is that all you saw?”

“No, I saw flashes of other things.” She admitted. “Jason on horseback with gold eyes, an old Southern belle, a bull with the face of a man rising from a river, and two giants lifting a bronze jar.”

“Possibly future events.” I said. “But how can you see the future? You aren’t tied to the Oracle are you?”

“No, nothing like that.” She drew her knife. “This is Katropis. It means ‘looking glass’, and it used to belong to Helen of Troy.”

“The same Helen of Troy that helped cause the Trojan War?”

Piper nodded. “I don’t know how, it must be some Ancient Greek Magic or something, but it lets me see glimpses of the future.”

“But I’m guessing that these glimpses are hard to interpret since you’re only seeing fragments, right?” Again she nodded. “To be honest, until the events play out, it will be nearly impossible to determine the meaning of the visions. Time is tricky, and all…wibbly wobbly.”

“Oh gods.” Piper chuckled. “This is going to be a long Quest.”

“You don’t like Doctor Who, do you?” I asked.

“My father’s agent is constantly wanting him to audition for a role for that show.” Piper said. “Honestly, it’s annoying.”

“Agent?” I wondered. “You’re dad’s an actor?”

“What, you don’t know?”

“Know what?”

“My dad’s Tristian McClean.” It took me a second to process.
“WHAT!!”

“Shhh!” she said, her eyes pointing to the sleeping Jason.

“Sorry, but you can’t just drop a bombshell like that.” I said. “I mean, your dad is Tristan McClean! The famous actor.”

“Trust me, I know.” Piper said.

“You don’t understand, I’m a fan of his.” I said. “I’ve seen all his movies at least three times, except that terrible Blue Beetle movie he was in last year.”

“Oh yeah, that was a thing.” Piper said. “To be honest, dad didn’t really want to do that one, but he was persuaded to.”

“Yeah, I could tell.” I said.

“So you’re interested in acting then?”

I smiled. “Yeah, I am. Ever since my mom passed away, I’ve been thinking about it more and more.”

“Oh, I’m sorry.” Piper laid her hand over mine.

“It’s fine.” I said. “But it’s because of her that I even have a drama background. Mom loved theatre, especially Shakespeare. She and I were a part of the Seattle and Oregon Shakespeare Festivals for a few years. She even had me do children’s theatre in Seattle. I remember he dragging me to her rehearsals when I was younger, and her theatre friends would always come over to our place and talk business with her over a glass of wine.” I smiled at the memories. “It’s really something I want to do.”

“My dad says that it’s a hard business to get into.” Piper said.

“Oh, I know that.” I said. “But I’m going to do more stuff to get better once this quest is over and we’re all back home. Taking workshops and acting classes, auditioning more often, trying to network—”

“If you want, once this is all over, I can maybe introduce you to my dad and he can give you some advice, if you want.”

“I’d love that, thanks.” Jason started to stir, so I stood up and placed a hand on her shoulder. “It was good talking with you Piper. If you need to do it again, I’ll be here.”

“Thanks, Tsuna.”

I left the couple alone in Jason’s room and headed back upstairs. Seeing all these couples on the ship is really making me wish I was in relationship, although I have the spot of my special someone filled. Right as I got outside Arion’s hooves clomped across the deck, Leo and Hazel on the magical, foul mouthed (according to Percy) horse. They were carrying a large sheet of Celestial Bronze.

“Hey guys.” I said. I helped grab the sheet of Celestial Bronze and bring it to the floor. “Have fun?”

“Tons.” huffed Hazel.
“Yeah, it was a blast.” Leo said.

And he certainly looked…different. His curly hair was greased back with welding goggles on, lipstick (not Hazel’s though) was on his cheek, he had tattoos all over his arms made in Sharpie, and his shirt was covered in short phrases like ‘Bad Boy, Team Leo, All Da’ Ladies Love Leo’ and—

“Hot stuff?” I asked, pointing to the ‘tattoo’ on Leo’s bicep.

“What can I say, when you look this good, you gotta advertise.” I laughed a little and smiled. “I’ll keep that in mind.”

“Is Frank and the others back yet?” asked Hazel. I shook my head.

“Not yet.” I said. “But they should be back soon.”

“Thanks.” Hazel said before heading off to the other side of the ship.

“Hey could you help me Tsuna?” asked Leo. “This thing is heavier than it looks.”

“Yeah, sure.”

Together Leo and I lifted the sheet of Celestial Bronze and headed downstairs. Leo told me that he needed the Celestial Bronze in the engine room. Maybe there’s a forge or something for him to use this for. When I asked about the lime that he needed, he said he grabbed enough and stuffed it into one of his belt pockets. On our way down, we passed Jason’s room, and he was awake.

“Gods of Olympus, what happened to you?” Piper asked.

“It’s a long story.” Leo said. He spotted Jason and a huge smile appeared on his face. “Hey man! Glad you’re better.”

“Thanks Leo.”

“How’re you feeling?” I asked.

“Really good actually.” Jason said. “That nap really helped a lot.”

“Great.” I said.

“Well, I’ll check up on you guys in a little bit.” Leo said. “Need to get this down to the engine room.”

I waved to Jason and Piper as I helped Leo carry the Bronze. Once we were in the engine room Leo got straight to work. I really don’t know what he was doing, other than hammering. And I couldn’t ask for an explanation because he was in the zone. I wanted to help, but whatever he’s doing went so far above my head that I’d just be in the way.

All of the sudden the ship started listing to the port. “Uh-oh.” Leo said, looking up from his work.

“What did you do?” I asked.

“I might have ticked off some nymphs while getting this bad boy.” He said, hitting the bronze with his hammer a few more times, making it sound like an Irish river dance.
“Fantastic.” I said. “Can you take care of everything down here? I’m heading up to stabilize the ship.”

“Go for it me amigo.” Leo said, getting back into the zone.

I left the engine room and started heading back upstairs. Along the way I nearly ran into Frank and Annabeth who was carrying two five-gallon buckets of foul smelling black sludge, which she almost spilled. She had some of the stuff in her hair.

“Hey.” Annabeth said, her breathing a little heavy.

“You alright?”

“Peachy, just peachy.” She said. “Leo in the engine room?”

“Yeah, he’s in the zone.”

“Cool.” The ship listed again, and I had to help steady Annabeth before she could drop that the tar. “You should get up there. Percy could use your help.”

“Right.”

With that I squished myself against the wall and made it to the deck. As soon as I did a wave of salt water rose over the ledge of the ship as it listed violently starboard. Before it could hit the wave was pushed back by Percy. I ran to his side, feeling the water move violently.

“Hey man.” I said.

“Sup?” he asked.

“Not much, was pretty boring until the last few minutes.” I flicked my wrist and a wall of water fell apart.

“I do bring the excitement.”

“Actually I think this is Leo’s doing.” I said.

“What did he do?”

“Pissed off some nymphs from what he said.”

“Wow, and I thought I was the one who caused trouble.” I looked over at him and saw the massive blotch of tar on his shirt.

“Did the three of you have fun?” I asked him, pointing at his shirt.

“Yeah, a lot of fun.” He explained. “Tar monsters are a party.”

Tar monsters are a thing? Who would of thought. “Were they that bad?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

For a few minutes, the ship kept rocking back and forth. Leo must have really pissed off these nymphs if Percy and I together were only able to keep the water calm enough to not break the ship in half. The whole-time waves crashed into the Argo II and Coach Hedge was screaming at the lake, which made it funny when a wave hit him and he spat out the water. The dragon masthead
was helping out too by breathing fire.

Percy was getting annoyed at the nymphs and started shouting. I can tell you now Sally would not approve of his choice of language. Yatagarasu was not happy either. His squawks and caws could be heard over both Coach and Percy yelling.

After what felt like hours, but probably only a few more minutes in reality, the ship started to shake and hum. The oars along the sides creaked and ground. The next thing I know the ship was starting to rise out of the water. The nymphs continued to try to use the water to bring the ship down, but we were too high above them now.

Percy and I collapsed against each other in exhaustion. That was more tiring than I thought it would be. Yatagarasu flew to me and landed on my leg. The sky was looking very nice right now, peaceful, serene. Percy leaned his head against my shoulder and looked like he was about to pass out. It was then that I noticed the smell.

“You, brother dear, need a shower.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and Kudos are appreciated.
It took about an hour for everyone to get cleaned up. During which Coach Hedge jumped at the chance to man the helm. Once everyone was showered we met in the dining hall for dinner. The eight of us were all together for the first time—Jason’s head now bandage free, Percy, Leo, and Annabeth’s hair are all still wet from their showers and wearing fresh clothes (although Leo’s arm still has ‘Hot Stuff’ written on it, albeit faded a bit)—and unfortunately you could cut the tension in here with a knife. It’s like no one can relax.

Although, having the titular Seven Demigods in one room must make it more really for them. This quest is to prevent the literal destruction of the world, not just civilization. Everyone went to sit down, and both Percy and Jason went for the seat at the head of the table. They were both gripping the chair tightly and were glaring at each other, as if to say ‘Seriously dude?’

It was honestly incredibly funny. I was having a hard time keeping it in from my spot leaning against the wall. There were even literal sparks coming from Jason as he stared at my brother. I was half expecting that anime trope of two rivals glaring at each other and electricity connects them as they struggle against each other to happen. And with both of their powers it’s a possibility. Luckily Annabeth decided to take charge and took the seat at the head, making Percy and Jason sit at opposite ends of the table.

Leo passed out plates and cups to everyone, and food magically appeared. They were just like the plates at Camp Half-Blood. When he gave me one Leo apologized that there aren’t enough seats for me to join them at the table. On my plate, a grilled ham and cheese appeared and it was coupled with a glass of iced tea. Everyone ate in silence for a few minutes, making the tension even worse. It was almost suffocating at this point.

“So, uh…” Leo started. “Who wants to know how me and Hazel got the Celestial Bronze?”

Everyone looked up at Leo before looking down on at their plates, so I raised my hand. “I’d like to know. I am curious as to what Team Leo was for.” I took a bite of my sandwich.

Leo smiled. “Awesome! So, me and Hazel went to go look for the bronze, right, and she led her horse to an island in the middle of the lake. We met Nemesis, she gave me a fortune cookie, and pointed us in the right direction. We walked around for a bit and we met Echo—”

“Wait, the nymph?” Annabeth asked.

“Yeah.” Leo said. “She had us follow her and she took us to where the Celestial Bronze was. But there was someone else there, with a bunch of fangirls.”


“Anyway,” continued Leo, “The Celestial Bronze was at the bottom of a small pool of water, and
Narcissus was using it as a mirror. We tried to talk to him so we could get it, but his nymph fangirls got angry because if we took the metal Narcissus would leave and they would lose their pretty boy. So we had to retreat and make a plan."

“And your plan involved making yourself into the tough guy member of a boy band?” laughed Piper.

“Of course!” said Leo. “Echo and Hazel helped me with my costume, and I walked out as Leo Valdez, Bad Boy Supreme, the Super-Sized McShizzle himself. While Hazel made the bronze go to her, cool power by the way, I distracted the nymphs with Echo being my hype girl. It distracted the nymphs away from Narcissus and that distracted him from the bronze. But he realized what we were doing and started attacking, and his fangirls did too.”

All of us laughed, easing the tension. “Sounds like you had a more fun time than the three of us.” Percy said, digging into the completely blue pie (from the filling all the way to the whip cream) that was now on his plate. “After Frank took us into the city we went to a supply store like you said to get some tar, but the moment we walked out the street started to move like, I don’t know, ooze and tar monsters appeared. Have you guys seen the second Scooby Doo movie? They looked a lot like that.”

“How’d you get away?” asked Jason.

“It was hard.” Annabeth took over. “Since they were made of tar, they didn’t really have anything for us to hit. Percy’s sword went right through it. So we just tried running until Frank could change back into bird to bring us back here.”

Well, I think that helped us relax a bit. But it wasn’t enough, since the tension level went right back up. Everyone’s faces just fell back towards their plates.

Leo cleared his throat. “So, where to now?” He bit into his pizza and talked around his mouthful. “I did a quick repair job to get us out of the lake, but there’s still a lot of damage. We should really put down again and fix things right before we head across the Atlantic.”

“We need to put some distance between us and Camp Jupiter.” Percy said as he poked at his pie. “On our way back Frank spotted some eagles over Salt Lake City. We figure the Romans aren’t far behind us.”

“I don’t suppose we could go back and try to reason with the Romans?” Piper asked quietly. In her eyes, it looked like she felt guilty about something. “Maybe-maybe I didn’t try hard enough with the charmspeak.”

Charmspeak? Is that what her power is called? Sort of like a Siren’s Song mixed in with some hypnotism. Either way, it seems like it can be both incredibly dangerous and useful.

Jason took her hand and squeezed it in an assuring way. “It wasn’t your fault, Pipes. Or Leo’s. Whatever happened, it was Gaea’s doing, to drive the two camps apart.”

“But maybe if we could explain that, though—”

“With no proof?” Annabeth asked. “And with no idea what really happened? I appreciate what you’re saying Piper. I don’t want the Romans on our bad side, but until we understand what Gaea’s up to, going back is suicide.”

“Even if we did have proof,” I said. “It’s not like we’re going to be believed, at least right away. And of course, there’s the twat.”
“Who?” asked Leo.

“He’s talking about Octavian.” Jason said. “Tsuna’s right. Even if we had substantial proof proving that Leo didn’t attack New Rome and we’re not traitors, Octavian will do everything in his power to make us look like the villains. I remember how ever since he was a Probatio he has been getting everybody he can on his side through deals and blackmail.”

“So he’s always been a jackass.” I said.

“Essentially, yes.” nodded Jason.

“You’re all right about Octavian.” Hazel said. She looked a little green, and she must be sick to her stomach because she was only munching on some saltine crackers. “Reyna might listen, but even if she believes us Octavian won’t. Romans care about honor, and Octavian will use that to demand justice and to attack the Greek camp.”

Piper let out a sad sigh. “You’re right. We have to keep going. Not just because of the Romans. We have to hurry.”

Hazel nodded in agreement. “Nemesis told us that we only have six days until Nico dies and Rome is destroyed.”

Six days? Until Nico dies?! In my shock of hearing that I dropped the plate, grabbing everyone’s attention. I muttered an apology as I picked the plate up. When I stood back up Percy and Annabeth were looking at me with concern. Out of everybody here, they are the only ones who know about how much I care for Nico, and how close we are. But six days? Can we even get there in time?

“You mean Rome Rome, not New Rome?”

“I think,” Hazel said. “But if so, that’s not much time.”

“Why six days though?” Percy wondered, scratching his scalp. “And how are they going to destroy Rome?”

“It doesn’t matter how Rome is going to be destroyed.” I said. Everyone looked back at me. “We just have to get to Rome as soon as possible. Now that I know where Nico is, we have to get a move on. Leo, does this ship have thrusters, or do you have like a warp gate or, or a Space Bridge or even—”

“Tsuna, take a breath.” Percy said, standing up. It looked like he was about to jump over to grab me. “I know you want to save Nico, and I want to too, but Rome is a long ways away, and we really don’t even know what we’re supposed to do when we get there. And Rome is huge, at least I think it is.” He looked to Annabeth who nodded that it was. “Right, Rome is huge, so Nico could be anywhere in the city. But we will save Nico, I promise you. Both of you.”

He looked back at Hazel at that point. That’s right. Hazel is Nico’s half-sister. She must be worried about her brother. I feel for her. Someone we both care about is in danger, trapped in somewhere in Rome and going through gods knows what.

“Guys, there’s more.” Piper said. “I’ve already talked to Tsuna about it, but I think you all should know. I have been seeing some things in my knife.”

Frank dropped his fork into his spaghetti, slashing sauce on him and the table. “Things such as…?”
“They don’t really make sense.” Piper admitted. “Just garbled images, but I saw two giants, dressed alike. Maybe twins.”

“Twins…” Annabeth started, her focus on the images of Camp Half-Blood. “Like in Ella’s prophecy. If we could figure out those lines, it might help us.”

“Wisdom’s daughter walks alone,” Percy said, “The Mark of Athena burns through Rome.” Annabeth, that has to mean you. Juno told me…well, she said you had a hard task ahead of you in Rome. She said she doubted you could do it. But I know she’s wrong.”

“If she told me that I probably would’ve smacked her.” I said.

“And get smited?” asked Annabeth. “While appreciate the sentiment Tuna Head, I’d rather you stay alive.”

“She’s too scared of pissing off Poseidon and my family to actually try anything.” I said. “I’m my Bāchan’s and Ojīchan’s favorite grandchild, their words, not mine.”

“How are you so close to your gods?” asked Jason. “I thought the gods don’t, uh, mingle with demigods more than they have to.”

“It helps when you’re the only Shinto demigod.” I said. “And I guess because I’m basically the crown prince of the pantheon helps too.”

“You’re a prince?” asked Frank.

Leo stood up and bowed. “You’re majesty.”

“Very funny Valdez.” I chuckled. “But trust me it doesn’t really mean anything. I basically told my gods that I wasn’t going to rule either the pantheon or Japan, that I’d rather just live my life.”

“And now you’re here, with us, trying to stop the planet from killing all of us.” Jason said.

“Yep.”

“Guys, let’s bring it back to the Quest, shall we?” asked Annabeth. “Going on, Reyna was about to tell me something right before the ship fired on us. She said there was an old legend among the Roman praetors—something that had to do with Athena. She said that it might be the reason Greeks and Romans could never get along.”

Leo and Hazel exchanged looks. “Nemesis mentioned something similar.” Leo said. “She talked about an old score that had to be settled—”

“The one thing that might bring the gods’ two natures into harmony.” Hazel finished. “An old wrong finally avenged.”

“I was only praetor for like two hours. Didn’t even get a chance to go through orientation because we had Tsuna’s trial basically right after the victory feast.” Percy said. “What about you Jason? You ever heard a legend like that?”

Looking over at Jason, he seemed to have paled. “I…uh, I’m not sure.” He said. “I’ll give it some thought later.”

“What about the other lines?” Hazel asked after a few moments of silence. “Twins snuff out the angel’s breath, Who holds the key to endless death.”
“It’s about Nico,” I said right away.

“How can you be sure?” asked Hazel.

“Nico was captured by Gaea’s forces while he was in the Underworld.” I explained. “Well, it was Tartarus where they captured him. But once captured, Gaea had the audacity to have the idea of using Nico as bait in order to lure us, you seven specifically, to Rome. And in order to get whatever the Hell she wants, she has to have Nico guarded by these twins. Also, and you should know this as his sister Hazel, but Nico’s name, di Angelo, it means angel.”

“But what about the other part of the line?” asked Piper. “How does Nico hold the key to endless death?”

I shook my head, indicating I wasn’t sure. “It could be for many reasons. He could have something that can permanently kill the monsters that keep coming back, or know a spell or something to banish all those who came back from the dead back to the Underworld, and if that’s it I’m sure Nico found a way to keep you safe Hazel. But if I had to take a shot in the dark, I think that Nico might know where the Doors of Death are and how to close them.”

“Either way, we have to save Nico to find out.” Percy said. “What was the rest of the prophecy?”

“Giant’s bane stands gold and pale,” Frank said, “Won through pain from a woven jail.”

“Giant’s bane?” Leo asked. “Anything that’s a giant’s bane is good for us, right? That’s probably what we need to find. If it helps the gods get their schizophrenic act together, that’s good.”

Percy nodded. “We can’t kill the giants without the help of the gods.”

Jason looked to Frank and Hazel. “I thought you guys killed that one giant in Alaska without a god’s help, just the two of you.”

“Alcyoneus was a special case.” Hazel said. “He was only immortal in his home territory, so Frank and I dragged him into Canada to finish him off. But the other giants won’t be as easy.”

“I was actually thinking that the Giant’s Bane is Tsuna’s sword.” Franks said.

“Why is that?” asked Jason.

“Because when Percy used it against Polybotes he killed the giant.”

Jason’s eyes went wide. “What?! How?! The Giants can only be killed by a god and demigod working together.”

“My father, Susanoo-no-Mikoto, his godly essence resides within the Kusanagi.” I said. I lifted my necklace out of my neck and showed it to the group. “The same can be said about my Aunt Amaterasu and Uncle Tsukuyomi in the other two Regalia. Technically speaking, any one of them can be used to kill a giant because I am always fighting alongside my gods, and Percy proved that this applies to others as well. But I doubt that my Regalia are the Giants bane the prophecy is referring to.”

“How do you know?” Jason asked.

“Because in the end this is a Greco-Roman thing, not Shinto.” I said. “Despite my lineage, I’m considered wholly Shinto. And even when I’m not, I’m just called an abominable interloper. And while I will do everything in my power to help you guys defeat the giants, I am here for reasons
beyond stopping Gaea, despite how much I want to kill her myself.”

“But with you on our side, we have a secret weapon to defeat the giants!” Piper said excitedly.

I shook my head. “You guys can’t rely on me to fight the Giants. At the end of this Quest, we’re bound to fight more than one Giant at a time. I mean, we’re going to be fighting two of them in Rome as it is. Anything can happen, so if there are ways to get the gods to help us, that would be the smart thing to do.”

“Well, I’m glad you’re on our side man.” Jason said with a smile. My cheeks tinged with warmth.

“Thanks dude.” I smiled back at him in gratitude.

It went quiet again. Maybe everyone was thinking about the rest of the prophecy. What exactly is the Giant’s bane? And how can it unify the two demigod camps? And that part about a woven jail? What does that mean? What will Annabeth be going through in Rome?

“So…” Leo said as he stood up. “First things first, I guess. We’ll have to put down in the morning to finish repairs.”

“Someplace close to a city.” suggested Annabeth. “In case we need supplies. But somewhere out of the way, so the Romans will have trouble finding us. Any ideas?” Again, everyone went quiet as they tried to get an idea as to where to go.

“Well,” Piper suggested, “How do you guys feel about Kansas?”

After dinner, everyone went their separate ways, agreeing that Kansas (specifically outside of Topeka, according to Piper) was as a good spot as any to land. Leo went to the engine room to do a bit more repairs, with Jason and Piper going to help him out. Frank and Hazel went off on their own, but I don’t know where. I went to the deck to check on Yatagarasu. The moment I was outside he flew down and perched himself on my arm. I pet him down the back and he made a sound indicating he was happy. I saw Percy and Annabeth walk out holding hands and they watched the night sky.

I sat down and leaned against the wall of the railing and took out my spell book. I kept flipping through it as I pet Yatagarasu. There were a lot of things I would like to do. Invisibility, transfiguration, teleportation, that fireball thing that Rumpelstiltskin, Regina, and Cora do.

“All right Cupcakes!” yelled Coach Hedge after nearly an hour. “Curfew!”

“I’m sorry, did he just say ‘curfew’?” I asked when Annabeth and Percy came close.

“Yes, yes he did.” She said.

“You’re joking.”

“Unfortunately, I’m not.”

“We’re all basically sixteen years old, we don’t need a curfew.”

“Trust me, we’ve tried to talk to him about it, but he’s a stubborn old goat.”

“What are you three doing?!” yelled Coach Hedge as he came stomping out of the ship. “It’s time for bed!”

“Sure thing Coach.” Annabeth said. “Night guys.”
“Uh, Coach.” I raised my hand.

“What is it?” he asked, giving me an annoyed look. Annabeth stopped at the door that lead inside the Argo.

“I think you’re forgetting something.” I said.

“Really? What would that be?”

“Oh I don’t know, maybe it’s the fact that I don’t have a bed.”

“What?” he asked. “Oh, I get it. You don’t have a room on the ship.”

“That’s my fault.” Annabeth said. “When we were building the Argo, I never thought about the fact that Tsuna would invite himself on the Quest. I should have, but I didn’t.”

“Oh, well—” Coach started.

“So where exactly am I going to sleep?” I asked.

“Well, I can give up my room.” Percy said. He wrapped his arm around Annabeth’s waist. “Annabeth and I can bunk up—”

“OVER MY DEAD BODY JACKSON!!” screamed the ornery old goat man so loud that if the others were asleep they weren’t now. “No girls and boys alone together in the room! I know how you teenagers are, all those hormones!” Both Percy and Annabeth turned as red as the Magatama around my neck.

“It’s not like you didn’t let Jason and Piper in the same room earlier today.” Percy mumbled.

“What was that Jackson?” asked Coach as he tightened his grip on his baseball bat. I’m getting flashbacks of Hyousuke from back in Japan.

“Nothing Coach.” Percy said.

“So what do you think then?” I asked.

Coach Hedge looked between me and Percy, and I’m not liking it. “You two are in the same family, right?” Percy and I gave each other questioning looks before nodding. “Good. Then the two of you can share a bed until something better comes up.”

We gave another look to each other. “Look Coach, we’re close, but we’re really not ‘share the bed’ close.”

“It’s either that or one of you bunks with me.” At that my eyes went wide and I grabbed Percy and pulled him away from Annabeth and into my side. Coach smiled. “Thought so Cupcakes.”

At that, Coach went to the other side of the ship while the three of us went down to the dormitories. Percy walked Annabeth to her room and told her good night. She said good night back and they just stared into each other’s eyes. It was almost gag worthy, and if I ever get in a relationship I hope I don’t act like that. And then, not surprising, they leaned into give each other a goodnight kiss, which turned into a pretty heavy make out session. It was getting pretty awkward.

“Oh, I’m, uh…I’m going to say goodnight to Yata, I’ll be right back.” I said. Percy, not one to be distracted from a PG-13, borderline R, make out session just gave me a thumb up. I shook my head and turned around to leave. “Just don’t do anything stupid.”
Walking out I looked for Yatagarasu. He appeared right on the railing. I petted him again and asked him to keep an eye out. He chirped in agreement, like I knew he would. Always the overprotective…guardian? Familiar? Whatever he is, I had to tell him to make sure he rests every now and again so he doesn’t get exhausted.

“WHAT ARE YOU STILL DOING UP!!”

“Ohaio-shū no tame ni ā.” I said in annoyance. Yatagarasu cawed at the goat man, flapping his wings in frustration.

“What did you just say Cupcake?!” asked Coach.

“Nothing Hedge, nothing.” I said.

“Then why are you still up?!?” he asked.

“I’m just checking on my friend here.” I said. “Sore wa daijōbudesu, kare wa chōdo hidoi furui yagidesu.”

“Well that’s nice and all, but it’s no excuse.” Coach said.

“I was also asking to keep an eye out while everyone sleeps.” I said. “He has the best eyes, so he can alert us if anything dangerous gets close.”

“Oh…well…that…was a good idea.” Coach admitted. “But you didn’t have to do that. Valdez and Chase designed the ship to hide all of us from any incoming monsters. And I have a nose for these things. Trust me, no monster will surprise us with me around.”

I smiled. “Thanks Coach, but I’ll sleep better at night knowing that Yata here is helping you.”

Coach Hedge went quiet for a second before wiping his thumb across his nose. “Get to bed Cupcake, it’s late.”

“Sure thing.” I said. “Night Coach.”

I gave Yatagarasu one last stroke down his back before having him fly off. I saw him perch himself on the short mast, right behind the masthead. I walked down the stairs and went straight to Percy’s room. Percy was already laying down, arm behind his head and his knee up.

“Hey man.” He said. He sat up and looked at me before looking away. “Uh, there’s not a lot of room.” He’s right. The bed is only a twin.

“I’m not sleeping with the goat, so make room bro.” I told him.

Percy shrugged. “Just saying man, it’s going to be a tight squeeze.”

“We slept in trees before, I think we’ll manage.”

He smiled. “Yeah, I guess you’re right. Uh, Annabeth packed me a couple changes of clothes. I think there’s an extra pair of pajama pants in there if you want.”

“Thanks man.”

I walked over to the dresser and took off my shirt. I pulled out the dark blue plaid pajama pants from the dresser. I stepped out of my jeans and got into the pajamas before crawling into the bed, facing the opposite side of Percy. It was a tight squeeze, but with some shifting around we
both got comfortable.

“Night Perce.”

“Night Tsuna.”

I’d like to say I slept good. But I didn’t. I wanted to, but how can anyone get any sleep when Coach Hedge walking up and down the hallway, his hooves click-clacking the entire time. And then he would constantly bang his bat against the doors when he thought he heard any noise. If I could do it I would petrify him for a few hours just so I could get some sleep. At least the bed and pillows were amazingly soft.

But the softest of mattresses couldn’t grant me a good night sleep with the way our Chaperone Satyr doing his ‘duties’. I eventually fell asleep, but I woke up early. I don’t know how early, but it was early enough and I didn’t feel like I got enough sleep. So instead of trying to go back to sleep, I quietly got up and grabbed some clean clothes from my backpack (which someone must have put in here for me) and headed towards the boys’ showers.

Leo had put some thought into the plumbing on this thing, because the water pressure was absolute heaven. There were four stalls with white curtains. The shower heads were made of bronze, and each stall had three shower heads. By the time I got dressed and made my way to the dining hall for breakfast, Percy and Annabeth were already eating.

“Morning.” They said. Both of them were wearing the orange Camp Half-Blood t-shirts, and Percy looked so natural in it compared to the purple of Camp Jupiter’s shirt.

“Morning.”

I grabbed a cup and a plate. The cup filled with a white chocolate peppermint mocha. I took it in my hand and took a deep breath, loving the smell. After a sip, I realized that it was the best one I’ve had in a long time. My plate was soon covered with chocolate chip pancakes, scrambled eggs, bacon, and a chopped banana.

After breakfast, the three of us went to the deck to enjoy the morning light. Coach Hedge went old school sailor as he announced ‘Kansas, ahoy!’. I had grabbed my spell book (big surprise there) from mine and Percy’s room on our way up. Yatagarasu flew around the three of us as soon as we were outside. He perched himself on my held-out arm. Percy smiled and went to try to pet him, but Yata nipped at his fingers.

“You’d think he’d like me by now.”

“Oh, he likes you plenty.” I said. “Although I don’t know why he did that.”

I took Yata with me as I sat on the ledge. Down below was sea of golden wheat. And it was incredibly flat and boring. I really miss the mountains and emerald green forests of Washington, or the valley where Camp Half-Blood is. Hell, even the concrete jungle of New York City was so much more fun.

Yatagarasu took off flying around the ship as I read from the grimoire. As I read I saw out of the corner of my eye Percy and Annabeth. They were bathed in the morning light. Annabeth’s head was laying on Percy’s shoulder as he held her close. They looked so happy and content, it was hard to stay mad at the blonde girl, especially with that sparkle in her eye. After everything she went through, she deserved to be this happy, and so does Percy. She looked absolutely destroyed the night Percy disappeared, so now that they’re together I doubt they’ll ever let each other go
As the landing gear extended we made out descent. In the distance, I could see a large city, which had to be Topeka. Coach Hedge apparently has something against sunflowers because he aimed right for a field of those flowers. After we landed the oars retracted in on themselves and the gangplank lowered itself.

“Urgh, it smells like a farm.” I said.

“Don’t like the smell Tsuna?” I turned around and Piper was coming out of the ship.

“I prefer the smell of forest and sea water.” I said. “Growing up in western Washington my mom and I went on hikes though the woods and mountain trails and we took her boat on the Pugent Sound. But farms? Never been a fan.”

“That’s too bad.” She said. “It reminds me of my grandpa’s place.”

“To each their own.” I said.

“So!” Annabeth reached towards Piper and snatched the bagel that was in her hand. She took a bite, and if she did that to me I’d have to judo flip her myself, but Piper just smiled like this is something Annabeth did often. “Here we are. What’s the plan?”

“I want to check out the highway.” Piper said. When she suggested Topeka last night, she said that in one of her visions that she saw something happen at a specific mile marker. “I want to find the sign that says Topeka 32.”

Leo walked over after talking to Coach and spun a Wii remote of all things, making the sails lower themselves. “We shouldn’t be too far Pipes.” he smiled, looking like a mischievous little elf. “Festus and I calculated the landing as best we could.”

The others came up to the deck at this time. They all looked a lot better. A good night’s sleep and getting cleaned up did a lot. Jason came over and put his arm around Piper’s shoulders, and she relaxed in his buff arms. Wait...did I just think that?

“What else did you see?” asked Annabeth.

“Not much.” Piper said. “There was this man in a purple shirt with a goblet in his hand. And he was wearing a straw hat covered in vines.”


“Dionysus.” Percy muttered, and I can understand his feelings about the god of wine, since he comes off like a jackass. “If we came all the way to Kansas to see Mr. D——”

“Bacchus isn’t so bad, but I don’t like his followers much...” Jason, Piper, and Leo all shuddered at the same time. “But the god himself is okay. I did him a favor once up in wine country.”

Percy did not look happy about the situation. “Whatever, man. Maybe he is better on the Roman side. But why would he be hanging out in Kansas? Didn’t your dad order the gods to cease all contact with mortals?”

Frank grunted. “The gods haven’t been very good at following that order. Besides, if the gods have gone schizophrenic like Hazel said——”
“And Leo said,” added the son of Hephaestus, which earned him a scowl from the son of Mars. I’m sorry, I can’t take anybody in a track suit seriously.

“Then who knows what’s going on with the Olympians?” Frank continued. “Could be some pretty bad stuff out there.”

“Sounds dangerous!” Leo agreed. What is wrong with him? He looked around and headed to the stairs. “Well, you guys have fun. I’ve got to finish the repairs on the hull. Coach Hedge is gonna work on the broken crossbows—”

“Oh yeah, crossbows baby!” cheered the satyr.

“And, uh, Annabeth, I could really use your help.” Leo said. “You’re the only other person here who even sort of understands the engineering.”

“He’s right.” Annabeth said to Percy apologetically. “I should stay and help.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Percy said. “I’ll come back to you. Promise.” He leaned down and kissed her cheek.

“Ohaio-shū no tame ni ā.” I said with an eye roll.

“Relax man, I’ll come back to you too.” Percy said. “But I’m not kissing you.”

“Oh don’t be disgusting.” I said. “We’re brothers, not animals.”

Percy laughed and threw his arm around my neck and gave me a noogie. “What? My overly affectionate brother doesn’t want any love thrown his way?”

“If your lips touch me,” I started, making my voice go dark, “I’ll put a smile on that face.” Percy quickly let go of me and back up with his arms up. “Thought so.”


“What can I say, I’ve been working on the impression for years.”

“Yeah, I noticed.” said Frank. “Anyways, I think I should turn into a crow or something and fly around.” He took off his bow and leaned it against the wall. “I want to keep an eye out for Roman eagles.”

“Why a crow?” Leo asked, and Yatagarasu cawed at him. “Uh, not that there’s anything wrong with crows. But if you can turn into a dragon, why don’t you just turn into a dragon every time? That’s the coolest.”

Franks face turned red, either in anger or embarrassment I can’t tell. “That’s like asking why you don’t bench press your maximum weight every time you lift. Because it’s hard, and you’d hurt yourself. Turning into a dragon isn’t easy.”

“Unless your Maleficent.” I pointed out.

“Uh, yeah, sure, whatever.” Frank said.

“I guess that makes sense.” Leo said. “But I wouldn’t know. I don’t lift weights.”

“Yeah, well maybe you should consider it Mr.—”
Hazel stepped between the two boys, who for whatever reason have something against each other. “I’ll help you Frank.” She said. “I can summon Arion again and scout around too.”

“Sure.” Frank said, glaring at Leo. If I didn’t know better it’s like he’s jealous of Leo for some reason. “Yeah, thanks.” What is going on with the three of them? It’s like Frank is jealous of Leo and wants to rip his head off.

Hazel turned towards Percy. “Just be careful when you go out, okay? Lots of fields means lots of crops. Could be karpoi out there.”

“Karpoi? asked Piper.

“They’re grain spirits.” Hazel explained.

“Trust me, you don’t want to meet any.” Percy said. “So that means that it’s the three of us to check on that mile marker I guess. Me, Jason, Piper. Personally, I’m not all that excited about seeing Mr. D again. That guy is a pain. But, Jason, if you’re on better terms with him—”

“Yeah,” Jason said, “If we find him, I’ll talk to him. Piper, it’s your vision. You should take the lead.” Piper nodded.

“And what about you Tsuna?” Annabeth asked.

“Well as much I’d like to go with Percy and make sure he doesn’t do anything stupid—”

“Hey!”

“Don’t act like you won’t open your big mouth when you meet up with Mr. D, I know you. Anyway, instead of going with them and probably putting us in extra danger, I’m going to stay here and keep an eye out. Frank and Hazel can scout out, but I’ll protect the ship while the repairs are being made.”

“And I’m sure you’ll do a good job.” Annabeth said.

“Are you seriously doubting my skills Wise Girl?”

“No.”

“Hm, right.”

“Well, let’s get going guys.” Percy said. I think he thought something was going to happen between me and Annabeth.

Piper grabbed Jason’s hand. “Yeah, let’s find the highway.”

Percy, Jason, and Piper walked off the ship and down the road. With how flat the landscape was, I could see them until they were like ants in perspective. And as I walked around the ship all I saw was the flat landscape and I grew BORED! Gods above I hate this part of the country. Nothing really but corn and wheat and this one patch of sunflowers. I really miss Washington, I can’t say that enough.

Coach Hedge had finished repairing one of the crossbows by my sixth circle of the Argo II. Frank and Hazel zipped off not long after Percy and the others left. Leo and Annabeth disappeared inside the ship to repair the hull. I had Yatagarasu flying above us, circling around and using his better vision to keep an eye out.
“Well, well.” Uh, not even twenty-four hours of piece.

“What do you want now Gaea?” I said, staring at the field. I saw it swirl until it made a face of a sleeping woman.

“I’m just actually impressed.” She said. “I never actually thought that you’d go with the Seven.”

“And why wouldn’t I?” I asked. “I assume you know me enough by now to know that nothing was going to stop me from coming.”

“Well, you’ve made it clear that you don’t care what I think.”

“You’re right there.”

“But I don’t think you should get comfortable with your new friends, boy.”

“What are you talking about?”

“All of them will be dead by the time you all reach Rome. And your dear Percy and Jason? They will be dead by the end of the day.”

“What do you mean?”

“My minions will take care of them. And they are with them right now.”

“You’re bluffing.”

“Am I? You know that I have no reason to lie. Granted, I would have preferred using young Percy as part of my ritual, or even my granddaughter’s champion Jason Grace. But Frank Zhang will do nicely, even Leo Valdez.”

“If you prefer using Percy or Jason so much, why are you trying to kill them?”

“Because admittedly, they are the biggest threats to me,” explained Gaea. “The sons of Poseidon and Jupiter, the two most powerful gods of Olympus. The strongest warriors of the Greek and Roman camps. My granddaughter was smart in trying to unify them using these two boys, but even they can’t stop millennia of hatred.”

“You’d think that you’d have learned by now Earth Mother.” I said. “Percy and Jason are incredibly skilled and powerful by themselves, but together I personally expect great things. Whatever minions you send after them won’t be enough to kill my friends.”

Gaea laughed, and I hated how it sounded like it was in my head. “You can brush it off as much as you want boy, but you will find out soon about the fate of your brother and your hero.” How did she know about that?! “I am going to enjoy showing you their deaths every night to prove to you what I can do even in this state of slumber. I will drive you mad as every time you close your eyes you will see them die, over and over again.”

“They will not die witch!” I yelled. “I have faith in them!”

She laughed again. “Faith. Let’s see what your faith brings you, son of Susanoo.”

The sleeping dirt-faced avatar that Gaea was using dispersed back into the ground as her voice faded with her cruel laughter. She seemed so sure that she would succeed this time. Why though? What exactly was she sending to kill Percy and Jason?
I swallowed the lump in my throat and started pacing the deck. I kept watching the direction Percy, Jason, and Piper went, hoping to see them coming back to the ship. But as time went on I grew more and more worried. I’m actually half tempted to go talk to Annabeth, but I don’t want to worry her more than she probably is with Percy not in her line of sight.

Speaking of the she-devil, Annabeth came out from below deck. She stretched towards the sky and took a deep breath in. I just stared at her, half wanting to tell her what I just experienced and half wanting to keep it to myself.

She caught me staring at her, so she came over. “Hey Tuna Head.”

“Wise Girl.” I said. She cocked her head, and it I felt I was being scanned by a Cyberman.

“You look agitated.” She stated. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” I lied. “I’m fine, trust me. I just thought I saw something and it kinda put me on edge.”

“Are you sure, you’re not looking too good.”

“I’m fine Annabeth, I assure you. Just got spooked, is all.”

“If you say so.” Annabeth gave my another of her analytical stares. “Let me know when Percy and the others get back, okay?”

“Yeah, sure thing.” Annabeth walked down the stairs back into the ship after waving goodbye.

Pretty much the moment she was out of my sight, I sensed something from the distance. I quickly turned around and looked towards the direction of where Percy and the others were at. That’s when I saw it, a white bolt of lightning arcing across the sky.

“What did she do?” I asked myself.

My pacing got a lot faster. I wanted nothing more than to jump off the ship and go check on the others, but I couldn’t just leave the ship. Leo and Annabeth are too focused on repairing the ship, and if I left Coach Hedge alone he’d probably start firing on cows. Pretty soon Frank and Hazel returned to the ship. They said that they didn’t see any eagles, so we have a bit before the Romans find us. I told them to relay that information to Annabeth.

I jumped when Yatagarasu let out a loud caw. He was flapping his wings like crazy in the direction Percy and the others are in. I saw something black flapping its way towards the ship, and it was getting bigger. I then realized who it was that was flying towards me.

“Blackjack!!” I yelled, waving my arms to get his attention.

He still looked as majestic as ever. His black fur covered skin were pulled tight over his equine muscles. His black wings were beautiful. On his back was Piper, and she was doing her best to hold onto Percy and Jason, who were both knocked out.

“What the bloody hell happened?!” I yelled to Piper as soon as the black Pegasus landed. He trotted to me, so I took his muzzle in my hands and started soothing him. While I might not be able to talk to horses, they still really like me, proven by the fact that he kept nuzzling me.

“Gaea’s doing.” Piper said. “I’ll talk about it later, we need to get these two to the sick bay.”

“Right.” I nodded. “Coach! Annabeth!” As I grabbed Percy (who’s shirt was dotted with burn
holes) and shouldered him. Coach and Annabeth came running up, along with Frank and Hazel.

“Oh my gods!” Annabeth said. She rushed over to her boyfriend. “Is he—?”

“Just knocked out.” Piper said. “A little help?”

While Frank and Hazel took care of Blackjack (with me telling them that he’s a fan of doughnuts) I took Percy to the sickbay as Annabeth and Piper followed me shouldering Jason. Once there we laid the boys down on the two cots. Surprisingly, Coach Hedge was checking over Percy and Jason. You wouldn’t take someone like Coach being able to do that, but then again, he is a satyr, and they are supposed to be protectors of demigods.

“At this rate we’re going to run out of Ambrosia.” He explained. He dripped a few drops of the golden liquid into the two boys’ mouths. Some color returned to their faces. “How come I never get invited on these violent trips?”

“So what happened?” I asked Piper, who was holding Jason’s hand. Annabeth looked up from where she sat on Percy’s side, gently wiping his hair out of his face.

“Gaea sent something to take control of them.” Piper explained. “She wanted me to choose who would survive and who would die, but I couldn’t do it. I just watched as they fought until Percy was able to knock out Jason, and before he could strike the killing blow I told Percy’s Pegasus to knock him out too.”

“Gods…” I said. I reached over and felt the back of Percy’s head, wincing at the lump I found.

A knock came from the door. “Hey, how are they doing?” asked Leo.

“They’re knocked out, but alive.” Annabeth said. “They’re going to have major headaches when they wake up though.”

“Leo, are we ready to set sail?” Piper asked.

“Yeah, but—”

“Set course for Atlanta. I’ll explain later, I promise.”

“But…” Leo was cut off by Piper’s pleading eyes. “Okay.” He scurried off.

“Aw come on!” Coach yelled.

“What is it?” I asked.

“I’m missing an ingredient to this healing paste I know how to make.” He explained. “Without it, I can’t help those to ice cream cupcakes.”

I raised an eyebrow. “Ice cream cupcakes?”

“Because they’re knocked out cold, and their Cupcakes, get it?”

I actually chuckled a little bit at how bad that pun was. “Yeah Coach, I get it. But as much as I am sure your paste would help, I can help them too.”

I took off my necklace and stood between Jason and Percy. I focused and the Magatama began to glow. The room filled with a golden, ruby red light, before it shrunk down until it only covered the two unconscious boys. Once the light faded, both boys’ skin looked full of life, their
cheeks were bit rosier, and (maybe it was the light in the room, I can’t tell) but I think they were a
tiny bit tanner. Both boys groaned a little and opened their eyes.

“Hey everyone.” Percy smiled cockily. “What’s going on?”

“Seaweed Brain!” Annabeth pulled him into a hug. “Thank goodness you’re alright.”

“Why wouldn’t I be?”

“Your girlfriend continues to doubt me.” I said.

“I do not!” Annabeth exclaimed. “I’m just worried about my boyfriend, is all.”

“Uh, sorry to interrupt, but how did we get back here?” Jason asked.

“What do you last remember?” asked Piper.

“I-I think we were talking to Bacchus.” He said. “You were trying to convince to him to help us,
and Percy kept trying to tick him off.”

“You idiot.” I said to my brother. He sneered back at me.

“And then everything went blank.” continued Jason. “What happened Pipes?”

“Gaea found a way to control you.” She explained. “She was going to have the two of you kill each
other, but you both ended up knocked out.”

“She controlled us?” Percy asked. “How?”

Piper shook her head. “I’ll explain in a little bit. It’s something that everyone should hear. Coach,
could you tell the others to gather in the dining hall?” He nodded and left, his hooves pounding on
the wood floors as he yelled out to Leo, Hazel, and Frank.

“Man, knocked out in two days.” Jason muttered. “Some demigod I am.” He looked over at Percy.
“Sorry, man. I didn’t mean to blast you.”

Percy looked down at his shirt and managed a weak laugh. “Not the first time. You’re definitely
Thalia’s little brother. She got me good once back at camp.”

“Yeah, but I could have killed you.”

“Or I could have killed you.”

Jason shrugged and forced out a laugh, like he doubted what he was about to say. “If there had
been an ocean in Kansas, maybe.”

“Girls, girls, you’re both pretty.” I said. That stopped the measuring contest they were having.
“Can we talk about something else now?”

“I agree.” Annabeth said. “I’m sure that the two of you would’ve been wonderful at killing each
other.” Percy mumbled something that I couldn’t hear. “What was that?”

“Just saying that I’m hungry.” Percy said. “Let’s get some food.”

About five minutes later everyone had gathered in the mess hall. Percy had gotten a new
shirt (an orange Camp Half-Blood tee, big surprise). Leo had given the helm to Coach, who from
Leo had said was complaining that he wasn’t allowed to divert our course to a military base for fun. Makes you wonder, are Coach Hedge and Ares friends or something?

“So what happened with you guys?” asked Leo. “I thought you were just meeting Mr. D?”

“Bacchus actually.” Jason said. “And we did. And despite Percy opening his big mouth—”

“Hey!” Percy said. “Don’t just blame me! He was being difficult too!”

“But you weren’t helping the situation either.” Piper said. “Even with my Charmspeak he said we’d have to give him a tribute to help him.”

I rolled my eyes. “You have got to be kidding.”

“She’s completely serious.” said Jason.

“Great.” I drawled out.

“Then what happened?” Frank asked.

“Gaea sprung her trap.” I tensed at that. “She had something she called Eidolons to possess the boys and attack each other.” Eidolons? As in, the name of the summons in a couple of Final Fantasy games?

“Oh course!” clapped Hazel, which scared Frank enough to drop his burrito onto his plate. Luckily it didn’t explode open. “That’s what happened to Leo!”

“So it wasn’t my fault.” Leo let out a sigh of relief, like a huge weight was lifted off his shoulder, which I bet was true. “Gracias a Dios. I didn’t start World War Three. I just got possessed by an evil spirit. That’s a relief!”

“But the Romans don’t know that.” Annabeth said. “And why would they take our word for it?”

“Even if there were a few that did, they’re so angry right now that Octavian would bend our words against us.” I said.

“Maybe we could contact Reyna.” offered Jason. “She would believe us.”

“Jason, while I would like to believe that, even if Reyna did, she’s just one person.” I said. “Even as Praetor, her opinions and thoughts only count for so much. And that if she believes us.”

Jason nodded and looked at his girlfriend. “Maybe you can convince her Pipes.” He suggested with hope in his voice.

“I could try.” She said, but she clearly doubted herself. “But Octavian, like Tsuna said, is the one we have to worry about over anybody else. In my dagger blade, I saw him taking control of the Roman crowd. I don’t think even Reyna can stop him.” Everyone’s expressions visibly darkened.

“She’s right.” Frank said. “This is the exact opportunity that Octavian has always wanted. He’s always been seeking power since he was first inducted into the Legion, at least that’s from the stories I heard back at Camp Jupiter.”

“It became worse when he became the camp’s Augur.” added Jason.

“And even if Reyna supported us, Octavian would just make it look like she’s soft on the Greeks. And as for those eagles…it’s like they could smell us.”
“They can Frank.” Jason said. “Roman eagles can hunt demigods by their magical scent even better than monsters can. This ship might conceal us somewhat, but not completely—not from them.” Well, I guess if anybody would know about eagles it would be the son of Jupiter out of all of us.

Leo leaned on his left arm while drumming his right fingers on the table, looking annoyed. “Great. I should have installed a smokescreen that makes the ship look like a giant chicken nugget or something.” He waved at Jason. “Remind me to invent that, next time?” Jason gave him a look that said ‘What am I, your secretary?’

“What is a chicken nugget?” asked Hazel. Oh yeah, she’s from the Forties. I guess she wouldn’t know about fast food like that.

“It one of Nico’s favorite foods.” I said.

“Oh…” Hazel’s face saddened. Damn it.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to remind you of your brother.”

“No, it’s fine.” She steeled herself.

“It doesn’t matter anyways.” Annabeth said. “Even if we had proof that we’re telling the truth, Octavian will twist this to his advantage some way or another.”

“You’re right.” Jason leaned forward. “We should just keep going. Once we’re over the Atlantic, we’ll be safe—at least, from the legion.” His words sounded depressing, maybe because the ones chasing us are the one who he grew up with his entire life, fought side by side with, lived with without a real chance to be normal.

“How can you be so sure?” Piper asked as she put her hand on Jason’s shoulder for support. “Why wouldn’t they follow us?”

“You heard Reyna talking about the Ancient Lands, right?” asked Jason. Piper nodded. “They’re too dangerous. Roman demigods are forbidden to go there. It’s been that way for generations. Not even Octavian can get around that rule.”

“That just means he’ll do everything in his power to stop us before we get there.” I said. “And if he succeeds, then Gaea will win, and then Armageddon.”

“If you want to put it that way, go ahead.” said Jason. “But yeah, basically.”

“So, if we do go to the Mare Nostrum…” Frank started.

“We’ll be outlaws as well as traitors.” explained Jason. “Any Roman demigod would have the right to kill us on sight.” Frank gulped so loudly that I could hear it from where I was standing. “But I wouldn’t worry about that.”

“Why’s that?” asked Leo.

“If we get across the Atlantic, they’ll stop chasing us.” said Jason. “They’ll just assume we died in the Mediterranean.”

Percy pointed his pizza at Jason. “You sir, are a ray of sunshine.”

Jason didn’t argue. Not that I can blame him. This is a serious situation. Usually in these kinds of scenarios someone would try to get everyone’s spirits back up, but that didn’t seem likely.
“So how about we change the subject?” suggested Percy after inhaling his fifth slice of pizza.

“Let’s plan ahead so we don’t die. Mr. D—Bacchus—Ugh, do I have to call him Mr. B now?” I shrugged, cause he might as well. “Anyway, he mentioned the twins from Ella’s prophecy. Two twin Giants. Otis, and uh, something that starts with an F?”

“Ephialtes.” Jason said.

“Twin Giants, like what Piper saw in her blade.” Annabeth said, spinning her finger in her cup as if it helped her think, which it probably did knowing her. “I remember a story about twin Giants. They tried to reach Mount Olympus by piling up a bunch of mountains on top of each other.”

Frank groaned. “Well, that’s great. Giants who can use mountains like building blocks. And you said Bacchus killed these things with a pinecone on a stick?”

“Something like that.” Percy waved his hand in dismissal. “But I don’t think we should count on his help this time. He wants a tribute, and he made it pretty clear it would be a tribute we couldn’t handle.”

“Really? He wants a tribute?” I asked. Percy nodded. “How about a world that’s not destroyed? That should be plenty of a tribute.”

“It doesn’t make sense to me either Tsuna.” Percy said. “It’s actually really annoying. How are we supposed to beat Gaea and the Giants if the god aren’t willing to help us?”

Nobody had an answer. I get that the gods are fickle, but you’d think that they don’t want the world to be destroyed. Without the world, there wouldn’t be anyone worshipping them or giving them children to use (not the best way to put it, but you get what I’m saying.) And also they wouldn’t be able to enjoy everything the world has to offer.

And then there’s the Giants that we have to fight in Rome. What about them makes them so special that they can destroy one of the oldest cities in the world? And what could they be putting Nico through? Nico’s tough and the strongest person I know, but I don’t think he can fight his way past two Giants (and I’m not even taking is he’s even recovered from Tartarus yet.)

“So, these Giants Ephialtes and Otis,” I said, “They’re our targets, right? Do we know whose bane they are? Since they’re twins, are they the Anti-Apollo and Artemis?”

Annabeth shook her head. “I’m not sure.” Well that’s shocking. “They have issues with both Dionysus and Ares though. Why?”

“If they were made to oppose Apollo and Artemis, we could ask them to help.” I said. “Out of all the Olympians, I feel that they would be the two that would be easiest to convince to help us.”

“But we would have to find them.” Annabeth said. “And we have no idea where they are. And they have to be hit with the same split personality as the other gods are.”

I let out a breath. “You’re right.” I guess I could try to IM Will and ask him if he’s heard anything from his dad, but I don’t think that’ll help.

“Guys, I just remembered something.” Piper said. We all turned our attention to her. “Gaea, she wants two of us.”

“What’cha mean, Beauty Queen?” said Leo.

“Today, on the highway,” she started, “Gaea told me that she needed the blood of only two
demigods—one female, one male. She—she asked me to choose which boy would die.”

“But neither of us died. You saved us.

“So that’s what she meant.” I muttered.

“Who are you talking about?” Jason asked.

“Gaea.” I said. “While you guys were gone, she contacted me. She was saying how that you and Percy would be dead by the end of the day, expecting her plan to work. But what I want to know is why are you two her prime targets.”

“Who knows.” Percy said. “Maybe because of what we did during the Titan War.”

“But what does she really want with our blood?” asked Piper.

Leo whistled. “Guys, you remember what happened at the Wolf House?” Our favorite ice princess Khione talked about spilling Jason’s blood, how it would have stained the place for generations.”

“Oh…” Percy said. “Bad. Bad. This is really bad. You guys remember Polybotes, right?”

“How could we forget him?” I asked.

“Who?” asked Leo.

“He’s the Giant that attacked Camp Jupiter.” explained Hazel. “The anti-Poseidon. Percy killed him with Tsuna’s sword. Yes Percy, we remember.”

“I had a dream, as we were flying to Alaska.” Percy said. “He was talking to the gorgons, and he said—” he swallowed a lump in his throat. “He said that he wanted to take me prisoner, not kill me.”

“I remember him announcing it after he broke my initial illusion.” I said. “He was pretty sure he’d kidnap you.”

“Yeah, he did.” Percy said. “And in the dream, he said that he would only kill me after the time was right. After using my blood to water the stones of Mount Olympus and waking up Gaea.”

“You think that the Giants would use our blood…the blood of two of us—” Piper started.

“I don’t know.” Percy shook his head. “But until we figure it out, I suggest we avoid getting captured.”

Jason spoke up. “That I agree with.”

“But why blood though?” Frank asked.

“Well, it’s because—” started Annabeth.

“Blood is a key ingredient in many spells, in both fiction and reality.” I interrupted. “Blood tends to be the basis of binding spells, or as fuel for many other spells and rituals.”

“And since when do you know anything about magic?” asked Annabeth questioningly.

“For a while now.” I said. “Polybotes said that the spilled blood will wake Gaea. That’s the ritual they are planning.” I looked at Percy. “It must be like the last seal that kept the Orochi bound, or
just the final step in waking Gaea up.”

“But why would Gaea want one of us if she just needs demigod blood?” Hazel wondered. “There’s two camps full of us.”

“She might consider us the most powerful demigods in the world.” Annabeth said. I love her, don’t get me wrong, but she is arrogant and prideful. “Maybe our blood is stronger than other demigods.”

“I think it has something to do with what happened during the Titan War, like Percy said.” I explained. “With what you all who fought in the war did, against the Titans, Gaea’s favored children, at the time, she has it in for you. But it begs the question as to what if all of us die on our way to Greece before anyone can be captured? Would she try to kidnap someone from the camps? Like Will and Reyna? Would any other demigod’s blood have the same effect needed for the ritual?”

“How are we supposed to figure all this out?” Hazel asked. She was holding her head, trying to process everything, and it was as if it was giving her a headache. Not that I can blame her since all this information is overloading my brain. “The Mark of Athena, the twins, Ella’s prophecy and this blood ritual…how does it all fit together?”

Annabeth took a breath before looking over at Piper. “You told Leo to set course for Atlanta, right?”

Piper nodded. “Bacchus told us that we should seek out…uh, um…what was his name?”

“Phorcys.” Percy said, and Annabeth looked surprised.

“You know him?”

Percy shrugged. “I didn’t recognize him at first. Then Bacchus mentioned salt water, and it rang a bell. Phorcys is a really old sea god from before my dad’s time. Never met him, but it I’m remembering right he’s a son of Gaea. But I still don’t know why a sea god would be in Atlanta.”

As Percy was talking, I started seeing something…weird. Maybe it was the light or the fact that it’s getting late and I’m tired, but I saw…something. It was like a white shadow standing behind Percy, staring at him with golden eyes. They were like static images, buzzing in for a moment before fading away.

“What’s a wine god doing in Kansas?” Leo snorted, drawing my attention away, but this feeling in the pit of my stomach didn’t go away. “It’s not the first place I’d think of when I think of wine. Gods are weird. Anyway, we should reach Atlanta by noon tomorrow, unless something else goes wrong.”

“Thanks for that Leo.” I said, knocking on the wood of the wall to ward off the bad juju.

“Please don’t ever say that Leo.” Annabeth rubbed her temples. “It’s getting late. We should all get some sleep.” Everyone started to stand up, but Piper spoke up.

“Wait.” Everyone stopped in their tracks and looked at the daughter of Aphrodite. She swallowed a lump in her throat and took a deep breath through her nose. “There’s one last thing. The eidolons—the possessing spirits. They’re still here, in this room.”

Wait, they’re in the room? How? I thought the ship was supposed to—wait a minute. Those specters that I saw, were those…tawagoto.
“She’s right.” I said, getting into a ‘ready for anything’ stance. “When Percy was speaking about Phorcys, I saw something behind him.”

“I can sense them too.” Hazel said.

“But how can you be sure?” Annabeth asked.

“I’ve met eidolons.” Hazel said. “In the Underworld, when I was…you know.”

“So…you think these things are lurking on the ship?” asked Frank. If that was the case, that would explain all the cold feelings I’ve noticed around me. “Or—”

“Possibly lurking inside some of us.” Piper said. “We don’t know.”

“But if that’s true—” Jason clenched his fists.

“We have to take steps.” Piper said. “I think I can do this.”

“Do what?” Percy asked.

“Just listen, okay?” Piper took a deep breath. “Everybody listen.”

At that, that weird fuzzy feeling that happens to me when I listen to Piper came back. It clouded my mind, and I felt like I just had to listen to her every word. It was hard to resist, but I think I willed myself out of her power, so I decided to listen and watch.

“Eidolons, rains your hands.”

There was only silence, that is until Leo opened his mouth. “Did you really think that was going to —”

His voice faded. His face went slack, as if all his facial muscles just stopped working. And then Leo raised his hand. And he wasn’t the only one to do so. Both Percy and Jason raised their hands as well, and all three pairs of their eyes were glassy and gold. Frank scrambled out of chair to back away from Leo.

“Oh, gods.” Annabeth looked at Piper pleadingly. “Can you help them?”

Piper nodded and directed her vision to Leo. “Are there anymore of you on this ship?”

“No.” Leo said, but not in his voice. There was this…hallow feeling to it. “The Earth Mother sent only three. The strongest, the best. We will live again.”

“Not here you won’t.” growled Piper. “All three of you, listen carefully.” Our three possessed friends slowly turned towards Piper, their movements stiff like they were trying to resist her. “You will leave those bodies.”

“No.” Percy-with-not-Percy’s voice said.

Leo hissed. “We must live.”

Frank reached for his bow. “Mars Almighty, that’s creepy! Get out of here spirits! Leave our friends alone!”

I reached for his bow and ripped it out of his hands. “Don’t be stupid! If you shoot them you might kill them!”
Leo turned towards Frank. “*You cannot command us, child of war. Your own life is fragile. Your soul could burn at any moment.*” Leo started walking towards Frank, who pushed me out of the way and readied an arrow. Leo then engulfed himself in flames, scaring Frank so much that he dropped his bow and arrow and backed up against the way.

“Stop it!” Piper yelled. Leo staggered in his steps, but he pushed forward. “I SAID STO—”

In the blink of an eye Jason drew his sword and held it against Piper’s throat. At the same time, Percy dove at Hazel and pinned her on her stomach. He clicked his pen and Riptide appeared, and he held it to her back, right where her heart was.

“There is to be no tricks.” Percy said.

“There is to be no tricks.” Percy said.

“*Any more words from you will mean death.*” said Jason.

Leo’s flaming body was now too close. “Surrender to us now, and Gaea will make your deaths painless. After she uses you for her ritual.”

Great, what now? Three possessed demigods. Three now held hostage. Annabeth can’t do anything, not even signal Coach Hedge, not that he could do much other than yell and scream at Percy, Leo, and Jason. But me, I could do something.

“O Bāchan, watashi ni chikara o atae nasai.” I said under my breath. I stepped forward.

“Stand down, son of Susanoo.” Jason said. “*Your life is already forfeit. Will you risk your friends’ lives as well?*”

I glared at the possessed boys. “Leave my friends’ bodies. *Now.*”

All three of them hissed. “*You have no authority over us.*” They said in unison, “*You are a foreigner, an interloper.*” Gaea really likes to use those specific words I’ve noticed. “*You have no right to be here, or any right over us. The Earth Mother told us to go after you and further the division of the Greeks and Romans, but you were unable to be touched by us.*”

“Out of everyone on this ship I have the most right over the dead.” I said. “I am the son of Susanoo, and the grandson of Izanami. I am the sole and rightful heir to the Shinto pantheon. My father has connections to the Yomi, the realm of the dead. My grandmother Izanami is the goddess of Creation and Death, and she favors me immensely.” I looked at the one that was possessing Percy. “Look through Percy’s memories. You know I speak the truth.” Percy’s now golden eyes went wide, hopefully with fear. I raised my hands out and focused my abilities, really hoping that I did inherit some necromancy powers from dads’ side. “So by my authority, I order you to leave my friends now!”

The eidolons visibly flinched. It made me hopeful, because it looked like it had some effect on them. But they didn’t leave my friends’ bodies. They steadied themselves and glared back at me.

“*Your connection to the dead is not strong enough to banish us, son of Susanoo.*” Percy said.

“We will give you all one last chance to surrender.” Jason said, his gold blade digging into Piper’s throat and drawing a bit of blood.

“If not, we will kill all but two of you, the ones the Earth Mother desire most.” Leo said, now right in front of Frank who looked petrified.
What can I do? Is there anything I can do to save my friends? I was hoping that my power over the Yomi that I inherited from Dad would have worked, but I guess not. I wish more than ever that Nico was here. If he was, these possessing spirits wouldn’t stand a chance. I don’t think Hazel has any control of the dead, otherwise she would have done something herself.

The eidolons were serious too about their threat. I can feel it in my bones. They only fear Gaea if they fail, but they have us all trapped. My magic, even if I could access it right now, can’t help. Nothing in my spell book dealt even mentioned spirits.

“Well, son of Susanoo?” asked Not-Percy. “Will you surrender and give yourself over to the Earth Mother? Or will you watch all those you care about meet Death?”

Death… maybe, maybe he can help. I glanced down at the silver ring on my left hand, noticing how it felt unnaturally cold. The white stone had a barely noticeable glow to it. Maybe I can use this to summon Death himself here to get rid of them.

But what if that’s my only favor? A being such as Death, quite possibly the most powerful being in the universe, he could do absolutely anything. Should I waste it just for this? And from the meetings I’ve had with him he’d be disappointed if I summoned him here just for this. He’d berate me about it too, saying I should have been able to handle this myself. But if that’s true, how? Suddenly I remembered what Death said to me when he first gave me his ring.

“My ring will allow you to get my attention, when the time comes. And I guess it has other features as well, some you will like and some… not so much.”

Features, like what? What can I do with Death’s Ring? Is it the reason why I couldn’t be possessed by the eidolons? Looking back up at my friends, possessed and held hostage, I decided that I should just follow my instincts and just use the ring. I just hope that it works for me.

I raised my left hand. The ring continued to glow palely and drew in the light from the room, like those scenes from the Lord of the Rings where Gandalf gets angry. Then there was this deep shaking noise, although the ship itself wasn’t shaking. The entire room felt cold too, the type of cold you can feel down to your soul.

“What is happening?” asked Jason.

“What are you doing?!” Leo demanded.

I glared and focused on the three possessed boys. “I am Tsunayoshi Noble, son of Susanoo. I wear the ring of the Horseman of Death upon my hand.” I flexed the fingers of my left-hand outward. The boys stiffened, Percy and Jason dropping their swords and Leo’s flames dying out, and backed away from their hostages.

“How—”

“Silence!” I yelled. Their throats looked like they were being choked. “This is my order to you three: You are to never possess anyone on this ship ever again. You are to never come anywhere near this ship again. You are to leave the bodies of Percy, Jason, and Leo. Do you understand?”

“We-We unders-stand.” They said in unison.

“You will vow, on the River Styx itself, to agree to my orders to the letter.”

The Eidolons hissed, but with a twist of my hand they groaned in pain and responded. “We s-s- swear on the River Styx to follow your orders.”
“You are dead.”

“We…are…dead.”

“So by my father, and his father before,” I drew my hand back, feeling the power of the ring pouring out. “I, Tsunayoshi Noble, cast you out!!”

With a thrust of my hand the eidolons screamed in agony. They looked like they were trying to fight against the power of Death’s Ring. Underneath the trio’s skin I saw flashes of the eidolons as they attempted to fight. With another scream from them, the eidolons were forcible dragged out of my friends.

The moment the eidolons were fully expelled and banished from the ship Percy, Jason, and Leo crumpled to the floor. Annabeth, Piper, Frank, and Hazel rushed over to check on them. I, on the other hand, felt drained, physically and mentally. As I leaned against the wall, holding my hand to my sweaty forehead I thought if this is what Death meant when he said that there would be features of his ring that I wouldn’t care for.

“Percy, wake up.” Annabeth shook him. He didn’t respond. “Come on, wake up Seaweed Brain!”

“Oh gods, did I banish their souls too?” I picked myself off the wall and walked closer. By the time I got close and leaned down, Percy opened his eyes. “Percy, thank gods, you’re—”

Percy jumped when he saw me, and Annabeth screamed. “Get away from him!”

“What? Annabeth, you can’t be—”

“I said get away!”

I stood and backed up. Looking at everyone else, they were…scared of me. It’s like I lost everything I worked so hard to gain. Piper held Jason close, Frank had Hazel behind him and stood several feet away. And Percy…it was like I truly scared him.

“I—I—” I started, feeling a tear forming in the corner of my eye. “I’m sorry.”

I rushed out of the room and up the stairs. I fought back the tears. I looked for somewhere private, finding it in a tented pile of sail material, rope and boxes. I crawled my way inside and curled in on myself. I started crying, but I refused to make any noise. Yatagarasu must have sensed something, because he found me easily. He hopped in and perched himself on my knee. He cocked his head to the side, as if to say ‘What’s wrong?’

“Oh Yata.” I said. I pet him down the back. “I think I messed everything up.”

I talked to him about what just happened. How I tried to fight the eidolons, and how in the end I had to use Death’s Ring to defeat them and prevent them from harming my friends. By the time I was talking about how I ruined my relationship with everyone, a certain someone spoke up.

“You didn’t ruin anything.” I looked up and saw Percy. He was leaning in the makeshift tent. “Can we talk?”

I nodded and left the tent, Yatagarasu following my out and landing on my shoulder. “Are you okay?” I whispered.

“Yeah, I’m fine. A bit shaken, but fine.” He said. “But I’m not here right now so we can talk about me.”
“Then why are you here?”

“I want you to explain exactly what happened back there.”

“I… I banished the eidolons.”

“Yeah, I got that much. You did more than that actually.”

“What do you mean?”

“What you were doing, I could feel it happening to the eidolons, like an echo effect or something. From their point of view, it was like they were being dragged back to the Underworld by hooks in their skin. I could almost feel my own soul leave my body.”

My eyes went wide. “Watashi no kami Percy, taihen mōshiwake-arimasen. I didn’t know you would experience that. I was just trying to protect all of you.”

“Daijōbudayo.” Percy sighed out. “I’m not blaming you for what you did. I just want to know how you did it.”

“It’s… hard to explain.”

“Tsuna, I’m not stupid.” He said. He placed his hand on my shoulder. “You’ve basically talked down to Thanatos, showing him that ring on your finger and scaring death. I saw through the eidolons you use it to banish them. What I want to know, is what exactly is that thing on your finger?”

I swallowed a lump in my throat. “You heard me in there. It’s the Ring of Death himself.”

“I don’t understand. You clearly don’t see Thanatos as Death, or your grandmother, so who are you talking about.”

“I’m talking about THE Death.” I turned so I wasn’t facing him, twisting Death’s Ring around. “The entity himself, the Grim Reaper, the Judeo-Christian Death. He outranks every death god out there. Thanatos, Hades, my Bāchan Izanami and her Shinigami.” I took in a deep breath. “You remember the day Ares took me after school.”

“It’s one of the last things I remember before Hera kidnapped me.”

“Well, he wanted me to steal Death’s Scythe from Anubis, the Egyptian God of Death and use it on Death himself.”

“Why would he want Death killed, and how can you even kill Death?” I walked to the ledge of the ship and looked out at the landscape below.

“Ares thought that the Scythe could do it, but Death had installed safety protocols into it, so even if I wanted to, I wouldn’t have been able to do anything to him. And as for why? Death thought Ares wanted his position.”

“So why did he give you his ring?”

“My guess?” I brought my hand up and looked at the ring. “I impressed him somehow, or at the very least I’m an interesting subject to him. To be honest, banishing the eidolons was the first thing I used the Ring for, well, except for threatening deities.”

“Like you did with Thanatos in Alaska.”
I nodded. “That was also to prove to him that I was under orders of higher beings. And I did it again in Seattle right before I ran up to you. I didn’t even show Hera, she just glanced at it and was terrified. And unless Death was joking, there are more powers this Ring has that I don’t know about.”

“So why haven’t you tried to use any? I think that it could really help us out on our way to Greece.”

“Because of that look you and the others gave me right after the eidolons were banished. You all looked scared of me, as if I was a monster. I don’t want to be looked at like that ever again.”

“Tsuna….” He grabbed my shoulder and turned me towards him. “I’m sorry for reacting like that. I was just shocked from what I felt during the banishment.”

I shook my head and grabbed Percy’s hand and took it off my shoulder. “I don’t blame you or the others for your reaction. It’s just…I’m scare that the others are now too scared to fight alongside me, to trust me.”

“Dude, if that’s what you think of our friends, then you really don’t know them.”

“We’ve all been together what, thirty-six hours tops?”

“You’re not wrong.” Percy said. “But I think we all understand each other well enough to know we can trust each other. Just give them some space until they calm down. If you’d like, I can go talk to the others.”

I smiled. “I’d like that, if you’d think it would help.”

“I’m bet it will.” He said. “In the meantime, let’s get you to our room. I think some quiet will relax you.”

He threw his arm around me and gripped my shoulder in a brotherly manner. It startled Yatagaras enough for him to fly off. At least Percy isn’t scared of me. He led me down the stairs and towards our room. When I asked them what the others were doing, he explained that they were cleaning up the dining hall and then after that they were going to set up a night watch.

“Just lay down and relax man.” Percy said as he sat me down on the bed. “Using that ring must have drained you.”

“Thanks Percy.” I said. “I’ll see you later.”

“Later.” He waved. “I’ll go explain what happened to the others. I’ll check up on you in a little bit.”

I nodded and watched as Percy closed the door as he left. Once he did, the room dropped a couple of degrees until it was at a comfortable temperature for me. The lights dimmed a bit, so I leaned back on the mattress and lied down.

It was really quiet in here. It left me alone with my thoughts, and the one thing I was thinking about was Nico. I hope he’s alright. I wish, that despite being captured by Gaea’s forces, that he isn’t being tortured. He’s smart, so he has to be thinking of an escape route. Letting out a relaxing sigh I closed my eyes.

At first, I saw only darkness. Black and cold, there wasn’t even a single speck of light. No fires, no houses lit up in the night, not even stars. Just utter blackness. But then all of the sudden flames ignited in bronze braziers and-were those theatre lights? I was practically nearly blinded.
Once my eyes adjusted I saw boxes labeled PROPS, WEAPONS, and COSTUMES, and one of the boxes was even labeled ASSORTED ROCKET LauncherS. In the back of the room on a raised platform was a large bronze jar.

“Am I dreaming?”

“It should be obvious son of Susanoo.”

“Gaea. Are you ever going to leave me alone?”

“I have plans for you Shinto Spawn.” She said. “And I oh so wish to follow through with them.”

“Great, more incentive to stop you before you wake up.”

“Oh don’t bother. Now that I know what you carry on your left hand, I can take proper precautions.”

“Kuso.”

“Oh yes, Tsunayoshi Noble, I now know of your connection to Death. Interesting that you have that ring in the first place. Whatever he sees in you, I don’t see it.”

“Well, it’s a good thing you don’t. For all you know, if you kill me he kills you.”

“Don’t try to act all mighty. He has far more important things to do that take revenge on the death of one meaningless demigod. Once you die, the Ring is bound to be returned to him. And now that I know your hand, you have nothing to threaten me with.” Well, I hate to say it but she’s not wrong, at least until I can get a handle of my magic.

“So why am I here in this pit?” I asked. “What are you trying to show me?”

“What?” laughed the Earth Primordial. “You can’t sense him?”

“Sense him? Who are you talking about?”

“And I thought you cared about him so much, that your heart belongs to him.”

My eyes widened and I turned to the jar. “Nico…”

“Yes, son of Susanoo, your precious one is inside that bronze jar. Perhaps you should take a closer look?”

A yanking sensation pulled me towards the jar. I raised my arms up to cushion the impact, but it never came. Instead, I ended up in another black space that was filled with stale air that reeked of tarnished metal. My eyes adjusted again, and then I noticed a faint purple light.

That’s when I saw him. Nico, my best friend, blood brother and…I can’t believe the state he’s in. He looks so much thinner and paler than in the vision Gaea sent me back in Camp Jupiter, when Nico was first captured in Tartarus. His clothes were ripped and torn, and were practically hanging off of him. He almost looked like a skeleton, and it was heartbreaking to see.

“The poor boy.” tutted Gaea. “It doesn’t seem he’ll last much longer.”

“What do you mean?”

“Look on the floor and see.” I did as she said and looked. Along the floor were some seeds and an
old pomegranate that was torn open.

“What is the fruit for?”

“Did he never tell you? Such a shame, I thought you two were so close.”

“What is the fruit for Gaea!” I yelled through gritted teeth.

“It’s from the garden of Persephone. It allows boy to enter a state like death.” Gaea laughed. “He will never wake up. Nothing you can do will be able to save him. He won’t survive the week.”

Ignoring the dirt clod, I tried to get Nico to wake up. “Neeks, it me. It’s Tsuna. I’m here. Wake up, please.” He didn’t stir. “Please Nico, wake up. You need to escape this place.”

Gaea’s laugh echoed in the jar. “There is no way for you to wake the boy. You are less than a spirit in this state, and even if you weren’t it wouldn’t matter. The son of Hades is teetering on the edge of life and death. The Death Trance he put himself in does buy him a bit of time for his mortal life, but his abuse of it has made him weak. The Death Trance is so strong that not even Hypnos would be able to enter his dreams.”

“Nico…” I went to brush some of the hair out of his face, but my fingers just phased through. I clenched my fist, and then I noticed that there were three hash marks on the wall. “I will find you. I swear it.”

“You will die trying to save the son of Hades.”

I cupped my hands around Nico’s face. “My life doesn’t matter to me, in the end. Only Nico’s.”

“I am so very glad you said that.” Gaea chuckled throatily. “That just means that his death will destroy you before I kill you myself.”

“You wouldn’t dare.” I said.

“Wouldn’t I? You seem to doubt me after everything I have done in my sleeping state alone.” She laughed again. “I know you’re an aspiring actor boy, so I hope you’ll enjoy the show my two sons will perform in Rome. I also hope that you’ll enjoy this show.”

She started laughing again, cruelly, only for it to be drowned out by my screaming. Before my eyes, Nico had started to rot. His hair fell out, his skin turned a vile gray before it began slopping off. The stench was unbearable. His beautiful dark brown eyes bulged and popped out of the sockets. Soon there was nothing left of Nico, and I was standing in a rotten puddle of the son of Hades.

“Tsuna! Tsuna!”

“No, Nico, no!!!”

“Tsuna wake up! You’re having a nightmare!”

I opened my eyes, realizing I was still on the Argo. I was breathing heavily, my skin was sweaty and gross, and my throat hurt like hell. I looked up at Percy, who was the one who woke me up. He was clutching his left eye.

“What-what happened?”

“You were screaming in your sleep, and I tried waking you up.” Percy explained. “But you ended
up punching me.”

“I-I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine.” He said calmly. “A bath or something and some Ambrosia and nobody will notice.” He moved his hand and I saw the bruise starting to form.

“Here, let me.” After healing him with the Magatama, I leaned my back against the wall and brought my knees to my chest.

“So, are you going to tell me what you dreamed about?”

I shook my head. “Nothing. Just a nightmare.”

“Tsuna, you were screaming Nico’s name.” he said, causing me to flinch a bit.

“Did Hazel or anyone hear?”

“I don’t know. But I don’t care about that. I’m worried about you. Do you want to talk about it?”

“No.” I said quickly. “Just go to sleep man.” I stood up and slipped on my shoes and grabbed the first hoodie I saw.

“Where’re you going?” he asked.

“I need some air.” I said. “Just get some rest Percy, I’ll be fine.”

Closing the door behind me I walked to the deck. It was much later than I expected, with the stars being out. Hopefully Coach wasn’t bothering with the curfew tonight.

“Hey, what are you doing up?” I turned and saw Jason.

“I could ask you the same thing.”

“I’m just taking a night watch.”

“So Coach isn’t enforcing his curfew?”

“Nah, Leo fixed the satellite, so Coach is distracted with his MMA marathon.”

“Right.”

“But you still haven’t told me why you’re up.”

“I couldn’t sleep and decided that I needed air.”

“Well I could use the company.” He looked over at me and pointed at me face. “Uh, you got a little something there.” I wiped my face, just now noticing the tears. “Are you alright Tsuna?”

“I’m fine. They’re nothing.” I looked at Jason as he yawned. “Maybe I should just take over for you. We’ve all had a long day. You should get some sleep.”

Jason waved me off. “I’m fine. I’m not that tired yet.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah, I’m good.”
“If you say so.”

“Besides, you look like you could use the company.”

I smiled. “Thanks man.”

For a while we didn’t really say much. Just small talk here and there. A lot of it was about bits and pieces of our lives. I told him about my quest in Japan, he told me how he fought the Titan Kios and toppled Kronos’s throne on Mount Orthys. It was nice, talking to Jason. He was easy to get along with. Maybe it’s because he has this major ‘Bro’ thing going on with him, making it easy to approach and open up to him.

The son of Jupiter yawned again. “You should get to bed Jase.”

“Yeah, I guess you’re right.” He stretched his arms above his head, and I had to stop myself from eyes said arms. “Oh, I keep forgetting.”

“Forgetting what?” I wondered.

“I just wanted to thank you for saving me and everyone else from the eidolons.”

“Oh. No problem.” I scratched the back of my head awkwardly. “Uh, I’m sorry if I scared you or anything.”

“I wasn’t scared. Maybe weirded out, but not scared.” He explained. “Percy explained everything earlier, and everyone felt so bad with the way we treated you in there. I’m sorry if we hurt you.”

“No, it’s fine, I understand.” I smiled at him. Jason was now looking at me strangely. “What wrong now?”

“Nothing, it’s just…” he said, trying to find the words. “It’s just that you look familiar to me. I don’t know why. Have we met before?”

“Yeah, we have a bit of history, but it was just a blip on the timeline.”

“What?”

I shook my head with a small laugh. “It’s nothing.”

Before Jason could react, I pulled him into a hug. “Uh, what was that for?” he asked after I pulled away.

“I’ll tell you later.” I said smiling. “Get some sleep man.”

“Uh, I…uh….” Jason started backing up, not sure what to do. I didn’t know I’d throw him off so much. He seemed weirded out, but I know he didn’t mean anything mean by it. “I’ll see you, uh, later then.”

“Night Jason.” I waved.

With a sigh, I looked up to the night sky. I walked around the ship, just watching the skyline and the changing of the landscape. Surprisingly, Yatagarasu was nowhere to be found. I wonder what he’s doing. When we were traveling looking for Percy, when he wasn’t by my side, he was either scouting or hunting for some food. What does he eat, by the way? I should ask him at one point.
Feeling the onset of tiredness hit me, I leaned against the large mast and slid to the floor. I forced myself to stay awake. I didn’t want to fall asleep again if Gaea is just going to haunt my dreams and make me see her torture Nico or any of my friends. But I yawned and felt my eyelids grow really heavy. The East was starting to turn pink when I felt a hand on my shoulder.

“Morning.” Jason said.

“What are you doing up?” I asked as I rubbed my eyes. “Didn’t I just send you to bed?”

“That was a few hours ago Tsuna.” He said. “I got plenty of rest. I’m good.” I gave him a sleepy look. “And I’m used to getting up early anyways to do a little wake-up workout.”

“Gods, you so…you’re such a…” I started, but my brain really can’t process words right now.

“Okay, you need to get some sleep.”

“No, I’m fine, I’m fine.” I waved him off.

“Dude, you can barely finish your sentences.” Jason leaned down and supported me by grabbing my shoulders. I leaned on his shoulder, and I was so tired I didn’t care that I started to really lean on him. “Yeah, it’s time for bed Tsuna.”

“Don’t wanna wake Percy…”

“Wasn’t planning on it.” said Jason. “Which is why you’re taking my bed.”

Oh, how my fourteen-year-old self would have loved that, but at this point I wasn’t really thinking about that. Jason was really nice. A perfect, all American boy. All he needs is a leather letterman’s jacket (probably purple, Jason looks good in purple) and he’d be your ideal football player. Every girl, and guys, dream boy.

“Here we are.” Jason said as he opened the door. He sat me down and helped me take my shoes off. I lied down and pulled the sheets up. “Night Tsuna.”

“Thanks Jason.” I said, raising my fist to him. “You’re a great friend.”

“You too man.” He fist bumped me. “Now get some sleep. Who knows what’s going to happen tomorrow.”

“Night Jace.”

“Night Tsuna.”

Jason walked out and closed the door. The room was pitch black now, perfect for falling asleep to. I snuggled into the sheets and took a deep breath to relax. That’s when I noticed the scent: Jason’s sheets have a nice, natural ozone-like smell to them. I smiled into Jason’s pillow and closed my eyes, enjoying the calming scent that stuck to the blankets.

I woke up a few hours later. Sitting up I stretched up and twisted my back, feeling my spine pop very satisfyingly. I haven’t slept that good in a long while. No prophetic dreams, no nightmarish visions from Gaea, nothing. Just pure sleep.

Swinging my legs over Jason’s bed I stood up and walked down the hall to the room I share with Percy. I opened to door quietly to not wake Percy up and tiptoed over to the dresser. After snagging some clean clothes I went to the bathroom and showered. Getting dressed I walked over
to the dining hall.

Grabbing a bowl and a cup, I sat at the table. As I yawned the bowl filled with chocolate cereal and the cup filled with green tea. I started eating, enjoying the quiet of the early morning. As I was eating the others came in, and they all looked worried.

“Uh, morning guys.”

“Hey.” Piper said. “Have you seen Annabeth and Percy.”

I shook my head. “Percy’s probably still asleep. He was when I was in the room a few minutes ago.”

“That’s just it.” Jason said. “I went to get him up, and he isn’t there. It’s like he disappeared.”

I dropped my spoon in my cereal, splattering my milk everywhere.

“Genki ippai!”
I don’t think I have ever felt this relaxed, or slept so good. I honestly can’t believe me and Annabeth fell asleep cuddling. Man, I love that we were able to cuddle. It’s just so normal. My girlfriend was wonderfully warm curled into my side.

The only reason I even woke up was because there was daylight shining through the glass floor. I really didn’t want to wake up, but it was just bright enough to wake me. I blinked my eyes open, smiling into Annabeth’s hair.

“O-oh g-g-gods…” Looking over Annabeth’s blonde curls I saw Frank standing in the doorway, wearing cargo pants and a Vancouver Winter Olympics T-shirt with his Roman Centurion badge pinned to the neck. “You guys are in so much trouble.”

“What…?” I said groggily. I used my free hand to rub my eyes a bit. Annabeth started moving in my grasp. Now that I’m a little bit more awake, I could see Frank’s face starting to red and he was trying his hardest not to look at us. “Oh, we just fell asleep.”

“Oh, everyone thinks you’ve been kidnapped…again.” He said. “We’ve been scouring the ship looking for you. When Coach Hedge finds out—oh, gods, you’ve been here all night?” I felt my face warm a little.

Annabeth sat right up at what Frank was implying. “Frank!” Her ears were as red as strawberries. “We just came down here to talk. We fell asleep. Accidentally. That’s it.” I love it when Annabeth is flustered like this, it’s cute.

“Kissed a couple of times.” I smiled. I don’t think it was possible for Frank’s face to turn any redder. It was like he was splashed with Dakota’s Kool-Aid.

Annabeth glared at me. “Not helping!”

“We’d better…” Frank said, not even looking anywhere near us now. “Uh, we’re supposed to meet for breakfast.” He started stuttering on his words. “Would you explain what you did—I mean didn’t do? I mean…I really don’t want that faun—I mean satyr—to kill me.”

Frank ran. I mean, he booked it out of the stables, as if being in the same room as us terrified him. Come on Frank, we weren’t doing anything than making out.

Annabeth sighed and stood up. “Come on Seaweed Brain. Let’s go before Coach, or gods forbid your brother start tearing the ship apart.”

“Oh crap, Tsuna.” I said. “He’s going to kill me.” I wiped my hands down my face.

“Don’t be such a baby.” She grabbed my hand and pulled me up. “You know Tsuna just…wow, knowing Tsuna he might put you on a leash.”
“Like those toddlers we see walking around?” I asked. “Gods, I feel sorry for those kids.”

“It might do you some good to have toddler leash.” Annabeth laughed. “Could keep you in line.”

She laughed and walked to the door. I wasn’t going to let her have the last word, so I reached for her and grabbed her hand. Before she could react, I pulled her into my chest and wrapped my arms around her waist.

“Percy, what are you-mmph!”

I stopped her from asking anymore questions by pressing my lips to hers in a passionate kiss. If we’re both going to get in trouble for being teenagers then I’m going to make it worth it. Annabeth melted in my arms and started kissing me back. We pulled apart just so we could catch out breaths.

I leaned my forehead against hers. “Wow Percy, that was…uh…”


“All of the above?” she said unsure. I smiled because I don’t ever think I’ve seen her brain short circuit like this before, so I’m really proud of my kissing skills. Annabeth soothed the wrinkles on my shirt and looked down. “We, uh, we should get going. I really don’t want anyone, especially Coach finding us like this.”

“Yeah, sure.” Before I let go of her I kissed her one more time.

We left the stables, our hands held tight, and walked to the dining hall. Before going in Annabeth made sure to make us look a bit more proper and less like what Frank thought we did. When we did go in, I realized that we made a mistake in coming in together. The dining hall was filled with everyone (except our satyr guardian) who turned and just stared at us. Jason and Piper looked relieved, Leo was muttering ‘Classic. Classic.’ and Hazel looked scandalized, fanning herself and wouldn’t look me in the eyes.

I think what was worse than everyone’s stares was Tsuna himself. He was just sitting at the table with this wickedly evil grin plastered on his face. I tried to ignore it as I sat down, a plate of blue pancakes appearing as I did. I couldn’t take a bite though because I could feel the weight of everybody’s stares on me.

“Oh, I’m going to get into some clean clothes.” Annabeth said. A good excuse to escape the awkwardness in here. “I’ll be back in a second.” She kissed my cheek and walked out.

I started eating, but after a few seconds I looked up and saw Tsuna. He was just smiling at me with his arms crossed, sitting next to Leo who also had the same smile. Tsuna, however, looked like he was going to be evil, as if he was saying ‘I’m going to enjoy this.’

“Tsuna, it’s not what you think, nothing happened.” He just raised an eyebrow, still smiling like a crazy psychopath.

“Oh really?” he asked with a smile, drumming his fingers on the table. “Please, do tell me the details of what you ‘didn’t’ do.” Leo laughed and reached to the side with his fist, which Tsuna bumped while staring right at me.

“Come on man, nothing happened.” I said, not liking being made fun of, especially by Tsuna.

“What kind of brother would I be if I didn’t bug and blackmail you?”
“A great one.” I mumbled before harshly taking a bite of my pancakes.

“THERE YOU ARE LITTLE MISSY!!”

Everyone looked at the doorway and watched as Coach Hedge chased Annabeth into the dining hall. I stood up and put Annabeth behind me. I know she can take care of herself, but I’m her boyfriend. I’ll always want to protect her.

“Unbelievable!” he bellowed, waving his bat around and knocking over a plate of apples. “Against the rules! Irresponsible!”

“Coach,” Annabeth said from over my shoulder, “It was an accident. We were talking, and we fell asleep.”

“Besides,” I said, “you’re starting to sound like Terminus.”

“Is that an insult, Jackson?” Hedge narrowed his eyes. “Cause I’ll—I’ll terminus you, buddy!”

I had to try really hard not to laugh, because it was really hard to take Hedge seriously with him being barely five feet tall. “It won’t happen again, Coach. I promise. Now, don’t we have other things to discuss?”

“Fine!” growled Hedge. “But I’m watching you, Jackson. And you, Annabeth Chase. I thought you out of everyone you would have more sense—”

Jason cleared his throat. “So maybe we should let them get cleaned up Coach. Then we can get started.”

I glanced over at Jason and nodded my thanks. Coach took a breath and mumbled that there will be no ‘hanky panky’ on this ship. It was funny that he said hanky panky. Who even says that anymore?

Hedge gave us five minutes, so Annabeth and I went to our rooms to freshen up for the day. After getting dressed, I grabbed my toothbrush and opened the door. But as soon as I did I noticed someone was leaning against the wall next to the door.

“Hi Percy.” smiled Tsuna.

“Come on man.” I begged.

“So, you and Annabeth had a fun time last night.” He said. “All those pent-up emotions and raging hormones.”

“Oh gods!” I hid my face in my hands.

“At least tell me the two of you were safe?” he asked. “I’m not ready to be an uncle.” There was a smacking sound. “OW!”

“Stop picking on him Tuna Head.” Looking up I saw Annabeth standing behind Tsuna who was rubbing the back of his head.

“Hey, it’s my job.”

“Then you’re fired.” I said.

“You can’t fire me.” He said. “That’s like firing me from being your brother.”
“Don’t tempt me.” I grumbled.

“Please, you don’t have the balls to fire me.”

“Can you guys just stop?” Annabeth asked, pinching the bridge of her nose. “You’re giving me a headache.”

“Yes ma’am.” We said.

I went to brush my teeth and afterwards me and Tsuna followed Annabeth back to the dining hall. Tsuna walked past Jason and stole a chocolate glazed doughnut from it and didn’t look back as he went over to a wall to lean against. I feel bad for him. He might not be a part of the Seven, but he’s still here. He deserves a seat at the table.

“So where do we begin?” Frank asked.

“I guess I can tell you about the dream I had.” I said.

“Was it a ‘demigod dream’, or a ‘dream dream’?” asked Jason.

“Demigod.” I said.

“Man, I hate those.” Leo said, fiddling with a screwdriver.

“You’re not the only one.” I said.

“Go on then Percy.” Hazel said. “Tell us what you saw.”

I nodded. “I was standing in this gloomy underground parking garage.” Let’s start there. No need for anyone to worry about me if I tell them about the me drowning part of the dream. “The ceiling was covered in pulley systems, sandbags, and rows of dark theatre lights.” Tsuna looked up with interest. “All around me there were large crates that were labeled PROPS, WEAPONS, COSTUMES, and even ASSORTED ROCKET LAUNCHERS.”


“What’s wrong?” Jason asked. Tsuna shook his head.

“It’s nothing.” He crossed his arms and closed his eyes.

“Tsuna are you okay?” I asked.

“I’m fine.” He said through grit teeth. “Just go on Perce.”

“Uh, okay. So then all of a sudden a Giant, at least I think it was a Giant, walked in. He was a lot shorter than all of the others I met. He was like twelve feet tall.”

“That’s like two Jason’s stacked on top of each other.” said Leo.

“But it wasn’t just his height.” I continued. “He looked more human too. Except for his purple dread that had gold and silver coins woven in. He uses spears by the way, he had one strapped to his back.”

“Did he say anything about what he is planning?” Piper asked.

“Not really. He was pacing in front a large bronze jar.” I saw Tsuna tense and look away. Did…did
he have the same dream last night? “He was complaining about the jar and called another Giant, his brother Otis.”

“The twins.” Jason said.

“Ephialtes and Otis.” I said. “They started bickering and talking about preparations, probably for us. And then they started talking about the bronze jar, or to be specific who’s in the jar.” I looked over to Hazel. “Hazel, I’m sorry to tell you this, but Nico’s in that jar.

Hazel covered her mouth. “Oh gods.”

“Keep going.” Tsuna ordered. “What else did you see?”

“Well, I don’t know if any of you have tried before, but I willed myself inside the jar. The air inside was musty with stale breath and tarnished metal. And that’s when I saw Nico. His breathing was so shallow I could barely hear it.” Hazel looked like she was about to cry. “At his feet were pomegranate seeds.”

“Nico…” Hazel choked back a sob. “Oh gods. The seeds.”

“You know what they are?” asked Annabeth.

“He showed them to me once.” Hazel said. “They’re from our stepmother’s garden.”

“You’re step…oh, you mean Persephone.” I said.

I remember meeting her once. And she didn’t leave the best impression. Not really the warm and sunny personality I heard she was. Her garden was really gloomy and a creepy, filled with crystal plants that were either blood red or ghostly white. You’d think that Demeter’s daughter would have more of a green thumb. And I didn’t like the way she talks to Nico, she even turned him into a flower once! But that just means we have something in common: we both have Evil Stepmothers.

“The seeds are meant to be a last resort.” Hazel bit on her bottom lip nervously. All the silverware on the table started shaking towards her. “Only the children of Hades can even eat them. Nico always kept some on him in case he got stuck somewhere. But if he’s really imprisoned—”

“The Giants are trying to lure us, like Tsuna said yesterday.” Annabeth said. “They’re assuming we’ll try to rescue him.”

“What do you mean by ‘assume’ Wise Girl?” Tsuna asked. Oh no, not again. “There’s no assumption about it. We’re saving Nico.”

“Oh yeah!” Hedge yelled over a mouthful of napkins. He swallowed loudly and let out a wicked burp, at least an eight out of ten. “It’ll involve fighting, right?”

“It’s bound to end up in fighting knowing us.” Jason said. “Hazel, are you alright?”

Hazel looked like she was about to cry, so Frank grabbed her hand. “Hazel don’t worry, of course we’ll help Nico. But how long do we have before…uh, I mean, how long can Nico hold out?”

Hazel sniffed and tried to keep it together. “One seed a day.” She said miserably. “That’s if he puts himself into a death trance.”

“It’ll keep him from consuming all of his air.” Hazel said. “Like, uh, hibernation, or maybe a… a coma.”

“It does more than that.” Tsuna said.

“Like what?” I asked. Out of everyone here, Tsuna does know more about how these things work, what with him wearing the ring of Death himself on his finger.

“It’s a literal in between state.” Tsuna explained. “This trance puts your body at the tipping point between life and death. And Nico is putting himself into such a strong trance that, according to Gaea not even Hypnos can enter Nico’s dreams. But this type of power has to be incredibly taxing on him. And as strong as Nico is, he can’t keep putting himself through that kind of torment.”

“So we have five days to save him then.” I said. Hazel looked to me, her eyes asking me how I knew. “I saw how many seeds were left, and there were five. So five days, including today. The Giants must have planned it that way, so we’d have to arrive by July first. Assuming that Nico is hidden in Rome—”

“He is.” chimed in Tsuna.

“But that’s not much time.” Piper said. She put her hand on Hazel’s shoulder. “We’ll find him, I promise. We won’t let anything happen to Nico. The prophecy won’t come true.”

“Oh gods, Nico.” Hazel started crying into her hands.

“Uh, one thing guys.” Leo said, shifting in his chair. “The Giants are expecting us to go rescue him right? So we’re walking into a trap?”

Hazel’s head snapped up and glared daggers at the Latino. “We have no choice!”

“Don’t get me wrong Hazel.” Leo said with his arms up defensively. “It’s just that your brother Nico… well, he knew about both camps, right?”

“Well, yes.” Hazel said.

“So he’s been going back and forth, and he didn’t tell anyone?”

“What are you insinuating Leo?” Hazel angrily asked.

Jason sat forward with a grim expression in his face. “You’re wondering if we can trust the guy. So am I.”

Hazel shot to her feet, tears starting to streak down her face. “I don’t believe this. He’s my brother. He brought me back from the Underworld, and you don’t want to help him?!”

“Nobody’s saying that.” Frank said as he tries his best to soothe her. “Nobody better be saying that.”

“Look guys.” Leo said. “All I’m saying is—”

“Hazel,” Jason interrupted. “Leo is just raising a fair point. I remember Nico from Camp Jupiter. Now I found out he also visited Camp Half-Blood. That does strike me as… well, a little shady. Do we really know where his loyalties lie? We just have to be careful.”

Hazel lost it, making plates and silverware fly off the table. I just barely ducked in time as a fork came flying at my head. I think it took some of my hair with it. When I looked back up Hazel was
“You…the great Jason Grace…the Praetor I looked up to.” Hazel looked so betrayed. “You were supposed to be so fair, such a good leader. And now you…” She stomped her foot and stormed out of the dining room in tears.

I don’t like seeing any of my friends’ cry. But at the same time, I couldn’t speak up for Nico. Putting it mildly, he and I have a rocky history. At first, he was an excited little kid that kept pestering me when we first met. And before I went to follow Thalia to save Annabeth from Atlas, he begged me to keep an eye out and protect his sister Bianca, which I failed at.

When I broke the news to him, he ran away, saying how much he hated me. I tried looking for him that night, but I couldn’t find him. It wasn’t until I started my Freshman year at Goode that I saw him again, in the Labyrinth. I tried everything I could to get him to come back with me, but Minos was focusing his anger at me. But after we saved him from Minos and he saved me from Kronos, I thought we buried the hatchet. I even gave him some of my birthday cake.

But then he tricked me into being captured by his dad Hades. I lost all trust for him then. I thought though after we saved Olympus that he could start over, and I even tried to get him to visit me and mom once in a while. And he actually did, and then Tsuna came and we went to Japan. We grew so much closer. But then he disappeared, and when I was first at Camp Jupiter he pretended not to know me. I still have the urge to wring his neck when I see him again.

“Hazel!” Leo yelled. “Ah jeez. I should—”

“You’ve done enough.” Frank growled. The glare he gave Leo reminded me so much of Ares. He went to go after Hazel, but Piper stopped him.

“Give her some time.” She said, before frowning at Leo and her boyfriend. “Guys, that was pretty cold.” I felt goosebumps on my arms, so I started rubbing them.

Jason looked shocked. “Cold? I’m just being cautious!”

“Her brother is dying!” argued Piper. I think I just saw her breath.

“Uh, speaking of cold, is everybody else feeling that?” I asked.

Everyone started to notice. It was getting colder and colder in her. All of us started shivering. Our breaths were becoming visible clouds in front of us.

“Khione!” Jason yelled. He drew his sword and Leo made a fireball in his hand.

“Who’s Khione?” Frank asked.

“The goddess of snow.” Annabeth said.

“There’s a goddess of snow?” I asked.

“Yeah, and she sided with Gaea.” Piper said. “And we’re not on the best of terms to begin with.”


Jason scanned the room and his eyes went wide. “It’s not Khione.”

I wasn’t sure what he was talking about, but I followed his stare and stood up when I saw it. Or should I say him. Tsuna was glaring with absolute fury at us, specifically Jason and Leo. His
teeth were grit and his jaw was clenched so tight I expected him to pop a blood vessel. His hands were in fists, and they were shaking like he was trying to stop himself from doing something.

But the pissed off son of Susanoo wasn’t what everyone was gawking at. Around Tsuna, on the wall he was leaning on and the floor, was ice and frost. It wasn’t a lot, but it was enough that it drew everyone’s attention.

I stood up and carefully walked over to my brother. “Tsuna, calm down—” His glare was now aimed at me and I froze in place out of instinct. Chiron did teach us never to approach an angry animal, and Tsuna’s anger looked primal.

He looked back at the table. “I don’t care who any of you are. I don’t care how you feel about him. No one is to ever, EVER, question Nico’s loyalties again. It’s because of him the Greeks were even able to defeat the Titans. It’s because of him Hazel is with us today. I am sick of people doubting his allegiance.” He turned his stare back at me and I took a step back. “And you.” I gulped. “After everything Nico has done for you, you should have been the first to defend him. I am so ashamed of you.”

With a huff, he walked out. I don’t think I have ever seen Tsuna so scary. And that ice thing, it’s like he didn’t even notice it. Did it have something to do with his magic? Is that how it works? Him being so angry he can’t think?

A loud whirring sound, like a dentist’s drill came from above us. “Uh, that would be Festus.” Leo said. “I’ve got him on Autopilot, but we must be nearing Atlanta. I’ll have to get up there…uh, assuming we know where to land.” Everyone turned to me.

“You’re Captain Salt Water.” Jason said with a raised eyebrow. Despite looking paler than usual because of him being scared of Tsuna, his voice sounded like there was resentment in it.

“Uh, I don’t know.” I said, looking in the direction Tsuna went. “Just…park the ship someplace away from people and a good view of the city, like a park or something. I’ll think of something once we land.”

I ran out the door and tried to find Tsuna. I was listening for two things: either him crying, or something breaking. Tsuna wears his heart on his sleeve, I guess that’s just a thing with actors like him. I didn’t find him on the deck, or in the stables. I was making my way down the hall with our rooms and I passed Hazel’s. I heard crying because the door was just barely opened. I leaned in close to listen.

“…and when he gave me some of his blood, he saved my life from the Orochi Spawn’s venom. I’m alive because of him.”

“You have so much faith in him. He’s so lucky to have you. I just hope he can make it until we get there.”

“I swear to you Hazel, we’ll save Nico. I will save Nico.”

Hazel sniffed. “Thank you Tsuna. I’m glad you’re in Nico’s life.”

“He means more to me than you can imagine.” Tsuna said. “If I had to, I’d gladly trade my life for his again.”

Tsuna…I know you care for Nico, but I know him well enough that you dying for him will hurt him. From the moment you two first met, there has been this bond between the two of you, stronger than anything he and I have or ever will. You literally have his blood in you. I can’t think
of a way you two could be closer.

And you can’t give your life for Nico’s. I know that sounds selfish of me, but I can’t lose him again. When he killed himself to protect me, it was like my world was falling apart. I lost someone I had grown so close to me in such a short time. I had lost my brother. I don’t want to feel that kind of pain again, and I know Nico doesn’t either.

I then just stayed next to Hazel’s door, listening to Tsuna tell her about his friendship with Nico. “Percy…”

I looked up and saw Annabeth. She was standing above me. I didn’t realize that I had slid to the floor as I listened in on Tsuna and Hazel. Annabeth reached down and helped me up.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine.” I ran a hand down my face.

“You sure?” I nodded and took her hand, leading her away from Hazel’s room.

“What’s up?” I asked.

“We need to discuss what we’re going to do in Atlanta.” She said. “Or I should say, what you’re going to do.”

“Oh, yeah.” I said. “Is everyone still in the dining hall?”

Annabeth nodded. “They’re waiting for you. Since this deals with an old sea god, we thought it be best if you took charge.”

“Makes sense.” I could use a distraction.

Back in the dining room Piper was scolding Jason. Frank was picking at his food, looking antsy. He probably wants to go check on Hazel, but Piper isn’t letting him. I know how protective he is of Hazel, I watched as they grew close on the trip to Alaska. Hedge was just sitting in a chair, his fury legs propped on the arms of the designer chairs (giving everyone a very bad view), and munching on a fork. Looking over at the wall Tsuna was standing at, I saw the ice was gone. Leo must have melted it or something.

Once Frank saw me he jumped up. “Is Hazel—”

“She’s fine.” I said. “And Tsuna is too. But we should give them a little bit to cool down.” Frank didn’t look happy about it, but he sat down and started playing with an arrow.

“So, what’s going to happen in Atlanta?” Piper asked.

“Since we’re dealing with a sea god, I’m going to scout around the city.” I said. “Frank, I could use your help.”

“You mean turn into a dragon again?” he asked annoyingly. “Honestly Percy, I don’t want to spend the whole quest being everyone’s flying taxi.”

“No, that’s not what I meant.” I said. “I want you with me because you’ve got the blood of Poseidon. Maybe you can help me figure out the way to find salt water around here. Besides, you’re good in a fight.”

That made him feel either really good or really embarrassed. “Sure. I guess.”
“Great.” I said. “We should take one more, the rule of three you know. Annabeth—”

“Oh, no!” barked Coach Hedge. He had jumped out of his chair and onto the table. He aimed his bat at Annabeth. “You young lady are grounded!”

Annabeth looked at him like he spoke a foreign language, her mouth hanging open like a goldfish. “Excuse me?”

“You and Jackson are not going anywhere together!” He glared at me, as if I did something already. “I’ll go with Frank and Mr. Sneaky Jackson. The rest of you guard the ship and make sure Annabeth doesn’t break anymore rules!”

Wonderful. A boy’s day out with Frank and a bloodthirsty satyr. As, uh, great of a satyr he is, I really don’t want Hedge to come with. I need someone else with sea connections. And that only leaves one person.

“Actually Coach, I wasn’t going to ask Annabeth to join us.”

“What!?” they both asked.

“Well, yeah. We’re going to be dealing with a sea god. And who better to deal with a sea god than descendants of sea gods? I was just gonna ask for her opinion about Tsuna.”

“Oh, yeah, Tsuna!” Annabeth said. “Of course, he’d be perfect! He’s so connected to the sea, and he has that sword of his. You should take him Percy.”

“What do you think Coach?” I asked. “As great of a fighter you are, having Tsuna with us will get us back quicker.”

“I don’t know.” He started rubbing his curly beard.

I let out a breath. “And this way, you can keep an eye on Annabeth yourself, and not miss any of your televised fights. Besides, as much as I have faith in the others, they need you to protect them from any monster dumb enough to attack. Your, uh…ferocity will keep everyone’s hopes up if anything happens.”

“Yeah, you’re right!” said Coach. “Fine, go grab Noble. I’ll stay here and keep an eye on everyone. Especially you little missy.”

“What did I do?” asked Annabeth.

“Nothing babe.” I said. “Just let him do whatever he plans on doing. I’m going to go find Tsuna.”

“Find me for what?”

I nearly jumped out of my skin. I turned around and saw Tsuna. His skin was a little damp, so he must have taken a quick shower after talking to Hazel to relax. He had a band in his mouth while he was tying his hair up into a loose ponytail.

“Hey man, you doing okay?” I asked.

He raised an eyebrow questioningly. “I’m better if that’s what you mean.”

“Yeah, about that.” I grabbed his arm and started leading him out of the dining room. I turned back to Frank. “Uh, grab what you think you might need. We’ll meet up on the deck.”
“Got it.”

I led Tsuna to our room and closed the door behind me. “Why do I feel that you’re about to say something heartfelt?”

“Probably because I am.” I said. “Listen, I just want to apologize to you, about not standing up for Nico back there.”

“I’m not the one you should be apologizing to.”

“I know, I need to talk to Hazel.” I said. “And I promise I will, but I needed to talk to you.”

“About?”

“Well, let’s get this part out of the way.” I said, rubbing the back of my neck. “Again, I’m sorry that I didn’t stand up for Nico. He doesn’t deserve people talking about him like he’s a traitor.”

“Then why didn’t you?”

“To be honest, I was lost in thought.”

“That’s rare.”

“Shut up. I was just thinking about all the bad times he and I had. I was…am mad at Nico. He tricked me several times in the years we’ve known each other. He didn’t bring me back to Annabeth, or mom, or you when he saw me at Camp Jupiter.”

“Nico had to have his reasons Percy.” Tsuna said. “He may not show it but he does care about what happens to you. But… I understand that you’re angry, but you know Nico. And how do you think I feel? We traveled up and down the East Coast for months looking for you, and he never once mentioned Hazel, let alone Camp Jupiter.” He let out a breath. “Let’s put this behind us for now, okay? I don’t want to fight.”

“Me neither.” I said, holding out my arms. He smiled and walked into a hug.

He pulled away. “So, what were you going to look for me for?”

“I was going to ask if you wanted to join me and Frank while we look for Phorcys.” I said. “You and I are the most powerful sea demigods there is, and with Frank’s connection to Poseidon, it shouldn’t be too hard. Besides, I could use your help. Finding sea water in a landlocked area like Atlanta is going to be hard. And I’d much rather have you than Coach Hedge.”

“Makes sense.” Tsuna said. “He’d be screaming and threatening everything that moves just because he can. Sure, I’ll go.”

I chuckled. “I bet you’re getting sick of staying on the ship too.”

“You’re not wrong.” He said.

The ship shook, and the PA system loudly rung out. “Ahoy mateys! We have just landed in the magical land of Atlanta!”

“Leo…” Tsuna said.

“Annabeth said he was the class clown.” I said.
“Comedy is therapeutic in our situation, but it has to be good.”

I laughed a little. “Come on man. Let’s go.”

We climbed out on deck, and I was shocked at the view. We had landed near the summit of a forested hill. Near a grove of pines was something like a university or maybe even a museum. Below us was the city of Atlanta—a cluster of brown and silver buildings that stretched around flat sprawls of highways, railroad tracks, houses, and green patches of forests.

Coach was standing near the railing of the ship, arms on his waist as he took a deep breath in. “Ah, lovely spot. Good choice Valdez!”

“Uh, I just picked a tall hill.” Leo said, pointing at the white buildings I saw. “I think that’s a presidential library or something over there. At least, that’s what Festus says.”

“I don’t know or care about that!” yelled Coach. “Libraries are for sissies! Don’t you realize where we are? What happened on this hill? Zhang, you should know!”

“I should?” Frank gapped.

“A son of Ares stood here!”

“I’m Roman, so…Mars, actually.”

“Whatever! We’re parked on a famous spot in the American Civil War!”

Frank mumbled. “I’m Canadian, actually.”

“Whatever!” waved Coach. “General Sherman, Union leader. He stood on this hill watching the city of Atlanta burn. He cut a path of destruction all the way from here to the sea. Burning, looting, pillaging—now there was a demigod!”

“Is it just me, or does Coach have stars in his eyes?” Tsuna leaned in and asked.

“No, he does seem to be really excited.” I said.

“I’ve been thinking on how Ares must be his patron god or something, with how violent he is.”

“Yeah, me too. You know, he does act a lot like Clarisse I’ve noticed.”

“Yeah, I can see that too.”

“Anyway, let’s not burn down the city this time.” I said.

“All right.” Coach said. “So where are you guys going?”

I pointed downtown. “When in doubt, start in the middle.”

Together with Frank and Tsuna we left the ship and headed towards the presidential library. Everyone wished us good luck before we left. Annabeth kissed my cheek (with Coach Hedge keeping an uncomfortably close eye on us), and Hazel, who came out of her room a few minutes ago hugged Frank goodbye.

Jason, Piper, and Leo went to Tsuna. Both Leo and Jason apologized to him about the way they talked about Nico. From what I could overhear they said that they already apologized to Hazel. Piper and Leo turned to talk to Hedge about something, but Jason stuck close to Tsuna.
“Maybe we can talk later?” Jason asked. “You said we met before, and I want to know where.”

Tsuna smiled. “Yeah, we can do that.”

After climbing down the ship, I nudged Tsuna. “What was that about? What did Jason want?”

“Oh, he just wants to talk.” Tsuna said. Maybe it was the Georgian heat, but his cheeks were just noticeably red.

During our walk, we began smelling the most amazing things. There must be restaurants around here. We passed a McDonalds and a Sonic, but there were more local places. One of them smelled like Bar-B-Que and a smokehouse. Tsuna looked like a waterfall of saliva was about to come pouring out of his mouth any minute. He must be hungry.

“You know, with the way you drool over food you should be a food reviewer or something.”

“What, be like Guy Fieri, going around the country and visiting lesser known eateries?”

“Yeah, like that.”

“While that would be cool, I’d rather act.”

As we walked I was tempted to summon Blackjack, but I wasn’t sure if he’d want to help after what happened in Kansas. And Frank didn’t want to morph into anything, not that I can blame him. Besides, I wanted to travel around like a normal teenager for once.

When we arrived at the library—which happened to be the Carter Center—we went to the counter and asked the staff if they could call us a taxi or give us directions to a bus stop. As I was talking to one librarian, another, more elderly librarian (whose name happens to be Esther) came over and insisted on driving us personally.

The three of us were unsure. In our lives it’s rare for people to just randomly give us a way to travel, and when they’re pushy they tend to be monsters. It was really hard to tell, because she looked so normal. I got this grandmother vibe from her, so maybe this is just the way she is.

She piled us into the back of her black Cadillac and drove us downtown. It was pretty funny watching her drive, since she could barely see over the steering wheel. All the while, she talked about the history of Atlanta: the old plantation owners, sports stars like Dwight Howard and Walt Fraizer, and my personal favorite story was about the founders of Coca-Cola. But her stories didn’t really put me at ease.

“You know, I don’t think she’s a monster in disguise.” Tsuna whispered in my ear.

“How do you know?”

“I don’t, it’s just a feeling.” He said. “I think she’s just a nice old lady.”

“Did you say something sugar?” Esther asked. She was straining her neck to look into the rearview mirror.

“Uh…” I was drawing a blank.

Tsuna nudged me with his elbow. “Ask her about anything to deal with salt water.” I nodded.

“Actually, there’s something I’ve been meaning to ask.”
“Yes sweetheart?”

“This might be a heard question, but salt water, in Atlanta.” I said. “What’s the first thing that comes to your mind?”

“Oh sugar.” She chuckled. “That’s easy. Whale sharks!” The three of us shared a look.

“Whale sharks?” Frank asked nervously. “You have those here in Atlanta?”

“Oh yes, at the aquarium, sugar.” Esther said. “Very famous! Right downtown. Is that where you want to go?”

An aquarium. Well, as far as finding an old sea god, that would be the best place to at least start, especially here in a land locked city. And it’s not like we have any better lead.

“Yes.” I said. “That’s where we’re going.”

Another fifteen minutes went by. Esther continued her stories, going off subject once or twice by wondering aloud why three teenagers would be out by ourselves like this. Once we arrived she dropped us off at the main entrance, where a line was already forming. She wouldn’t let us leave the area around her car without insisting that we take her cell number for emergencies. She said that she didn’t like the idea of kids our age being by ourselves. Then she gave us money for a taxi back to the Carter Center and (I don’t know why she keeps it in her trunk) a jar of homemade peach jam, which Frank pocketed in his backpack.

“Thank you, ma’am.” said Frank.

“You’re welcome son.” She said. I noticed Frank flinch, but it was unnoticed by Esther. She must remind Frank of his grandmother, which I can understand is still a very touchy subject for him.

As she drove away, Frank said, “Are all people in Atlanta that nice?”

Tsuna laughed. “Oh, come on now,” he was using a (admittingly) really good southern accent. “Certainly you’ve heard of good old fashioned Southern Hospitality?” He was smiling.

“I’ve seen it in movies, but I didn’t expect that to be a real thing.” Frank said. Tsuna responded by laughing. “And cool accent man.”

“Thank you kindly.” said Tsuna, tipping an imaginary hat.

Looking at the line to get tickets, I saw that it had already grew longer. It was going to take us forever to get through. In the line were elementary schoolers in colorful shirts, probably on a trip from a day camp. I felt sad looking at them, because it reminded me that I should be at Camp Half-Blood right now having fun with Tsuna and Annabeth, teaching sword fighting to the newbies in the arena, and playing pranks with the Stolls.

We got closer to find how much tickets will cost, and it was more than I expected at $33. I patted my pockets (the only thing in them was Riptide), realizing that I never thought I would have to pay for anything today. It’s not like I had my wallet with me. I think it’s still back at Camp Half-Blood.

But then I remembered my prince of a brother. “What?” Tsuna asked when I looked at him.

“Give me your credit card.”

“Uh, no.”
“What? Why not?”

He gave me a look. “Because I’m not made of money.”

“You told me your card has unlimited funds!”

“With a monthly limit!”

“Dude…”

“What? In the letter dad left for me he said that he didn’t want me to end up being a spoiled brat.”

“You bought two Transformers in Japan just because you wanted them!”

“That was with the Olympian Credit Card! It had no limit! And Chiron took it after we returned, remember?!!”

“Fine Tsuna, but are you at your limit?”

He shrugged his shoulders. “Probably, the months almost up. Food is expensive, as is the very few hotel rooms I stayed in looking for you. I doubt I have enough to get the three of us in.”

“Can you check at least?”

“Do you see a smart phone on me?”

I sighed. “Okay. But how are we going to get in? Frank, do you have any money on you?”

Frank checked his pockets. “I have...three denarii from Camp Jupiter, and about five dollars Canadian.”

“Great.” I said. “I guess we could sneak in. Tsuna, do you think you can make us look like employees with the Yata no Kagami?”

“Yeah, it should be easy.” He said. He started to pull out his necklace when a woman in a blue and green Georgia Aquarium shirt skipped up to us, smiling brightly.

“Ah, VIP visitors!” she said way to perkily.

She looked like a school girl nerd fresh out of college. Her cheeks had dimples, he teeth were covered in braces (she looked a little too old for braces) and thick framed glasses. And her hair was up in pig tails, making her look a little younger. She was actually kinda cute, in that odd, dorky way. Nobody tell Annabeth I said that. She bounced on her heels like an excited little kid. The name tag on her shirt read *Kate*.

“Ah, you have your payment, I see.” She said. “Perfect!”

“Wh-what?” I asked.

She reached out and snatched the denarii out of Frank’s hand. “Yes, that’s fine. Right this way!”

She spun on her right heel and trotted off towards the main entrance with her hands behind her back, like she didn’t have a care in the world.

Me, Frank, and Tsuna shared a look. “A trap?”

“Probably.” Frank said.
“More than likely.” Tsuna said. “No mortal would take the denarii. Monster in disguise?”

“No doubt.” I said. “But we don’t have another option. Everyone be on alert.”

“Got it.” Frank and Tsuna said.

We followed Kate past the ticket queue and into the aquarium with no problem. Some of the people in the line gave us angry, jealous looks. They had to have been waiting in line for a while and the three of us getting in without even stepping into the line must have ticked them off.

“Right this way boys.” Kate said with a grin aimed at me. Is...is she trying to flirt with me? “It’s a wonderful exhibit. You won’t be disappointed. It’s so rare that we get VIPs.”

“Uh, you mean demigods?” Frank asked.

Kate winked at Frank and put a finger to her mouth. “So over there is the cold-water experience, with your penguins and beluga whales and whatnot. And over there...well, those are some fish, obviously.”

She didn’t seem to know or care much about some of the sea animals that live here in the aquarium. Even if she is a monster or a god in disguise, you’d think that she would put more of an effort in to keep up her appearance. She basically waved off Frank’s question about a tank of tropical fish, just calling them ‘the yellow ones.’

We passed more tanks filled with a bunch of sea life. There were sea horses, a couple of turtles, lion fish, clown fish, so many more fishes. They all noticed me and Tsuna. They called out to us, praising us for being the sons of sea gods. The turtles seemed to like Tsuna more than me. I think it has something to do with Tsuna’s connection with Ryūjin, the dragon sea god that used to inhabit his sword. When we were in his palace while in Japan, there were more turtles and jellyfish than other sea life. I think his daughter, Otohime, told me that sea turtles and jellyfish were her father’s personal servants.

When we passed a gift shop Frank slowed to a stop to check out a clearance rack that was covered clothes and toys. Kate had told him that he could grab whatever he wanted, saying that as a VIP everything was free. Frank hesitated at first, but then he started grabbing some T-shirts and stuffing them in his backpack. Meanwhile, Tsuna just looked around the store, picking up one of those shark shaped hats, a collectible coffee mug, and a stuffed squid toy.

“Dude, what are you doing?” I asked Frank.

“She said I could.” whispered Frank. “Besides, I need more clothes. I didn’t pack for a long trip!”

Frank then went and grabbed a snow globe to his stash, which was odd. I don’t know, maybe he collects snow globes or something. Then he picked up a braided cylinder the size of a candy bar.

He squinted at the toy. “What is—?”

“Chinese handcuffs.” I said. Frank looked offended.

“How is this Chinese?”

“I don’t know, that’s just what they’re called.” I said. “It’s a gag gift.”

“Come along boys!” Kate called out.
“I’ll show you later man.” I promised. Frank nodded and stuffed the toy into his back pack.

“Hey Kate, can I take a one of these?” Tsuna asked, holding up a chocolate bar.

“Sure, why not?” Kate smiled. “Anything for our VIPs!” We started walking, and Tsuna opened the candy.

“Seriously?” I asked.

“What, I’m hungry.” He said. He broke off a piece and handed it to me. “Here, have some.”

I smiled and took it. “Thanks.” I popped it into my mouth.

“Want some Frank?”

“I’m good.”

We ended up walking through an acrylic tunnel. Fish and other sea creatures swam over our heads and I felt panic rising in my throat. I told myself I was being dumb, since I’ve been underwater a million times. And Tsuna made it clear that water is not something for me to be scared of, especially after batting those ghosts at the Hubbard Glacier. But being surrounded like this just made me anxious.

Tsuna must have noticed because he walked close to my side and grabbed my hand. I nearly jumped when he did, but he just held on tighter. The look in his eyes said ‘I’ve got you.’ I nodded and took a breath. I knew he would be there for me if anything happens, but at the same time I need to get over this fear.

Letting go of Tsuna’s hand I reminded myself that the real threat here is Kate. We already know she’s not a human. I’m waiting for her to reveal herself as some horrible monster and attack us. Like when me, Grover, and Annabeth went looking for the Zeus’s Master Bolt and dealt with Medusa. She acted friendly, but she soon revealed who she really was not long after making us fall under her spell of free greasy food.

The down side is she doesn’t seem to want to reveal her true self anytime soon, so we had to play along with her VIP tour until we find Phorcys. With our luck, this has to be trap. Who am I kidding, this is clearly a trap.

The acrylic tunnel opened out into a large viewing room covered in blue light. Inside was the largest aquarium tank I have ever seen. There were schools of huge fish, including two ginormous spotted sharks, both easily twice my size. They were fat and slow, and when they opened their mouths I saw that they had no teeth.

“I thought sharks were supposed to have rows and rows of sharp teeth?” Frank said.

Kate giggled. “Silly boy, whale sharks are peaceful. They only eat plankton.” I really didn’t like the way she giggled. There was just something off about it.

Frank walked over to a plaque next to the tank. “The only whale sharks in captivity in the world. That’s kind of amazing.”

“Yes, and these are small.” Kate said, and I think she looked disappointed by that. “You should see some of my other babies out in the wild.”

“Your babies?” asked Frank.
There was this wicked glint in Kate’s eye. It didn’t make me feel comfortable. In fact, it made me definitely not want to meet her babies. Maybe it’s time for us to get to the point.

“So, Kate.” I said. “We’re looking for a guy… I mean, a god, named Phorcys. Would you happen to know him?”

Our guide snorted. “Know him? He’s my brother. That’s where we’re going sillies. The real exhibits are right through here.”

So she’s not a monster, she’s a sea goddess. An old one at that, if she’s Phorcys’s sister. Still, there’s something about her that I can’t just simply trust. Gods aren’t this nice and helpful, at least none of the gods I’ve ever met, except maybe a couple.

Kate gestured at a wall, were the black surface began to ripple like water. It faded away, revealing another tunnel. Purple light was coming out of it. Kate strolled inside, hands behind her back without a care in the word. The last thing that I wanted was to follow her, but if Phorcys is on the other side, and if he really had useful information that would help us on our quest…

“So are we going in, or not?” Tsuna asked.

“I’m not sure.” I said. “What do you guys think?”

“We can’t trust her.” Frank said.

“Yeah, my spider sense has been tingling since we met Kate.” Tsuna said. “I also don’t like the fact she said she’s Phorcys’s sister. There’s something about that that sets my nerves on edge.”

“Me too.” I said. “But can we really just turn around now?”

“It’s up to you Percy.” Frank said, and I could tell that he wanted me to choose to leave.

“Whatever you choose, I’ll stick by your side.” Tsuna said.

I nodded. “Let’s go. We’re here for a reason. The sooner we talk to Phorcys the sooner we can leave.”

I took a deep breath and walked into the tunnel, Frank and Tsuna behind me. Once we left the tunnel we stepped into another room filled with giant aquarium tanks. Above us were multicolored jellyfish the size of trash cans. They had hundreds, thousands of tentacles, each one looking like silky barbed wire. I’d hate to step on one of those on the beach.

“You see?” Kate said excitedly. “Forget the whale sharks! And there’s much more!”

The jellyfish must have noticed Tsuna, because they all started to gather above him. One even dropped its fully-grown swordfish dinner from its tentacles. They smashed together as close as possible to each other in the tank.

“Oh, hi there.” Tsuna waved at the giant jellyfish. I think they jiggled in awe.

“Huh, they seem to like you.” Kate said. “What’s your secret?”

“Uh, Japanese magnetism?” said Tsuna.

Kate seemed to accept that and continue to lead us deeper into this secret aquarium. The next chamber was even larger than the last. One wall had a glowing red sign that said ‘DEATH IN THE DEEP SEAS!’, sponsored by Monster Doughnut.
“Wait a minute, Monster Doughnut?” I asked after reading the sign twice.

“Oh yes.” Kate said. “One of our corporate sponsors.”

I gulped. I don’t really have good experiences with Monster Doughnut. Not with their food (I’ve never had their doughnuts). When we were in Florida on our way to the Sea of Monsters, me, Annabeth, and Tyson fought a hydra which came from a Monster Doughnuts.

Looking around, the exhibits included a lot of supernatural sea creatures. In one aquarium, there were a dozen hippocampi, the horses with fish tails instead of hind legs. I’ve met and rode a few before, but I never expected them to be in an aquarium. I was waiting for them to notice me and call me ‘My Lord’ like all the others do, but they just floated around, occasionally bonking against the glass. It’s as if their minds weren’t all there.

“This isn’t right.” I muttered.

“I know.” Tsuna said. His hands were clenched. “Look over there.”

He pointed to another tank. It was smaller than the one that held the Hippocampi. Inside were two Nereids. These two girl sea spirits were sitting cross legged and playing…are they seriously playing Go Fish? And they looked incredibly bored, with their eyes half closed.

I could hardly breathe I was so angry. “How can you keep them here?”

“I know.” Kate sighed. “They aren’t very interesting. We tried to teach them some tricks, but with no luck, I’m afraid.”

“Tricks?” Tsuna asked. “They’re Nereids, not circus animals! They live in the sea, with fresh clean water, sunshine, wind, and natural company. They have minds of their own! And you think you can just teach them tricks?!”

Kate just hummed and turned. “I think you’ll like this tank over here better.”

I tried to continue Tsuna’s argument, but Kate ignored me. She led us to a tank filled with two giant sea serpents that had glowing blue scales and jaws that could have bitten a whale in half. She then pointed to a tank that had a giant squid that looked bigger than an eighteen-wheeler. And then there was a tank filled with Telkhines-the seal men with dog like faces. I remember them from the Labyrinth, in one of Hephaestus’s Forges, remaking Kronos’s scythe.

“What are those things?” Frank asked, watching the smallest try to build something out of Legos.

“Telkhines, the only ones in captivity.” Kate happily.

“But they fought for Kronos in the Titan War!” I said. “They’re dangerous!”

“Well of course they are!” Kate said with a role of her eyes. “We couldn’t call it ‘Death in the Deep Seas’ if these exhibits weren’t dangerous. But don’t worry, we keep them sedated.”

“Sedated?” asked Frank, who looked appalled. “Is that even legal?”

Kate ignored him and kept going. I was getting really pissed that she kept ignoring us. It’s as if she didn’t care, just going on and on about the exhibits. When she talked about how one of the creatures’ favorite food was demigods, Frank freaked out a bit.

“But they will eat whales or small boats too.” Kate said before stopping and turning towards us.
Was she blushing? “Sorry, I am such a monster nerd! I’m sure you know all about this, being a son of Poseidon, and all.”

That set off alarm bells. Yeah, Frank called us demigods, and she took the denarii, but how does she know that I’m the son of Poseidon? Can she sense Frank’s connection to Dad? And what about Tsuna? Can she sense he’s the son of Susanoo?

“Who are you?” I demanded. “Does ‘Kate’ stand for something?”

“Kate?” she asked confused. “Oh…” She started laughing. “No, it’s actually—”

“Hello!!” boomed a new voice over a PA system.

Out of the darkness scuttled out a small man. The way he scuttled reminded me of Zoidberg from Futurama. It was like he was part crab with the way he walked. And he was wearing this wetsuit that was made covered in several horrible shades of green. In silver glitter printed down the side the words *Porky’s Follies*. He was wearing a wireless headset over his greasy hair, and he had these messed up glassy blue eyes.

“Visitors!” he said, his voice thundering through the microphone. “Welcome to Phorcys’s Follies!” He swept his arm in one direction as if to cue something that was supposed to happen. “Curse it. Telkhines, that’s your cue! I wave my hands, and you leap energetically in your tank, so a synchronized double spin, and land in a pyramid formation. We practiced this!”

“Nice outfit.” Tsuna said sarcastically, although crab man here didn’t seem to notice.

“Thank you!” he said excitedly, beaming with pride over his costume. “I am Phorcys.”

“Um…” Frank shifted from foot to foot. “Why does your suit say ‘Porky’ then?”

Phorcys snarled at Frank and groaned in annoyance. “Stupid uniform company. They can’t get anything right!”

“I told them my name was *Keto*.” ‘Kate’, now Keto, said as she tapped her nametag. “They misspelled it as Kate. My brother…well, now he’s Porky.”

“I am not!” he snapped. “I am not even a little porky.” Actually, he did have a bit of a beer gut like Smelly Gabe’s. “The name doesn’t even work with Follies, either. What kind of show is called *Porky’s Follies*? But you folks don’t want to hear us complain. Behold, the wondrous majesty of the giant killer squid!”

Waving his arms again, he gestured to the tank that had the squid. Fireworks shot out in front of the glass on cue this time, sending a geyser of golden sparkles right in front of us. Music started building from the speakers. When the lights were brought up, the squid was gone. It must have skulked back into its cave.

“Curse it!” Phorcys yelled again. His neck snapped to his sister. “Keto, training the squid was your job! Juggling, I said. Maybe a little bit of flesh rendering for the finale. Is that too much to ask?”

“Oh, the poor thing is just shy.” Keto said defensively. “Besides, each of his tentacles has sixty-two razorlike barbs that have to be sharpened daily.” She turned to Frank and smiled excitedly. “Did you know the monstrous squid is the only beast known to eat demigods whole, armor and all, without getting indigestion? It’s true!” Frank stumbled away from her.

“Keto!” snapped Porky. “You’ll bore our guests with so much information. Less education, more
entertainment! We’ve discussed this.”

“But—”

“No buts!” he yelled. “We’re here to present “Death in the Deep Seas!”” He took a small pause. “Sponsored by Monster Doughnut!!” His last words reverberated across the room, with flashing lights and smoke coming out of the floor. “Now available at the concession stand. But you’ve already spent all of your hard-earned denarii to get the VIP tour, and so you shall! Come with me!”

“Um, hold it!” I said. Phorcys’s smile dropped in a very ugly way.

“Yes?” he hissed out.

“You’re a sea god, aren’t you? Son of Gaea?”

Dr. Zoidberg here sighed. “Five thousand years, and I’m still known as Gaea’s little boy. Never mind that I am one of the oldest sea gods in existence. Older than your upstart father, by the way.” Tsuna clicked his teeth and I could see in the corner of my eye that he was prepping himself for anything. “I am the god of the hidden depths! Lord of watery terrors! Father of a thousand monsters! But, no…Nobody even knows me. I make one little mistake, supporting the Titans in their war, and I’m exiled from the ocean, to Atlanta of all places.”

“We thought the Olympians said Atlantis.” explained Keto. “Their idea of a joke, I guess, sending us here instead.

“So you are a goddess.” Tsuna said.

“Keto, yes!” She clapped her hands together. “Goddess of sea monsters, naturally.” So that’s why she kept calling those serpents her ‘babies’. “Whales, sharks, squids, and other giant sea life, but my heart always belonged to the monsters. Did you know that young sea serpents can regurgitate the flesh of their victims and keep themselves fed for up to six years on the same meal? It’s true!” Frank looked like he was going to throw up himself.

“Oh, that’s fascinating.” Tsuna said, sarcasm dripping from his voice. “Please, tell me more.”

“Yay!” Keto screeched. “See Phorcys? People do want to learn about my babies!”

“He was being sarcastic Keto!” Phorcys said. “No one wants to learn about the finer details of the kids! No, they want a show! So let me give them a show! Now, I present to you our Nereid gladiators! Witness them fight to the death!”

A mirrored disco ball descended into the Nereid exhibit, making the water dance in multicolored lights. With a thunk, two swords were dropped into the water and landed next to the Nereids. They slowly looked them over before ignoring them completely and going back to their Go Fish game.

“I said, ‘Witness them fight to the death!’” Phorcys yelled. The Nereids ignored him. “Curse it! Curse it! Curse it!!” He stomped his foot at every ‘curse’ said. “Never mind. There are other exhibits to see. Come with me boys.”

“Actually, I’m the tour guide.” Keto said.

“I’ll take it from here.” Phorcys said. “Go train the squid like you’re supposed to, or feed one of the other creatures. It’s my turn with the VIPs.”
“Percy,” Tsuna whispered in my ear. “Get the information we need and let’s get out of here.”

“Right.” I said. “Listen, Phorcys—”

“Come on boys, there’s so much more to see.” Phorcys scuttled away. I looked back at the others for support.

“Let’s go guys.” I said.

We began following the old sea god deeper into the building. I then started noticing a small headache building up. Maybe it was from yesterdays’ head injury. But then Tsuna’s healing always fully works, so maybe not. It could have been from a combination of Phorcys’s special effects and Keto’s biology lesson.

“So…” I managed. “Dionysus sent us.”

“Bacchus.” Frank corrected.

“Right.” I shook my head and rubbed the back of my neck. I could barely remember one name for the gods, so two was pushing it. “The wine god, whatever. Bacchus said that you might know what your mom Gaea is up to, and these twin Giant brothers of yours—Ephialtes and Otis. And if you happen to know anything about this Mark of Athena—”

“Bacchus thought I would help you?” Phorcys asked.

“Well, yeah.” I said. I have to earn his trust. “Uh, I mean, you the Phorcys. Everybody talks about you.”

The sea god tilted his head. “They do?”

“Oh…sure!” Frank said. “People talk about you all the time.”

“What do they say?”

“Uh, well…” Frank looked uncomfortable. “Well, you have great pyrotechnics. And a good announcer’s voice. And, um, uh…”

I nudged Tsuna. “You have amazing stage presence. And you’re so full of energy that any crowd is mesmerized by you.”

“Yes!” Phorcys clacked his fingers and thumbs together like a crab. “It’s true. I also have the largest collection of captive monsters in the world!”

“And you know stuff.” I added. “Stuff like the twins and what they’re up to.”

“The twins!” echoed Phorcys. “Yes, I know all about Ephialtes and Otis. Those wannabes! They never fit in with the other Giants. Too puny—and those snakes for feet.”

“Snakes for feet?” I asked. So that’s why it looked like they were wearing elf shoes.

“Yes, yes.” said Phorcys impatiently. “They knew that they couldn’t get by on their strength, so they decided to go for Drama—illusions, stage tricks, that sort of thing. You see, Gaea *shaped* her Giant children with specific enemies in mind. Each Giant was created to kill a certain, specific god.” We already knew that much. “Ephialtes and Otis…well, they sort of the Anti-Dionysus.”
Tsuna and I shared a look. Why would Mr. D require two Giants to off him? You’d think that Gaea would want the two Twin Giants to go after the two Twin gods, Apollo and Artemis.

“So what? They want to replace all wince with cranberry and grape juice or something?” I asked.

“No, no, no, nothing like that!” snorted the old sea god. “Ephialtes and his brother always wanted to do things better, flashier, more spectacular! Oh, of course they wanted to kill Dionysus, but that wasn’t enough. They want to upstage him, humiliate him by taking his reveries and making them look tame!”

“How?” Frank asked, looking around at Phorcys’s special effects. “With fireworks and disco balls?”

Phorcys smiled creepily. “Exactly. I taught the twins everything they know, or at least I tried to. They never listened. Their first big trick? They tried to reach the peak of Olympus by stacking mountains on top of each other. It was just an illusion, of course. I told them it was ridiculous. ‘You should start out small,’ I said. ‘Sawing each other in half, pulling gorgons out of a hat. That sort of thing. And matching sequined outfits. Twins need those!’”

“Oh, they’re preparing for their doomsday show in Rome.” sneered Phorcys. “It’s one of Mother’s silly ideas.” I was expecting something to happen from Gaea since one of her children insulted her. “They’re keeping some prisoner on a large bronze jar.” He turned towards Frank. “You’re a child of Ares, right? You’ve got that smell. The twins imprisoned your father the same way once.”

“Yes, another stupid stunt.” said the sea god. “I mean, how can you show off your prisoner if he’s trapped in a bronze jar? No entertainment value. Not like my lovely specimens!”

He waved towards the hippocampi, who were just banging their heads against the glass. Tsuna had gripped my wrist when the bronze jar was mentioned. I know he’s worried about Nico. And now he must think that Nico’s in even more danger, if the twins were able to capture Ares once, and even I know Nico is more capable and clear headed than the god of war. I wanted to say something to comfort him, but my head was starting to feel fuzzy, so much so that it was taking a lot for me to focus.

“You said this—this doomsday show was Gaea’s plan?” I asked.

“Well, Mother’s plans always have lots of layers.” He laughed. “The earth has layers! I suppose that makes sense!”

“Oh, she has put out a bounty on some group of demigods.” He said. “She doesn’t really care who kills them, as long as they are killed. Well, while leaving a specific two in good enough condition, Tartarus only knows why. At any rate, the twins have their little show planned, hoping it will lead these demigods to Rome. I suppose that the prisoner in the jar is a friend of theirs or some such. That, or perhaps they think this group of demigods would be foolish enough to come into their territory searching for the Mark of Athena. Ha! Good luck with that, eh?” He elbowed Frank in the
Tsuna’s grip loosened on my wrist and he started walking towards Phorcys. I had to stop him before he did something stupid, so I grabbed his hand tight and, without making it clear what I was doing pulled him back to my side. He was thinking about Nico, I know.

“Yeah.” laughed Frank nervously. “Ha-ha. That would be really dumb, because, uh…”

Phorcys narrowed his eyes. He has to know who we are, that we’re the demigods with the price on our heads. With my free hand, I reach into my pocket and gripped Riptide. Over the years I’ve been pretty good at being able to draw it out really quick in sudden fights.

Luckily for us Phorcys just grinned and elbowed Frank again. “Ha! Good one, son of Mars. I suppose you’re right. No point talking about it. Even if the demigods found that map in Charleston, there’s no way they’d make it to Rome alive!”

“Yes, the MAP IN CHARLESTON,” Frank said loudly, giving me a wide-eyed to signal me. He couldn’t have been more obvious. I got the message loud and clear. Charleston.

“But enough boring educational stuff.” Phorcys said. “You’ve all paid for the VIP treatment! Won’t please let me finish the tour? The tree denarii entrance fee is refundable, you know.”

“Afterwards, can we ask questions?” I asked.

“Of course! I’ll tell you everything you need to know.” He clapped his hands twice. A new tunnel appeared underneath the red sign. “Walk this way please!”

Frank scratched his head and looked to me. “Do we have to—” He mimicked the crab movement.

“It’s just a figure of speech, man.” I said. “Tsuna, are you okay?”

Tsuna took a breath and nodded. “Yeah I’m fine. Just feeling off.”

“You too?” I asked.

“What wrong?” asked Frank.

“It’s just as Tsuna said, we’re feeling off.” I said. “Do you think we’re just feeling what they’re feeling?” I gestured out to the exhibits.

“Maybe.” Tsuna said, rubbing his forehead. “We should go after him, but be ready for anything.”

I lead the others through the tunnel. The moment that we saw all the water over our heads (about fifty thousand gallons) Tsuna’s grip on my hand tightened. He was making sure that I knew that he was there for me, and I appreciated it. This wasn’t going to be a big deal. Together, we can deal with any water.

“Beautiful exhibit, isn’t it?” Phorcys had stopped in the middle of the tunnel and spread his arms proudly.

Beautiful isn’t the word I would use to describe it. Empty, lackluster, boring, those come to mind. In one corner of the tank was a forest of fake kelp and a life sized plastic gingerbread house. Is this supposed to be an underwater Hansel and Gretel? In the opposite corner, there was a plastic sculpture of an old school diver suit kneeling at sunken treasure chest which sent bubbles out every time it flapped opened. The floor was covered in what looked marbles the size of bowling balls and
weapons: swords, tridents, even spear guns.

“What do you keep in here?” Frank asked. “Giant killer goldfish?”

“Oh, that would be good!” Phorcys said. “Think of the shows we could do with that! Imagine, the crowd waiting for something unseen, and then giant goldfish! At first the question why, and then we bring in the bait and have them tear it apart! Oh, I should send a memo to Keto, get her started on those. But no, Frank Zhang, descendent of Poseidon. This tank is not for goldfish.”

Frank flinched at ‘descendent of Poseidon.’ Tsuna tried to let go of my hand, but I held tight. Just because he could sense Frank’s connection to dad, that doesn’t mean Phorcys can tell about Tsuna’s connection to the sea through Susanoo. He could be our trump card here, and he can’t show our hand yet.

“How do you know Frank’s last name?” I asked, swallowing the sense of dread. “How do you know he’s descended from Poseidon?”

“Well…” Phorcys shrugged and scratched the back of his head. “It was probably in the descriptions Gaea provided. You know, for the bounty, Percy Jackson.”

Shit. At that instant, I let go of Tsuna’s hand and drew Riptide while he drew the Kusanagi. Frank sadly didn’t bring his bow, so all he has was his back ready to be thrown. We pointed out swords at the sea god.

“Don’t double-cross me, Phorcys. You promised me answers.”

Again Phorcys shrugged. “After the VIP treatment, yes. I promised to tell you everything you needed to know. The thing is, however, you don’t really need to know anything.” His smile stretched unnaturally wide. “You see, even if make it to Rome, which is quite unlikely, you’d never defeat my Giant brothers without a god fighting by your side. And what god would help you? So I have a better plan. You’re not leaving. You’re VIPs—Very Important Prisoners!”

Frank tossed his backpack right at Phorcys’s ugly face. Me and Tsuna lunged. But before any of us could hit him he vanished into thin air. He called out to us from the aquarium’s sound system.

“Yes, good!” he said. “Fighting is good! You see, Mother never trusted me with big assignments, but she did agree that I could keep anything I caught. You all will make fine exhibits!”

“Jigoku no yō ni okorudarou, anata no obaka!” Tsuna yelled.

“Don’t think I forgot about you son of Susanoo.” Phorcys said. Gods dammit! “Mother wanted me to capture you if I saw you. She wants you out of the way, so I’ll gift wrap you for her to do with as she pleases. She told me some of the plans she has for you, and they sound unbearable to watch.”

“Gaea ga watashi o nozomunara, kanojo wa kanojo no futotta o shiri kara orite kite, watakushijishin o te ni ireru koto ga dekimasu!” said Tsuna.

“He’s not going anywhere!” I said.

“Oh, of course he’s not!” Phorcys said. “At least, not without performing a few shows for me! Can’t you see it? My aquarium will become a major hit once the ‘Sons of the Sea Gods’ exhibit come about. Gods, monsters, spirits of all shapes and sizes, from all walks of life, will be overjoyed! I’ll have you three fight each other every day at eleven am and one pm, with an evening show at seven pm.”
“You’re crazy!” yelled Frank.

“Don’t sell yourself so short!” Phorcys said. “You’ll be our biggest draw!”

Frank ran for the exit, only to run right into a glass wall. If the situation wasn’t so serious it probably would have been funny. I ran the other way and found the same thing. The tunnel had become a bubble.

“Percy! The glass!” Tsuna called out. I placed my hand on the wall and realized that it was softening, melting like ice. All that water would soon come crashing in.

“We won’t cooperate, Phorcys!” I shouted.

“Oh, I’m optimistic.” boomed Phorcys. “If you won’t fight each other at first, no problem! No problems at all. I can send in fresh sea monsters every day. After you get used to the food here, you’ll be properly sedated and will follow any directions. Believe me, you’ll learn to love your new homes.”

“That’s inhumane!” yelled Tsuna.

“But you’re not human, at least, not fully.” Phorcys yelled. “No, what you are, are exhibits.” Above us the glass started to crack and water began to trickle in.

“I’m the son of Poseidon!” I screamed. “You can’t imprison me in water! This is where I’m strongest!”

Phorcys laughed. “What a coincidence! It’s also where I’m strongest. This tank is specially designed to contain demigods. Now have fun you three. I’ll be seeing you soon!”

At that the glass dome shattered. And water began to crash in. Tsuna tried to swim for me, and I struggled to get to him. But the water was already at my chin, and I was too far away from him or Frank. While I could, I took a deep breath and held it.

I don’t know how long I held it, but when I couldn’t stand it anymore I breathed in and felt my lungs fill with water. Since I didn’t die from drowning or the water pressure, my powers still were working.

I took another deep breath in, calming myself down. “It’s just a stupid phobia.” I thought. “I’m not going to drown.”

“Oh good, you didn’t freak out.” Turning around I saw Tsuna floating near me. “I thought I was going to have to calm you down.”

“Just means I’m brave.” I said.

“That, or you finally accepted that there’s nothing to be scared of.”

“Yeah, I could have overreacted like Frank—” My eyes went wide. Me and Tsuna shared a look.

“FRANK!!” We yelled.

We were filled with fear, panic, and guilt. How could we have forgotten Frank? He’s a distant, DISTANT, descendant of dad, so there’s no way he could breathe underwater. But where is he? We turned around in a circle and found nothing. With nowhere else to look, we looked up and where shocked by what we saw.
“Dude.” I sent my thoughts out through the water. “A goldfish?” Frank had shapeshifted. He changed himself—clothes, backpack, and all—into a giant fish.

“Looks more like a koi fish.” Tsuna said. “See the whiskers?”

“Guys, seriously?” Frank asked.

“Sorry dude, but seriously?” I indicated to his form.

“I freaked, okay?” he said. “We were talking about goldfish, so it was on my mind. Sue me.”

“We’re having a telepathic conversation with a giant koi.” I said. “Great. Can you turn into something more... useful?”

“Like what?” Frank asked annoyed.

“Anything would be more useful than a koi fish.” said Tsuna.

“I’ll try.” Frank said. He went quiet, maybe he was concentrating. It was impossible to tell. Koi fish don’t have many expressions. “Sorry. I’m stuck. It happens sometimes when I panic.”

“Fine.” I gritted my teeth. “Let’s figure out how to escape.”

Frank went and circled the tank. When he came back he found no exits. Tsuna went above us and found that it was covered by this net made of Celestial Bronze mesh. I tried to use Riptide to cut through it, but it didn’t cut, or even make a dent.

“So what now?” Tsuna asked.

I looked around and saw the glass wall. “We break the glass.”

We swam over to the glass wall and started banging on it. Neither of our swords was scratching it. Even Frank couldn’t even smudge the glass. I decided to try different weapons, so I swam to the floor and picked up a few. They were all made of Celestial Bronze, a few of them were made of Stygian Iron, and one was actually made with Imperial Gold. I ended up breaking three tridents, a sword, and a spear gun before giving up on using anymore.

I was getting so pissed off that I decided to try to use my powers to control the water. I wanted to make it expand and break the tank, or make the water explode out of the top so break through the mesh netting. But the water didn’t obey.

“Not having any luck either?” Tsuna asked.

“None.” I said. I tried again until my ears popped.

“It must be Phorcys.” said Tsuna. “He has to be repressing our powers.”

“So what do you think?” I asked. “Co-op mode?”

He nodded. “Co-op mode.”

Tsuna reached out his hand and I took it. Together we focused on making the water bend to our will. I could feel the water just move slightly around us, but it also felt like it was resisting us. Tsuna squeezed my hand tighter, so I focused harder. But the water still wasn’t doing what we wanted.
Is this really going to be our fate? Putting on shows for monsters and gods, being as dazed as the Nereids, the telkhines, the hippocampi—that didn’t calm me down. I don’t want to live the rest of my life like that. I’d rather go down fighting the Giants and saving the world.

But, if we even do get out of here and get to Rome, how are we going to fight the Giants? The gods are fractured between their Greek and Roman aspects. Even then, they don’t want to help despite the fact that if they don’t the world will end. And the ones willing to help us want an impossible tribute, and the idea of giving Bacchus, or Dionysus, or whatever he calls himself a tribute makes me sick to my stomach.

Tsuna screamed. “What’s wrong?” I asked.

“I am not going to live in captivity or become Gaia’s plaything!” Tsuna put his sword towards his face. “I’m going to use the Kusanagi to get us out of here. Phorcys might be strong in the water, but he’s nothing compared to my dad!”

The Kusanagi began glowing in a sea green light. I could feel the energy that it held within. It was like it was the power of the sea itself was held in one blade. The water around the three of us began to shift around us, finally bending to Tsuna’s will.

“Now, now Shinto demigod.” Phorcys spoke. “No need for your toy anymore.”

The Kusanagi began shaking violently in Tsuna’s hand. “What’s happening?” Frank asked

“I-I don’t know.” Tsuna said, and he was looking scared. “Something’s happening, and it’s like the Kusanagi is resisting.”

“Hold on Tsuna!” I yelled. “Keep a tight hold in it!”

“I’m trying!”

Soon the Kusanagi began to drag Tsuna across the tank. He held on as tight as he could, but he kept getting tossed around. I tried to grab a hold of him but I missed every time. Frank has to swim away from the Kusanagi when he was in its path.

All of the sudden Tsuna and the Kusanagi just stopped. Tsuna then let go with screech of pain. I went over and saw that his hands looked burnt, but they were healing.

“Are you—”

“Grab it!”

I didn’t even get a chance to move, let alone grab the Tsuna’s Sacred Regalia. There was a flash of light and the Kusanagi was gone.

“DAD!!” cried Tsuna.

Tsuna started freaking out. Like he lost his mind. I had to hold him around the waist as he kept calling out for his dad. This was not something I expected to see from Tsuna. While he can be emotional, I hadn’t seen him like this since he learned his mother died.

“Tsuna, calm down!”

“Give me back my father!!” he cried.

I swam around to Tsuna’s front and grabbed his face, making him look right in my eyes. “Tsuna,
you need to calm down! Everything is going to be fine. I promise you that I will get the Kusanagi back. I will get your father back. But I need to calm down.”

Tsuna slowly nodded, so I let go of him and backed away. He curled in on himself and was taking deep breathes. Before I could move farther away, I noticed that the water around Tsuna was starting to feel colder. Like, really cold. And it was getting colder by the second.

“Tsuna—”

“Percy, what's happening?” Frank asked.

I gulped. “I-I’m not sure.” I saw ice started forming on Tsuna’s body. Was this his magic again? “We need to get out of here, now.”

“How is he freezing the water around him?”

“It has to be his magic, just like earlier in the dining hall.” I said. “Hurry, we need to break the glass.”

We swam back to the glass wall and started banging on it as hard as we could. I took out Riptide and started slamming the pommel against it as hard as I could. The water kept getting colder and colder, and when I looked back over my shoulder I saw that chunks of ice were floating around Tsuna, the bubbles from the gingerbread house chimney and the treasure chest were frozen and falling to the ground.

“Percy look!” Frank said. I turned back around and saw Kate-I mean Keto- looking at us with a smile.

“Well, I hope you three are comfortable.” She said. She stood on her toes and looked over my shoulder. “Oh dear, that poor boy. He doesn’t look too good.”

“Let us out Keto!” I screamed, bubbles erupting from my mouth.

“You know I can’t do that.” Keto said. “Besides, I don’t want to. Gaea wants you all out of her way. And then there’s the Shinto boy.”

“What are you planning to do with him?!”

“Well, until the Earth Mother comes to take him, I’m going to see what sort of monsters he’ll attract from his homeland.” She said. “They’ll make the most lovely specimens and exhibits. They’ll be the last of their kind of course, if they weren’t already, after Gaea destroys all of Japan. He must have made her really mad.”

“That’s not happening!” I yelled. I continued to bang on the glass. “My brother will not be bait! We’re getting out of here!”

Frank started ramming into the glass to help out. Keto just watched us amused. The tank was getting really cold now, and I don’t know how much longer I can last, let alone Frank. I don’t think Keto noticed, but I saw frost starting to climb like a fern all over the edges of the glass wall.

“Come now boys!” Phorcys spoke through the intercom. “You’re just going to tire yourselves out! You should just rest up a bit and prepare for your first show! Oh, you’re going to love it, you’ll be facing some Karkinoss in an hour! And do something with the Shinto boy! He looks pathetic!”

I looked over my shoulder and saw that Tsuna had curled in on himself even more, holding himself
as tight as possible. “Tsuna…”

“Oh, is it because I stole his little sword?” asked Phorcys. “I personally don’t know why it’s so important, but Mother really wants it. Probably to destroy it, if I’m honest. I think it has something to do with how you’ve angered her.”

“No. No. No.” Tsuna said, shaking his head back and forth and clutching his hair. “Dad…” Tsuna’s body started shaking.

I swam back over to him and grabbed his shoulders. “Tsuna you need to calm down! Whatever’s happening in here is because of you! You’re making the water too cold for me or Frank!” Tsuna still shook, not looking me in the eye. “Come on man, please, just calm—” Tsuna looked up, and instead of his eyes that looked so much like mine and Dad’s, they were snow white.

Between my battle experience over the years and my own demigod senses, I knew that something was about to happen. Tsuna’s magic is unpredictable at the best of times right now, so I had no idea what is going to happen. All I knew was that something was coming.

“Percy, I can’t last in this cold.” Frank said. Neither can I Frank, neither can I. Ice was starting to cover my body.

“Frank, when I get to you you need to back to a human.” I said. “You’re going to need as much heat as possible for what’s coming.”

“What’s coming?” he asked.

I didn’t answer him. Instead I swam as fast as I could to him, and he must have switched back to normal by instinct because he was back to being a person again when I reached him. I hugged him as tight as I could and kept my back to Tsuna. I did everything in my power to keep Frank from drowning and to make the water behind me protect us from what Tsuna was about to do, and I refused to let the water ignore what I wanted.

I didn’t have to wait long because the next thing I felt was this wave of intense cold. I could hear the water starting to freeze. The force of what Tsuna did sent me and Frank slamming into the glass. Either it was the blast itself or me and Frank hitting it, but the glass cracked and broke. Before closing my eyes to protect my eyes from the glass, I saw Keto stare at us in shock with her jaw dropped. And then all the water came pouring out. It was like there was a raging river in my ears as me and Frank were poured out of the tank.

Once I felt that there wasn’t any water around us and we were able to breath, I opened my eyes and let go of Frank. He rolled onto his back and started coughing. I stood up, making sure to be careful of the shattered glass. Not too far away was Keto. Her face was bleeding Ichor and the plastic diver was on top of her.

I willed Frank dry and started looking for Tsuna. He was leaning against the broken tank. He wasn’t wet (obviously) but his clothes were completely covered in frost, and from what I could tell he looked out of it.

“Tsuna, are you okay?” I asked, stepping close to him. He didn’t answer. All he did was put his free hand to his forehead. All of the sudden alarms started blaring. “We have to go!” I grabbed Tsuna and supported him as I started running. But we didn’t get far.

“WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!” Phorcys said popping into existence. His face was almost purple in anger. “YOU RUINED MY AQUARIUM!!”
Frank yelped seeing the angry sea god. But I wasn’t paying him any attention. What I was looking at was the Kusanagi in Phorcys’s hand. It looked like it weighed a lot more than it should, and it was making his right-side droop towards the floor.

“Give me back the Kusanagi Phorcys.” I demanded. “You have no right to wield it. Only Tsuna as the heir of the Shinto Pantheon can truly use it.”

“What, you mean this?” Phorcys tried to lift his arm, but the Kusanagi seemed to make itself heavier. Was Susanoo making it work against him? “This thing is resisting me and sending shocks all through my body. You can’t imagine how much it hurts. But maybe if I kill the Shinto demigod it’ll bend to my will.”

I raised Riptide. “You’ll have to go through m—” Tsuna pushed me to the side and stomped closer to Phorcys.

“Give him back.” He said. His fists were clenched and he was glaring daggers at the old sea god. “I want him back!”

“Who are you talking about boy!” yelled Phorcys.

“My dad.” said Tsuna. “Give me back my dad now!”

“Your father?” asked Phorcys. “You mean to tell me that he’s in this blade? That’s why Mother wants it destroyed! Well, I’m not going to let something like this back in the hands of—”

“I SAID GIVE HIM BACK!!”

Tsuna raised his hands and a pulse of his magic blasted out. Phorcys wasn’t expecting it and took the full blast, sending him flying into a pile of weapons that had spilled out when the tank broke. Tridents, harpoons, swords, spears made of Celestial Bronze, Stygian Iron, and Imperial Gold impaled and burst through Phorcys, spilling his Ichor onto the soaking floor. I don’t think being impaled by three magical metals will kill him, but he has to be in more pain than he has ever felt. He was moaning really loud too.

With his grip broken, the Kusanagi started glowing. It flew out of Phorcys’s hand and into Tsuna’s. Tsuna smiled once it was in his hand and it looked like the world was lifted off his shoulders. But then he nearly fell.

“Tsuna!” I jumped forward and caught him before he fell onto the floor and glass.

“Is he okay?” Frank asked.

I put Riptide to Tsuna’s mouth and saw the metal fog up with his breath. “He’s alive, but I think he passed out.” I looked back at the Kusanagi and watched it turn back to its ring form around Tsuna’s right ring finger. “We need to get out of here. Phorcys won’t stay down long.” Keto started making noises. “And she’s about to get up.”

I put Tsuna on my back and followed Frank out of the glass tunnel. We passed the other sea creatures-the Nereids, the telkhines, the hippocampi- and I wanted to help them. I sent them a promise that I’ll come back, but I wasn’t sure they heard me. I don’t even know how I could do it. They’re sea creatures, they won’t do well on land. And it would give Phorcys and Keto time to recover and capture us. As proud as I am in my powers, I know that I can’t go up against Phorcys. He’d overpower me for sure.

And I have to get Tsuna out of here. His magic took a lot out of him, cause he’s basically
like Nico right now. And his…breakdown…he and I are going to talk about that when we get back to the ship.

Me and Frank stumbled out of the glass tunnel and into the mortal area of the aquarium, in the whale shark exhibit. The crowds were all panicking and screaming. There were kids crying for their parents. The staff was trying to get everybody to calm down, but the people were stampeding to the closest exits. Frank led me through the crowd and to a spot hidden from view.

“Hop on!” he yelled. He shifted into a giant eagle large enough to carry me and Tsuna.

I laid Tsuna on Frank’s back and got on, making sure to keep an arm around him while I gripped onto Frank’s feathers. “Go Frank, go!” With a shriek Frank flapped his wings and took off into the sky and towards the Argo II.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and Kudos are appreciated.
Tsuna V

Chapter Notes

Thanks to Aflashofthought for BETAing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I don’t feel good. I felt like I was going to throw up and I think I was seeing shapes being my eyes. I didn’t want to open my eyes, but I heard wind blowing in my ear and Percy talking right next to me. I struggled to open my eyes to see what was going on.

“P-Per-c-” I tried to say, but my throat felt raw.

“Tsuna, you’re awake, thank the gods.” Percy said. “Try not to speak until we get back to the ship, you need to save your strength.”

I rolled my neck to the side and felt something soft pillow my head. “Where are we?”

“We’re on Frank.” Percy explained. “He’s flying us back to the ship. But please Tsuna, rest.”

I tried to argue, but it was as if I lost my voice. I have no idea what’s wrong with me, so I did as Percy said. I closed my eyes again, and when I opened them again Frank was descending. How long was I out?

“By the gods!” That sounded like Jason. “What happened?”

Frank landed on the ship and Percy helped me off him. “I’ll tell you later, right now we need to get out of here! Frank—”

“I’ll find Leo.” Frank said and he took off.

“Tsuna, are you okay?” Jason asked, looking worried. I wonder how I looked to him.

“Yeah,” I said as I made Percy let go of me, “I’m fi—” Before I could finish my knees buckled and I nearly toppled over, if it wasn’t for Percy and Jason catching me.

“Tsuna—!” Jason yelled.

“We need to get him to sick bay now.” Percy said. “Jason help me out.”

“Got it.” nodded Jason.

They both supported me by the shoulders and carried me down to the lower levels. What happened to me? It’s like my mind is covered in a thick fog. I can’t remember what happened. The last thing I do remember is being trapped in that tank with Percy and Frank.

“Percy, Tsuna, what happened?” Annabeth and Hazel ran up to us once we got to the second floor. “Oh gods, Tsuna, are you okay?” How bad did I look right now?

“Annabeth, meet up with Leo.” Percy said. “Tell him to fly us to Charleston.”
“Why Charleston?” asked Annabeth. “Does this have anything to do with—”

“Annabeth, I promise I’ll tell you later, but we need to get out of here now.” Percy explained. “We’re being followed.”

“Followed by what?” Leo popped in out of nowhere. “Can’t a guy take a lunch break?”

“Two very angry sea gods who support Gaea are going to send their monster children after us any second.” Frank said from behind Leo. What was he talking about? What happened back at the aquarium?


“Yeah, sure, I’ll go do that.” Leo said with snark. He ran past and to the helm.

“Come on, let’s get Tsuna to the sick bay.” Jason said.

“I’ll man the crossbow.” Annabeth said. She went to the deck followed by Hazel, Piper, and Frank.

Percy and Jason carried me to the sick bay and set me down on one of the beds, which I instantly fell back on. I felt the ship begin to move, so we must be heading towards Charleston. Percy went around the room and Jason helped me sit up. I glanced at one of the glass cabinets and saw my reflection, and I didn’t look too good.

I was really pale. Almost Nico’s natural level of paleness. To be honest I looked like all of my life energy was sucked out of me. That would explain why I felt like death (I would know). All of a sudden, the room started spinning and my stomach didn’t feel good.

“Bucket.” I muttered against Jason.

“What was that Tsuna?” he asked.

“Bucket, now.”

He seemed to realize what I wanted because he hopped off the bed and grabbed a silver bucket and handed it to me right before I threw up. I’d rather not go into the details of it, it was pretty disgusting. After a minute of dry heaving, my stomach settled.

“I-I uh, think I’m done.” I said. Jason looked at my sick bucket and gingerly grabbed it.

“I’m going to get this cleaned out.” Jason said. Before leaving Jason grabbed my shoulder and flashed me a smile. “Rest up Tsuna. I’ll come check on you in a bit.”

“Th-thanks.” I said, feeling my face grow warm. Jason left, hold the used bucket at arm’s length and closed the door behind him.

“Tsuna.” I looked to my left and saw that Percy was sitting on the cot. He had some Nectar and Ambrosia, a bottle of water, and a wet towel with him. “Lie back.”

I nodded and leaned against the head frame of the bed. He placed the wet towel on my forehead and made me eat the square of Ambrosia and drink the Nectar. I felt a little better, but not completely. After downing the water bottle, I leaned back until my head was touching the wall and tried to think.

No matter how hard I try, I can’t remember what happened after getting trapped in that tank.
by Phorcys. First, we were talking to the old sea god, then he betrayed us because he was working for Gaea (big surprise there), but after being trapped, nothing. It was all a hazy blur.

“How are you feeling?” Percy asked.

“Better.” I said.

“Good.” He said. He smiled. “I was worried.”

“What happened?” I asked.

“I was going to ask you the same thing.” He said worriedly.

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t know how to really describe it man.” He started. “You were freaking out and then you—”

The door slammed open, with Annabeth standing in the doorway. “Will someone tell me what in Hades’s name happened?!” I winced and clutched my head. I so did not need to hear her screech right now.

“Not so loud Annabeth.” Percy said as he rubbed my shoulder soothingly.

“I’m not a baby, stop treating me like one.” I said, swiping his hand off of me.

“Shut up and let me take care of you.” He said. I huffed and closed my eyes.

“Is he okay?” asked Annabeth. I felt the cot shift on the other side of me, so I assume she sat down.

“Yeah, he’s doing better.” Percy said with voice kind of muffled. Opening an eye, I saw him chewing on Ambrosia. “But he needs to rest and not move around much.”

“If you think this is enough to keep me in bed, think again.” I said.

“Stop being stubborn.” Percy said.

“Stop telling me what to do.”

“You’re sick, and it’s my job to take care of you.”

“Gods you’re worse than my mother or Sally.”

“Is it wrong that I care about you?”

“It is when you try to smother me!”

“If I was lying in that bed, you’d be doing the exact same thing I’m doing!”

“That’s different!”

“How is it different?!”

“Because…because it just is!”

“Will you both shut up?” demanded Annabeth. Percy and I glared at each other before looking away. “Tsuna sounds like he’s got his energy back, but he should rest. And you shouldn’t smother him Percy.”
“Fine.” Percy said, arms crossed.

“So, is someone going to tell me what happened?” she asked.

“Ask your boyfriend.” I said, leaning back and shutting my eyes. “I don’t remember much.”

“You heard him Percy.” Annabeth said. “Spill it.”

“Long story short, Phorcys was working for Gaea the entire time.” Percy said. That sounded familiar. “I don’t know why Mr. D-I mean, Bacchus, thought he’d help us. Gaea had warned him about us coming to him for help, and he trapped us. He wanted to use us for his aquarium shows until Gaea came to get us. She uh, she had special orders regarding Tsuna.” At that I tensed up and looked right at my brother.

“What plans?” Annabeth asked before I could.

Percy looked over at me. “That’s something that I need to talk to Tsuna about. In private. But, if he says I can, I’ll tell you, okay?”

Wise Girl looked confused and looked over at me. “What did happen to Tsuna by the way? He looks terrible. No offense.”

“None taken.” Percy looked at me again. “And about what happened to him? I don’t know what he’s told you, but let’s just say that he learned a few things while looking for me and he doesn’t have a lot of control yet.”


“Uh, I’m not sure even I understand what they are, but it’s something that Tsuna should explain when he’s ready.”

“What’s with all the secrets?” Annabeth asked. “I thought you trust me?”

“I do, we do, but somethings need to be kept between brothers.” Percy said. I have to give it to him, when he wants to be Percy can be really thoughtful.

She didn’t look happy about it, but Annabeth seemed to relent. “Fine, but I don’t like being out of the loop.”

“I know, I’m sorry, but please, we need to talk.”

“Just come see me when you’re done.” Annabeth said. She came over and kissed my head. “Get better Tsuna. We’ll talk later, okay?”

“Sure.” Annabeth then kissed her boyfriend and left, leaving me and Percy alone. The silence was uncomfortable.

“So…”

Percy scratched at the back of his head, unsure of how to start. I was getting nervous, because I didn’t know what he was going to talk about. In my anxiety, I kept fiddling with the blankets. What happened at the aquarium?

“Tsuna, what happened to you?” he asked.

“What do you mean?”
“At the aquarium, you were about to use the Kusanagi to get us out of Phorcys’s trap.” He explained. “But he stole it out of your hands, and you just…lost it. You were freaking out and curling in on yourself, and you didn’t really respond to me when I was trying to calm you down, you just nodded up and down. I haven’t seen you that emotional in a long time, not since…not since the day we found out your mom died.”

With that it all came flooding back to me. Phorcys did steal the Kusanagi. And I did freak out. I felt…I felt…

“I don’t know where it all came from.” I said, unable to look at my brother.

“I’m not good at this man, but how did it feel? When your sword was taken?”

I took a minute to think about it and collect my thoughts. “I…I guess that I just lost it, like you said. When Phorcys stole the Kusanagi, it was like he was stealing my father. I felt that I lost my dad forever.”

“It’s as if you felt that you lost Susanoo just like you lost Donna.”

“Yeah, it felt like that.” I stared at my ring, wondering how dad felt being taken by Phorcys. “I mean, I guess. I’m not really sure.”

“Maybe that’s why your magic did what it did.” He said.

“What?”

“Your magic, it was freezing the water around you.”

“I didn’t cast any magic Percy.”

“Yes, you did Tsuna. I saw it, I felt it. You were practically freezing the entire tank, to the point where it was colder than the waters in Alaska. And then you really lost it and blasted the three of us out. And when you saw Phorcys holding onto your sword you blasted him into a pile of Celestial Bronze weapons before your sword came flying back into your hand.”

I looked at my hands, trying to summon any magic, but nothing happened. “I did that?”

Percy cocked his head. “You don’t remember that?”

“I don’t remember any of that.” I admitted.

“I don’t understand, how can’t you remember?”

“I don’t know. Maybe I was so blinded by my emotions that everything I did was blocked out.”

“Have you ever thought about talking about your feelings?” He suggested. “Maybe it’ll help you.”

“Yeah, talking.” I brought my knees to my chest.

“Tsuna…” I felt the bed dip and a hand on my shoulder. “Why is it that you want to know everybody else’s problems, but you won’t let anybody know yours?” I didn’t say anything. “Come on man, talk to me. I should be the one person you can tell anything to.”

“I know.”

“So, what is it Tsuna? Do you not trust me?”
My head shot straight up. “No, I trust you more than anyone! It’s just…”

“It’s just what?”

“I just…don’t like burdening people. We’re all already facing and dealing with so much already. Hell, you went through a war before we met, the has to be issues abound in your head. And the others…you all don’t need my problems piled onto yours.”

“But you can’t bare your problems all by yourself. I know you’ve been through a lot this last year. I mean, you died weeks into us knowing each other. I haven’t even died yet. The point is, you’ve been through as much as I have, in even less time than I did. I get that you don’t want to burden us, but I’m your brother. You can tell me anything and it won’t be a burden.”

“…I know.” I said. “But—”

“No buts.” He said. “You don’t have a choice in the matter. I want you to tell me your problems Tsuna.”

I let out a breath. “I’ll try.”

“That’s all I’m really asking.” Percy said. “Do you want to start now, or—”

Someone started knocking on the door, interrupting Percy. It opened and the blonde-haired Annabeth popped in. She smiled at seeing me and Percy.

“Hey.” She said. “You’re looking a little better.” She came over and placed her palm on my forehead.

“I feel a little better.” I said. “But I’m not at a hundred percent yet.”

“I’m sure you’ll be back you your usual self in no time.” She said. “Everyone’s up on the quarterdeck. They all want to know what happened back in Atlanta and why we’re heading to Charleston.”

“I can explain everything.” Percy said standing up.

“Good, cause I’ve been waiting for an explanation.”

“Come on, let’s get outside.” Percy said. “I bet the others are eager to know too.”

“Hold on, I’m coming too.” I said, swinging my legs over the side of the bed. When I stood up my legs wobbled and I almost fell over. Percy tried to catch me, but I caught myself before he could.

“Maybe you should stay in bed Tsuna.” Annabeth suggested.

“I’ll be fine.” I said, before gripping my head. It felt like it was going to split open any second. “But I wouldn’t mind some help getting outside.”

“I got you man.” Percy said.

Percy came over and supported me by putting his arm over my shoulders. Before we left he had Annabeth grab another square of Ambrosia, a bottle of water, and some pain reliever for me. Once we were on the quarterdeck I saw everyone was gathered around.

Jason saw me right away and rushed over. “Tsuna! Man, are you doing okay?”
“I’m fine Jase.” I said smiling.

The face he made looked like he didn’t believe me. “Are you sure? Do you want me to get you anything?”

“Thanks, but no thanks.” I said. “I’m just going to go sit out in the sun for a bit, maybe it’ll perk me up a little.”

“Yeah, good idea.” He said. “You’re looking a little pale.”

I gave him a blank, neutral face. “Gee, thanks for that Jason.”

“What did I say?” he asked.

I ignored him and had Percy take me to the wall. He set me down carefully and Annabeth handed me the Ambrosia and other stuff. After swallowing the pills, I closed my eyes for a second and pointed my face to the sky.

“Hey Apollo, I mean, Lord Apollo,” I thought, “Can you do me a favor and help me get better quicker please? I’d really appreciate it.”

Maybe he heard me, maybe not. The Olympians have gone silent, like the others have said. But maybe Apollo was listening, because this nice warmth hit my face and I felt a little bit better. I have to admit, next to Poseidon, Apollo has to be my favorite of the Olympians. I mean, any father of Will’s has to be a good guy.

“So why are we heading to Charleston?” Leo asked from the steering wheel.

“Yeah,” Jason said, looking as if the word ‘Charleston’ brought back bad memories. “What exactly did you guys find in Atlanta, and why was Tsuna in that condition?”

“Uh,” started Frank as he unzipped his backpack. “I got some peach preserves. A couple of T-shirts. A snow globe. And, um, these not-really-Chinese handcuffs.”

“How about you start from the top—of the story, not the backpack.” Annabeth said. Maybe it’s because I know her pretty well, but it sounded like she was forcing herself to remain calm.

“Well,” began Frank, “We got a ride from a really nice old lady to the aquarium, and when the three of us were fighting on how we were going to get in, another woman came over and swiped the few Denarii I had for a ‘VIP Tour’.

“We didn’t trust her at all.” Percy said as he took over. “I mean, what Mortal would take Denarii? And she didn’t have any interest in any of the exhibits. It was as if she was bored. She then led us down a secret tunnel where we encountered a lot of sea monsters, like Hippocampi and Telekhines.”

“And then Phorcys scuttled in.” Frank added. “Like, he scuttled in like a crab, it was really weird. He took over for our ‘VIP Tour’ and he started going on and on about how he wanted to put on a show, and that he taught the Giant Twins everything they know about entertaining. He even said that they are just waiting for us, like we expected. We were able to get out of him that we need to find some map at Charelston.”

“And then he turned on us, trapping in our own exhibit.” Percy said. This is all starting to sound familiar. “We tried to escape, but Phorcys was blocking our powers. If it wasn’t for Tsuna, we would have been trapped there until Gaea sent her goons to pick us up.” At least he didn’t tell them
“I can’t believe you all went through that.” Annabeth said. “And the sea creatures, we need to help them.”

“We will.” Percy promised. “In time. But I have to figure out how. I wish…” He shook his head. “Never mind. First we have to deal with the bounty on our heads.”

“Wait, we have a bounty on us?” I asked. I don’t remember that part. “This is like One Piece then. How many Beri are we worth?” Percy laughed, because he actually understood the reference after I made him watch the first few arcs of One Piece.

“A bounty on our heads…as if we didn’t attract enough monsters already.” said Annabeth.

“I’m with Tsuna on this one, although I’m not sure what One Piece is.” Leo said. “Do you think we have WANTED posters?”

Hazel wrinkled her nose. “What are you talking about?”

“Just curious how much I’m going for these days.” Leo said. “I mean, I can understand not being as pricey as Percy or Jason, maybe…but am I worth, like, two Franks, or three Franks?”

“Hey!” complained Frank.

“I wonder if I can get my hands on a pile of my posters and sign them, you know, like collectors’ items or something when we win.” Leo said. “I’d make a fortune at Camp Half-Blood.”

“Like anyone would want your signed face.” Frank grumbled.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Knock it off.” Annabeth ordered. “At least we know our next step is to go to Charleston, to find this map.”

“A map.” Piper said. “But a map to what?”

“The Mark of Athena.” Percy said. Maybe it’s just me not feeling well and everything being kind of blurry, but Percy looked like he overstepped some boundary. “Whatever that is, we know it leads to something important in Rome.” I glared at him, “something important related to Athena, not that Nico isn’t important Tsuna. Whatever it is, it’s something that might heal the rift between the Romans and Greeks.”

“The Giant’s Bane.” added Hazel.

Percy nodded. “And in my dream, the twin Giants said something about a statue.”

Statue? Some stolen statue has the power to heal what happened between the Greeks and Romans? How does that work? What kind of supernatural power does it have? Assuming it does have any mystical energies tied to it, that is. For all I know it could just be a basic statue. Who knows, and at the moment who cares? My head is starting to feel like it’s about to split open.

“Um…” started Frank, “According to Phorcys, we’d have to be insane to try to find it. But what is it?”

We all turned towards Annabeth. Obviously, since this is an Athena thing, she would have the answers. I could see the gears turning in her head, lost in thought. Her eyes lingered off to the
side, and following her gaze I saw that she was looking at Jason. They were just looking at each other, and Annabeth was looking nervous.

Why would she be nervous? Does Jason know something? If he does, then why hasn’t he said anything? It can’t be because that he doesn’t trust Annabeth or something, I can see that he does.

“I-I’m close to an answer.” Annabeth said, taking me out of my thoughts. “I’ll know if we find this map. Jason, the way you reacted to the name Charleston…have you been there before?”

“Yes…” he admitted. “Reyna and I did a quest there about a year ago. We were salvaging Imperial Gold weapons from the C.S.S Hunley.”

“The what?” asked Piper.

“Whoa!” Leo said. “That’s the first successful military submarine. From the Civil War guys, do you know how much engineering it took to build that thing back in the day? I always wanted to see it.”

“It was designed by Roman demigods.” Jason said. “It held a secret stash of Imperial gold torpedoes—until we rescued them and brought them back to Camp Jupiter.”

Hazel crossed her arms. “So, the Romans fought on the Confederate side?” Oh no, I think I know where this is going. “As a girl whose grandmother was a slave, can I just say…no cool?” Yep, it went exactly where I thought.

Jason put his hands up defensively. “I personally wasn’t alive back then. And it wasn’t just all Greeks on one side and all Romans on the other. But, yes. Not cool. Sometimes demigods make bad choices.” He looked apologetically at Hazel. “Like sometimes we’re too suspicious. And we speak without thinking.”

Jason elbowed Leo. “Ow!” the Latino elf rubbed his arm. “I mean, yeah…bad choices. Like not trusting people’s brothers, who, you know, might need saving. Hypothetically speaking.”

“Fine.” Hazel said. “Back to Charleston. Are you saying we should check that submarine again?”

Jason shrugged. “Well…I can think of two places in Charleston we might search. The museum where they keep the Hunley—that’s one of them. It holds a lot of relics from the Civil War. A map could be one of them. I know the layout. I could lead a team inside.”

Leo raised his hand. “I’ll go. “It sounds fun.”

Jason smiled at Leo before turning to Frank. Jason started to speak, only to have the words caught in his throat. I can understand why, because looking at Frank I saw that he had trapped his fingers in the Chinese Finger Trap. Frank was struggling against it, trying to pull his fingers out. It was so sad that it was funny.

“Uh, you should come too Frank.” Jason said after shaking his head to refocus. “We might need you.”

Frank looked up in surprise. “Why? Not like I was much good at the aquarium.”

“You did fine.” Percy assured him, rubbing his back.

I smiled and gave Frank a thumb up. “I agree with Percy. Though, I don’t remember much, I know that you did great.”
“Thanks Tsuna.”

“Anyway, since you’re a son of Mars, you’d be of great help.” Jason said. “It is a Civil War museum. The ghosts of the defeated causes are bound to serve you. And the museum in Charleston has plenty of Confederate ghosts. We’ll need you to keep them in line.”

Frank loudly gulped out of nervousness. I don’t know why he’s so nervous. All he needs is some confidence, and who knows what he could accomplish.

“Okay.” Frank relented. “Sure.” He looked down, probably to avoid looking at the others and tried to pull his fingers apart harder, but he couldn’t get out of his trap. “Uh, how do you—”

Leo laughed and put his hand over his mouth. “Man, you’ve never seen those before? There’s a simple trick to getting out.”

Frank tugged really hard again, but it just made it worse for him. I was starting to feel bad for him. Even Hazel was trying not to laugh. Frank grimaced at the finger cuffs before suddenly disappearing in the time it took me to blink. It took me a second to notice, but where Frank was standing was an iguana next to empty a Chinese finger trap.

“Well done Frank Zhang.” Leo clapped sarcastically. “That is how people beat Chinese handcuffs. They turn into iguanas.”

At that we all burst out laughing. It felt so good to laugh. It helped lift some of the stress from our shoulders. But my head started hurting so I stopped. Frank had shifted back into his human state and pocketed the gag toy. At least he can see that we weren’t laughing at him, but with him. He even managed an embarrassed smile.

“Anyway,” Frank started, “The museum is one place to search, but uh, Jason, you said there were two?”

Jason’s warm smile dropped. “Yeah.” He said. “The other place is called the Battery—it’s a park right by the harbor. The last time I was there…with Reyna…we saw something in the park. A ghost or some sort of spirit, like a Southern belle from the Civil War or something, glowing and floating along. We tried to approach it, but it disappeared whenever we got close. Then Reyna had this idea—well, she said it was more like a feeling—she said that should try going by herself. Like maybe it would only talk to her, to a girl. She went up to the spirit and sure enough, it spoke to her.”

We waited for Jason to continue, but he didn’t. “Well, what did it say?” asked Annabeth.

“Reyna wouldn’t tell me.” Jason shook his head. “But it must have been important. She seemed…shaken up. Maybe she got a prophecy or just some really bad news. Reyna never acted the same around me after that.”

Odd. It’s not unusual for spirits to pass along what they’ve heard to the living, but it’s usually them trying to get people to fulfill their final wishes so they can move on. If they’re gentle that is. If the spirits are malevolent, well…you’ve all seen Poltergeist, right? At least, that’s the closest way for me to describe from what Nico has told me.

“I don’t like the idea of going anywhere near a ghost after dealing with the Eidolons.” Annabeth said. “But we’re going to have to.”

“What do you mean babe?” asked Percy.
“I mean that we need to split up when we get to Charleston.” Annabeth explained. “Jason, Leo, and Frank you three will look around the museum. Piper, Hazel and I will talk to this ghost. It’ll be an all-girls adventure.” Hazel didn’t look too excited to go after the ghost. I can understand though, with what I know about her time in the Underworld.

“And what about us Wise Girl?” Percy asked. He waved his hand in my direction. “What do you want me and Tsuna to do?”

Annabeth looked over the two of us and stared at me with her concerned look. I know I don’t look great right now, but I can still help out somehow. I don’t like the idea of people, especially the people I know and love, pitying me.

“Maybe the two of you should stay with the ship and guard it with Coach.” She suggested. “Facing Phorcys affected the two of you much worse than it did Frank, so you guys should take any chance to sit back until you’re back to full strength.”

“You’re not serious, are you?” I asked.

“As a heart attack.” She responded. “You are to stay here and get your strength back.”

“Annabeth, I’ll be fine to help the others out, so just let me—”

“We’ll be safe Annabeth.” Percy interrupted. “I’ll keep an eye on him, and Tsuna’ll keep an eye on me.”

“Thank you Percy.” Said Annabeth. “So it’s settled then.” She turned to Leo who was studying his console. “Leo, how long until we reach Charleston?”

“Good question.” Muttered Leo. Then clicking noises came from the PA system. “Uh guys, it looks like Festus just detected a group of eagles behind us—long range radar, still not in sight.”

“Are you sure if they are Roman eagles?” asked Piper.

“No, Pipes.” Leo said sarcastically. “It could be a random group of giant eagles flying in perfect formation. Of course they’re Roman! I suppose we could turn the ship around and fight—”

“Which would be a very bad idea.” Jason said. “And remove any doubt that we’re enemies of Rome. Eagles are a sacred animal to Rome, they’re the symbol of my dad, so to attack eagles, especially these eagles, is a huge affront to the Roman Legion.”

“Thanks for that lesson Jace.” Leo said. “But I do have another idea.”

“Oh, sorry Leo.”

“No hay problema.” Said Leo. “If we went straight to Charleston, we could be there in a few hours. But these super eagles would overtake us, and then things would get complicated.”

“You have no idea.” Muttered Jason.

“Instead—” Leo continued. “We could send out a decoy to trick the eagles. We take the ship on a detour, go the long way to Charleston, and get there tomorrow morning—”

Hazel made this choking sound. “But what about—”

“I know, I know.” Leo said after raising his hand. “Nico’s in trouble and we have to hurry.”
“But it’s June twenty-seventh!” Hazel said. “After today, we only have four more days to get to Rome. Four more days and then—”

“He dies.” I finished for her, feeling my chest tighten at the very idea of Nico dying.

“I know!” Leo yelled. “But this might throw the Romans off our trail. We still should have enough time to reach Rome.”

“Should?” I asked.

Hazel scowled. “When you say should have enough…”

Leo shrugged and looked at her guiltily. “How do you feel about… barely enough?”

Hazel put her face in her hands and took calming breathes. “Sounds about typical for us.” She said once she calmed down.

“Okay Leo, I’ll bite.” Annabeth said. “What kind of decoy are we talking about?”

Leo smiled. “Oh, I’m so glad you asked!” He punched a few buttons on the control console and played with the Wii remotes really, really fast to the point where that if he wasn’t wearing the straps the remotes would have gone flying and hitting someone (probably Jason with his luck) in the head. He then grabbed the intercom. “Buford? Report for duty please.”

Frank took a step back and looked around. “Wait, there’s somebody else on this ship?”

“Who the hell is Buford?” I asked, grabbing the ledge and hauling myself to my feet. I was still a little wobbly, but Jason rushed over and caught me. I did my damnedest to look away before my cheeks reddened any more than they probably already are.

Luckily for me, a puff of steam shot out of the stairwell, distracting everyone. And coming out from the steam like Batman or something was—

“You’re not serious?” I asked dumbfounded.

It was a table. I repeat, it was a TABLE. A three-legged mahogany table to be precise. It had a bronze base with several drawers, spinning gears, and steam vents for whatever engineering reason. I think I saw it once in the engine room when I helped Leo take the Celestial Bronze sheet so he could repair the ship. This table, excuse me, Buford here was dragging a bag like it was Santa’s Little Table with its legs. It stopped right in front of Leo and let out a high-pitched train whistle.

“This is Buford.” Leo said. “Buford, these are our friends Percy, Hazel, Frank, and Tsuna.”

“You name your furniture?” asked Frank with his eyebrow raised questioningly.

Leo snorted. “You don’t? Man, I bet you just wish you had furniture this cool.” Leo bent down and rubbed the table top as if it was a dog. “Buford, are you ready for Operation End Table?”

The table shot out some steam. He hobbled to the railing and his mahogany top split into four blades and elongated. The blades started spinning, gaining momentum until Buford rose up into the air and took off into the sky.

“A helicopter table. Sweet.” Percy said. “What’s in the bag by the way?”

“Frank choked. “What?!”

“It’ll throw the eagles off our scent.”

“But those were my only extra pair of pants!”

“I asked Buford to get them laundered and folded while he’s out.” Leo said, as if that made stealing Frank’s clothes any better. “Hopefully he will.”

“What do you mean hopefully?”

Leo ignored him and rubbed his hands together. “Well! I call that a good day’s work. I’m gonna calculate our detour now. See you all at dinner!”

Leo gave us all a salute and turned around to fiddle with the console. All of us were kind of dumbfounded as to what to do now. But we slowly left Leo to his devices and went about our business. Percy, Annabeth, and I went to mine and Percy’s room, where he insisted that I eat some more Ambrosia to recuperate but it had gotten to the point where if he forced another piece of the godly food down my throat I’d end up spontaneously combusting.

“He’s only concerned about you Tuna Head.” Annabeth explained.

“I know, and I appreciate it, I really do,” I said, “But whatever happened to me at the aquarium just needs to just fade away with rest.”

“You still need to tell me what happened to you.” She said.

“No.”

“I’m sorry?”

“No. I’m not telling you, at least not yet.” I said. “I know I can trust you with this secret Wise Girl, but who knows who else is listening.” I pointed up, indicating the gods. “I’ll recover, but I don’t know when I’ll be back to full strength.”

“Fine, but if you can’t tell me, I’m putting you on bedrest.” Annabeth ordered. “Gods know that you both need it.”

“You can have the bed Tsuna.” Percy said. “I’ll just crash in Annabeth’s room.”

“Yeah, like Coach would let that happen.” Looking at the doorway Jason was leaning against the frame. “His horns might pop off if he finds out.”

“Then what do you suggest Bolt Boy?” I asked.

Jason shrugged. “You can nap on my bed for now. I don’t mind letting you have it when I’m not using it.”

“How chivalrous of you.” I said. “But I’ll be fine.”

“Dude, come on.” He said. “You need to at least rest your eyes for a little bit. It’ll do you some good. Both of you.”

He looked over at Percy, and for the first time since I woke up flying on Frank’s back I saw how tired Percy looked. He was slightly paler than usual, and that troublemaking gleam in his eye was lessened. My brother looked like he was about to pass out himself. He must have been keeping
himself going because he’s been concerned about me.

“On second thought, I’ll take you up on that offer.” I said. “But I could use an assist.”

“Yeah, no problem.” Jason said. He leaned down and held his arm around my shoulders to support me.

“Go take a nap Perce, okay?” I said. “I’ll be fine. Take care of yourself for a little bit.”


“It’s nothing.” He said. “Sleep tight.”

Jason escorted me to his room and sat me down on his bed. He tried to take my shoes off for me, but I told him that I’m not an invalid. I took them off and lied down, instantly smelling Jason on his pillow. I closed my eyes and heard Jason leave.

I didn’t really fall asleep though. Despite still feeling unwell and tired, I just couldn’t fall asleep. I tossed and turned, trying to get comfortable, but it was damn near impossible. I couldn’t help but think about my magic and how it just erupted out of me. If I could just get a hold of this power, I’ll be so much more useful to the others. I’ll be able to protect Percy. I’ll be able to save Nico.

After what felt like hours to me, I threw the blankets off and put my shoes back on. After stretching a bit, I walked out and headed towards the Dining Hall. Percy and the others were there. He looked better, not a hundred percent, but close. That nap did him good.

“Hey Tsuna.” He waved. “You sleep well?”

“Yeah.” I lied. “Just what the doctor ordered.”

He smiled and turned to talk to Frank, while he was holding Annabeth’ hand. The Dining Hall was a buzz with conversation. Leo was chatting with Hazel, Jason and Piper were having their ears talked off by Hedge. I was the only one quiet. And they all were munching on something, from pizza to salads to some decadent waffles with chocolate ganache. My plate was the only one that didn’t have anything on it.

“Hey, are you not hungry?” Percy asked after he turned to me.

“Hm?” I said.

“Your plate, it doesn’t have food.” He said.

“Oh, yeah.” I said. “I guess I don’t have much of an appetite.”

“You’ve got to eat Tsuna.” Annabeth said.

“I’m just not hungry right now.” I said. I pushed my chair out and stood up.

“Where you goin’?” Percy asked.

“Outside.” I said. “I’m going to check on Yata.”

“Okay, see you in a bit.” Percy said.

Walking out of the Dining Hall I headed outside. The stars were beginning to come out. I
couldn’t see Yatagarasu anywhere, so I whistled and called out for him. He came swooping to me and landed on my shoulder.

“Hey buddy.” I sailed smiling. I rubbed his breast and he seemed happy. “Wanna watch the stars with me again?” He cawed his approval.

You know, it’s funny. I’ve never really been much of a stargazer before, but since I’ve been on the Argo II, I seem to do it every night. Maybe there’s just something about the night sky that just calms me. Maybe there’s this omnipresent power that resides up there, something greater than the gods. I don’t know, but at least looking at the stars is calming.

I stayed out there for a couple hours. I wasn’t really tired at all. Coach’s voice then boomed over the loud speaker, declaring that it was time for curfew. A few minutes later Percy came up and smiled when he saw me.

“Tsuna.”

“Percy.”

“It’s time for bed man. We should be in Charleston in the morning. We’re going to need all the rest we can get.”

“Sure, who knows what we’ll face tomorrow.”

After changing into our PJs, we crawled into the bed and went to sleep. Percy was out like a light, but I just laid there, staring up into the ceiling. My thoughts were running on and on about the aquarium and what Percy told me. I soon fell asleep, but I didn’t feel rested when I woke up. Percy was still knocked out, but I’m sure that he’ll wake up soon.

I grabbed some of some clean clothes (including one of Percy’s Camp Half-Blood t-shirts) and took a shower. Afterwards I went to the deck and saw that we had landed in a pier. Frank, Leo, and Jason were already up here.

“Morning Tsuna.” Waved Jason. I waved back.

“So, this is Charleston?” I asked, looking along the pier. We were parked next to a seawall, and dotting along the shore were tall mansions, palm trees, and wrought iron fences. Old, rusted cannons were lined up pointing at the sea.

“Yep, Charleston Harbor.” Leo said. “I figured that if anything happens you and Percy can get us out of here fast.”

“Not a bad idea.” I said. “You guys heading out already?”

Jason nodded. “The museum is pretty big, if I’m remembering right. It might take a while to look around.”

“Not to mention dealing with all the ghosts that are supposed to be there.” Leo said. He clapped Frank on the back and made him jump. “But I’m sure Frank here can handle them.”

Frank didn’t look to sure. “Yeah, sure.”

Poor guy, he needs to gain some more confidence. “Hey Frank, want some advice?”

“Uh, sure.”
“When it comes to the dead, don’t be afraid.” I said. “Show them who’s boss, and remind them that they are dead and you are alive. The dead envy the living, and will want to take their frustrations out on those who are alive. Just be brave, and use your divine authority over them, and you should be fine.”

Frank gulped. “Uh, yeah, thanks.” While he heard me, I don’t think he had enough faith in himself to really do it. I’d go along, but I’m only feeling like I’m at sixty percent, if I’m being generous. Don’t know how much help I’m really going to be.

“Well, good luck guys.” I said. “I’ll see you when you get back.”

“Thanks Tsuna.” Jason said. “We’ll be back by sunset.” I waved them off as they left the ship. Not long after Hazel and Piper came up top. We made small talk until Percy came up. He looked a lot better than yesterday.

“Hey man.” Percy said, grabbing my hand and pulling me into a hug. “How are you feeling?”

“Better.” I said. I don’t feel like it was a lie, but the way Percy was looking at me he didn’t think so. At least he didn’t say much more.

“So, I was wondering if you’d like to come with me later today.”

“Go with you where?”

“The sea.” He said. “I’m going to talk to some of the local Nereids and be in real, untainted salt water. It could do us both some good.”

“Oh, uh, sure.” I said. “That does sound good.”

Percy smiled and we bro fist. He then leaned against the starboard rail, gazing over the bay. I stared at him and felt that he seemed…distant, at the moment. Usually I would try to ease his mind, but I can’t think of a way to do so. He’s probably scared of what we still have to face, feeling guilty over the sea creatures in the aquarium, worried about all of us. He intentionally puts so much on his shoulders.

Piper and Hazel were now prepping themselves so that they were ready to go when Annabeth was. Speaking of, Wise Girl herself stepped onto the deck. She talked for a moment with the other girls before coming over to me and Percy. She nodded in my direction before taking Percy's hand.

“What are you going to do while we’re gone?” she asked him.

“Jump into the harbor.” He said casually. “I want to try communicating with the local Nereids. Maybe ask for some advice about how to free those captives in Atlanta.” I knew he felt guilty about leaving them. “Besides, I think the sea might be good for me, for us,” he waved in my direction, “right now. Being in that aquarium made me feel…unclean.”

Annabeth nodded, before her attention drifted. I think she was looking at Percy’s hair. Now that I think about it, didn’t they share a strand of grey hair? From when they held up the sky together a few years back? Looks like it faded away with time.

Annabeth leaned up and kissed Percy. “Good luck, Seaweed Brain. Just come back to me, okay?”

Percy smiled and kissed her again. “I will.” He promised. “You do the same.”
She nodded and turned her attention to me. “You’re going with him?”

“Yeah, I am.” I said.

“Good.” She said. Annabeth then kissed my cheek. “Watch each other’s back, okay? You two are stronger together.”

I nodded. “I know.”

The girls left the ship a few minutes later. Before Percy and I left Coach was throwing a fit that he was stuck on the ship again. It was harder to convince him to stay this time, but we promised him he could leave soon, but we couldn’t just leave the ship unguarded.

I followed behind Percy after we stepped off the ship. He led the way to a dock. Along the way we passed by a few shops, from an ice cream parlor to a clothing store. After getting to a dock we looked around to make sure no one was watching. We then jumped in the water.

It felt good, really good to be surrounded by natural sea water again. And it felt better than the waters in Alaska, nice and…well, not warm, but warmer than Alaska anyway. Percy and I swam around for a bit, and the longer we stayed in the water the better I felt and the more my head cleared.

We asked some sea life as to where the local Nereids were and followed their directions farther out to sea. Once we found them, I told Percy that I would keep back and stand guard while he talks to them. It also let me think for a minute.

I’m still not understanding how my emotions caused my magic to react like that. I tried to think back to how I felt, but it was like there was a block on that memory. Maybe the key to harnessing my magic is those emotions. I remember what Rumpelstiltskin, I mean, Mr. Gold told me back in Storybrooke, about how magic was emotion. His particular choice of emotions were the ones that made him think about ripping people’s throats out and then controlling them with memories of his past. I really don’t want to harness my magic like that though. I don’t want to go dark like him (although I doubt anyone can go as dark as the Dark One.)

“Tsuna.” I turned around and saw Percy. “Where did you go?”

“Huh?”

“You seemed lost in thought.”

“Oh, yeah, just thinking.”

“What about?”

I shook my head. “Nothing really. So, what did you find out?”

“The Nereids don’t have any ideas, but they’d ask around. Stuff like this apparently gets around fast here under the sea.”

“Hm.” I looked off in the distance.

“Tsuna, are you sure you’re doing okay?”

“I’m fine.”

“Tsuna please talk to me.” He begged, grabbing my shoulder and making me face him. “I know
when you’re lying to me.’’

“I’m not lying.”

“Come on Tsuna. I know that what happened at the aquarium is still bothering you. I mean, you look better, but it you’re so lost in trying to figure out why you lost control, and you’re just closing in on yourself.”

“Look I understand that you’re concerned Perce, but this just has to be something I have to go through without your help.” I let out a sigh and watched the bubbles float up. “Listen, I’m heading back to the ship. I need to do some thinking by myself. And maybe some clothes shopping. I saw a store on our way here, so I’ll make a quick stop there. Besides, I’m getting tired of sharing the wardrobe your girlfriend chose for you.” I indicated to the attire I was wearing. “Do you think you’ll be fine by yourself?”

Percy looked like he was about to argue with me, but he quickly relented and nodded. He hugged me and told me that he’ll meet me back on the ship. I swam back to shore and climbed out of the water. You know, for a summer’s day on a Carolina beach, it wasn’t as populated as I’d expect.

I quickly found the store I saw earlier and went in. I looked around and found a couple of things that didn’t scream ‘tourist’. I grabbed two thin plaid shirts, one blue and white, the other green and blue, a couple of form fitting sleeveless shirts, a loose green tank top, and some extra trunks. As I was waiting to check out I saw a postcard. After debating for a second I grabbed it and paid for everything.

When I got back to the ship Coach Hedge was waving his baseball bat at other tourists. I was wondering what they were seeing. Coach was so distracted that he didn’t notice me so I slipped by and went straight for mine and Percy’s room. I set my purchase aside and sat on the bed.

I just sat there for a few minutes, alone in the dark. My mind kept going to the aquarium. I needed to know how my emotions caused my magic to erupt out of me. And there’s only one person who I can talk to about it. I held my hand out and my sword appeared in my hand.

“Otōsan.” I said. “I need your guidance. I don’t know if you know, but something happened recently. And it caused me to lose control, and my new magical abilities erupted out of me, nearly freezing and killing Percy and Frank.” My eyes started feeling wet. “I know it’s hard for you to appear to me, but I need your help. Please, talk to me.” Nothing happened. “Dad, please. I need you.”

The Kusanagi didn’t react at all. It was then that the tears started falling. My emotions were getting out of my control. I needed my father right now, but he isn’t responding. The one person that could help me and give me any advice, and he’s…asleep, I think.

I just eyed the Kusanagi as I cried. Then one of my tears fell from my face and landed on the blade. The Kusanagi started glowing, and so did the other two Regalia. The light shined and enveloped the room. When my vision cleared, I was sitting on a dock. Looking around I saw that there was Japanese architecture around.

“Tsuna.” I nearly jumped and turned to my left.

Sitting there was my father Susanoo. He looked just like he did when I last saw him in Alaska- early thirties, neatly shaven, no grey hairs or wrinkles (except the ones around his eyes that come out when he smiles) and in his prime. I tackled him into a hug.
“Dad…” I said.

“I’ve missed you son.” He rubbed my back. “It warms my heart to see you again. How long has it been seen you last saw me?”

“What?” I looked up and saw that he was serious. “A-a few days. How long has it been for you?”

Dad shook his head. “I don’t experience time in this state son. It could have been mere moments since I saw you last or months.”

“I’m sorry you have to go through that Otōsan.”

“Sore way yoi musukodesu.” He said, cupping my face in his hands. “Let’s have some tea and talk, okay?”

In between the two of us was a steaming pot of tea. Dad poured us a cup and handed one to me. I smelled it, the tea having a flowery aroma. I blew on the liquid to cool it a bit and took a sip. It had this sweet mild flavor to it.

“This is good.” I said. “What is it?”

“Gyokuro.” said Dad. “It’s one if my favorite blends.”

For a few minutes we just sat on the dock, sipping on our tea. The salty air of the sea filled my lungs and it made me feel happy. The sound of the water lapping at the dock sang through the air.

“So, why did you summon me Tsuna?” he asked. To which I really didn’t have a way to answer. I mean, I know why I wanted to talk to my father, but now that he’s here, I don’t know how to say it. “Tell me son.”

I took a breath. “It happened yesterday. Me, Percy, and one of my new friends Frank went to the Atlanta aquarium to talk to this old Greek sea god named Phorcys. We had gotten a clue that he might have some knowledge about the Prophecy of Seven and the Mark of Athena, which I kind of made them let me join so I can keep Percy safe and save Nico from the forces of Gaea. We found him and he blabbed about these twin Giants in Rome and then he let it slip that Gaea had put a price on the Seven’s heads. He then said that Gaea warned him about me and that she wants to personally use me as an example to all those that defy her. Phorcys decided to trap us in his aquarium and he was suppressing our powers. We tried escaping, with Percy and I trying to join together to boost our abilities like we usually do, but even that wasn’t enough. So I tried using the Kusanagi, since it strengthens my powers, and I figured that Phorcys couldn’t stop the Kusanagi. But I was wrong. I took it. He took the most powerful sword in our pantheon, and I couldn’t stop him. And the moment it vanished from my hand, I…I…lost it.”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s hard to explain.” I said. “I don’t even remember what happened after the Kusanagi was stolen from me. Percy had to tell me what happened.”

“What did happen?”

“According to Percy, I barely responded to him when he spoke to me. He said that as he was looking for a way out my…my magic started reacting to my emotions. I started freezing the water around me, and it was spreading. Frank and Percy could have frozen to death, it would have been my fault.”
“What happened next?”

“Percy says that when Keto, the other sea goddess at the aquarium, started taunting us, I really lost it and my magic just exploded out of me, shattering the tank and setting us free. But when Phorcys appeared, I saw him holding the Kusanagi. It looked like it was resisting him, making itself heavier that it really was and making him feel immense pain. I had demanded that he return it…return…you to me. And then I blasted him into a pile of magical metals which wounded him enough to let go the Kusanagi and return you to me.”

Dad went quiet for a minute. “You felt that you lost me when Phorcys stole you from me, didn’t you?”

I swallowed the lump in my throat. “Yeah, Percy and I came to that conclusion.”

Dad sighed and pulled me close. “I’m sorry son. You should never have felt that lost and desperate. In most cases the Kusanagi would never have been stolen like that. But there are beings strong enough to steal the sword, however the enchantments I placed on the Kusanagi prevent anyone other than you or I from using its powers.”

“But Percy was able to wield it.” I said.

“Because you gave it willingly to him, and it could sense that he wouldn’t use its abilities for wrongdoing. Besides, after everything he has done for you, I have a soft spot for the son of Poseidon.”

“I guess that makes sense.”

“I wish I was there for you though.”

“What do you mean?”

“I could sense that you were in trouble, but I couldn’t do anything, as you know.” He said. “But you know that I would have done something if I could.”

“I know that dad.” I said.

“But let’s move on.” said Dad. “Tell me what you were feeling when the Kusanagi was taken from you.”

“It was like I lost you.” I said.

“I know, but what was going through your mind? What were you feeling in your heart, your very soul?”

“I don’t know, I can’t rememb—”

“Yes, you can. Tell me.”

“Dad, I don’t remember, I can’t—”

“Tsunayoshi!”

“It felt like I when I lost mom, okay?!” I screamed. “She was ripped from me, and it was like you were too! I felt like I was never going to see you again! Or talk to you again! I was feeling so much raw emotion that I blacked out! Is that what you wanted to hear?!”
Dad sighed before smiling at me. “Tsuna,” He placed his hands on my shoulders. “You are so much like Donna and myself. You feel so much. You are as temperamental as the seas, and you have Donna’s hair-trigger temper, with an ocean of compassion inside you. But you bottle up your emotions, repress them so you don’t cause your loved ones any harm or worry. That’s not how you should live your life.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m saying that you should face your feelings, embrace them and just let go.” he explained. “If you do, who knows what could happen. It could lead to many great things.”

“I don’t understand, what’s that supposed to mean?”

Dad didn’t answer me. He just stared at me. All of a sudden, the dream started to fade away. I tried to fight it, but it wasn’t working. Dad must have realized his time was up, because he pulled me into a hug.

“Embrace your emotions Tsuna, and be honest with yourself.”

“No!” I screamed. “Dad!”

When I blinked my eyes, I wasn’t on that Japanese dock with my father anymore. I was sitting on Percy’s bed, just like I was before I entered that dream state. My arm was sore, so I must have been in a trance for a while now. I felt a hand being placed on my shoulder so I jumped.

“Tsuna, it’s me!” Hazel yelped.

“Oh, sorry.” I said, rubbing my eyes with the heel of my hand.

“What were you doing?” she asked. “I saw lights coming from in here, and when I came in your Treasures were glowing, and you were staring at your sword with your eyes glazed over as if you were blind.”

“Oh, I was uh, talking to my dad.”

“Did you guys have a fight?”

“What? No, we didn’t.”

“Then are you okay?”

“What are you talking about?”

Hazel pointed at my cheek. “You were crying.”

I felt my cheek, and there were tears there. “It’s nothing. I just talked to my dad.” I felt the ship begin to shake and move. “What’s happening?”

“We’re heading to Fort Sumer close by.” Hazel explained. “Venus said that the map we’re looking for is there.”

“What about the others?”

Hazel shook her head. “Piper is Iris Messaging them now. I’m actually supposed to be finding Coach Hedge right now.”
“You do that, I’ll head up to the deck. Meet you there in a few minutes, okay?”

“Got it.” Hazel nodded.

Wiping my hand down my face I steeled myself and ran up to the deck. As soon as I was out I saw three huge eagles circling overhead. They weren’t doing anything much other than trailing us. I saw the fort that Hazel was talking about, in the skies there were more of the Roman eagles flying in formation towards it. If each eagle was carrying at least one Roman demigod, then we’re going to be facing some trouble.

“Tsuna!”

Percy was yelling from the masthead. He waved me down so I ran over. He must be using his powers to control the ship.

“What happened?”

“Octavian didn’t take Leo’s bait.” He explained. “He tried to capture Annabeth, Piper, and Hazel after their meeting with Aphrodite.”

“Freaking weasel.” I said.

“Yeah, I know.” He said. “It’s a good thing I was near when Annabeth signaled me, or they might have been captured.”

“You can stop polishing your armor Percy, we all know you’re Annabeth’s heroic knight.”

“Really, that’s what you thought up?” he asked.

“Yeah, kinda distracted Perce.”

“With what?”

“I’ll tell you later.”

On the wooden floor of the Argo, there was the click-click-click of Coach’s hooves. “Where are they? Who do I kill?!”

“No killing!” ordered Annabeth. “Just defend the ship!”

“But they interrupted a Chuck Norris movie!”

“Oh, like you haven’t seen them all at this point!” I yelled. “Besides, Chuck Norris isn’t that great as everybody says he is!”

“You did not just say that!” screamed the old Billy Goat.

“Guys!” Piper ran onto the deck, followed by Hazel. “I got a message through to Jason. Kind of fuzzy, but he’s already on his way. He should be—oh!” She pointed to the sky behind us, where another eagle, larger than the Roman ones was flying. “There!”

“It’s Frank!”

It really was Frank. From what I could recall through the fuzzy memories when I woke up after the aquarium incident, Frank did look like this. And being carried in his bird feet was a screaming and (without a doubt in my mind) cussing Leo Valdez. Oh, I wonder how poor innocent
Frank is dealing with the situation.

Behind Frank was Jason flying through the air. “Never seen Jason fly before.” Percy muttered. “He looks like a blonde Superman.”

“Huh, I’m getting a flying Captain America vibe from him.” I watched as Jason and Frank dodged the Roman eagles and flew towards us. “Give him a shield and the patriotic uniform, and I’d think that he could give Chris Evans a run for his money.”

“Guys, they’re in trouble!” Piper warned.

She pointed to the sky, where a flying Roman chariot descended from a cloud and dove straight towards our friends. Jason and Frank dodged out of the way (Leo screaming still) to avoid getting trampled by the pegasi. The soldiers on the chariots fired their crossbows. They guys were able to dodge, but it caused them to veer off course and fly towards Fort Sumter.

“I’ll get’em!” yelled Coach Hedge. Annabeth tried to stop him but the satyr didn’t listen (or to be honest, chose not to listen) and fired a flaming spear at the chariot.

It exploded over the chariot like a booming firework, making the pegasi panic. It also caused Frank’s wings to be singed. Leo should be okay, he’s fireproof and all, but Frank started spiraling out of control and let go of the son of Hephaestus. The charioteers jumped out, and the empty chariot slammed into Jason.

“Jason!” Piper screeched.

Despite getting hit, Jason lunged for Leo and caught him. He was struggling to gain altitude, but getting hit by an out of control, falling high speed chariot had to hurt and at the very least dazed. I saw him try his hardest, but in the end Jason was only able to slow their fall. All of us on the ship watched as Jason and Leo vanished behind the ramparts of the fort and Frank tumbled after them.

After the chariot crashed inside the fort (hopefully not on top of my friends) Piper turned to Hedge. “Coach!!”

“What?” he demanded. “That was just a warning shot!”

“You could have killed them you moron!” I screamed. “A warning shot is to avoid the target!”

“Annabeth—” started Hazel.

“I’m on it!” Annabeth gunned the engines. The hull shuddered as we picked up speed.

“Percy, let’s help move this ship faster.” I said.

He nodded and together we willed the water to pushed the ship towards the fort. We were a few hundred yards from the dock, but even then there were at least a dozen more eagles circling the island, and in each of their claws was a Roman demigod. There was no doubt that we’re going to be outnumbered. Well, I like a challenge every now and then.

“Percy, Tsuna,” Annabeth called. “We’re going to come in hard. I need you to control the water so we don’t smash into the docks. And once we’ve docked you’re both going to have to hold off the attackers. The rest of you help guard the Argo.”

“But—Jason!” Piper said.
“Frank and Leo!” added Piper.

“I’ll find them.” Annabeth promised. “I’ve got to figure out where the map is. And I’m pretty sure I’m the only one who can do that.”

“The fort is crawling with Romans.” warned Percy. “You’ll have to fight your way through, find our friends—assuming they’re okay—find this map, and get everybody back alive. All on your own?”

“Just an average day.” Annabeth kissed him. “Whatever you do, don’t let them take this ship!” The dock was getting closer, and Percy and I were doing everything we could so the ship wouldn’t crash. The ship started slowing down, enough for Percy to direct his attention towards me.

“Tsuna, I need you to do something for me.” He said.

“What is it?”

“I need you to cover Annabeth for me, okay?” he said. “Keep her safe so I can focus on keeping the ship protected from the Romans and ready to go as soon as everyone else is.”

“Did you not hear what I said Seaweed Brain?” Annabeth said, clearly overhearing her boyfriend. “I have to do this myself.”

“I know, but it wouldn’t hurt to have some protection.” countered Percy. “At least until you get to where you need to be to find this map.”

“Percy, I don’t need a bodyguard!”

“I know you don’t, I just want to make sure you’ll be okay!”

“Gods you’re so over protective!”

“I’m your boyfriend, of course I’m going to be overprotective of you! I don’t want anything to happen to you, I just got you back, I can’t lose you again!”

Annabeth’s eyes went wide with shock and realization. “Alright Percy, Tsuna can come.”

“Thanks for asking for my opinion Wise Girl.”

“You’re just as over protective as he is.” She said. “And I guess as far as escorts go, I got a good one.” She winked at me.

I rolled my eyes. “You couldn’t afford me sweetheart.” I said with a smirk.

After Annabeth gave Percy a kiss for luck she and I jumped off the ship and landed on the dock. Once inside we saw the warzone the fort had become. There were Romans everywhere. Some were chasing Leo, who had miraculously didn’t look hurt from his fall. He was ducking between the porches (porticos, Annabeth would later tell me) blasting fire at the Romans and the giant eagles that swooped at him.

There were Mortals who looked terrified and confused. The tour guides kept screaming ‘It’s just a reenactment!’, but they didn’t sound so sure about it. I mean, what part of the civil war involved teenagers fighting with swords, spears, giant eagles, and superpowers?

In the middle of the courtyard was a full-grown elephant—no doubt Frank, unless the Romans were able to bring Hannibal the Elephant here without us even noticing, but stranger
things have happened in the world of gods and monsters. But this had to be Frank, since he was tearing down flagpoles with his trunk and swinging it with his trunk. The Romans were scattered, obviously afraid of getting smacked by a full-grown elephant.

Jason stood about fifty yards or so away, single handedly taking on a small platoon of Roman warriors. They all attacked at once and in a few moments Jason had them disarmed and on the ground moaning in pain. The only one standing was a really stocky soldier whose lips were stained red-Dakota, the son of Bacchus. He’s the one who Percy gave the golden eagle standard to during the battle with Polybotes.

Dakota looked unsure in fighting Jason, which gave the son of Jupiter an opening to exploit. “Sorry about this Dakota!” He vaulted over Dakota’s head and slammed the hilt of his sword into the back of the centurions’ head. Dakota crumpled.

Annabeth waved at the other blonde. “Jason!” He scanned the battlefield and when he noticed us he ran over.

“Annabeth, Tsuna, what are you doing here?”

“I have to get the map.” She explained. She pointed in the direction where we came, where the Argo II was docked. “I need you to get to others onboard the Argo. Retreat!”

“What about you two?” he called.

“Don’t wait for me, get the others to safety.” Annabeth bolted before Jason could protest.

Jason looked over at me. “Is she serious?”

“She’s always serious.” I said, watching her weave through the mobs of tourists. “I better head after her.” I looked at Jason. “Do as she says and get Frank and Leo to the ship. We’ll be back as fast as we can. Help Percy defend the ship once you get there, okay?”

Jason nodded and held his fist out. “You better get back safely, we still have to talk.”

I bumped his fist. “You got it Captain.”

I ran off, but not before seeing the look of confusion on Jason’s face. I pushed my way past the Mortals and dodged any attacking Roman. I soon caught up with Annabeth, who I saw was fighting a hulking figure that looked oddly familiar. He kicked Annabeth in the leg and swung down his two-handed broadsword. I dove and rolled next to Annabeth and brought my sword out and held it above us, with the flat of the blade facing up.

A ring of metal echoed in my ears, but I was able to hold off the Roman’s attack. The Kusanagi doesn’t break easily. The Roman demigod looked surprised (probably either he wasn’t expecting me to block his strike or my sword was strong enough to do so in the first place), and I used that to my advantage. I pushed against him and stood up, taking a fighting stance.

“Oh great, it’s you.” Said the Roman. “Octavian said that if any of us found you that we were to deliver you to him alive.”

“Whatever that rat has planned, don’t expect me to come quietly.” I said. In the corner of my eye I saw Annabeth stand up while rubbing her kicked leg.

“Careful now, it’s not smart to talk that way about the Augur.” warned the soldier. “He said alive, he didn’t say how many pieces you had to be in.”

With that I swung my sword, only for him to counter. I pushed myself against him, but he countered every strike I made, remarkable considering the size and weight of his sword. His skills can only mean one thing.

“Let me guess, son of Mars?” I asked.

He smirked. “You got it Shinto. One of Rome’s best warriors.”

“Who said that?” I asked. “Was it Octavian? You can’t believe a word he says you know. The guy’s certifiably insane.”

“Stop disrespecting the Augur!” screamed the son of Mars.

He put all of his strength and pushed me away. It threw me off balance a bit, but I was able to steady myself. But as I went to attack again the son of Mars flicked his hand, but nothing happened. He looked dumbfounded.

“That usually works.” He said stupefied.

“Were you trying to knock my sword out of my hand?” I asked, recalling a time when one of Clarisse’s siblings did the same thing when I first arrived at Camp Half-Blood. “Nothing makes me lose this sword.” I ran forward and sliced his palm, making him drop his broadsword. “Nothing will make me lose my birthright ever again!” I then spun kicked him on the side of his head.

“A little viscous there weren’t you?” asked Annabeth.

“Maybe, but he deserved it.” I said. “How’s your leg?”

“It’s fine.” She said quickly, maybe too quickly. “It’s just going to have a bruise tomorrow.” She looked towards her left, where a garrison stood.

She ran off into the building and I followed. Once inside she began to look around, analyzing every little detail about the room. With the way she was looking at the room, it was like she was looking at a blue print overlay of the room, like if Iron Man scanned a room with his tech. After a beat she turned towards me.

“You need to head back to the ship.” Annabeth said. “I have to do this on my own from here.”

“You’re joking, right?” I asked. She gave me one of her ‘Does this look like I’m joking’ looks. “Annabeth, I can’t just leave you!”

“I have to go alone. It’s a part of my Quest.” She had this distant look in her eyes.

“Do you have any idea the crap Percy is going to give me when I come back alone?”

“Tell him that I told you to leave.” Annabeth said. “He’ll understand, and with you there the ship will be ready to leave faster.”

“He won’t like it and will try to come after you though, he’s stubborn like that.”

“I know, but I have to go alone Tsuna.” She said. “This is my Quest, and I can’t do this if I’m depending on others.”

I threw my hands up in the air. “Fine, whatever. Just don’t get killed. I’ll never hear the end of it.”
I pulled her into a hug. “Good luck Wise Girl.”

“Thanks Tuna Head, you too.”

With that we parted ways. I ran back towards the Argo II. I fought my way past a couple of soldiers, but I made sure not to hurt them since they were just doing their duties. I soon caught up to where Jason was, only seeing him fighting against another group of soldiers. While he handled most of them, there was one that was sneaking up behind him. I wasn’t going to make it just by running, so I decided to take a move from Jason’s playbook and focused on the winds to push me. While I wasn’t really flying like Jason, both of my feet were off the ground. Using my momentum, I did a drop kick to knock the Roman soldier away from Jason.

“You can do that?” Jason asked, having defeated his group of soldiers.

“Uh, yeah, but not as good as you.” I said. “Maybe if I trained a bit more, but I doubt I can fly like you.” The Romans were starting to get back up. “We should get out of here.”

“Want a lift?” Jason offered.

“Sure, why not.”

Jason turned around and bent down slightly. Oh, he’s going to lift me. Piggy back style. Oh, I really hope nothing bad (or embarrassing happens.)

“Are you going to hop on or what dude?”

“Oh, yeah, sure.” I said. I crawled on and held onto Jason’s broad, footballer shoulders. Think calming thoughts, think calming thoughts.

The winds swirled around the two of us. Jason then kicked off the ground and we were flying. I looked back to the garrison and sent a prayer that Annabeth would be alright.

In no time we landed on the Argo II. Leo was already getting the ship ready to escape, with Piper assisting him. Frank was firing arrows as warning shots while Coach manned the crossbow and also fired warning shots (although his ‘warning shots’ just narrowly missed the eagles that were starting to descend upon us.

“WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DOING HERE!?” Percy screamed. He looked furious. “Did you seriously abandoned Annabeth when I asked you to stick by her side?”

“Hey, don’t raise your voice to me man!” I yelled back. “She ordered me to come back and help get the ship ready to pull out of here. And you know how stubborn your girlfriend is.”

Percy groaned, but he didn’t say anything else. He focused on keeping the Romans from getting too close to the ship. He blew up a wind storm that pushed the Romans away. I helped out by summoning a strong rain to pelt them. With the wind and rain, the Romans were having a hard time getting close. But then one familiar, extremely annoying (to the level of putting rusty nails in my ears) voice shrieked over then wind.

“Kill them! Kill them all!!”

Looking over the edge of the Argo I saw that Octavian had arrived. He was decked out in golden armor and the color purple, as if he was the Praetor. He was crouched behind his guards, screaming at the Roman demigods as they struggled closer to the ship.
“Octavian…” grunted Jason, scowling at the false prophet. “Why is he doing this?”

“I’ve been asking that since I met the freak.” I said. With Octavian’s encouragement, the Romans started pushing closer. “We need to up the ante. Jason, help us brew a localized storm.”


“Just focus on storms.” I said. “Control your natural abilities as the son of Jupiter. Percy and I always co-op our powers and the results are stronger than we expect. With you, who knows what out limits will be.”

“I don’t know.” Jason looked unsure.

“Dude, it’ll be fine.” Percy said. He drew Riptide and held it out. “Don’t think about it and let go, it’s only a localized storm, like Tsuna said.”

Jason looked between us and the oncoming Roman demigods before nodding. “Right.”

Jason drew his golden gladius and I lifted the Kusanagi. The three of us crossed swords and the sky darkened. The clouds blackened and swirled above us. The wind picked up even more. There were constant flashes of lightning. Large waves were starting to beat down on the docks and the fort itself. Rain was pelting everyone-us, the Romans, and the Mortals. The Roman eagles tried to attack us, but the appearance of cyclones of swirling water and Coach Hedge taking potshots at them scared the birds away.

“Keep moving!” screamed Octavian, ducking when a piece of wreckage flew at him. “They can’t keep this up for long! The gods are on our side! They wish for the destruction of the Greeks! The demand the lives of the traitors to the legion! They desire the blood of the Shinto spy!”

“I AM NOT A SPY!!” I yelled.

My powers acted on their own at that moment. From my sword a strong steady stream of lightning struck the ground right in front of the enclosing soldiers, marking a line and scaring them. Glancing to my sides I saw that both Percy and Jason were (pardon the pun) shocked. I just shrugged my shoulders and kept it up to prevent the Romans from getting closer. Despite Octavian’s screeching, even the Romans thought twice about being electrocuted.

“Annabeth!” Percy said.

Looking ahead I saw the daughter of Athena running towards us. Without even looking at or signaling each other, the three of us willed the storm to go around Annabeth, letting her make her way to us without any struggle.

“Stop her!” ordered Octavian.

A Roman heeded Octavian’s order and threw a spear. It flew straight at her, and then it changed directions, flying past her ear. I didn’t will the winds to do it (but I would’ve if I had the chance) so Percy must have done it on instinct. Piper screamed for Leo to take off, and the ship began moving. The daughter of Aphrodite ran to the ledge and held her hand out. Once she was at the dock Annabeth leaped and grabbed Piper’s hand.

Piper pulled her up and Percy was about to run over to her when Annabeth ordered “Go, go, go!!”

Leo must have heard her, because the engines roared. The oars churned. Jason and Percy broke from our combo to get the ship moving faster. Jason altered the course of the winds while
Percy called forth a wave to carry us away from the fort and out to sea. Octavian was flipping out, stomping his feet like a child throwing a tantrum. I could just make out him pointing at us when a group of Roman archers appeared and drew their bows. As they knocked their arrows back I swung the Kusanagi in their direction, sending a wave that collided into Octavian and his loyalists. Soon we were going top speed, and Fort Sumter was merely a blot in the distance.

This is it. We’re officially in the Atlantic now. We’re heading to the Ancient Lands. We’re heading to Rome. Hold out just a little bit longer Nico. I’m coming for you. I’m coming.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and kudos are appreciated.
That…was close.

I think I really over did it using my abilities like that to get away. I felt exhausted. I was leaning on my knees, breathing deeply and heavily. I could really use a nap, and maybe some food, like a chicken sandwich or something…yeah, I definitely over did it.

And I wasn’t the only one. Percy and Jason were being taken care of by their girlfriends. They both were sitting with their backs to the mast, heads slumped in exhaustion. Their girlfriends made them drink water and nibble on some Ambrosia. To be honest, compared to how I feel and how they look, I think I came out in better shape than them. Maybe the Kusanagi was boosting my powers enough for me to not feel as weakened. I am a bit jealous though. They both got someone special to take care of them, I don’t.

“Here you go Tsuna.” I stood up straight and saw that Hazel was holding out a bottle of water.

“Thanks.” I said, taking the water. And then my legs gave out. “Oomph!”

“Gods, Tsuna, are you okay?” she asked after I landed on my butt. She leaned down and placed her hand on my shoulder.

“Yeah, I should be.” I said, sitting up. “I must be more tired than I thought. How long were we keeping things up?”

“About two hours.” She said.

“Two hours?!” I said. “Impressive. Time flies when you’re saving everybody’s lives.”

Hazel giggled. “Yeah, thanks for saving us. What you three did was amazing.”

“Thank you, I do try to impress.” I did a mock, over the top bow. The daughter of Pluto giggled, and it was really cute.

Frank then came up, and he looked…off, like there was something on his mind. “Hey Hazel, can I talk to you for a second?”

Hazel cocked her head to the side confused. “Yeah, sure.” She responded. Hazel turned to me and smiled. “Will you be okay here Tsuna?”

I nodded. “I’ll be fine.” I waved her off.

Once they walked away I leaned back on my hands and faced the sun. It felt nice, just sitting there soaking up the sun’s rays. If I didn’t know any better I could almost imagine being on a cruise right now. I only got distracted for a moment when I heard Frank and Hazel arguing about
something just out of earshot, but I went back to relaxing in the sun.

“You don’t look bad Tsuna.” I popped open an eye and saw Annabeth. She was holding out a piece of Ambrosia for me.

“I knew you liked me for my good looks.” I said, taking the square of godly food. Annabeth rolled her eyes and smiled. “How’s Percy?”

“Tired, but okay.” She said. “Jason too. Piper’s keeping an eye on them while they rest their eyes.” She looked out into the horizon. “How far out are we?”

“Way out in the Atlantic.” I saw automatically. “No land nearby. But if we keep going in the direction we’re headed, we’ll be in Spanish waters.”

“To get into the Mediterranean we’re going to have to go through the Straits of Gibraltar.” She said. “How off course are we from the Straight?”

“Not very, but Leo should be able to correct our course easily.”

“Speaking of Leo.” said Annabeth.

Leo had descended from the console room. He was flexing his fingers. It was as if he didn’t let go of the wheel since we left Fort Sumter. His hands have got to hurt. Once he was on the deck Frank and Hazel stopped their little argument, whatever it was about.

“I think we need to have a meeting.” Annabeth said. “Regroup and plan our next moves from here.”

Annabeth held out her hand to me. I took it and she pulled me up to my feet. Everybody gathered at the mast so Percy and Jason didn’t have to move.

“There’s no sign of pursuit.” Frank said, but from the scowl he had on his face he didn’t seem to excited about that fact.”

“And no land.” Hazel added. She was starting to turn a little green. I didn’t know she got sea sick. Leo turned to Annabeth. “Did you find that map you wanted?”

Annabeth paled, but nodded. “I’ll have to study it.” She said. “How far are were from those coordinates?”

“At top rowing speed about an hour.” Leo said. “Any idea what we’re looking for?”

“No.” Annabeth admitted. “Percy?” My brother looked up and gods he didn’t look good—it’s like he went clubbing and had a few too many to drink. His green eyes were bloodshot and droopy.

“The Nereid I talked to said that Chiron’s brothers were there, and they’d want to hear about the aquarium in Atlanta. I don’t know what she meant, but…” Percy paused and shook his head. “She also warned me to be careful.”

“Careful?” I asked. “What for?”

“Keto.” He said. “The goddess we met at the aquarium.” Keto…wait, did he mean Kate? Gods when is my memory going to clear up? “Keto’s the mother of sea monsters, like Echinda is for most of the Greek monsters—”
“Actually, Echinda is the daughter of Keto and Phorcys.” Annabeth said.

“Okay Wise Girl, show me up.” Percy said, dragging on his words a bit. “Keto might be stuck at the aquarium, but she can still send her children after us. The Nereid said we should be expecting an attack.”

“Wonderful.” muttered Frank.

“It’s not like we weren’t expecting anything to attack us.” I said. “We’re heading into the Ancient Lands, Monsters don’t stay dead as it is, and Gaea has a bounty out on us. We should constantly be on high alert.”

Everyone nodded and went silent. From the vibe I was getting, I think the realization of where we’re going and what we’re about to face hit everyone. We are heading to the Ancient Lands, to Rome and Greece to put a stop to Gaea and her Giant spawn. We could be heading straight to our deaths.

Jason tried to stand, which wasn’t a good idea. His knees wobbled and Piper caught him before he fell. Jason leaned back against the mast and slid down it back to the floor next to Percy, who I know that if he was feeling better would have made fun of the blonde man.

Jason cradled his head in his hand. “Can we get the ship aloft?” he asked. “If we could fly—”

“That’d be great.” Leo said. “Except Festus tells me the port aerial stabilizer got pulverized when the ship raked against the dock at Fort Sumter.”

“We were in a hurry,” Annabeth crossed her arms. “Trying to save you.”

“And saving me is a very noble cause,” Leo raised his arms defensively. “I’m just saying, it’ll take some time to fix. Until then, we’re not flying anywhere.”

Percy flexed his shoulders and winced. “Fine with me. The sea is good.”

“Speak for yourself.” Hazel glanced at the evening sun, the golden sphere of light almost at the horizon. Hazel was looking greener by the minute. “We need to go fast. We’ve burned through another day, and Nico only has three more left.”

My heart skipped a beat. Nico… I forgot about Nico’s time limit. What kind of monster am I that I forgot that Nico is living on borrowed time? He’s the main reason I’m on this Quest in the first place. I pray that he’s holding on, because I will save him before he dies.

“We can do it.” Leo said, drawing me from my thoughts. His eyes were filled with sincerity. “We can make it to Rome in three days—assuming, you know, nothing unexpected happens.”

“Is there any good news?” grunted Frank.

“Actually, yes.” Leo said. “According to Festus. Our flying table, Buford, made it back safe and sound while we were in Charleston, so those eagles didn’t get him.” Seriously Leo, the table? “Unfortunately, he lost the laundry bag with your pants.”

“Dang it!” barked Frank. I had to repress a laugh, not only because of him losing his only other spare pants (I do feel bad about that though) and the fact that ‘dang it’ was the worst thing he can say.

Percy started groaning and doubling over, drawing my attention. “Did the world just turn upside
“Yeah,” Jason said, cupping his hand over his eyes. “And it’s spinning. Everything is yellow. Is it supposed to be yellow?”

I kneeled down and gripped Percy’s shoulder. “You okay man?”

“No, I’m dying.” He said in all seriousness. “How come you’re not like us?”

“The Kusanagi, I think.”

“Un no ī yatsu.” He muttered.

“Akachande wanai, anata wa yoku narudeshou.” I rolled my eyes. “Sore ni, watashi wa anata o iyasu koto ga dekimasu, anata wa shitte imasu.”

“Okay, this is something that’s bugging me.” Leo said. “Why do you two keep breaking into Japanese?”

“It just slips.” said Percy. “I don’t even notice that I do it.”

“Neither do I.” I said. “But now that you mentioned it, it has been happening a lot.”

“That’s cool.” Jason said, holding Piper’s left hand while her right felt his forehead. “Wish I could speak something other than Latin and the bit of Greek that I know.”

Piper pulled back her hand. “Summoning up that storm took a lot out of you two. You’ve got to rest.”

Annabeth nodded in agreement. “Frank, can you help us carry the guys downstairs.”

“I’ll help too.” I said. “I’m not in as bad of as shape as they are.”

“Thanks Tsuna.” Annabeth said. “But I want you to rest too. You might be better off then the two of them, but you using your powers like that still drained you, I can tell.”

“Sure, I know I’m not going to win a fight with you.” I said with a shrug of my shoulders. I grabbed Percy’s arm and pulled him up. “Up you get.”

“Easy.” He said.

“At least you won’t throw up like I did.”

“Yeah, that was gross.” Jason said.

“Sorry about that.” I said.

“It’s no problem man.” said Jason.

“Come on boys, let’s get to the sick bay.” Annabeth said, on the other side of Percy.

Frank helped Piper carry Jason, and the five of us walked to the sick bay. The two ‘strongest’ demigods on the ship collapsed on the beds and almost fell asleep. If it wasn’t for their girlfriends forcing them to sit up and eat a bit more Nectar and Ambrosia, they would’ve fallen asleep the moment they hit the beds. Once she was satisfied with her boyfriend’s current state Annabeth came over and pushed me into a chair.
“Now you rest.” She said (more like ordered.) “You might not be as bad as those two, but you still need to recover.”

“I’m fine ‘Beth.” I said.

“You might be, but I still want you to rest.” She said. “We’re going to need all three of you at full strength once we get the Mare Nostrum. And since you’re feeling better than Percy and Jason, you can keep watch while I study the map.”

“I’m on baby sitting duty?” I raised an eyebrow.

“Yes, now keep an eye on the two babies while Piper and I get to work.” explained the blonde girl.

“Can I at least go grab something real quick?” I asked.

“I can grab it for you.” Piper said. “What is it?”

“It’s a book in my back pack.” I said. “Black with gold clasps, snowflake in the center.”

“Okay, I’ll go get it.”

“Thanks Pipes.” I said as the two girls left.

Piper came back a few minutes later with the spell book. As Jason and Percy rested I flipped through the book, reading the notes Ingrid and Rumpelstiltskin left me. I hoped that they would help me with my magic, or have something that would explain the emotional meltdown and power that Percy said erupted from me.

Most of the notes were about using my emotions to harness and control my magic. A few of them were spells that were a bit too complicated for me right now. I flipped through the pages, looking for the invisibility spell I’ve been trying to use on this freaking tattoo I was branded with back in New Rome.

I set the book in my lap. “Okay Tsuna, let’s try this again.”

I held out my right arm, the tattoo facing out. I glanced through the spell again, making sure I was doing everything right. Once I was sure that everything I was doing was right, I focused on the emotions to fuel the spell. I thought about back to when I found Percy again and happy I felt when he remembered me, that feeling of brotherly love in my heart.

I smiled at the memory. It was so recent, but after losing Percy for so long it was the happiest I felt in a long time. It had to be strong enough to fuel this spell. I waved my hand over the tattoo, but nothing happened.

“Come on, you can do it Tsuna.” I waved my hand again, and this time the tattoo started to fade, but it came back instantly. “Damn it!”

“What are you doing?” Looking towards the beds I saw Jason sitting up.

“Hey man, you feeling better?” I shut the spell book.

“Yeah, a bit.” He said. He sat up straighter. “I think I just need to eat something and I should be good to go.” He looked around. “How long have we’ve been in here?”

“I don’t know, maybe an hour? Two tops? I’ve been a little distracted to pay too much attention.”
Jason smiled in understanding and nodded his head at my spell book. “So, what were you doing there?”

“Oh, yeah, uh,” I started. How do I tell him? I guess the truth is the only thing I can say. “I’m, uh, trying to use magic to get rid of this.” I held up my right arm to show him the tattoo.

“The Legion brand?” Jason asked. “Why do you want to get rid of it?”

“Well, while I understand that it’s a sign of honor or something for you Romans,” I started as I began rubbing my thumb on the tattoo, “I can’t stand tattoos. I think they are ugly and unnecessary. Besides, they are also a complete turn off to me.”

Jason laughed. “Yeah,” he raised his arm, showing me his tattoo that looked more like a barcode in all honesty. “I guess having this at my age is kinda unattractive.”

“I don’t know.” I said, tilting my head and giving him a sincere smile. “I think you make it look good.”

I winked at Jason, causing him to blush a deep red. “Uh, th-th-thanks, I-I-I guess.” He stuttered. Oh dear, I think I broke him. Jason rubbed the back of his neck, unable to look me in the eye. “I-d-didn’t know you were, uh…you know…”

“What would it matter if I was or not?”

Jason jumped, his eyes wide and filled with fear and sudden guilt. “Nothing!” he said quickly, and a bit too loud for my tastes with Percy sleeping right there in the other bed. “Nothing at all! I don’t have a problem with it. I mean, I’m flattered and all, but you know about me and Piper, and we’ve been together for—”

“Jason, stop.” I waved him down. “Nanite kotoda Jason, I’m just playing with you. Relax, it’s just some harmless flirting. Don’t worry about it and just…” I glanced over at Percy, who I saw was drooling in his sleep. “Be quiet…please?”

The young mirror of Chris Evans looked over at Percy questioningly. “Are you worried about Per —”

“Listen, Jace, I’d rather not have this conversation now when Percy is around, okay?” I said in a harsh whisper. “It’s something that I want to talk to you in private, when no one can overhear.”

“Tsuna, man, Percy isn’t going to judge you, you know that, right?” Jason wondered. “We’ve just met, but I know Percy well enough to know that he won’t treat you any different. You’re one of the first people that are always on his mind. He’ll always care about you, I see that much.”

I let out a sigh and shook my head. “That’s not it.” I scratched the back of my head. “It’s just… there’s stuff I don’t want to burden Percy with, and…never mind. I have plans to talk to my brother when the time is right, just me and him.”

“You shouldn’t keep secrets from him though.” Jason said.

“It’s not a secret, its just…a truth that he doesn’t know yet.” I closed my spell book and stood up to stretch, enjoying the sound of my bones popping. “But you and I should talk soon. There’s something that you deserve to know.”

“We can talk now man.” Jason said, leaning back on his arms. “It’s as good of time as any.”
“Maybe for you, but I still need to think of what to say.” I explained. “I don’t want to scare you away or anything like that.”

“Tsuna, we’re friends. You won’t scare me.”

“Either way, I’m not really ready to talk about it, but I will be soon.” I promised. “All I need is some time to think of how I’m going to say it.”

“Tsuna…”

“In the meantime, you should get some more rest.” I needed to distract him. “We’re nearing the Ancient Lands, so I doubt you’ll get too much of a chance once we enter.”

“You can’t just change the subject like that.” He argued.

“Actually I can.” I countered. “Now go to sleep before I put a sleeping spell on you—”

In that moment the ship violently rocked. Jason grabbed onto the metal frame of the bed to keep himself from falling off while I grabbed the nearby table for support. Percy was jolted awake and jumped to his feet.

“What’s happening?!” he yelled wide eyed, although it sounded more like ‘Was apin?!’

“I don’t know.” I said. “But can you sense that? The ship’s in trouble.” As if on cue the ship’s bell rang.

“Let’s go!” Jason yelled. He grabbed his gladius and ran out the door before Percy and I could.

Percy reached into his pocket and pulled out Riptide. He kept it in its pen form while we ran upstairs. The boat shook again and we were hit by Jason who was falling down the stairs. It really hurt when the three of us made a pile on the floor. Luckily no one was skewered by Jason’s sword.

“Get off me.” Percy said, pushing Jason onto the floor.

“Come on, we have to get moving!” I said. I stood up as fast as I could and grabbed my friends by the arms to pull them to their feet.

Making sure we kept hold of the railing this time we ran straight up the stairs. The ship would rock in one direction one moment and then another the next. It was so fierce and sudden that something large had to be ramming into it. I really hope that Leo’s ship can take it.

We followed Frank, Annabeth, and Piper up the last flight of stairs. They were armed and ready to fight whatever was attacking us. Although, let’s face it, in the middle of the Atlantic, it has to be a sea monster, sent by Keto no less if that Nereid Percy talked to was telling the truth.

The six of us burst through the exit, drawing our weapons as we did so. “What’s going—Gah!” Percy screamed. “Shrimpzilla!”

That’s…a pretty spot on name for it Percy. It did look like a giant shrimp, and that giant shrimp was genetically crossed with a cockroach. Its pink shell was reflecting the moonlight. The creature’s flat tail slammed against the water’s surface as its millipede-like legs scratched their way against the hull of the *Argo II*.

Slimy tentacles began to crawl up the sides of the ship. With a low groaning sound, a giant
face of a pink catfish rose out of the waves, its eyes dead looking and glassy. Its maw was toothless, but it was still terrifying to look into.

“Where’s Godzilla when you need him?” I asked myself. But Ebirah could take this thing down easily…but this is Ebirah I’m talking about, so I doubt it.

A tentacle came right at me, bringing me out of my imagination, so I sliced it. I really don’t think the creature noticed. I was half tempted to scream out ‘Unleash the Kraken!’ with all the tentacles this thing had, but it wasn’t the time or the place. Frank had rushed straight for Hazel as the monster rammed into the ship. The Satyr was running around yelling (mostly at Leo.)

The hull groaned, with Annabeth, Piper, and Jason tumbling starboard. I really hoped that this thing is really sturdy, because I don’t know if it can take being rammed by this thing. I heard the ship make clicking noises, so Leo must be activating some self-defense system.

“How did it get so close?!” Annabeth screamed as she was being held up by her boyfriend.

“I don’t know!” Coach Hedge snarled.

“I’m stupid!” Leo scolded himself. “Stupid Leo! Stupid, stupid! I forgot the sonar!” The ship tilted starboard.

“Sonar?” demanded Hedge. “Pan’s pipes, Valdez! Maybe if you hadn’t been staring into Hazel’s eyes, holding hands for so long—”

“WHAT?!” yelped Frank.

“It wasn’t like that!” protested Hazel.

“It doesn’t matter!” Piper said. “Jason, can you call some lighting?”

Jason struggled to his feet and made a face that made him look constipated. “I—” He only managed to shake his head. Annabeth and I looked towards Percy and I, and we tried, gods did we try, but nothing. The three of us were far to drained from the storm we created at Fort Sumter. Even the Kusanagi wasn’t giving me enough of a boost, as if Dad didn’t want to overload me or something.

“Can’t you two talk to it?” Piper asked as Jason helped her to her feet.

“Yeah, like that’s going to work!” Percy said as he sliced down another tentacle.

“At least try!” Piper said, and she must have used her power without realizing, because both Percy and I ran to the edge and started talking to the creature.

“Please go away!” Percy asked it.

“Don’t destroy the ship!” I ordered.

The creature ignored us, not even pausing as it responded in a gurgling voice “Kill for Momma! Kill for Momma!!”

“Not good.” I said, just as a rouge tentacle slammed into me and my brother. I lost track of Percy as we flew, but I heard (and felt) the distinct sound of my back hitting a wall, and the tumbling of a heavy weight going down stairs, followed by a series of curses emanating from Percy’s mouth.

“Oh gods, Percy!” Annabeth yelled.
“I feel the love Wise Girl.” I moaned. I felt around my ribs, and prayed nothing was broken. I’m no doctor (gods I miss Will right now) but I’m pretty sure nothing’s broken or bruised, but I’m going to be hurting for a little bit.

Piper screamed. Once the spots in my vision cleared up I saw that a tentacle had wrapped around her leg and was drawing her near the creatures’ maw. More of the slimy things slithered their way up and all over the ship. They encircled the masts, curled around the crossbows, and ripped the rigging.

“Nose-hair attack!!” Hedge dove for his bat and leaped into action, but the blunt instrument was merely bouncing off the rubbery flesh of the tendrils.

Jason rushed after Piper. He grabbed her hand and tried to pull her leg out of the tentacle’s grip, but he was still weakened from our earlier escape. He drew his gold sword and sliced through the tentacle with ease. The slimy thing still wiggled and squirmed around Piper’s leg, but at least she was free. But the joy was cut short by the fact that more tentacles took its place faster than Jason could sever them.

Annabeth unsheathed her dagger and ran into the forest of tentacles, slicing and stabbing and dodging at whatever target she could find. I saw Frank firing arrows into the creature’s main body. A lot of them bounced off the creature’s shell, but a few lodged themselves into the chinks of its natural armor. Unfortunately, that only seemed to annoy the creature.

“Tsuna!” Annabeth yelled. “Get off your butt and help!”

“You bossy little…” I started as I stood. Gods…just…gods.

With sword in hand I ran past the tendrils, slicing them as I passed. As the monster started crawling onto the ship I willed the water of the sea to grab the creature and pull it away. It made another gurgling, screaming noise, this one unintelligible (even with my ‘son of the sea god’ sea-life translator I have in my head.)

But this sea monster was dead set on its mission from ‘Momma’. No matter how many tentacles we all cut off, no matter how many arrows Frank shot at it, and no matter how hard I tried to will the sea to take it away from the ship, it wouldn’t leave or lessen its attack. We needed something to do serious damage to this thing, but the big power houses (Percy, Jason, and I) weren’t completely at full strength. Hazel was fighting her sea sickness and whatever was up with her and Leo on top of fighting the creature. Annabeth was bossy, and despite her years of training she wasn’t really prepared to fight this thing. Frank’s arrows were more like toothpicks or something. Hedge…well, Hedge is just Hedge. Leo should be able to do something, what with his Human Torch powers, but why he isn’t using them is beyond me.

“Coach!” Leo screamed, drawing my thoughts. “Get to the wheel! Turn us towards the monster or we’ll capsize!”

“Hope you have a plan!” Coach bleated as he billy-goated his way to the ship wheel.

“Yeah, a bad one!” Leo ran to the mast, just as the ship lurched at a forty-five-degree angle. “Tsuna! Keep this ship together!”

“I’m trying!” I screamed back. I had to stop willing the water to push the creature away and focused on the Argo II, doing everything in my power to keep it from breaking apart.

Leo ran to Hazel, who was messing around with a box. “Frank! Buy us some time and distract that
thing! Can you turn into a shark or something?!” Frank barely had time to scowl at the Latino Elf before a tentacle slammed into his chest and threw him overboard.

“Frank!” screamed Hazel, dropping what was in her hands, which Leo dove to catch.

“Come on!” Leo handed Hazel one of the vials. “We can kill that monster and save Frank!” I watched as they went to the port side rail.

“What is this stuff?” asked Hazel.

“Greek Fire!”

Her eyes widened. “Are you crazy?!” Leo put his pointer finger and thumb a few centimeters apart.

Why the bloody hell do we have vials of Greek Fire on this ship?! While I have never seen what the stuff can do in person, people from camp have told me what it is capable of doing. Will said that it was, and I quote, ‘One of the most dangerous magical substances in the world.’ Nico had told me that the substance can even burn underwater.

Leo threw his arm back, but before he could toss the vial of Greek Fire a tentacle wrapped around them both. It lifted them in the air. We all screamed out for them as the monster thrashed them around. I wanted to help, but if I didn’t stay focused on the ship we’d be torn apart. If only Percy was up here and conscious, one of us would be able to help them.

But then the creature let out a shriek of pain. Leo had one of his hands against the tentacle and smoke was coming from in between his fingers. He must have burnt the creature to make it let go of him and Hazel. The monster bellowed as they fell, its maw wide open.

It must have been what Leo was planning, because as they fell both Leo and Hazel tossed the vials into its gaping mouth. There was this muffled *BOOM* and a flash of green light that could be seen from inside the creature shined, looking like that effect where you put a flashlight underneath your hand.

I could feel it when Leo and Hazel hit the water, and how they were sinking deeper and deeper. As much as I wanted to go jump in and save them, the monster was still trying to take the ship down. It was in so much pain, as you’d expect from something whose insides are on fire. I could tell that it wasn’t going to last much longer. But even as I say that, I get the feeling that it wants to take the ship down with its final breath.

“Jason!” I yelled. “You need to kill it before it drags the boat under with it!”

“How should I do that?!” he asked, still slicing tentacles.


Jason looked around, but there wasn’t anything for him to use. All he had was his sword in his hand. So, taking my advice, he just yelled and ran. He got to the railing and jumped off it as a tentacle went to swipe at him. The monster roared, green flames fanning out of it, as it rose itself out of the sea to swallow Jason. But the All-American demigod manipulated the winds to fly out of the way just in time. He screamed as he went to thrust his sword down. As he was plunging down, a single bolt of lightning came flashing down, and once Jason’s sword began to sink into the creature’s skull the lightning bolt connected to the hilt of the blade and spread out into the monster.

The creature flailed, its tendrils recoiling away from the ship. It backed away, unable to
cope with the pain of both burning up from its insides and the surge of electricity flowing through its nerves. Jason jumped off the creature’s head and flew back to the ship, landing next to me and looking drained. He had to have pushed himself summoning that lightning bolt.

“You okay?” I asked, letting go of my hold on the Argo II.

“I’ll be fine.” Jason shook his head to clear it. “But Leo and the others, I didn’t see them.”

“What?!”

“I mean, they haven’t surfaced yet!”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and Kudos are appreciated.
Everyone picked themselves up after the sea monster evaporated into dust. Even with the Doors of Death in Gaia’s control, it’s going to take some time for Shrimpzilla to reconstitute after everything we did to it. I wonder how its monster goddess of a mommy feels right now about us offing her Chthonic offspring?

“Is everyone alright?” Piper called out.

“We’re alive.” Jason said.

“Barely.” I added. I stood up, feeling a little dizzy, using Jason as support. “But Leo, Hazel, and Frank fell into the Atlantic, and they haven’t surfaced yet. We need to go find them.”

“I’ll take the skies,” Jason started, “Maybe I’ll be able to see them from above.”

“I’ll go under then.” I said. Annabeth hobbled over, her ponytail loose. “Wise Girl, head down stairs and wake Percy up. I’m going to need his help searching for the others.” I looked towards the east. “I’m going to take the eastern side, so have Percy take the west.”

“Got it.” She nodded and ran down stairs. I walked over to the ledge and stepped up. Yatagarasu flew over to me and landed on the crook of my arm. “Yata, help Jason search for Leo, Hazel, and Frank. Take to the skies with him and go in the opposite direction he goes.” Yatagarasu nodded and flew to the sky, waiting for Jason to choose which way he was going to search.

“Stay safe man.” Jason said. “Who knows what’s in these waters.”

“Thanks Jase.” I said. “But I should be fine. Son of a sea god, remember?”

With a small salute I jumped backwards into the ocean. As I was fully submerged I just let myself sink deeper into the water. Just being in the ocean felt amazing. It was as if my very cells were being strengthened. Maybe this is how it is for Aquaman, cause he’s at his strongest in the sea too. All the aches and soreness that my body felt melted away. I felt stronger than ever.

After taking the moment to enjoy the ocean I started heading east. I tried to focus on Leo and the others, but I couldn’t sense them anymore. I kept swimming for a while, talking to any fish that swam by.

None of the sea life I talked to saw my friends. The schools of fish, despite their many sets of eyes, hadn’t seem Leo and the others. The dolphins I encountered wanted to play instead of cooperate with me. The great white shark I met? Well…that didn’t end well. Let’s just say that it involved a lot of running away and some help being summoned by a heard of jellyfish. Thank goodness that those boneless creatures like me so much.

I couldn’t find any sign of the others. Not even a piece of clothe or anything that could give
me a hint as to where they were. I eventually found a large sea turtle that was kind enough to help me. He had me grab onto the back of his shell and took me to farther away from the Argo II.

Eventually he stopped at the edge of a large crevice, where a large clam shell was precariously perched. I gave the sea turtle a confused look, but he just swam off. I swam over and knocked on the shell.

The shell opened a bit. “Hello?”

“Oh, hi.” I said. “I was brought here for help?”

“Help?” the clam shell opened a bit more, revealing a sea green girl. She was an Oceanid.

“Y-yeah.” I said. “My ship was attacked by this catfish/shrimp monster, and three of my friends went overboard. You…haven’t seen them, have you?”

“Sorry no.” she said. “And if I did, they’d be…how do you Mortals say it? ‘Swimming with the fishes’.”

I felt the blood drain from my face. “Uh, thanks…I guess. Have a, um, good day?”

“You too. Bye.” With that she slammed the clam shut.

I swallowed the large lump that formed in my throat and decided to head back to the ship. It feels like I’ve been searching for a couple of hours, so hopefully I can meet up with Percy back at the Argo.

Once I arrived back at the ship I nearly ran into Percy. He wasn’t paying attention, just swimming on ahead, clearly focused on his search. He noticed me right before he slammed into me and righted himself in the water.

“Hey, you find anything?” he asked.

“No.” I shook my head. “You?”

“Nothing.” He said. He looked guilty, and I understand why, because I feel the same way. Between the two of us, we should have found a trace of Hazel and the others. But if we can’t find anything in our element, what good are we?

Percy sighed, letting out a stream of bubbles that floated up. “Let’s get back on board, maybe Jason saw something from the skies.”

I nodded. I know for a fact that he didn’t want to give up the search, but if the two of us can’t find anything, then there’s no hope. No, I have to keep a hold on hope, because they could still very well be alive. With a bird’s eye view, Jason should have seen something…

We broke the surface of the water and I shook my long hair, sending droplets flying around. Granted I know I didn’t need to do that, with me being able to just will myself dry, but somethings are just ingrained in you after so many years. It did, however, nail in the fact that I need a haircut soon. My hair has gotten way longer than I like it, and putting it up all the time is going to get annoying.

“Are you done acting like a wet dog?” Percy said, brow raised.

“Yeah, sorry.”
We swam to the Argo II and called out to anyone on the ship to throw down a ladder or a rope so we could climb up, but no one heard us. Which is odd, considering everyone should be on deck keeping a look out for Frank, Hazel, and Leo (and any monster or creature that could attack us.) We called out again, but no response. Percy and I shared a worried look.

Together, we focused our powers and had the water lift us up like a slow-moving geyser. When the water was level with the ships deck we stepped on and looked around. No one was there, which scared me. We called out, but no one responded. Please, for the love of the gods, be below deck.

“Stay here.” Percy said, clicking Riptide into sword mode. I nodded and brought out the Kusanagi.

Percy went down the stairs and I walked around the deck, hoping to see where everyone is, and to keep an eye out for Leo and the others. Walking to the control panel I saw that no one was manning the helm. I was really getting scared now. I jumped to the main deck and was about to call out when I heard someone calling out for me.

“Tsuna!” Looking up I saw Jason starting his descent onto the ship. With the wind blowing around him and the light shining from behind him, he looked like a wingless angel. I gulped as he landed. I was kind of speechless for a minute, but luckily, I was brought out of it by Yatagarasu landing on my shoulder and squawking in my ear.

“H-hey Jase.” I stuttered. “Di-did you find an anything?”

The blonde’s face looked sullen. “No.” He looked sad and disappointed in himself. I know the feeling. “How about you and Percy?” I shook my head. “Do you think that they’re—”

“I don’t know, but I’d rather just hope that they’re alright.” I said. “I doubt the Fates would let them die this early in the quest, but destiny is a fickle thing.”

Jason looked at me like I was crazy. “Um…okay, bit philosophical for my taste buddy.”

“Sorry…” I said with a blush rising on my cheeks. Gods, why now?

“So…” Jason started, “Have you seen Pipes? Or even Coach and Annabeth?”

I shook my head. “When Percy and I got back no one was on deck. Percy’s checking below now.”

“Do you think—?” started the blonde.

“I don’t think so.” I said, already knowing what he was about to say. Luckily for me, I didn’t have to say anything else because everyone came running up the stairs.

“Jason, Tsuna,” Piper said. “Did you two find anything? Percy just found us, and he said he didn’t find a trace of Leo and the others, but you’ve got to have seen something out th—”

“Pipes, Pipes, take a breath.” Jason rushed over and gripped her hands, running his fingers over hers in a soothing manner. “I’m sorry, but I couldn’t see anything, and Tsuna didn’t either.”

Piper’s eyes looked like they were about to flood with tears when she looked at me. “I’m sorry Piper.” I said.

“It’s…it’s not your fault.” Piper sniffled and rubbed her eyes.

“What were you all doing down there anyway?” I asked.
“I was making a list of what was wrong with the ship since that sea monster attacked.” Annabeth said. She waved a list in the air to make sure I saw it. Okay, is it me or has Annabeth been a bit more…moody, lately?

“And that involved having everyone down below deck?” I raised an eye. Her response was to roll her eyes.

“So what’s the damage?” Jason asked.

“It’s easier to say what’s not the damage.” Annabeth said. “While you three have been searching for our friends we were doing what we could to keep the ship from sinking. Good news, the ship isn’t sinking anymore. The bad news is that without Leo here we can’t fully repair the ship, but it is capable of sailing.”

“We can’t just leave everyone.” Jason said.

“No one said that we’ll be leaving those cupcakes, cupcakes.” Coach said. “I’m sure that they are alive, I’ve got this gut feeling.”

“Well, if you have a gut feeling.” I said sarcastically.

“Tsuna.” Percy said sternly.

“I know, I know.” I said. “Sorry Coach.”

“So, what should we do while we wait, and how long should we wait?” Jason asked.

“There’s not much we can do, without Leo’s expertise.” admitted Annabeth. She looked over the three of us, looking as if she was analyzing us. “The three of you should rest a bit. You guys haven’t had a chance to sit down since the monster attacked us. Get some food and recuperate for a bit.”

I decided to take that as my cue to go downstairs. I felt tired, but it won’t feel right to fall asleep until everyone’s safe together. Jason followed me while Percy stayed with Annabeth. We got some food and headed back up to the deck. As we munched we kept an eye on the water, hoping for a miracle.

I fed Yatagarasu some of my blueberry muffin as a treat while I continued eyeing the water. The sky was slowly starting to turn from blue to pink, and I have to admit that it was stunning. I haven’t seen anything like this before. Quests may be dangerous, but there are good parts to them, such as moments like these.

“Everyone!” Piper suddenly called out. “Look over there!”

We all got up and ran to where Piper was. Following the path she was pointing with her finger, I saw the water bubbling up. My mind went straight to a Kaiju coming out of the water for a second before three large pink bubbles burst out of the surface. They floated there for a second before they popped, sending three people flying before they fell back into the water. When they resurfaced, I saw realized that it was our missing friends.

Piper cried out in relief seeing our friends and dove straight into the water. No one even had a chance to stop her or give her a rope so we could bring her and the others back aboard. No, she was too focused on swimming to Leo and planting a kiss on his cheek.

“Oh, thank the gods, they’re alive.” Annabeth said relieved.
“We should get them out of the water.” I said.

“I’ll get a rope.” Jason said.

“I got a better idea.” I said. I yelled for everyone to swim close to the ship. Once they were, I used my powers to make the water rise, lifting the four of them up to the ships railing. They stepped onto the ship and were quickly hugged by everyone.

“Where were you guys?” Percy asked. “We couldn’t find you anywhere.”

“Long story.” Leo said. He set down the picnic basket he was holding (which I don’t know where he got it from) and shook his hair to get the water out of it. “But I want to get into some dry clothes.”

After they got into dry clothes (hilariously, Frank had to borrow a pair of pants from Jason due to Leo’s dirty laundry plan not really working out) all of us sat on the quarterdeck for a celebratory breakfast of sorts. While Coach Hedge was banging out any dents he could find in the hull, Leo passed out some brownies as Frank and Hazel explained where they were.

As it turns out, after the monster (which they said was called the Skolopendra) the three of them were saved by a group of sea creatures called Icthyocentaurs, who were basically the combination of a centaur and merpeople. They were taken to a hidden location that Leo said called Camp Fish-Blood. Percy’s attention was fully caught at the mention of the camp.

I mean, the camp did sound intriguing. An underwater camp where all the greatest heroes of the sea are trained? That sound pretty cool. I know that I could use some more training in underwater combat, especially after what happened at Ryūgū-jō. But unfortunately, Frank said that they don’t associate with children of Poseidon.

“Oh my gods, I am in love with these brownies.” I said.

“Yeah, they are great.” Leo said over a mouthful of deliciousness. “I was given the recipe, so I can pass it on to you.”

“Thanks man.”

A series of squeaks and creaks caught the attention of the Son of Hephaestus. “Uh, I’m heading to the helm to check things out and check over that list that Annabeth gave me.” And with that he rushed off.

“I call his share of brownies.” I said.

“Over my dead body.” Jason said.

“Is that a challenge?”

“Boys, really, you’re about to fight over a baked good.” Annabeth said.

She signaled Piper who snatched the brownie away from the two of us. Frank offered a jar of that old lady from Atlanta’s jelly to Jason to combo with his brownie. I don’t know how he could ruin such a good brownie like that.

“But they didn’t want to meet me?” he asked solemnly, still stuck on Camp Fish-Blood. I rubbed his back to soothe him.
“It wasn’t that.” Hazel tried to explain. “It’s more like…undersea politics, I guess. The merpeople are territorial—”

“Not all the merpeople I met.” Percy said, face down. I can’t tell if he’s talking about the ones he met when he was taken to Poseidon’s palace during the Titan War or the ones he met with me at Ryūgū-jō.

“But…” continued the daughter of Pluto, “The good news is that they’re taking care of that aquarium in Atlanta, saving all those sea creatures you guys saw.”

“Good.” I said. “I can’t believe those creatures were just locked up and drugged like that.”

“And they said that they’ll protect the Argo II as we cross the Atlantic,” Frank said, “But once we enter the Mare Nostrum, we’ll be on our own.”

Percy nodded absently. “B-But… they didn’t want to meet me?” I let out a small sigh, amused by my brother’s one-track mind, while Annabeth swatted his arm.

“Oh, come on Seaweed Brain!” Annabeth berated. “Is that what you’re concerned about? Tsuna’s a child of a sea god, and descended from Poseidon, and he wasn’t even mentioned.”

“Actually, Tsuna was mentioned.” Frank said.

“Come again?” I asked.

“They said that they felt a foreign sea in their waters.” Frank said. “They wanted to look into it and attack until I told them that it was probably Tsuna looking for us. I told them about Tsuna’s dad and that he’s our friend, so they didn’t go out to attack.”

“Thanks Frank.” I said, a little scared that merpeople wanted to kill me. They haven’t even met me, and all because I’m a Shinto sea demigod they thought I was a threat? What’s it going to be like when we get to Greece?

“You’re having a hard time making friends man.” Percy said.

“Says the Sea Prince that they didn’t want to even meet.”

“BOYS!” Annabeth yelled. “We’ve got other things to worry about!!”

“She’s right.” Hazel said. “After today, Nico has less than two days left. The fish-centaurs said we have to rescue him. He’s essential to the quest somehow.”

As Hazel looked around, as if waiting for someone to argue with her about it, I drew back into my thoughts. Nico. With less then two days left, will we make it to Rome in time to save him? We’re still a little ways from the Straight of Gibraltar and access to the Mediterranean. And even if the distance wasn’t bad enough, who knows what we’ll face between now and landing in Rome itself. Plus, I am positive that Gaea has plans to hinder us in any and every capacity once we arrive in the city. But if it means saving Nico…

“Leo!” I yelled. “If you floor it, can the Argo make it to Rome in less than two days?”

Leo rubbed his chin, doing the calculations in his head. “If we floor it once the repairs are done, we’d be pushing it. But we should be in the Mediterranean tomorrow morning, and be in Rome the morning of the last day.”
“Which will put us in Rome on the last possible day to save Nico. Twenty-four hours to find him—at most.”

Percy crossed his legs. “And saving Nico isn’t out only problem.” He grabbed Annabeth’s hand and squeezed. “There’s the Mark of Athena, too.”

Annabeth tensed, but she swung her backpack to her front and reached in, taking out this bronze disk the size of a doughnut. “This is the map I found at Fort Sumter. It’s…” She looked at it after stopping abruptly and flipped it over twice. “It’s blank!”

“It wasn’t like this earlier?” Percy asked after looking the disc over.

“No! I was looking at it in my cabin and…” Annabeth muttered under her breath, possible some Greek cuss word. “It must be like the Mark of Athena. I can only see it when I’m alone. It won’t show itself to other demigods.”

Frank scooted back and looked scared. Well, he is jumpy. But did he expect the map to blow up or something? Annabeth took back the disc from Percy and looked at it again, her reflection looking back at her.

“What did that thing have on it?” Frank asked.

“The map was hard to read,” explained Annabeth, “But it showed me a spot on the Tiber River in Rome. I think that’s where my quest starts…the path I’ve got to take to follow the Mark.”

“Maybe that’s where you meet the river god Tiberinus,” Piper said. “But what is the Mark? All this time we’ve been friends, you haven’t told me about it.”

“The coin.” Annabeth murmured, almost a whisper really.

Percy frowned. “What coin?” Annabeth should know better than to keep something like this from Percy, her super protective hero of a boyfriend.

Annabeth took out what looked like a silver drachma from her pocket. “I’ve been carrying this ever since I saw my mom at Grand Central Station. It’s an Athenian coin.”

She passed it around the group. It wasn’t much really impressive. It looked like any other drachma to me really, just silver. Oh, and the giant owl on the one side. Makes sense, what with Athena being the patron deity of Athens. And that must be an olive branch on the coin, cause you…Athens. But what do the symbols mean? Leo asked that himself when the coin got to him.

“It’s alpha, theta, epsilon.” Annabeth said. “In Greek it stands for Of The Athenians… or you could read it as the children of Athena. It’s sort of the Athenian motto.”

“Like SPQR for the Romans.” Piper guessed.

Annabeth nodded. “Anyway, the Mark of Athena is an owl, just like that one.” She took the coin back and rubbed her thumb over its surface. “It appears in fiery red. I’ve seen it in my dreams, and then twice at Fort Sumter.”

“You saw that when you told me to go back to the ship, didn’t you?” I asked.

“I did.” She admitted. “It lead me deeper into the fort, and then I started hearing her voice.”

“Her?” asked Percy. “You mean your mom?”
The daughter of Athena let out a humorless laugh. “I wish.” She shook her head. “It was Gaea. She was taunting me.”

“She likes to do that.” I said.

“And then in the garrison, there were the…spiders.” Annabeth’s skin pricked with goosebumps. Before Percy could do it, I instinctively grabbed Annabeth hand to soothe her, which earned me a glare from her boyfriend. Annabeth smiled her thanks to me. “Luckily for me, the Mark was able to scare the eight-legged freaks away.”

Percy took her other hand. “I should have been there with you.” He glared at me again. “Someone should have been there with you.”

“But that’s the point,” Annabeth said. “No one can be there for me. When I get to Rome, I’ll have to strike out on my own. Otherwise, the Mark won’t appear. I’ll have to follow it to…to the source.”

After a moment of silence, Frank spoke out. “The Giants’ bane stands gold and pale, Won with pain from a woven jail. What is it…this thing at the source?”

“A statue.” Jason said before Annabeth could get a word out. “A statue of Athena. At least…that’s my guess.”

“You sound pretty sure.” I said.

“And you told me that you didn’t know.” added Piper.

“I don’t.” he insisted. “But the more I think about it…there’s only one artifact that could fit the legend.” He turned towards Annabeth. “I’m sorry. I should have told you everything I’ve heard much earlier. But honestly, I was scared. If this legend is true—”

“I know.” Annabeth said. “I figured it out, Jason. I don’t blame you.” From what I could see, some of the tension Jason has been carrying seemed to be lifted. “But if we manage to save the statue, Greek and Romans together…Don’t you see? It could heal the rift.”

Percy made a time out gesture. “Hold on, what statue?”

“The Athena Parthenos.” His girlfriend began. “The most famous Greek statue of all time. It was forty feet tall, covered in ivory and gold. It stood in the middle of the Parthenon in Athens.”

“I’ll bite.” Leo said. “What ended up happening to it?”

“It disappeared.” Annabeth said.

That sent alarm bells ringing in my head, and apparently in Leo’s as well if the frown on his face was any indication. “How does a forty-foot-tall statue in the middle of the Parthenon just disappear?”

“That’s a good question.” Annabeth said. “It’s one of the biggest myths in history. Some people thought the statue was melted down for its gold, or destroyed by invaders. I even saw an episode of Ancient Astronauts that said that aliens took the statue. But Athens was sacked a number of times. Some thought the statue was carried off—”

“By Romans.” Jason finished. “At least, that’s one theory, and it fits the legend I heard at Camp Jupiter. To break the Greeks’ spirit, the Romans carted off the Athena Parthenos when they took
over the city of Athens. They hid it in an underground shrine in Rome. The Roman demigods swore it would never see the light of day again. They literally stole Athena, so she could no longer be the symbol of Greek military power. She became Minerva, a much tamer goddess.”

“And the children of Athena have been searching for the statue ever since.” Annabeth said. “Most don’t know about the legend, but in each generation, a few are chosen by the goddess. They’re even given a coin like mine. They follow the Mark of Athena...a kind of magical trail that links them to the statue...hoping to find the resting place of the Athena Parthenos and get the statue back.”

“So if we—I mean you—find the statue...what would we do with it?” Percy wondered. “Could we even move it?”

“I’m not sure.” Annabeth admitted. “But if we could save it somehow, it could unite the two camps. It could heal my mother of this hatred she’s got, tearing her two aspects apart. And maybe...maybe the statue has some sort of power that could help us against the Giants.”

“Even if it doesn’t directly help us slay the Giants, any advantage we have over Gaea and her armies would help us in the end.” I explained.

“And it could change everything.” Piper said. “It could end thousands of years of hostility. It might be the key defeating Gaea. But we can’t help you...”

“I have to succeed.” Annabeth said simply. She sat up straight and squared her shoulders. “The risk is worth it.”

“I don’t like the idea of you risking your life alone, but you’re right.” Hazel said. “We saw what recovering the golden eagle standard did for the Roman legion. If this statue is the most powerful symbol of Athena ever created—”

“It could kick some serious booty.” Leo offered.

“That wasn’t the way I’d put it, but yes.” Hazel said with a frown.

“Except...” Percy said, taking Annabeth’s hand again, as if he was scared he’d lose her. “No child of Athena has ever found it. Annabeth, what’s down there? What’s guarding your mom’s statue? If it’s got to do with spiders—”

“Won through pain from a woven jail,” Frank recalled. “Woven, like webs?”

The color drained from Annabeth’s face, becoming a sickly white. She must know what’s guarding the Athena Parthenos. And it scares her, scares her like nothing I’ve ever seen before. But...now that I think about it, there was a time when I saw her so scared that she went basically catatonic.

Back when I first moved in Percy, after my mom died, there was this dance at Goode High School. Percy and Annabeth went as a couple, dragging me along as a third wheel so I could get out of the house. Everything started out fine, I even danced with Annabeth for a bit.

But then everything took a turn for the worse not long after the dance started. The school bully Dylan and his new cronies started being dicks, and when I started to stand up to them, the school janitor Mr. Umo had Dylan’s cronies, his ‘children’, escort me outside.

It was then my life as a demigod really started. Mr. Umo’s kids began to shift and transform into these half human, half spider looking monsters. I ran as fast as I could away and ran into
Percy, who was protecting Annabeth. She was frozen with fear that day. And she was almost killed by Mr. Umo’s true form as a Tsuchigumo.

So whatever is guarding the Athena Parthenos has to be spider related. Not only that, it has to be something with a grudge against Athena since in the past two thousand years not a single child of Athena has returned from this quest their mother gave them. I know there’s a Greek legend about the origins of spiders. Something to do with Athena doing a weaving contest with some arrogant mortal who lost, someone who would want nothing less to make Athena suffer. But what was her name?

And that’s when it came to me. It all makes sense now. Webs, spiders, a hatred of Athena and her children. Killing the children of Athena on their destined quest? Annabeth is going to have to face her mother’s old enemy, the progenitor of the eight-legged beasts, the mother of all spiders. The Greek spider monstrosity herself.

“Chikushō.” I said, drawing everyone’s attention. I crawled over and hugged Annabeth tightly. “Annabeth, I am so sorry. I am so, so sorry.”

“Dude, what are you talking about?” Percy asked.

“What are you sorry about?” asked Jason.

I pulled away from Annabeth. “Because of what Annabeth has to face.” I started. “It’s a monster that hates her mother and wants her to suffer.”

“You know what Annabeth has to fight?” Percy asked. “Tsuna you can’t keep this from me, from us. Tell us now.”

I nodded. “It’s Ar—”

“Tsuna stop!” Annabeth yelled. She placed her hand on my shoulder and gave me a pleading look. “Don’t tell them.” She whispered. I wanted to tell her that the others deserve to know, but there’s a reason to what she’s feeling.

“Okay, I won’t.” I said. Annabeth smiled and moutheed ‘thank you’.

“You can’t just leave us hanging like that.” Leo said. “Tell us what you figured out.”

I shook my head and went to my spot on the other side of Percy. “Can’t do that.”

“What? Why?” Jason asked. “You were just about to say it.”

“Look, its not my place to say.” I said. “If Annabeth wants to tell everyone, that’s her choice, but that’s something she needs to decide to do. But I can say this: just like this statue we’re going to get, Annabeth is gonna kick some serious booty.”

“Yeah,” Percy said after putting his arm around Annabeth’s waist, “I learned a long time ago: Never bet against Annabeth.” Despite that, Percy was still eyeing me questioningly.

Everyone else still seemed uneasy, with the way they all stopped eating. Not even the temptation of finishing off these divine brownies was making them move. But Leo was able to shake everyone out of their gloom. He pushed a button on a Wii remote, and a loud blast of steam exploded from Festus’s mouth, making everyone jump.

“Well!” Leo said. “Good pep rally everyone, but there’s plenty of things to fix before we get to the
Mediterranean. Please report to Supreme Commander Leo for your superfun list of chores!”

For whatever reason, Leo decided to have me help him in the engine room repairing the flight stabilizer. I don’t know why he’d thought I’d be of any help. Stuff like engineering goes over my head, especially when you through in the divine mechanics with Magical Metals. I mean, there has to be something better for me to do, but here I am in this hot as hell room handing Leo tools or holding and supporting whatever he told me too.

It was getting really hot in here, so we took off our shirts. “Uh, nice bod man.” Leo said.

“Thanks.” I said.

Leo looked between me and him. “Have to say, I’m kinda jealous.”

“There’s no need to be jealous.” I said. “I was just active as a kid. And I’ve never been the one to gain excess weight. I could eat Twinkies all day, sitting on the couch in my underwear watching cartoons and not gain a pound. Must have been demigod metabolism or something.”

“…yeah…” Leo said. He rubbed his arms in discomfort.

I just noticed, but does Leo have an inferiority complex? I mean, yeah, he’s not the buffest of all the guys on this ship, but at the same time he’s not a scrawny twig either. I’m sure he’ll buff out a bit given time, because all his siblings in the Hephaestus Cabin that I have met are buffer due to working in the forges all the time.

Leo didn’t really say much to afterwards, other than to tell me what tools he needed. Once we got to a certain point, Leo dismissed me. He said he could handle the rest by himself and that I should go relax or find something else to do. I asked if he was sure, and after confirming he was I left the engine room. I decided to go and take a shower to rinse off the sweat.

“There you are!” Percy said, once he saw me walking out of the showers, rubbing the towel through my hair.

“Hey Perce. What’s up?”

“We need to talk.”

“What?”

“What you know about what Annabeth has to fight to get back her mom’s statue. You figured it out, and she doesn’t want you to tell the rest of us, but I need to know. I have to know what Annabeth is going to go through.”

I stared at Percy for a second, completely quiet. “Oh, hell no.” I grabbed his wrist and dragged him behind me.

“Wait—Dude! Stop!” Percy said, trying t get out of my grasp.

“Shut up and come on.”

“What are you taking me?”

“To your girlfriend.” Once at Annabeth’s door I kicked it open, much to her surprise and anger.

“Tsuna!!” she screamed, knife drawn and her back against the wall. “What the hell?!”
“It’s not like you were changing.” I said. I pushed Percy inside.

“What are you two doing?!” she demanded, lowering her knife.

“You, little missy, are going to tell Percy everything.” I said. “He demanded that I tell him what I knew about the creature that’s guarding the Athena Parthenos.” I glared at the blonde. “I do not want to be torn and take sides between the two of you. One of you demands answers, the other wants me to keep it a secret. Well, I’m already sick of it. Now, you two are going to sit down and talk, and I’m going to stay in here to make sure that you do Wise Girl.”

“I can’t Tsuna.”

“And why the hell not?”

“Because if I do, Percy will refuse to leave me alone when the time comes.” Was her reasoning. “If I don’t do this on my own, then the Mark won’t appear, I won’t find the statue, and the quest which has been failed by generations of my half brothers and sisters will fail. If I fail, then there’s no way for us to unite the two camps, and Gaea will win.”

I took a second to think. “Well, there is one way for Percy to know.”

“How?” my brother asked.

“You can swear on the River Styx to let Annabeth go when the its time so she can accomplish her quest.” I explained. “That way you can still know, but you’ll be obligated to leave.”

“Is…is there any other way?” asked Percy. He and Annabeth were now holding hands.

“Well…” I scratched the back of my head as I took out the Yata no Kagami. “I could use the Mirror to alter your memories, but I’d rather not touch those after you just got them back, plus I can figure out how’d you feel about the very idea of memory tampering.”

“Yeah, no more messing around with my head.” agreed Percy. He let out a breath. “Okay, I’ll swear it.”

“Percy, I know you, you won’t be able to keep this oath.” said Annabeth. “And I don’t want you to suffer because you couldn’t leave me.”

“‘Beth, as much I want to go with you, I know I can’t, since you have to do this on your own.” He said. “I should know better than anyone how strong and smart and creative you are. If anyone can do whatever it is you’re about to go through, I know you can.” He gripped her hand tight and ran his thumb over her knuckles.

“Thank you, Percy.” She kissed his cheek.

“Okay, so let’s get this show on the road.” I said. “Percy, say your oath.”

“Dude, you ruined our moment.” Percy said.

I gave Percy a blank look. “Don’t start with me.”

“Sorry.” Percy turned back to Annabeth. “I, Perseus Jackson, swear on the River Styx to only stick with Annabeth Chase for as long as I possible can on her Quest to retrieve the Athena Parthenos,” Annabeth smiled and opened her mouth to tell Percy her challenge, only for Percy to continue. “But I also swear to come back to her as soon as I possibly can.”
“Percy!!” Annabeth and I screamed the moment he finished, only for it to be overpowered by the thunderous seal of the oath.

“You idiot!” I said. “Why would you do that?”

“Because I know that Annabeth will beat this Quest, but I know that she’ll need me afterwards.” He said. “And after being away for months, I don’t want to be apart from her longer than I need to.”

“Still, that was stupid Seaweed Brain.” Annabeth said before pecking him on the lips. “But I appreciate it.” Percy was smiling like an idiot from the kiss.

“Well, the deed is done.” I said. “Might as well tell him now Wise Girl.” I went to the door and leaned against it.

Annabeth nodded, threading her fingers through Percy’s. “Okay. So, Tsuna already figured it out, but here’s what you need to know. You remember how I told you that—” The blonde gulped. “Spiders always seem to go after children of Athena?”

“Yeah.” He nodded.

“Well, do you remember why?”

“Uh, it has something to do with this woman who challenged your mom right? Something about a weaving contest?”

“Not bad Percy.” Annabeth said impressed. “Yeah, this woman was a weaver who went on to be known as the greatest weaver in Ancient Greece. Her name was… her name was Arachne. Everyone, people and even nymphs came to see the tapestries she would weave. People would praise her, and as you’d expect all that praise went to her head. She started claiming that her skill was greater than the gods, which angered my mother, who’s the goddess of weaving. She revealed herself in her divine glory and challenged Arachne to a weaving contest. Nobody really knows for sure what happened next, but Mom ended up humiliating her. Arachne was so embarrassed and ashamed that she hung herself, and Mom took pity on her, turning her into a spider so she can weave for eternity. But between beating, humiliating, and transforming her, Arachne swore to take revenge on my Mom for eternity, which is why her children hunt children of Athena.”

“So, what you’re telling me is that the creature that hates your mom the most is the thing that’s guarding your mom’s statue?” Percy asked. “And you have to beat her by yourself to complete this Quest your mom gave you?” Annabeth looked down, but nodded. Percy pulled her into a hug and held her tight. “Oh Annabeth, I’m sorry.”

Annabeth hugged him back and just let it all out. The fear and stress she has been holding in flooded out as she cried on Percy’s shoulder. I felt bad for her. She obviously has been holding it all in since she figured out what she has to face. Add that to the stress of coming to Camp Jupiter, meeting the Roman legion, reuniting with her lost boyfriend, and everything else that has happened the short time since we left New Rome must have been hell to keep in and put on a brave front.

They pulled apart a bit and stared into each other’s eyes. I started to go over and help comfort Annabeth, only to freeze when they smashed their lips together. It was a ‘caught in the moment’ make out session between my brother and his girlfriend. I was so shocked that I didn’t know what to do. Should I leave? Should I stop them before the nosy nanny goat hears them and brakes the door down?
I decided to turn around so I stopped looking at them. It was awkward enough as it is to be in here to begin with. I mean, it was as if they completely forgot the fact I was in here before they started snogging. When I heard the bed creak and some more…inappropriate noises leave their mouths, I decided to put a stop to this.

“Uh, guys, I’m still in the room.” With sound of smacking lips still in the air, I could only guess they didn’t hear me. I glanced around and saw some large erasers on Annabeth’s desk. Grabbing a handful, I tossed them at the horny teenagers.

“Wha—?” Percy started.

“Yeah, still here.” I said, not willing to look the two of them in the eyes. “I should take this moment to remind you that after last time, the two of you are still on Coach’s watch list. If he finds out about…this,” I gestured in their general area, “Then he will definitely follow up on his threat of a bell collar on the two of you.”

Percy groaned and fell back against the bed. Annabeth laughed under her breath and stood up. After straightening her clothes, she came over and kissed my cheek.

“Thank you Tsuna, for everything.” Annabeth said. “You’re a real friend.”

“No problem.” I said, still too embarrassed to look right at her.

“Well, I’m going to wash my face.” Annabeth said. After she left Percy got up from the bed. I stopped him from getting to the door.

“Uh, you might want to calm down a little bit.” I said.

“What are you talking about?” He asked. My response was to point down. When he looked, his face was so red I thought he was going to burst into flame. “Oh gods, this is so embarrassing.”

“Maybe you should go take a cold shower,” I suggested. “Or just sit and think ‘calming’ thoughts, okay?”

“Shut up and get out.”

“Just wash your hands afterwards.”

“GET OUT!!”

Percy shoved me out of the room, Annabeth’s room mind you, and slammed the door. Despite the awkwardness, I started laughing. Percy had to be embarrassed to death. I’d hate to be in his position.

“Oh hey Tsuna.”

“Sup Leo?” I wiped my eyes.

He looked over my shoulder and at the door. “What’s uh…what’s going on in there?”

“Nothing.” I said, maybe a bit too quickly. “What were you wanting man?”

“Uh, Festus told me that there’s still some minor hold damage.” He said. “It’s underwater, so I need you or Percy to go down and fix it.”

“How bad is it?”
“According to Festus it’ll affect us when we’re in the air.” explained Leo. “That, and if anything hits that spot we’ll go down, whether we’re flying or sailing.”

“Got it.” I said. “What do I need to do?”

“Nothing much.” Leo said.

Turns out ‘nothing much’ involved banging dents out of the hull. I personally don’t know why these little dents could affect the ship in anyway, but I’m not the engineer so who am I to say? After fixing the ‘damage’ to the hull I swam past the glass bay doors. Looking in I saw Jason and Piper holding each other.

They seemed to be talking about something, but I couldn’t make it out. I tapped on the glass, drawing their attention. Jason smiled at me, and it felt like a pulse of electricity shot through me. Feeling myself blush I waved at the both of them, and they waved back. They got on their knees and pantomimed asking me why I was in the water. I did my best to explain what Leo wanted me to do, and I think the message got acrossed. Something else got their attention, and Jason signaled that it was time for dinner.

After dinner everyone went to bed, Coach Hedge taking the night watch. Compared to the last few nights, it was a pretty good night of sleep. No dreams (or nightmares to be precise), no threats from big Dirt Face herself. Nothing but the blackness of sleep. That is, until a horn blasted so loud that I fell out of the bed, taking the blanket with me.

“Wha—!?” I said, still half asleep.

“If this is a prank from Leo I swear I’m going to drown him.” Threatened Percy, his hair a complete mess and his cheek stained with drool. The horn blew again, and the two of us jumped to our feet.

“I don’t think this is a prank.” I said and ran outside.

Most of the others were already up here, hastily dressed in the excitement. Frank’s shirt was inside out. Hazel’s hair was off to side like rather comically. Leo must have caught himself on fire when the horn blew, because his shirt was full of charred holes and his arms were smoking. Annabeth’s eyes were bloodshot and she had huge bags under her eyes like she stayed up all night. Jason was already dressed for the day, probably doing his morning workout. When Percy came up, he was wearing a bronze breastplate over his shirt. Did he make a stop at the armory?

Another horn blared, and looking towards our port side, a massive cruise ship glided past. The tourists who were aboard waved at us from just under twenty rows of balconies. I’m curious as to what they were seeing through the Mist, since it’s not every day you see a giant Greek trireme, especially out in the middle of the ocean.

Coach Hedge plugged his ears when the cruise ship blared its horn and shook the ship. “Do they have to be so loud?!” he screamed as Piper ran up.

“They’re just saying hi.” Frank speculated.

“What?!” Hedge yelled back. The cruise ship continued on its course, and we waved bye to the tourists.

“Bye!!” Leo waved happily.

“Can I man the ballistae?” asked Coach.
“No.” Leo said through a forced smile.

“Oh my…Tsuna…” Hazel said.

I looked over to the daughter of Pluto. “What’s up Hazel?”

She couldn’t look me in the eye and was fanning herself. “You…um…you might, uh…”

“What’s wrong with her?” I asked Piper.

“Oh, uh, well…” Piper’s face was looked a bit flushed. “It’s just, uh…”

“You’re not wearing a shirt bro.” Jason said.

“What?” I looked down, and would you believe it, I wasn’t wearing a shirt, and my pajama pants were riding a little low. I guess in the excitement this morning I forgot to put a shirt on. I do remember taking it off last night because it got way to warm for me. No wonder the girls were blushing. But I somehow made sure to grab my necklace. “Oh, would you look at that. Well then, I guess I’ll…yeah…sorry, by the way.”

“Don’t be.” Piper said, her gaze lingering a bit. I noticed Hazel was peeking from in between her fingers. I felt a mixture of embarrassment and flattery. Annabeth on the other hand either didn’t care or was too tired to take notice.

“Take this Tsuna.” Jason said as he took off his purple jacket and tossed it at me. I grabbed it out of the air and slipped it on. I hope he wasn’t jealous. I mean, what does he have to be jealous of? He’s more fit than I am.

“Thanks man.”

Once I was more covered Hazel finally relaxed and looked over at the glittering water. “Where are —oh…Wow.”

We all were awestruck. Now that I’m looking I could see the mountain jutting from the sea less than a mile to the north. It was a massive white rock thrust into the sky. While it wasn’t as majestic to me as say, Mt. St. Helens or Mt. Rainier, or the coast of Washington State, but it was beautiful. The limestone cliffs were sheer, nearly vertical in perspective. The mountain then sloped in tiers, covered in green forest.

“The Rock of Gibraltar.” Annabeth said, eyes wide. “We’re at the tip of Spain. And over there—” She pointed south. “That must be Africa. We’re at the mouth of the Mediterranean.”

The Mediterranean. The sea in which the empires of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome flourished. The sea in which a bedrock of civilization began. We’re at the entrance to one of the most ancient places in the known world. And once we pass the Straight, we’ll be in the Ancient Lands themselves.

“What do we do now?” Piper asked. “Do we just sail in?”

“Why not?” Leo said. “It’s a big shipping channel. Boats go in and out all the time.”

“In the old days,” started Annabeth with a brooding expression, “They called this area the Pillars of Hercules. The Rock was supposed to be on pillar. The other was one of the African mountains. Nobody is sure which one.”
“Hercules, huh?” frowned Percy. “That guy was like the Starbucks of Ancient Greece. Everywhere you turn—there he is.” All of a sudden there was this sudden boom that shook the ship, but I couldn’t place where it came from.

“So…” Piper said. “There Pillars of Hercules, are they dangerous?”

“For Greeks the pillars marked the end of the known world,” Lectured Annabeth. “The Romans said that the pillars were inscribed with a Latin warning—”

“Non plus ultra.” Percy said. Annabeth looked stunned, and I saw her pinch herself.

“Yeah.” She said. “Nothing Further Beyond. How did you know?” Percy pointed straight ahead of us. Looking at where he was pointing, I saw something begin to shimmer into existence.

“Because I’m looking right at it.”

It must be an island made of the Mist, or maybe something like how Calypso’s Island is based on Percy’s stories of her island, because I know for a fact there wasn’t an island in the middle of the strait just a second ago. It was just this hilly mass of land, covered in forests and ringed with a beautiful white beach.

It wasn’t the only thing to appear. About a hundred yards offshore of the island were two white Grecian columns as tall as the masts of the Argo II. They looked brand new, as if the Ancient Greek architects put them up yesterday. And in-between the two columns, shimmering like an underwater illusion were the words Non Plus Ultra.

“Uh guys?” Leo called out. “Should I turn around, or…?”

I wasn’t paying attention to the elf. And I doubt that anyone else was either. Because not long after the island and columns appeared, so did a figure standing on the beach. The ship came closer to the columns, allowing me to get a better look. He was wearing purple robes, had dark hair, and was clearly jacked to hell. His arms were crossed, and I personally didn’t like the way he was staring at the ship, as if he was expecting us.

Frank inhaled sharply. “Could that be—?”

“Hercules.” Jason said wide eyed. “The most powerful demigod of all time.”

“I beg to differ.” I said, without thinking admittedly. Everyone was staring at me. “What?” I showed off the Sacred Regalia. “Not to toot my own horn, but I do carry all three symbols of power of my pantheon, and I am the heir to the Shinto pantheon. It’s not like good old Herc here can say the same thing. And last I checked, Hercules never fought Kronos himself like Percy did.”

“Someone’s prideful.” Annabeth said.

“Hi pot, meet kettle.” I countered.

“Guys!” Leo screamed. “I need an answer! I can turn around, or we can take off. The stabilizers are working again. But I need to know quick—”

“We have to keep going.” Annabeth interjected. “I think he’s guarding these straits. If that’s really Hercules, sailing or flying won’t do any good. He’ll want to talk to us.”

“Won’t Hercules be on our side?” hopefully asked Piper. “I mean…he’s one of the us, right?”
Jason grunted and crossed his arms. “He was a son of Zeus, but when he died he became a god. You can never be sure with gods.”

“Great,” Percy said. “Eight of us against Hercules.”

“And a satyr!” Coach added. “We can take him.”

“I’ve got a better idea.” Annabeth said. “We send ambassadors ashore. A small group—one or two at most. Try to talk with him.”

“I’ll go.” Jason said, raising his hand as volunteer. “He’s a son of Zeus, I’m the son of Jupiter. Maybe he’ll be friendly to me.”

“Or maybe he’ll hate you.” Percy suggested. “Half brothers don’t always get along.”

Jason scowled. “Thank you, Mr. Optimism.”

“He does have a point though.” I said. “Triton is far from the friendliest to us two. To be honest, he acts like a jealous brat when we’re around. And he was really rude when we were at Ryūgū-jō in Japan.”

“Thank you, Jason.” Annabeth said, completely ignoring my rant. “It’s worth a shot. At least Jason and Hercules have something in common. And we need our best diplomat. Somebody who’s good with words.” All eyes turned to Piper.

After a moment of thought Piper nodded. “Fine. Just let me change my clothes.”

Leo went to anchor the Argo II between the pillars while everyone else got changed. When I got back to the deck Jason was just staring at his half-brother. He was gripping the rails really tight, his knuckles turning white with tension. I went to hand him his jacket back, but he didn’t even notice me.

“Jason, are you okay?”

He nearly jumped out of his skin. “Oh, Tsuna, yeah, I’m fine.”

“You sure? You look tense.”

“To be honest, I’m nervous.” He admitted.

“Why?”

“Are you joking? I’m about to meet Hercules, one of the greatest demigods in history. You can’t even mention Greek myths without bringing him up. How can I compare to my brother after everything he has done in his life?”

“Simple, just don’t compare yourself to him.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean ‘don’t compare yourself to him’, plain and simple. Just because Hercules did everything he did, what, two thousand years ago or so, doesn’t make you any less, well, you. You’re Jason Grace, not Hercules 2.0. You don’t have to live in the shadow of a brother you’ve never even met before.”

Jason smiled. “Thanks Tsuna, you’re a good friend.”
“I try to be.” I held out his jacket. “Thanks for this, by the way. I didn’t mean to come out shirtless earlier. Wasn’t really thinking at the time.”

“Don’t worry about it man, stuff happens.”

“That’s putting it mildly.” I remembered being eyed by Piper, which was awkward as hell.

“Okay Jason, I’m ready!” Piper called out as she jogged over.

“Hey Pipes.” I said.

“Hi Tsuna.” She replied. “You look good.”

“You too.”

She turned towards her boyfriend and kissed him on the lips. “Shall we get going?”

“Yeah, let’s get this over with.” Jason said.

“Good luck guys.” I said. “Come back soon, please.”

“Here’s hoping.” Jason said. After we bumped fists he manipulated the wind to swirl around him and Piper and they flew off towards the island.

I watched as they landed on the soft looking white sand and walked to the, as Percy so aptly put it, the Starbucks of Ancient Greece. I kind of wish I could make out what they’re saying from here. As I watched them Yatagarasu flew from wherever he was nesting and landed next to me on the railing. I stroked down his back absentmindedly.

To be honest, I wonder what Hercules is actually like. I grew up watching Disney’s Hercules on repeat as a kid, and through my mother I was introduced to Hercules via that old T.V. show starring Kevin Sorbo and her love of Xena: Warrior Princess (I’m proud to say that I can do a spot-on impression of her battle cry… I love Lucy Lawless, sue me.) Point is, I grew up with the stories of Hercules, despite them being vague interpretations of the actual myths.

“Hey Tsuna.” I flinched out of reflex. I turned on my heel and saw Frank standing there. “Sorry, didn’t mean to scare you.”

“No it’s fine.” I said. “I was just thinking.”

“What about?”

“Hercules.”

“Why though?”

“Well, I grew up watching many different movies and shows about him.” I said. “And when I was younger Disney’s Hercules was my absolute favorite Disney movie, and I liked the Herc from that film a lot too.”

“After coming to Camp Jupiter, I realized how inaccurate that movie was.”

“Well, yeah, Disney took a lot of liberties with the mythology, but as a kid I didn’t care or know better. And the Disney Freak in me still likes it as a movie, although I’m not a fan of their decision to make Hades a villain.”
“Maybe because they thought he was the closest representation of the Devil or something.”

“Maybe. But I did love James Woods’s performance. But he can’t top Tony Jay as Judge Claude Frollo. Such an intimidating presence in an animated character.”

“Tsuna, do…do you like the bad guys?”

“Actually, in recent years I have come to love the villains more than the heroes. Hades, Frollo, Jafar, although none of them can compare to Maleficent, the Mistress of All EVIL.” I went so dramatic with that last bit. Frank had to take a step away from me. He was probably weirded out.

“So…why do you like the villains?”

“I’m not really sure, I’ve never thought about it. But now that you’ve asked, I guess it’s because I think the villains have a more fascinating story.”

I don’t think I should tell Frank that I actually met real villains, when I was in Storybrooke before I found Percy in Seattle. There was Regina (the Evil Queen, who I don’t think is all that evil), her mother Cora (Wonderland’s Queen of Hearts), and man known as the Dark One, Rumpelstiltskin, who also started teaching me a few things in using magic. In that town I met both heroes and villains. I really want to go back one day and see everyone. And I was told that Maleficent does indeed exist, so maybe if I go back I can meet her…and potentially learn a thing or two.

Frank and I talked for a few more minutes, stepping away from the discussion of villains. As we talked I saw Jason and Piper walk into the jungle, heads down. I wonder what happened. I can tell you that I don’t like the way Hercules was staring at the ship. But he didn’t come closer, so I decided to ignore it.

Once Frank left to do his own things, I decided to get in my daily magic training in. I had my spell book with me, but I pretty much know what do for this vanishing spell. After maybe an hour or so, best I could do was making the Roman brand on my arm fade a little bit. But it restored itself to normal not even a second afterwards.

I still don’t understand why I can’t do something as simple as this vanishing spell. Is it because I’m not in Storybrooke anymore? Is that why using magic has been so freaking hard? Because before I left I was able to levitate a chair with some effort, but ever since I left I’ve hardly been able to ignite a candle, let alone this vanishing spell. Sure, I’ve accomplished some things, and lately when I hit a...emotional breaking point, I guess, my magic releases itself. The thing is though, I have been trying to focus my emotions when I use my magic, since as Rumpelstiltskin taught me, magic is emotion, but I have this lack of control for some reason.

Blowing out a breath I ran my fingers through my hair. I need a break. I slid down the railing so I was sitting down. Yatagarasu decided to perch himself on my shoulder as I took out my spell book. Opening the cover of the grimoire, I pulled out a small Polaroid picture of me and Nico. Before we split up while we were looking for Percy, Nico and I ended up in a small diner on Christmas Eve last year. We had no leads to Percy’s location, and we were both feeling down. Despite the situation, I wanted to cheer Nico up, which in turn would cheer me up because I like seeing him smile. We didn’t plan on getting each other anything for the holidays, but I surprised him by getting him a Spiderman comic book. The look on his face made it clear that he liked it, but then he went to the restroom for half an hour, and by the time he came back our food was on the table. He then gave me a little Godzilla keychain. When I noticed how tired he was, I berated him for Shadow Traveling just to give me a gift, but I appreciated it. I still have that keychain in my
back pack now.

Looking at the picture, I couldn’t help but think how scared Nico must be. He’s the bravest person I know, but I know that anyone would be terrified in his situation. The only consolation I have about his situation is that he’s ‘asleep’ through the ordeal. But that doesn’t make the knot in my chest loosen at all.

It made me remember that vision Gaea sent me, of Nico being captured in Tartarus. He looked so hurt and just… I don’t want him to be in that kind of pain again. I did try to send Nico my thoughts, hoping that somehow, someway he can hear me telling him to hold on a bit longer and that I’ll be there as soon as I can. I prayed to the gods, my family, the Greek gods… hell, I even prayed to God to watch over Nico. Maybe since Nico is trapped in Rome, the ‘holiest’ city on earth, maybe he can keep Nico protected until I get there to save his life.

Pretty soon I got hungry so I went down to the dining hall to grab something to drink. With Hedge pacing around the deck and Leo manning the helm I’m sure that there’s enough eyes topside. Yatagarasu flew and perched on a chair. Grabbing a plate an apple appeared and hot green tea filled the cup. I kicked my feet up on the table and leaned back in the chair, pulled out my spell book again and began going through it.

I flipped through the pages, rotating the red fruit around in my palm. When I took a bite of the apple, I landed on a page on a teleportation spell. It seems simple, and based on what I’ve seen in Storybrooke, it can be really helpful if I can teleport myself and others around.

After a moment of thought I stood up and went to grab an empty bowl. Placing it over the apple I sat back down and just stared at it for a second. I then took a breath and raised my hand. I opened my hand and focused. Unfortunately, nothing happened (sadly as expected). I did this for twenty minutes before someone entered the dining hall.

“What are you doing?” I looked up and saw Annabeth.

“Oh, practicing.”

“Practicing what?”

“Uh, this new ability I learned while I was looking for Percy.” I said. “I’m trying to get a hold of it so it’s another thing in our arsenal against the Giants.”

“Okay. Have you seen Percy? I haven’t been able to find him.”

“Not for a while. You try our room?”

“It’s the first place I looked but he wasn’t there. I did find this though.” She pulled out the small postcard I got back before Fort Sumter.

“Why do you have that?”

“You know every time I visited Sally she would always ask about you.” Annabeth sat on the table facing me. “She would tell me about how you were sending postcards every now and then to let her know how you were doing, showing me her scrapbook of the cards. I am admittedly ashamed that all I ever told her was that I was sure you were fine.”

“And after all that you still never thought about me enough to let me know when you knew where Percy was going to be?”
Annabeth let out an annoyed breath. “Yes, I’m a bitch, I get it. I wasn’t in the right mind set at the time, okay? I thought you forgave me?”

“Forgive, yes, slowly. But I will never let you live it down.”

“Anyways, Sally is worried about you. You should let her know you found Percy and are traveling with us.”

“I never meant to make her worry.” Great, now I’m feeling sad. “I just…I just wanted to bring my family back together.”

“I understand Tsuna. You are a part of Percy’s family, and seeing it broken like that must have hurt. So, I know you’d want Sally and Paul to feel better by letting them know you’re okay.”

“Fine, I’ll work on the card later.”

“You know, before all this happened, Percy and I were really hoping that you’d get the part that you were auditioning for.”

“Oh, yeah…that…”

“So…can I take a look at that book?”

“Sure.” I handed her the spell book and she flipped through it. By the annoyed look on her face, I can tell she couldn’t read it.

“What language is this?”

“Elvish, well, half-Elvish.”

“Wait, some of these look like Nordic runes.”

“That’s right, Ingrid wrote down a few things in the spell book too.” I thought. “Yeah, would you look at that.”

“Are you really not going to tell me what all this is?”

“It’s magic, what else would it be?”

“Magic? How can you use magic?”

“Training. And I guess I have a spark for it.”

“Really? Can you show me?”

“Technically, you already have seen me use magic, although I wasn’t controlling it at the time.”

“What do you mean you weren’t contra—wait a minute, that frost on the wall the other day, that was you using magic?”

“I guess, yeah. I didn’t know I was doing it until Percy confronted me about it. And remember when we got back from the aquarium in Atlanta and I was out of it? Percy said that I lost control and my magic reacted, nearly freezing the tank solid before blasting it apart. I barely have any memories of it, so I’ve been going by what Percy has told me.”

“Do… do you think you can control it?”
“Maybe. I’ve been practicing simple spells for a while now, but it’s been extremely difficult. I do everything I’ve been taught, but I can barely light a candle, let alone make this damn tattoo disappear or teleporting that apple to my hand.”

Annabeth lifted the bowl to look at the apple before putting it back. “Try it again.”

“What?”

“Try it again. Make that apple appear in your hand. I want to see what your magic is like. To be honest, I’ve never put much thought into magic. Hecate never had a cabin before the war with the Titans, and all the ‘mystical’ stuff in my life could be explained by the gods, but magic in and of itself I have no experience with.”

“I-I don’t know ‘Beth.” I rubbed the back of my neck. “Magic has been a…temperamental thing with me. Literally, temperamental. It only seems to work in moments of intense emotion for me, even when I’m not trying to use magic.”

“But can you at least try? Maybe you’ll figure it out this time.”

“O-Okay, I’ll try.”

I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. When I lifted my hand, I could feel Annabeth lean herself over me to watch. It was really uncomfortable and it made it hard for me to focus. I love Annabeth, don’t get me wrong, but she can really be annoying and forceful at times. I shot her a look but she didn’t even notice.

I rolled my eyes and tried to focus. After a moment I opened my hand, and unlike last time, blue mist-like smoke began to swirl. It wasn’t thick, barely noticeable really as it barely covered my palm, but I saw it. It just swirled in my palm, and once it faded away the apple wasn’t there. It was still under the bowl.

“I’m sorry Tsuna.”

“No, it’s fine. That…that was progress actually.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

“Well if you say so.” Annabeth rubbed my shoulders in support. “I’m sure you’ll get a hang of it Tsuna, especially if you keep practicing.” She kissed my cheek. “Don’t forget to write Sally, okay?”

“Yes ma’am.” I said with a salute.

After Annabeth left I kept practicing the teleporting spell for about a half an hour. Unfortunately, I wasn’t able to teleport the apple into my hand. The magic mist appeared every time I tried, and towards the end it did look thicker. Deciding that it was enough practice for today I went to grab the postcard from my room and went to Annabeth’s to find something to write with.

I sat at Annabeth’s desk, pushing aside her notes and diagrams and her special laptop. Yatagarasu flew around the room (doing five rotations in less than thirty seconds) as I sat at the desk. I wrote ‘Dear Sally and Paul’ before I just stopped.

I honestly had no idea what to write. She knows that I’m alive because Percy called her back
in Alaska, but what can I say to her to ease her mind? And how can I tell her that we’re going to the other side of the world to risk our lives to stop Giants and the Earth from killing us all?

Yatagarasu glided over and landed on the desk. He cawed and tapped the postcard with his beak. I let out a small laugh and petted him down his back.

“Yeah, I guess as a messenger you know what I have to do.” He just stared at me with his black eyes. “Thank you Yata. I’ll get writing.” I grabbed the pen and got started.

‘Dear Sally and Paul,

I’m OK. I’m with Percy and Annabeth and our new friends. We’re heading to Greece to save the world from the world. I’m protecting Percy and the others. I promise to keep him safe until we get home. We’re heading to Rome now. I hope to be home soon with everyone safe and sound. Please don’t worry. See you soon, I promise.

Love Tsuna.’

Even writing something as simple as this brought tears to my eyes. I really miss Sally and Paul. They have been so patient and loving to me since we first met. They supported me through my mother’s death. They took me in when I had no one. They are my family. The both of them are probably insanely worried about me as much as they are about Percy.

I wiped my hand down my face and took a moment to calm down. After, I held my arm out for Yatagarasu to perch on and went outside to the deck. The sun was starting to set, bathing everything in a red light, and I had to force myself not to think about how much time Nico has left.

“Okay Yata, I need you to do something for me, and I know you’re not going to like it.” He cocked his head to the side as I waved the postcard in front of him. “I need you to take this to Sally and Paul in New York City.” Yatagarasu started cawing, flapping his wings and puffing his feathers. He was NOT happy. “I know, I know, calm down.” In his anger he flew off my arm and onto the railing, refusing to look at me. “Come on, stop throwing a fit. You’re a messenger spirit, it’s your job.” He cawed loudly again. “Really, throwing a fit? Yata, I love you and I appreciate everything you have done for me, but you can be really annoying at times. Are you just worried about me? You don’t have to, you know. I have friends here that will protect me, and I’ll protect them. Nothing is going to happen while you’re away.” Yata still didn’t look assured. “Besides, the sooner you leave the sooner you can get back.”

With that Yatagarasu snatched the postcard from my hand and flew west. I watched him as he quickly turned into a black dot that faded in the horizon. As much as I needed him to do this for me, I’m going to miss him. He’s been with me for so long, has been watching over me since Japan and rarely left my side if he could help it.

I looked back at the island and only saw Hercules standing at the beach. From his stance, he was glaring at the ship. It was making me uncomfortable, and I wasn’t liking the fact that Jason and Piper aren’t back yet. I needed a distraction.

But before I could think of one I felt the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. I quickly turned towards the island and saw a lighting bolt flash and strike the island. Since there isn’t a cloud in the sky, it had to be one summoned by Jason. Maybe because my dad’s the god of storms I could sense Jason summoning it. But if Jason is summoning lightning then he must be in trouble.

“What was that?” Hazel asked, running up to the rail with Frank right behind her.
“Jason and Piper must be in trouble.” I said.

“What kind of trouble?” Leo asked. Annabeth, Percy, and Coach Hedge followed not far behind him.

“No clue,” I said. “I don’t have the Sword of Omens to use Sight Beyond Sight. But whatever it was required Jason to summon lightning.”

“Do you think they’re okay?” Frank wondered. “Should we head to the island and go look for them?”

“I don’t think Hercules is going to let us do that.” Annabeth said.

“Why?” Leo asked. “Isn’t he the greatest hero of Ancient Greece? The world’s first superhero? Shouldn’t he want to help us?”

“Because Hercules is a bitter, selfish jerk!”

We all twisted around and saw the mist formed holographic video of an Iris Message. Piper looked mad in the Message, mad and wet, and Jason didn’t look much better. In Piper’s hand was a horn. Why was she holding a horn?


“Annabeth let her talk!” I said.

“Pipes—” started Leo.

“We don’t have time guys.” said Piper. “We need your help if we’re going to get into the Mediterranean without Hercules killing us.”

“Why would Hercules try to kill us?” asked Percy.

“Because he hates Hera, so he sent us to take the horn of his enemy, but I can’t let him have it.” She explained. “So Hercules is going to do everything he can to kill us and all of you if you don’t help us.”

“Okay.” Annabeth said. “What do we need to do?”

Once Piper finished telling us her plan, we all got ready. Leo went to the console to do his preparations to get the ship into aerial mode, with Frank, Annabeth, and Hazel rushing around to expedite the process, such as getting the anchor up and drawing the sails. Percy stood to my side as we watched the beach, keeping an eye on Hercules as we waited for Jason and Piper.

Piper’s plan is dangerous, but to get out of here alive it seemed like the best option. And Annabeth agreed to it, so there’s that. But the fact that we’re going against Hercules doesn’t sit well in my stomach.

As the sun was setting Jason and Piper came out of the jungle. Hercules noticed them too and turned to talk to them. Even from here I can tell that it wasn’t going alright. And when Jason drew his gold sword, I knew it was time.

“Ready?” I asked.

“I guess.” Percy said.
I started to focus on my demigod powers, and I watched as Piper blasted Hercules back with a stream of food coming from her horn. Herc the Jerk (based on what Piper said about him) was buried in a pile of food. Jason then wrapped his arms around Piper’s waist and started flying to the ship.

“Leo get the ship moving!” Percy yelled.

“I’m on it!”

A roar screamed out in the air and Hercules jumped out of the food pile. He reached for his club but I made the sand whirl around him in a localized sandstorm. It bought Jason and Piper enough time to get to arrive back on the Argo II, but Hercules broke through, although his skin looked raw. I hoped that he’d be hurt enough that it let us get away safely, but as the ship began to move it was hit with something with the force of a cannon ball.

“Is he throwing coconuts?!” Jason asked.

“Doesn’t matter, get us in the air!” ordered Percy. He swung Riptide like a bat and sent a ten-foot wave of sea water at Hercules as three more coconuts hit the ship. The wave slammed into Hercules and pushed him closer towards the jungle.

To help Jason out a bit I made the sea water rise us into the air enough for Jason’s wind gale to pushes us into the skies. Between Jason’s winds and the Argo II’s engine we were speeding straight into the clouds in the Mediterranean, straight into the Ancient Lands.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and Kudos are appreciated.
Tsuna VIII

Chapter Notes

Thanks to a Flashofthought for BETAing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

1. Hate. The Mediterranean.

The moment we entered the sea, getting out of the reach of the ‘Great’ Hercules, the ship has been attacked non-stop. Even with the protective measures Leo and Annabeth took when designing and building the Argo II, with the Celestial Bronze plating and everything else, the monsters came. I guess having eight demigods (three of which are the children of the Big Three and the sole Shinto demigod in existence) and a (as one monster capable of speaking said) a plump and tasty looking satyr, we’re attracting every monster for miles on end.

We were attacked by a flock of those flesh eating Stymphalian Birds out of nowhere. It took a combination of Jason controlling the winds to make the birds fly right in front of Festus so the dragon masthead could blast them with fire. However, we were picking out their razor-sharp arrows for a bit after their incineration.

Then there were the storm spirits. They battered the Argo II with high powered winds. They threw lightning at us as we tried to stop them. Both Jason and I had to take them out by blasting them with their own lighting. I was able to save some of my energy by using the Kusanagi to draw their lightning and blast it back at them.

It was non-stop attacks on us. Monsters came out of nowhere several times an hour. Even the battle hungry Satyr Coach Hedge was getting annoyed and exhausted with it, especially after a wild Pegasus stampeded on his cheese enchiladas, neighed in his face, and flew off.

Everyone was doing their best to keep the ship protected. Frank would fire his arrows, Piper manned the crossbows. Leo went Human Torch and tried to blast any monster that got close, when he wasn’t telling Festus where to fire himself. Hazel ran around giving everyone bottles of water and making sure that Frank and Piper had ammo.

It was getting closer to midnight, so Jason, Percy and I had the others get some rest. If we’re experiencing all this at the entrance to the Mare Nostrum, it’s going to get a lot worse for us the deeper we go.

Between you and me, I was getting worried about Percy. He looks sad and upset when he isn’t fighting the onslaught of monsters attacking us. Maybe it has something to do with Annabeth. Once we entered the Mare Nostrum, Annabeth locked herself in her cabin, going over that map she found at Fort Sumter from what Percy said he saw. Every time he went to check on his girlfriend Percy basically ignored his attempts on talking to her turning into Annabeth giving him completely unrelated answers to his questions.

“You two doing alright?” Jason asked after the ninth, or maybe it was the tenth, aerial attack.

I rubbed my eyes. “Yeah, I’m good. Perce?”
“I’m fine.” He said distracted. His mind is still on Annabeth.

“You both look tired.” said the blonde male. “It is late and we’ve been protecting the ship nonstop since we entered the Mare Nostrum. Maybe you two should get some sleep.”

“We’re fine.” Percy insisted.

“Besides,” I started, “Everyone else is resting now. You’d be here all by yourself.”

“I’ll be alright.” Jason said. “You guys have been working non-stop since we entered the Mare Nostrum defending the ship. You need to rest so you can be ready for whatever else shows up.”

“Jason, I won’t fee—”

“You’re not going to fight me on this Tsuna.” Jason said, arms crossed and looking stern. “I’ll keep blasting stuff out of the sky as long as I can. Then we can go by sea for a while, where you two are strongest and can take point.”

“You’re right.” Percy said. “I’ll see you later Jason. Come on Tsuna.”

“Actually Tsuna, you can take my bed again.” Offered the son of Jupiter. “It can’t be all that comfortable sharing a bed with Percy, so get a good sleep in my bed while I’m not using it.”

“Thanks Jase.” I said. “Guess I’ll see you in a few hours.”

“Night guys, sleep tight.” He waved.

Percy and I went our separate ways when we got to Jason’s cabin. Since Annabeth’s was across the hall Percy wanted to check up on her. I wished him luck and sweet dreams before entering Jason’s cabin. After getting taking off my pants and getting comfortable in Jason’s bed, I drifted off to sleep.

Unfortunately, tonight was a night for nightmares. I looked around a dark empty place. I looked around for anything, but there wasn’t a single thing in this dream realm. I started walking in a random direction until—

“We meet again Shinto Spawn.”

“Oh, for God’s sake. What the hell do you want now Gaea?” I am getting so freaking annoyed of her visions.

“Your death would please me greatly, but I’ll accept your suffering for now.”

With that I felt the ground beneath my feet shake as pillars burst from the nothingness. Torches lit themselves and once my eyes adjusted to the sudden light I saw that I was staring at a bronze jar, the bronze jar that Nico is trapped in. My heart started beating like crazy. It reminded me of the hell Nico is going through and how he has just over a day left.

“Scared for the one you care about most, my dear?” Gaea said in faux concern.

I felt a vein in my head throb. “Stop it.”

“Would you like to see him?” asked Gaea. “Let me give you a look.”

The surface of the bronze jar began to fade and become transparent. Nico’s form began to be seen, and it hurt my heart to see him like this. He looked so bad, like he was physically on the
line between life and death. A week without food or water or even fresh air is killing him, and the
strain of the Death Trance he’s under isn’t helping.

“Stop it.” I said with more intensity.

“Oh, the poor thing.” said Gaea. “Maybe I should just end his suffering and snuff him out here and
now.” The ground beneath the jar began to ripple like water before muddy tendrils reached
upwards.

“If you’re trying to scare me, it’s not going to work.” I said through grit teeth. “This is a dream.
This isn’t real.”

“You stupid boy, of course this is real, or at least, it will be. Do you honestly think that the son of
Hades will survive at the end of the day? Do you think you or any of your friends will survive this?”

“Of course, I do. I have faith in my friends. I have hope.”

“Faith. Hope. Do you really believe those pathetic concepts will save you and everyone you care
about? I have a feeling that you will fail by day’s end. Let’s use your beloved son of Hades as an
example. He has one seed left, and then he will die. He has let go of all hope that help will come.
He has accepted his fate. And when he does die, I am going to enjoy watching you suffer. Not even
your connection to the dead, to Death himself, will save young Nico. And once his soul has passed,
he will be the eternal plaything of my consort Tartarus.”

“I refuse to play your god damn games Gaea! How many times do I have to tell you that you will
lose this war, just like Kronos did before you, and just like the Orochi!! The Seven will defeat
you!”

“You can think that all you want, but you and I both know the truth. The quest will fail. The Seven
will fall, and I shall awake and rise to my full glory. Your interference means nothing. It is time for
you to grow up boy. You might as well say goodbye to your friends now. If you abandon them all
now, I’ll let the son of Hades know your true feelings right before he dies.”

I clenched my fists. “I’m warning you now Gaea, if Nico does die, I will kill you myself.”

“Is that so?” laughed Gaea. “What can some puny, annoying little protozoa of a demigod like you
do to the very Earth itself when your entire species barely made a dent with the entirety of its
existence?” The room started shaking violently. “I don’t care what you think of yourself. I don’t
care about your little trinkets that you value so much, or whatever other secrets that you may have.
You will suffer for what you have done to hinder me and my children, son of Susanoo. You will
suffer just like the daughter of Athena.”

“What do you know about Annabeth?” I scowled.

“I thought you figured it out stupid boy. What Annabeth Chase has to face on her doomed quest?
Perhaps I should show you.”

The bronze jar with Nico inside vanished. The giant ancient prop room faded before my
eyes. The air started to smell stale, but at the same time sickly sweet. In the dim light that filled
this cavern, I saw massive, massive webs interconnected with each other. Some webs were so large
and massive that they were more like columns connected to the floor from the ceiling.

“Look, son of Susanoo. Look at what lies at the end of the path of the Mark of Athena.”

From behind me came this hissing/ clicking sound. It made my stomach curl in on itself
like a neutron star. It was not human in the slightest. Then there was the groaning. The terrible, terrible groaning, as if something was starving. And it was coming from behind me.

I twisted around and saw a giant statue, maybe fifty feet in height (give or take a few feet) covered in thick webbing. Despite the webs obscuring it, I knew what it was the moment I saw it. The Athena Parthenos. It’s ivory and gold shined through the webs. The face had the same stern, calculating look as the real deal, a look that still made me uncomfortable remembering from when we met at Olympus. And I could sense the power radiating off of it, like it was trying to release itself form the webs holding it down.

The hissing noise suddenly stopped. From behind the Athena Parthenos a large, spindly and hairy leg, lined with wickedly sharp looking barbs, reached around and hooked itself on a web. And then another appeared, and another, until a true monster arose from behind of the statue.

It…it was disgusting. From the waist down, it was…it was…gods, the best way I could describe it is like Shelob from the Lord of the Ring movie trilogy fused with a black widow. The spinnerets were oozing web fluid. From the waist up…I think that was a woman, or some type of woman. Black mandibles protruded out of her mouth like tusks, and where human teeth should have been were now thin bleach white needles. Her eyes were large, black and lidless, and she had an extra pair just off to the side of her main pair.

Her skin was greyed and pulled taught against her skeleton. She had long black hair that might have been beautiful millennia ago before she was cursed. She was so terrible to look at that I wanted to throw up. Tsuchigumo looked better than her by far.

“Arachne…” I said.

“Yes, she is the one who will make sure Annabeth Chase fails in her quest her split mother sent her on.”

“You mean kill her, right?” I gulped. “You can’t afford to do that. You want her and Percy to be your sacrifices for whatever ritual you plan.”

“It is true that I would prefer Annabeth Chase and your idiot adopted brother Percy Jackson above the rest of the Seven, but I can be flexible. If the daughter of Athena falls this day with Arachne playing with her food, then Piper McClean will do, or better yet my sweet little Hazel Levesque.”

I took a deep breath and calmed myself down. “Gloat all you want. Be arrogant, even by the standards the gods usually set. But I know we will win.”

“That so? Well, how about a parting gift then?”

“You’re not one for gifts.”

“Not usually, no, but I think you’ll enjoy this.”

“TSUNA!!”

My skin tensed and bumped up, and my hair stood on end. No, it’s not possible. But looking up at the source of the scream I saw…I saw Nico trapped in a web. He was struggling against the sticky material, but he couldn’t move.

“This isn’t real.”

“Please! Help me!” Nico begged. I looked away, trying to convince myself this isn’t reality.
“This isn’t real.” I felt my hands beginning to shake.

“Tsuna help! She’s getting close!”

I opened my eyes and saw that Arachne was climbing her way to Nico. Nico was struggling harder against the webs, but they wouldn’t loosen. He kept screaming for help, saying that he can’t use his Shadow Traveling ability to escape.

“This isn’t real, this isn’t real.” Closing my eyes tight I grabbed my head and pulled on my hair. “It’s just a dream! This isn’t real!!”

“TSU—gah!” choked Nico.

I opened my eyes and saw that Nico had stilled. Arachne had sunk her fangs in Nico’s side. Nico’s skin paled even more than it already has and his veins became visible in a toxic green. His mouth began foaming and his body went limp. But his eyes, his eyes were alive with fear and pain.

“Stop this.” I demanded. Arachne took her mouth out of Nico’s side and licked his cheek with a bloodied, monstrous thing that had to be her tongue. I felt tears fall from my cheeks as I fell to my knees. “Please, stop.”

Gaea’s cruel, cold laugh started echoing throughout the cavern. “Oh, how I enjoy this, you looking so broken. I can’t wait to see this in person.”

“Go fuck yourself Gaea.” I forced out.

“*My, my, do you kiss your mother with that mouth?*” I grit my teeth, but more tears fell as she laughed again. “Enjoy your last day with the people you care about son of Susanoo. No matter what happens, I have a feeling I’ll win by the end of the day. Oh, and look up.”

I stupidly did as she told. At that moment Arachne bit into Nico’s neck and grabbed him with her barbed hands. And with her monstrous strength ripped my dearest friend into pieces. His blood sprayed everywhere. In mere moments I was showered in the red material, the currency of the soul. Nico’s blood mixed with my tears.

I wasn’t even able to scream. I was too mortified. Gaea’s laugh rang in my head as the dream faded to black.

When I opened my eyes, I was still lying in Jason’s bed. Once I sat up I reached for my face and felt my cheeks soaking wet with tears. I hugged my knees to my chest and sat there, trying to calm myself by saying over and over that what Gaea showed me was nothing more than dream manipulation, that what I saw wasn’t real. This isn’t like Nightmare on Elm Street and Freddy Krueger’s le motif. What happens in dreams stays in the dreams. But why is my heart beating out of my chest?

I wonder how long I was asleep. I’m surprised Jason doesn’t have an alarm clock in here. It must be natural for him to get up early. Anyway, I knew I wasn’t going to fall back asleep anytime soon. Not with the images of a shredded Nico di Angelo still seen every time I close my eyes.

Getting out of Jason’s bed I put on my pants and my necklace. I might as well just go back to the deck and help Jason out. Walking out I heard Frank’s snoring from his room, so he wasn’t up yet. Guess I barely got any sleep at all. So that means Jason is still alone up top.

Before heading to the deck, I grabbed a couple of bottle of waters, one for me and one for Jason. I’m sure he hasn’t had a break from monster attacks since Percy and I went to bed. When I
got to the deck however, I couldn’t see him. I walked around the deck, but he wasn’t there.

“What are you doing up?” I turned around, but still didn’t see the blonde. “Up here.” Looking up I saw Jason flying several feet above me. He floated down and looked at me unhappily. "I sent you to bed almost a half hour ago."

“Sorry.” I rubbed the back of my head. “Couldn’t sleep.”

“What are you doing up?” I turned around, but still didn’t see the blonde. “Up here.” Looking up I saw Jason flying several feet above me. He floated down and looked at me unhappily. "I sent you to bed almost a half hour ago."

“Sorry.” I rubbed the back of my head. “Couldn’t sleep.”

“Were you…crying?” he asked, reaching to up his hand on my shoulder.

“No.” I said, maybe a bit too quickly.

“Tsuna, I can see the tear streaks on your cheeks, and your eyes a little puffy.” He pointed out. “Do you want to talk about anything?”

“No, I…actually, I wouldn’t mind it if you lend me an ear.”

“Yeah, I can do that. I’ll gladly listen to you.”

“Thank you.” We went quiet for a minute. I handed him the water bottle I got for him.

“Do you…want to take a walk?”

“It might help, yeah.”

So, we started walking around the deck. Jason was being remarkably patient with me while I tried to think of how to explain how I was feeling. I know Jason offered to listen, but it’s not like guys like to talk about their feelings.

“Tsuna, if you don’t want to talk—”

“Gaea sent me another dream.” I blurted out.

“I’m sorry, what?”

“Gaea…she sent me another dream. Well, it was more of a taunt, a threat really.”

“What did she show you?”

“She keeps showing me Nico trapped in the bronze jar, and she showed me how he got captured in Tartarus. She tells me that this quest will fail, and you, Percy, Nico…everyone will die. She wants me to suffer for everything I have done to stop her. And she kills Nico in front of me.”

“Gods, Tsuna, I’m sorry. I can’t imagine what that was like.”

“It was horrible Jase. Nico’s blood was everywhere, I was covered in the stuff. And her laugh…I can still hear it.”

“Dude, I’m so sorry.” He gripped my arm in support. “I-I really don’t know what to say.”

“There’s nothing to say. It was just Gaea trying to intimidate me. But I…every time she shows Nico dying it feels like my heart is being ripped from my chest and trust me I know how that feels.”

“Sounds like you and Nico are close.”
“I like to think so. He’s my best friend. I died once to make sure he and Percy would be safe.”

“I’ve heard about that. What happened to make you do that?”

“I had to choose between their safety or the world’s. I could either live and watch them die, or kill myself to unleash the Yamata no Orochi, the Typhon of Japan, upon the world.”

“And you chose them over yourself.”

“Of course, I did. I couldn’t live in a world without the two of them.”

“Well it looks like everything turned out alright.”

“Yeah, but I have this souvenir.” I lifted my shirt and showed him the scar over my heart. “And of course, the Regalia.”

We didn’t talk about my sacrifice or Nico or Gaea’s taunts after that. We spent several minutes in comfortable silence, or what can constitute as silence with us blasting and killing any monster that got close. When we hit a spot of no monster attacks we watched the night sky, clear of clouds and filled with stars.

As we leaned on the railing, I noticed that our shoulders were touching. In the cool night air, I could clearly feel his body heat, and I have to say it was comfortable. Really comfortable. Even before I could realize the thoughts that were forming in my head I could feel my cheeks blushing. I guess this time is as good as any to talk to Jason.

“You saved my life back in San Francisco, a couple of years ago.”

“Wha-huh?” Jason was caught off guard, and by the look in his eyes I don’t think he understood.

“I figured you wouldn’t remember. I mean, how many Asian kids are there in San Fran? I remember obviously, because you pushed me out of the way of a speeding car.”

“Wait…I pushed you out of the way of a car?” Jason’s eyes went wide with realization. “Oh my gods Tsuna, that was you?!”

I nodded. “You remember?”

“Yeah, I do.” He smiled. “It was on one of my rare days off that the legion allowed me to have when I was younger. I was just walking around the city, not really sure what to do with myself. Believe it or not, I didn’t have a lot of close friends growing up. The other legionnaires were nice to me because of who I was, Jupiter’s son y’know. But I never really had friends to hang out with, everyone didn’t want to taint the ‘Golden Boy’, with their high expectations of me. But yeah, I was just walking around trying to find something to do when I saw you across the street. You weren’t paying attention when that car came around the corner. I barely had time to tackle you out of the way.”

I gave Jason a small smile. “You know, I’ve wanted to thank you for years. Why did you just disappear right after?”

“I wasn’t supposed to bring attention to myself.” He said. “The Praetors at the time told me to keep quiet and stay down.”

“Sounds like you were kept on a pretty tight leash.”
“I was, but that’s just the Roman way.” Jason turned back towards the sky. “I have to be honest Tsuna, I haven’t thought about that day in years. I’m sorry I didn’t realize sooner.”

“Don’t be, I understand. And if it wasn’t for you, I wouldn’t have met you, Nico, or the others.”

“Why do you talk about Nico so much?”

“What do you mean?”

“I get that your friends with him, but you are obviously a lot closer to him than friends... Tsuna, do you have feelings for Ni—”

“You were my first crush!” Did…did I just say that out loud?!

Jason looked dumbfounded as my face felt like it was on fire. “W-What?”

“Uh, I...um...had a crush on you. I don’t want you to be grossed out by it, another guy having a thing for you, but it was in the past. I mean, how could I not get a crush on you? Look at you! Even back then you were hot. Add the fact that you saved my life, it was bound to happen and—”

“Tsuna, calm down, you’re rambling.” Jason grabbed my shoulders. “And don’t worry, I’m not mad or grossed out. I just...uh...don’t really know what to say.”

“You don’t have to say anything. Like I said, it was a crush. I got over it. But the attraction, that came back full force when I realized who you were. Like, the guy who saved my life is even hotter than when he saved me in the first place? How is that fair? But don’t worry, I know you don’t like guys like that and I don’t have any intentions of stealing you away from Piper if you’re worried about that.”

“You’re doing it again man.”

“Sorry.”

“It’s fine man. Is this what you wanted to talk to me about? You being gay?”

“I’m not gay.”

“What? But you just said—”

“I said I had a crush on you, but that doesn’t make me gay.”

“But—”

“Sexuality isn’t so cut and dry Jason. To be honest, I don’t like putting labels on myself, and I haven’t really found a label that fits me anyways. You’re the first person I ever had a crush on, and once I got over that I haven’t really been interested in anyone since. I’m not blind though, I can see when someone is cute or beautiful or just attractive. Piper is beautiful. Scarlett Johansen is absolutely stunning. Will is...Will is amazing. And Apollo is fucking hot. But if you need to put a label on me, I’m just...Tsuna.”

Jason was quiet for a minute, taking everything in. “You said that you haven’t been interested in anyone since me...except Nico.” Jason said, I didn’t say anything, but my face was on fire. “Tsuna, are you guilty about your feelings for Nico?”

“No.” I said quietly. “But I don’t want anyone to know. I mean, I’m not ashamed of it, but it’s not anyone’s business to know. When I’m ready, I’ll come and out and tell people. I’ll tell him when
I’m ready.”

“And what about Will?”

“What about Will?” I asked.

“You had this look in your eyes when you were just describing him, and your cheeks went a little red.” He stated.

I took a minute to gather my thoughts. “What I feel for Will is neither here nor there. He is important to me, but…that’s something I’ll have to face later. But this is to stay between us, okay Jason? I’m not ready to let other people know about my feelings like this.”

“I understand.” Jason said. “I won’t tell anyone. You can trust me Tsuna, I’m your friend.”

“Thank you, Jason.” I said. He smiled, and I smiled back. “Don’t take anything out of this.”

“Out of what?” he asked. Before he could react, I gave him a heartfelt hug, my arms around his neck, and I’ll admit that I made it linger for about six Mississippi’s longer than it needed to. Jason then patted my back and pulled away. “Feeling better?”

“Yeah, much better. Thank you, Jason. You’re a true friend.”

“Does Percy know?”

I chuckled. “Doubt it. Percy is pretty oblivious to stuff like that. Did you know that he had no idea neither Annabeth or Racheal had a thing for him until around the Battle for Manhattan?”

“Really?”

“Yeah, like I said…oblivious. But back on topic, I do plan on telling him. I know he won’t judge me or anything, but it’s not like there’s been a good chance.”

A loud yawning drew our attention. “Hi guys.” Leo said. He looked like the dead, but he was forcing himself to stick to his feet. “What’s the word?”

“Just the constant attacks.” Jason said. “We’re in a slow spot now though. No attacks the last few minutes.”

“Knock on wood.” I said, knocking on the railing.

“Well, I’m going to get the ship to the water.” said Leo. “The flight stabilizers need to cool down for a while.”

“Okay, I’ll get Percy up.” Jason said. “We’re going to need him up here if we’re in the water.”

“Let him sleep Jase, he needs it.” I said.

“So do you Tsuna.” He argued. “You need to rest, or you won’t be any help to us later today.” He crossed his arms and looked down his nose at me.

I rolled my eyes. “Fine, you win. But give Percy like fifteen minutes or something. He’s going to need as much rest as I do today.”

Jason let out an annoyed huff. “Fine, fifteen minutes, then you’re going to bed, got it?”
“Sure.” I said. I’m older than Jason, so why am I getting an over bearing big brother feeling from him?

Jason went below deck and Leo went to the control panel. The moment that the Argo II hit the water, I felt this… ancient power in the waves. It’s hard to describe, but it felt like something truly ancient and powerful is emanating from the water. And I knew exactly where we were, down to the longitude and latitude. Fifteen minutes later Percy came up, along with Annabeth. Percy eyes went wide when he saw me before turning on his wolf glare.

“Good morning.” I said. “What time is it anyway.”

“About four in the morning.” Annabeth said.

“Get to bed now Tsuna.” Percy said.

“Do you really think you can tell me what to do?” I challenged. “Don’t you want my help watching the seas?”

“If we’re going to be in Rome by sun-up I want you as rested as possible.”

“Hm, that’s what Jason basically said.”

“Jason’s smarter than he looks then.” Percy said. “Now get to our room and get some sleep.”

“Okay, fine, fine.” I said. All of a sudden, a series of Spanish curses erupted from the control deck. “But let me just grab Leo something, okay? He sounds upset.”

“Fine.” Percy said.

I walked back below deck and went to the dining hall, grabbing a cup that filled itself with orange juice and a plate that brought a breakfast burrito into existence. When I walked down the hall again I could hear Hazel heaving in her room. Feeling bad for her, but not knowing how I can help, I took the food up to Leo, who had calmed down a bit (although he looked upset about something). He acted like he wasn’t hungry, but his stomach growled so he ended up taking the early meal.

When I got back to the deck I saw that a fog had rolled in. I could hear Percy and Annabeth talking about something, I couldn’t make it out. Afterwards, I went down to mine and Percy’s shared cabin. But before I could even open the door the ship shook so violently that I was knocked to the ground.

“Please don’t let that be another Keto beast.” I prayed.

Seconds after the ships shaking, Percy, Annabeth and Leo started screaming and yelling. The sound of metal on metal rang through the air. And for some odd reason there were these weird clicking noises.

When I stood up back up the clicking noises had gotten louder, as if more of whatever was making the noise was coming aboard. And then the alarm bell went off. The doors of the other cabins started opening as whatever it was that was attacking the ship began to descend the stairs.

I didn’t know what else I could do. There wasn’t enough time to get to the others. So I dove into mine and Percy’s room and drew the Kusanagi and readied the Yata no Kagami. Whatever was invading the ship didn’t need to know about me, so I focused the Mirror’s power.
The invaders got to the door and started pounding on it. The door was bulging inward with each hit until the door was broken down. At that exact moment I released the Mirror’s power, bathing the entire room in a silver light.

Once the light cleared and the spots in my vision faded I saw what had violently boarded the ship. Standing in the doorway were these dolphin…people? I guess their people. One had a dolphin snout coming out of a human face. They had stubs attached to flippers, making me think that those used to be hands. One of the, uh, pirates had his legs fused together, but had human feet, while another had two regular legs that turned to flippers, making it walk around like a deep-sea diver in full uniform. It was like in Animorphs, as if one of the characters in mid-transformation and got stuck halfway through.

The group was frozen for second before they started flopping their way inside the room. I readied the Kusanagi into a battle position but the Marvel villain lackeys didn’t even pay attention to me. After inspected the room and left, I let out a small sigh of relief. I took a look at the Mirror and thanked good old Uncle Tsukuyomi for the Treasure. I wasn’t even sure my little trick would work, making myself invisible to the invaders.

I stayed still as I heard the grunts, groans, and screams of the others. The dolphin-men were dragging everyone out of their rooms and up to the deck in chains. After a minute or so I slowly walked out of the room and looked around, waiting for something to pop out for a fight. Luckily for me it seems like everyone was the deck. Unluckily for me, it seems that everyone was on the deck.

I slowly walked up to the deck myself, careful not to be seen. As I climbed the stairwell I heard the clink of chains and the grunts of my friends. I went as fast as I could while sneaking the stairs, worry filling my chest. It was still really foggy, but to give myself more of a stealth mode I used my demigod abilities to thicken the fog a bit around the entrance way.

Jason was knocked out, big surprise there with his track record. Leo was groaning in pain as he was tied by rope. Hazel and Piper were bound hand and foot, and Piper was being gagged. Coach Hedge was being dragged to the pirate’s ship, kicking and shouting what I could only assume was profanities. The only one missing was Frank. How the hell did Frank of all people not get caught?

A lot of the dolphins were marching in and out of the Argo II. They were pillaging the ship, taking whatever wasn’t nailed to the floor. Nectar and Ambrosia, food, weapons, anything they can grab with their stubby flippers and carrying it to their ship.

Percy and Annabeth were surrounded by even more of the dolphin-men. Percy held Annabeth close, not that she really needed it, being the badass she is. But I did have two questions. One, where the hell is Riptide? And two, who the bloody hell is that in that garish gold armor?

The gilded pirate walked over to Jason and directed the dolphins to dump Jason by the crossbows. “Excellent!” he said after looked over Piper and Hazel. “The boy is of no use to me, but we have an understanding with the witch Circe. She will buy the women—either as slaves or trainees, depending on their skill. But not you, lovely Annabeth.”

“You are not taking me anywhere.”

“Oh, sadly, Annabeth,” tutted the golden warrior, “You will not be staying with me. I would love that, and I can assure you’d learn to love it too.” A shiver of disgust shot through my spine. “But you and your friend Percy are spoken for. A certain goddess is paying a high bounty for your capture—alive, if possible, though she didn’t say you had to be unharmed.”
At that moment a shriek was released, so loud and high pitched that it felt like my ears would split. In the confusion my concentration on the fog was released, making it fade back to what it was before. Before I could be seen by anyone something grabbed me by the back of my shirt and pulled me backwards.

“Wha—hmph!”

A hand was put over my mouth. “Shh, its me.”

I angled my head up to see my favorite Chinese Canadian. “Frank?” Although with his hand over my mouth it was much more muffled. He made the universal sign to be quiet and removed his hand.

He was about to say something to me when the ring of metal against metal. My attention went straight to Percy fighting the golden pirate. It wasn’t like any of the other times I’ve seen Percy fight. He was clearly trying, but the other guy was something else. He was moving so fast, parrying Percy’s moves and dodging without any effort. This guy was toying with my brother.

I have never seen Percy struggling like this. His moves started getting sloppy as he got angrier and more frustrated. And the head pirate was using it to his advantage. Every time he dodged the pirate would nick Percy, drawing blood in little scratches.

I was shaking with rage. Nobody does this to Percy. Nobody toys with my brother. Tightening my grip on my sword I rushed towards the man assaulting my brother. I think I heard Frank call after me, but I was too focused on the golden ass hat in front of me. I ran past the dolphins and onto the railing, whereas Percy was disarmed I jumped off and slashed my sword down.

The gold warrior reacted in no time and locked my strike. We pushed against each other, our blades sparking. The dolphins surrounding us started to come closer until the gilded man signaled them to stop.

He cocked his head in his gold gorgon mask. “And who are you supposed to be?” he asked in a Middle Eastern accent.

“Figured Gaea would have warned all of her pawns about me at this point.” I thought. “I’m someone you shouldn’t underestimate.”

“Really?” he said, eyeing the Kusanagi. “That’s an interesting sword.”

“Glad you like it, it’ll be in your chest in a minute.”

“That so? I hope you impress me more than Percy did.”

He pushed me away with surprising strength and swung his sword. I jumped back and parried. He countered with his sword. We went back and forth, and I wasn’t doing all that great. I’m not saying I’m the best swordsman or anything like that, but I thought I was as least as good as Percy and Jason. But this guy was in a whole other league. And don’t get me started on the fact that he was unnaturally, annoyingly, agile for someone wearing solid gold armor.

The gilded man slammed his sword down with all his strength, which I barely caught with the flat side of the Kusanagi. “What was that about underestimating you? And didn’t you say you’d plunge your sword in my chest?” I glared at him. “You’re no fun.”

And then the prick kicked me in the knee. It was enough for me to fall to the ground and
drop my sword. The man used the opportunity to try to finish me, but he was distracted by his
dolphin troops making their echolocation clicks and by my brother screaming:

“Chrysaor!”

The golden warrior, Chrysaor, groaned and swung his sword to counter Percy, who looked
absolutely livid. I used the moment to grab my sword and swing, but Chrysaor blocked it with his
golden leg armor. I picked myself up and started coordinating with Percy. I could tell that Chrysaor
was putting more effort in than when he was fighting Percy and I alone, but I feel like he was still
holding back.

Percy and I did a maneuver where he took the front, driving all of Chrysaor’s attention to
him. I then kicked off the ground and thrust my sword once Percy backed off. Chrysaor barely
noticed and just backed off enough where the tip of the Kusanagi scratched his chest plate, leaving
a scar in the metal.

“You scratched my armor.” Chrysaor said dumbfounded. “You scratched my armor! YOU
SCRATCHED MY ARMOR!! How dare you?!”

“Come at me bro.” I taunted.

“Why you—!” Chrysaor started, only to lower his sword and begin laughing.

“What’s so funny?” Percy asked.

“Oh, nothing little brother—”

“Wait, little brother?”

“Not now Tsuna.”

“I just have you right where I want you. Look behind you.”

Percy and I shot him a questioningly look before he looked at each other for a signal.
Against our better judgement we did as Chrysaor, our…relative (I’m going to need some context
for that) …and saw that our friends were being held hostage. All of them, bar Frank who was still
hiding, had weapons against their throats.

“Guys!” I yelled.

“If you want them to live to see another day, lay down your arms.” ordered Chrysaor.

The others tried to cry out to tell us not to, but the blades against their necks stopped them
real quick. I looked at Percy, knowing what we must do. Percy yelled angrily and threw Riptide to
the ground. I, on the other hand, glared at Chrysaor.

“I said lay down your arms or your friends will perish.”

“Fine.” I said. I flipped the Kusanagi in my hand and stabbed it into the deck of the ship.

“¡¿Qué demonios estás hacienda Tsuna?!?” yelled Leo.

Chrysaor walked right up to me and looked me in the eye, his gorgon mask really unnerving. “Tie
this one up tight. I’ll deal with him later. In the meantime, brother,” Chrysaor pointed his gold
sword at Percy’s throat. “You stay still. The Earth Mother has plans for you.”
Upon his order a couple of the dolphin men roughly grabbed me and started tying me up. Since these guys are pirates, they’ll be wanting any treasure they can get their hands on, so I made sure to cover up Death’s Ring. One of the dolphins was looking at my chest, and I looked down and saw that in the fighting with Chrysaor the Sacred Regalia came out from under my shirt. As expected, he reached for it, and the Regalia did not like that. He didn’t touch them before the Regalia blasted him over the railing and into the water.

It was more than enough to draw Chrysaor’s attention from Percy. “What was that?!?”

“Your friend touched my stuff.” I explained. Chrysaor walked over to me and glared at the Regalia.

“What did you say your name was?”

“I didn’t.”

Chrysaor looked around and counted everyone. “Well, there’s seven of you plus the satyr. Based on what Gaea has told me, you must be Frank Zhang. You are the only Far Easterner on this ship.”

“Racist prick.” I muttered.

“Unless…” He rubbed his chin underneath his helmet. He then looked over at the Kusanagi sticking straight out of the deck. “Gaea did mention another demigod, one not belonging either to the Greeks or the Romans.” He walked over to my sword and reached for it. “I can’t recall his name though.” He tried to grab the Kusanagi, but from the handle a stream of electricity and into his outstretched hand. “What in Hades’s name?!?”

“Yeah, not everyone can wield my sword.” I said.

Chrysaor rubbed his hand vigorously. “So which one are you? Frank Zhang, or the other one?” He came back over to me and grabbed my face so tight it was painful. “You’re clearly a demigod, that goes without saying. Hmm… I can sense the sea within you, but from the information I have Frank Zhang also has a connection to my father.”

“Susanoo.” I said.

“I’m sorry?”

“My father is Susanoo-no-Mikoto.”

“So you are the one Gaea has told me about.” He said smugly. “This is perfect. Gaea told us that whoever brings you before her will be greatly rewarded because of your interference. Unlike Percy Jackson and sweet Annabeth, you aren’t protected by your usefulness to the Earth Mother. No, she said that you can be brought to her in pieces.”

He raised his sword above his head, ready to chop something off of me. The others were screaming, begging him to stop before he could lob something off. I was scared, my heart thundering in my chest. Was this how I am going to die? By amputation?

“All right Chrysaor, fine!” Percy shouted loudly, drawing everyone’s attention. “Take us away, if our captain will let you.”

Chrysaor slowly lowered his sword to his side as he tried processing what Percy was talking about. “What captain? My men searched the ship. There is no one else.”

Percy raised his hands dramatically. “The god appears only when he wishes. But he is our leader.
He runs our camp for demigods. Doesn’t he, Annabeth?”

“Yes!” nodded Annabeth enthusiastically. “Mr. D! The great Dionysus!”

At the mention of the ‘nicest’ god of Olympus, the dolphins visibly grew uneasy. They started murmuring to each other, eyes wide with fear. One of them dropped his sword.

“Stand fast!” bellowed Chrysaor. “There is no god on this ship. They are trying to scare you.”

“You should be scared!” Percy looked over the dolphins. “Dionysus will be severely cranky with you for having delayed our voyage. He will punish all of us. Didn’t you notice the girls falling to the god’s madness?”

Hazel and Piper stopped struggling against the pirate that held them and stared at Percy for a second. He glared at them, and the girls started acting crazy, trembling and flopping on the deck like a fish. Oh, I get it. Percy’s bluffing about the wine god. Excellent strategy.

“Fakes!” roared Chrysaor. “Shut up, Percy Jackson! Your camp director is not here. He was recalled to Olympus. This is common knowledge.”

“So you admit Dionysus is our director!” said Percy.

“He was.” corrected Golden Boy. “Everyone knows that. If you don’t shut up, I’ll—”

Percy ignored him and pointed at Chrysaor. “You see? We are doomed! If you don’t believe me, let’s check the ice chest!”

Percy stormed over to the ice chest, which the dolphins had brought up after they raided the ship. Oddly, despite their captai’n’s screams about Mr. D not being here, not one of his pirates tried to stop Percy. The son of Poseidon kicked the ice chest open and started going through it. He found whatever he was looking for and waved a silver and red can above his head.

“Behold!” Percy shouted. “The god’s chosen beverage. Tremble before the horror of Diet Coke!” Chrysaor’s lackies began to panic. “The god will take your ship. He will finish your transformations into dolphins, or make you insane, or transform you into insane dolphins! Your only hope is to swim away now, quickly!”

“Ridiculous!” I didn’t think it was possible for anyone’s voice to go so shrill.

“Save yourselves!” Percy warned. “It’s too late for us!” He then gasped and point to where Frank was hiding. “Oh, no! Frank is turning into a dolphin.” Nothing happened. “I said, Frank is turning into a dolphin!”

Now that he heard his cue, Frank stumbled out into the open. He was making a big show of grabbing his throat. He was flailing around like a fish out of water.

“Oh no!” Frank said. “I am turning into a dolphin!” I couldn’t help but roll my eyes at Frank’s acting.

With his…performance, I guess, he began to shapeshift. His nose elongated into a snout, his skin became sleek and gray. His clothes faded away with the transformation, and once it was completed he flopped to the deck as a full-fledged dolphin, his tail thumping against the boards.

The moment Frank let out his first click as a dolphin, the pirates disbanded in complete and utter terror. They dropped their weapons, screamed in their dolphin way, and jumped overboard, all
the while ignoring Chrysaor’s orders

At that moment Annabeth moved quickly to cut the everyone’s bonds. Percy then rushed forward to my sword and tossed it to me. I caught it and held it to Chrysaor’s throat. Other than me and Annabeth, no one else was armed, but that didn’t stop Chrysaor to back to the ledge.

“This isn’t over Jackson.” He growled. “I will have my revenge—”

He didn’t get to finish his threat. A deep roar bellowed from the left and all of a sudden there was an eight-hundred-pound grizzly bear on the ship where Frank the Dolphin was flopping about. Chrysaor yelped right before the bear swiped his paw across the gold mask, sending it flying across the Argo’s deck. Chrysaor quickly covered his face with arms, and with a girlish scream tumbled into the water.

“That was brilliant!!” Annabeth rushed over and kissed Percy deeply.

“It was desperate.” Percy admitted. “And we need to get rid of that pirate trireme.”

“We could burn it.” Offered Annabeth.

“I’m down with that!” Leo said over his shoulder as he and Piper picked up Jason who was regaining consciousness.

“No, I got another idea.” Percy said.

Percy’s idea was pretty good, considering what it could lead to. We first got our stuff off the pirate’s ship, after which we let Coach Hedge go to town on it. He was having a lot of fun breaking everything he could find with his baseball bat. We then had to put all the enemy weapons back onto the ship…and leave the treasure, all six million dollars’ worth of it, according to Hazel.

“It’s the tribute.” Percy said.

Jason grinned. “Crazy. But I like it.”

Afterwards Percy and I opened the flood valves. Leo gladly jumped at the chance to drill holes into the bottom of the hull. Once that was done, we all assembled at the rail and cut the grappling lines.

“Okay, Piper, do it.” Percy said.

Piper nodded and took out her cornucopia, her spoil of war she got from a river god on Hercules’s island. She aimed it at the pirate’s ship and from the hollow point of the horn Diet Coke sprayed out like a fire hose, covering the deck in the sticky substance. In no time, alarmingly fast to be honest, the ship started to sink.

“Dionysus,” Percy called, holding up Chrysaor’s golden mask. “Or Bacchus—whatever you call yourself. You…You…” I nudged him in the side to get the words out. “You made this victory possible, even if you weren’t here. Your enemies trembled at your name…or your Diet Coke, or something. So…yeah, thank you.” Percy looked like the words were going to gag him, so I nudged him again. He gave a nod. “We give this ship to you as tribute. We hope you like it.”

“Six million in gold,” Leo muttered. “He’d better like it.”

Hazel smacked his arm. “Shh,” scolded Hazel. “Precious metal isn’t all that great. Believe me.”
“And as an added tribute,” continued Percy. “I offer you the helmet of my half-brother Chrysaor, son of Poseidon and Medusa, won in battle.”

Percy tossed the helmet on the enemy trireme. The ship was spewing Diet Coke and salt water out of the oar slots and bubbling from the cargo hold. The water was turning into a rather disgusting frothy brown.

“Isn’t that polluting?” Piper asked as Leo steered the Argo II away from the sunken pirate vessel.

“I wouldn’t worry.” Jason told her. “If Bacchus likes it, the ship should vanish.”

I smiled at Jason’s comment. I hoped that it’ll work. Mr. D is fickle as to what appeases him. But if we have to face two Giants at once, then having the help of a god would be great.

Turning to talk to Percy, I saw that he looked upset. He wasn’t his usual self, sarcastic and confident. I mean, I know that’s not Percy’s true self, he’s rather insecure once you get to know him, but he’s never as distant as the energy he is putting off is making him seem.

Before I got a chance to talk to him, Annabeth called for a vote to take to the skies for the rest of our journey to Rome. Everyone voted for sky travel. Jason insisted that he was well enough to be on sentry duty with Coach Hedge. I wanted him to go and rest, but he was adamant and unmoving.

Percy left the moment the vote was finished. I wanted to talk to him. He clearly wasn’t doing alright.

“Tsuna, wait!” Jason called.

“Jason, can we hold on whatever you want to talk about please?” I begged, seeing Jason disappear beyond the banister. “I need to—”

“Talk to Percy, I know.” He finished.

“How did—”

“I can see that he’s upset, we all can.” said Jason. “You just need to relax and give him his space.”

“I can’t Jason. I’ve never seen Percy defeated so effortlessly. He’s the best swordsman at Camp Half-Blood, and that Gilded Brat defeated him without even trying. Even when I jumped in and tagged teamed him with Percy I could tell that Chrysaor was barely trying.”

“I know what you mean. But you have to understand that Chrysaor must have had thousands of years of training and experience. We’ve only been wielding swords for ten years or so max.”

“Yeah, I kinda figured that out by myself. But that doesn’t mean Percy doesn’t feel…weakened, or less powerful, I guess.”

Jason sighed. “Then maybe you should go talk to him. Other than Annabeth you know Percy better than anyone. But maybe give him a few minutes to think things through.”

“I guess you’re right.” I started to head down to the lower deck, but I turned and rushed to grab Jason’s hand, only to quickly let go when I felt my face turn red. “Uh, um…listen…I, I just want to thank you.”

“Thank me for what?” Jason asked.
“For not being weirded out about my old crush on you, and acting normal with me.”

Jason smiled. “You’re my friend Tsuna. I would never judge you wrongly just because you used to have a crush on me.”

“Thanks man. It…it really means a lot to me.”

Now that…that… was off my chest, I went down stairs. I decided to do what Jason said and give Percy a few minutes by himself. I got something to drink, then I washed my face. There really not a lot I could do to kill time, so I finished up in the bathroom and headed to mine and Percy’s room. I reached for the door handle when I heard something coming from within.

I put my ear to the door and listened. What I heard was whimpering. Percy was whimpering. And he was saying something, but I couldn’t make it out.

I knocked in the door. “Percy, are you okay?” There was no response, but Percy sounded scared. “I’m coming in!”

I pushed the door open and stood in the doorway for a second. I saw Percy thrashing on the bed, mumbling and whimpering. He might be having a nightmare, so I closed the door for some privacy. But when I took a step closer to Percy, the Regalia began to glow, the Mirror shining the brightest.

“What? Why are you glowing?” I asked, hoping for an answer from my dad or my aunt or uncle, but they didn’t make an appearance.

“Stop it!” cried Percy, and his thrashing got more intense.

“I don’t have time for this.” I muttered at the Regalia.

I went over to Percy and reached out to him to wake him up. But the moment I touched his shoulder the Regalia shone so brightly that I couldn’t see anything. Once the light faded I forgot to breathe.

I was standing in the center of the green of the cabins next to the Hestia’s Hearth. The grass a healthy green, and the trees swayed in the wind. I could smell the strawberries coming from the fields. I walked down the hill and took in the silence. It’s never this quiet at Camp. There weren’t even any pegasi or any birds in the sky. It was really creepy.

Walking around I tried to think as to why I’m back at Camp. It didn’t make sense. The Regalia can’t just teleport me places. And even if they did it wouldn’t explain the lack of life here. Thinking that there was someone, Chiron hopefully, at the Big House I jogged over there. I ran along the side and saw Percy on the porch. He looked terrified.

"Now your blood, and the blood of the one you love most will be spilled far from home.” Said a cold, ancient voice that I knew. "Your blood will wet the ancient stones, and I will rise.”

The ground in front of the Big House started became fluid as a figure started to form. It rose up and formed into the figure of a woman. Her eyes were closed, as if she was sleepwalking. Her robes were forest green, dappled with gold and white like sunlight shifting through branches. Her hair was as black as tilled soil. Her face was pretty, but at the same time it was cold, like she could watch demigods die and the civilization burn without dropping a smile.

This...this was Gaea. This was her physical manifestation. This isn’t the future, so this must be a dream. Gaea must have been torturing Percy with this sight, and the Regalia had let me enter
Percy’s dreams to help him.

But before I could intervene and stop this nightmare Gaea snapped her fingers. The ground started shaking. Thalia’s Pine, with the Golden Fleece shining in the sunlight burst into flames. The grass beneath my feet started turning to sand and the forest crumpled to dust. A wave of heat hit me from behind and the smell of smoke filled the air. The Cabins were burnt to cinders, and the Big House caught fire and was falling apart. It was like an atomic bomb went off, with only the porch Percy was standing on untouched.

Is…is this what Gaea is capable of doing if she fully awakens? This the power of one of the Protogenoi? No wonder Gaea was as confident as she was, she had the raw power to back it up. With this power she has no reason to fear Death, if I did call upon him and beg him to help defeat her. I even think she can rival him in power if she tried. I was so scared that I couldn’t move from behind the smoldering Big House.

“No! No, why?!” Percy screamed

“When I reclaim the earth,” Gaea said, not through her telepathic way, but with her actual manifestation’s mouth, “I will leave this spot barren forever, to remind me of your kind and how utterly powerless they were to stop me. It doesn’t matter when you fall, my sweet little pawn—to Phorcys or Chrysaor or my dear twins. You will fall, and I will be there to devour you. Your only choice now…will you fall alone? Come to me willingly; bring the girl. Perhaps I will spare this place you love. Otherwise…”

Gaea opened her eyes, revealing green and back swirls. It was like her eyes showed the raw power the earth has. It was also like her eyes were seeing everything. Nothing on the planet is hidden from her. It was clear that she could wait countless millennia for her plans to succeed, for she has infinite patience.

“Wha-what’s happening to me?” Percy cried.

That broke me out of my fear induced paralysis enough for me to look over at Percy. His body was breaking apart. He was crumbling to dust, just like all the monsters we have defeated.

“Enjoy Tartarus, my little pawn.” purred Gaea. Already Percy was half-way broken down, and he was quickly being finished off.

“NO!!” I yelled. I ran onto the porch and grabbed Percy’s shoulders, feeling the dust fall through between my fingers.

“You again?!” screeched Gaea.

I reached down and grabbed Percy’s remaining hand. “Percy, look at me. You have to fight this. This is just a dream. This is your dream, fight back for control.”

“No, I…I can’t…everything is gone. What’s the point?”

“What’s the point? Percy, this isn’t real! Our world is still safe. Don’t let Gaea bring you down.” My brother scrunched up his face in concentration, however he didn’t stop breaking down.

“Tsuna…” He looked up at me with tears in his eyes. “I can’t…”

“Don’t give me that bullshit! Your Percy Jackson, son of Poseidon and Sally Jackson! You’re the savior of Olympus, slayer of the Minotaur and other titles I can’t even remember! You fought gods and Titans, killed countless monsters and accomplished many quests. You have a beautiful, smart,
amazing girlfriend. You have so many friends and family who love you, who will always be there to fight for you and just be there for you. You are a hero, you’re their hero. You’re the greatest person I know. I love you Percy, and I right know I need you to be the hero I know you are. I need you to be my hero.”

Percy’s eyes went wide and he stared at me. I saw hope light anew in his green eyes and a new confidence filled his face. He nodded at me and grabbed my hand tightly. His body began reforming until he was renewed completely.

“Thank you Tsuna.” He said. “Thank you.”

I nodded. “Just remember that you always have people who love and trust you, and are always willing to fight for you.”

I put my forehead against his to console him. The ground beneath then started to shake violently. Percy and I quickly turned towards Gaea who was seething in absolute wrath. Her black hair was waving about as if there was an intense wind around. Rocks and small chunks of the ground began to rise and float around her.

“I am sick and tired of your interference boy!” she shrieked. “You are nothing but a sickness infecting my pantheon. You are a mistake, a BLIGHT! Once I have awoken, I am going to torture you with immortality and make an eternal example out of you, once I kill everyone you remotely care about, especially your precious little Angel.”

I squeezed Percy’s hand for support. “You know what Gaea, you might have raw power. You might be the very foundation of the world we live upon, but you are nothing. I have met Death himself. If his can kill God Himself, then you can be destroyed. You are arrogant and a real bitch if you ask me.”

“Why you little—”

I took a step towards her. “You will lose this war. You will be defeated and sent back into a slumber so deep you’ll never awaken.”

“If you truly believe that you and your annoying protozoa of friends can stop me, then you are sorely—”

“Begone Gaea!”

I thrust my right hand out and from it a cold bluish light covered in snow and ice shot out and hit Gaea into her chest. She screamed, and in the matter of seconds her body started freezing until it was a giant ice statue.

Gaea’s voice didn’t resonate within the devastated landscape. Her body didn’t move. She was gone, for now.

“Huh,” I said, looking at me hand. “If only it was that easy in the real world.” I snapped my fingers, causing the frozen manifestation of Gaea to shatter and scatter in the wind.

“Was that…your magic?” Percy asked.

“I think so.” I said.

“But I thought you can’t control it?”
“I can’t.” I said. “At least, not in reality. But this is a dream world. I guess here I can do anything.”

“Dream huh.” Percy said. “What else do you think we can do?”

I smiled and grabbed his hand. “Let’s fix Camp up, okay?”


Together we waved our hands and a golden pulse was released. As the pulse spread, the Camp began to bring itself back together. The Big House, the Cabins, and all of the buildings in Camp Half Blood rebuilt themselves. The forests sprouted out of the ground and shot towards the sky. The lake refilled itself with crystal clear water. The grass rose from beneath our feet. Camp Half Blood has been restored.

“Never give up hope Percy.” I said. “Or your faith in yourself.”

“What?”

“I don’t think I ever told you, but I look to you Percy for support. Everyday I’m out here, fighting for my life and keeping all of you safe, knowing the condition Nico is in, I’m losing hope. If anything happened to, I don’t think I can make it through this. I need you as much as you might need me. If you’re ever feeling like you just did, please come talk to me. You already carried the world on your shoulders once. You don’t it alone.”

“Tsuna, I don’t know what to say.” smiled Percy. “But I can promise you that I’ll come talk to you if I ever lose myself like that again.” He pulled me into a hug. “I love having you as my brother Tsuna. And you know what? You’re my hero too.”

A metallic CLANG-CLANG-CLANG made us both jolt. The dream instantly ended and our eyes were shot open. Both of us were lying in holding hands. We looked around the room, wondering what was happening.

Someone knocked on the door. “Tsuna? Percy?” The door creaked open and Jason popped his head in, where Percy and I let go of each other.

“Hey Jace.” I said.

“What’s going on?” asked Percy.

“Good, you guys are awake.” said Jason. “We’re descending into Rome now. You both should see this.”

It was a truly marvelous sight. The sky was a brilliant blue, as if there wasn’t any stormy weather to begin with. The sun was rising over the distant hills, so everything below was bathed in a golden light.

And then there’s the sheer size of Rome. Seattle was huge and packed, but Rome was another creature all together. It was as if the city had no limits of geography. It spread through hills and valleys, connected on two sides by bridges over the Tiber.

The city looked like time was folding in on itself. Glass office buildings stood next to excavation sites. Roman columns, worn from time and weather, led to a state-of-the-art soccer, sorry, football stadium. The older streets looked like they were made of cobblestone and they bled into more modern roads and walkways. Looking at the villas, with their red tiled roofs, I can imagine what the city might have looked like in ancient times. If I only had a TARDIS or something, I could
actually go back and see it for myself.

“We’re setting down in that park.” Leo announced, pointing to a wide green space dotted with palm trees. “Let’s hope that the Mist makes us look like a large pigeon or something.”

Maybe the Mist did work on something like this. Or maybe it’s being amplified by the magical metals of the ship. Either way, no Romans were freaking out or trying to take pictures of us to post to Instagram or Facebook as if we’re some UFO.

The Argo slowed its descent and hovered over an empty field near an old villa nestled in the shade of some weird looking pine trees. Just north of here I could see the Colosseum. The oars retracted and the ship began to lower itself slowly. I heard the hum of the landing gear opening up.

The moment we landed, I felt this…odd feeling. “Do you guys feel that?”

“Feel what?” Percy asked.

“I…I don’t know how to describe it.” I said. “It’s as if this place is holding so much power in it.”

“Well this is one of the bedrocks of human civilization.” Annabeth said.

“And it was the heart of the Roman Empire for centuries.” added Jason. “It was where many gods ruled and were born.”

“I don’t think it’s just that.” I said.

“Then what do you mean?” Jason asked.

“It think it’s just what Rome is. It’s a melting pot of so many cultures. Remember that the Roman Empire at its peak stretched as far north as Britain and as far south as Egypt. Between trade routes, prisoners of war, slavery,” I saw Hazel bristle at that word. “All of that brought the different cultures here. Culture, as in their beliefs and gods. Greco-Roman, Celtic, Egyptian, Muslim…” I glanced at Death’s ring. “Judeo-Christian…all of these powers coming here, it’s like there’s a constant magical background radiation in this city.”

“I don’t feel anything.” Frank said.

“Actually, I think I do.” said Coach Hedge. Everyone looked at him. “I don’t know, maybe Noble got me worked up. Or maybe because I’m a Satyr I have better senses than you all do.”

“Tsuna is right though.” Hazel said. “Rome is a melting pot of so many cultures, we should be careful. If there are any non-Roman gods around, we really don’t want to incur their wrath.” We all nodded in agreement.

“I think I know where we are.” Jason said, pointing at the base of an old archer’s wall. “That’s the Tomb of the Scipios.”

“Scipio…” pondered Percy. “Reyna’s pegasus?”

“No.” Annabeth put in. “They were a noble Roman family, and…wow, this place is amazing.” Her eyes were filled with this sense of wonder and I couldn’t help but smile, especially when she grabbed her boyfriend’s hand.

“I’ve studied maps of Rome before.” Jason said. “I’ve always wanted to come here, but…”

He didn’t have to finish his sentence. I think everyone was feeling the same. We were all
having the same sense of awe. We were in Rome—the Rome. I think...I think I had the same feeling when Nico, Percy, and I went to Japan.

“Do we have any plans?” Hazel asked, shaking the rest of us out of our stupor. “Nico has until sunset—at best.” My chest tightened at the mention of Nico. “And this entire city is supposedly getting destroyed today.”

“You’re right.” Percy said. “Annabeth...did you zero in on that spot from your bronze map?”

“Yes,” Annabeth said carefully. “It’s on the Tiber River. I think I can find it, but I should—”

“Take me along.” finished Percy. “Yeah, you’re right.”

Annabeth glared daggers at him. “That’s not—”

“Don’t forget what happened the other day Wise Girl.” I said. “Or should I remind you?”

“Don’t you dare.” Annabeth warned.

“Then you should have no problem with Percy going with you for a bit.” I said.

Annabeth’s dagger eyes were on me now, but she relented, looking away and shaking her head. “I hate you.”

“No, you don’t.” I said with a smug grin.

She rolled her eyes. “Fine. Hazel, now that we’re in Rome, do you think you can pinpoint Nico’s location?”

Hazel blinked. “Um...hopefully, if I can get close enough. I’ll have to walk around the city. Frank, would you come with me?”

“Absolutely.” beamed Frank.

“And, uh...Leo.” added Hazel. “It might be a good idea if you came along too. The fish-centaurs said we’d need your help with something mechanical.”

“Yeah,” Leo said. “No problem.”

“I’m going with you.” I said, ignoring the way Frank’s face darkened at Leo’s joint venture with them.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea.” Hazel said. “The four of us—”

“Yeah, yeah, four of us in Rome will attract trouble, but I don’t care.” I argued. “I have to go with you. Nico is my best friend. I know you’re worried about him, you’re his sister. But Nico means so much more to me than you can imagine. I need to be there with you when he’s rescued.”

“Tsuna, I know you and Nico share such a strong friendship, but it’s going to be dangerous as it is.” Hazel said.

“I know Haze, but...I have this feeling that I need to be there for him. And...and I just want to see him alive again with my own eyes.”

“Okay Tsuna, you can join us.”
“Thank you.”

“Now that that’s settled,” Piper said as she drew her knife, “Jason and I can watch the ship while you all do your stuff. I’ll see what Katroptris can show me. But, Hazel, if you guys get a fix on Nico’s location, don’t go in there by yourselves. Come back and get us. It’ll take all of us to fight the Giants.”

It went unspoken that all of won’t be enough. Even though the Regalia I carry can kill the Giants, it’s not going to be enough. Without a god here to help us, I don’t know how long we’ll last.

“Good idea.” Percy said. “How about we meet up back here at…what?”

“Three in the afternoon?” Jason suggested. “That’s probably the latest we could rendezvous and still hope to fight the Giants and save Nico. If something happens to change the plan, try to send an Iris-message.”

We all nodded in agreement. The air then felt tense. It was another unspoken thing: Annabeth was on a different time table than we are. In a perfect world, she would join us here at three after her solo quest, but this isn’t a perfect world. She has the highest risk today, fighting her mother’s most hated enemy all by her lonesome.

Coach Hedge grunted. “That’ll give me time to eat the coconuts—I mean, dig the coconuts out of our hull. Percy, Annabeth…I don’t like the idea of you two going off on your own. Just remember: behave. If I hear about any funny business, I will ground you until the Styx freezes over.”

“And don’t forget about the bell.” I added.

“TSUNA!!” yelped Annabeth and Percy.

“And I’ll make due on that bell collar!” Coach barked.

“I’m going to kill you Tsuna.” Percy said, face in his hands.

“No, you’re not.” I said smugly.

“We should get going.” Annabeth said, face red. “I need some stuff first.”

Everyone went their separate ways, either to get ready or to simply mentally prep themselves. I went to my room and got into a dark green sleeveless shirt I had bought. I met up with everyone back on the deck where Leo had lowered the gangplank.

“Good luck Annabeth.” Piper said. She was hugging Annabeth. “Please be safe.”

“I will.” Annabeth said. Everyone went over and wished Annabeth luck.

“Wise Girl.” I said when it was my turn. Annabeth looked me over.

“Like the look.” She said.

“Thanks.” I said. We stood there awkwardly for longer than I care to admit. I shook that feeling out of my head though and pulled her into a hug. Annabeth wrapped her arms around my neck and held tight. “Come back to us Annabeth. I can’t imagine a world where you are not in it.”

“I will Tsuna.”
“Promise me.” I whispered in her ear. “Promise that you will survive whatever Arachne has planned. Promise that you will beat that overgrown spider and come back to us.”

“…”

“Promise me.”

“I promise Tsuna, I’ll survive this and come back to all of you.”

“I’ll be waiting for you with Percy.” I said, pulling away to kiss her cheek. “By the by, if you don’t come back he’s going to make me go with him to the Underworld to save you. I’d rather not go through that hassle.”

Annabeth rolled her eyes and playfully pushed me away. “Oh yes, I bet it would be such a hassle for you, especially with that on your finger.”

“This ring isn’t a get out of death free card.” I said. “And I’d rather not figure out what will happen if I use it to defy the Natural Order.”

“Okay Tsuna, wrap it up.” Percy said.

“So yeah…” I said. “Come back safe.”

“Will do, Tuna Head.” She turned towards her boyfriend. “Let’s get going Seaweed Brain.”

Percy nodded. “I’ll be back guys.” He then took Annabeth’s hand and together they walked off the ship.

Everyone else dispersed as the resident power couple stepped off the gangplank. I kept watching Percy and Annabeth walk across the park hand in hand. I don’t know how Annabeth will do it, but I know she’ll beat Arachne and bring back her mom’s statue. She and Percy will rush into each other’s arms, share a passionate (and embarrassing to watch) kiss, and we’ll all defeat the Giants.

As Percy and Annabeth walked away, I saw something a head of them that made me uncomfortable. Or should I say someone. This creepy old man in a black suit was just staring straight in my direction. Considering how old he looks, maybe he was senile and just staring ahead. A part of me feared the worst though, so to test him I moved along the railing, and his gaze followed me.

“Shit.” I mumbled.

Whoever this man was, he could see through the Mist. But what’s weird is that Percy and Annabeth didn’t look like they noticed him, and he was in their direct path. They were getting closer and closer, and all the man did was stare right at me. It was when Percy and Annabeth walked straight through him as if he didn’t exist that I knew I had to deal with this.

I took one step onto the gangplank before I was stopped.

“Where are you going Tsuna?”

“Oh, Jason, I uh…” I turned back towards the old man, making sure that he hadn’t moved. “I had a dream…last night as to where Nico might be and I want to check it out.”

“You did?” he asked. “Then why didn’t you say anything earlier, especially to Hazel?” He grabbed
my wrist and started pulling me. “Come on, we need to tell her now.”

I ripped my hand from his grasp. “It was a dream Jase.” I lied. “It could have been sent by Gaea as a ploy to lead us to a trap. And if that’s true, then I don’t want to get Hazel’s hopes up.”

“Then let me go with you as back up.” He said. “I don’t want you to be by yourself here.”

I shook my head. “I’ll be fine.” I said. “I know how to be careful. But if anything happens or if I find anything, I’ll I.M. you ASAP.”

“I don’t feel comfortable with you by yourself. If Yatagarasu was here, maybe, but—” I put a finger to his lips.

“Y’know, with how concerned you’re getting you might give a guy some ideas.” I smiled at how fast his face blushed. “Have some faith in me, will ‘ya?” I rubbed his shoulder.

“Fine, I’ll cover for you.”

“Thank you, Jason. I’ll try to be here at the rendezvous time.”

“I’ll be waiting, but please, just be careful.”

“That’s the idea.”

Walking down the gangplank I waved Jason goodbye. Once I got on the grassy ground I steeled myself for whatever it was I’m about to confront. The guy in the black suit just stared me down, and the closer I got the older he looked. His face was covered in wrinkles and his eye sockets were so depressed that they were almost completely shadowed over.

“So what are you?” I asked when I stood in front of him. He didn’t answer, just kept staring at me. “Are you some type of spirit? Like a Lar or something? Here,” I showed him the brand on my arm, “I’m a full member of the Legion. So whatever you are... just give me some response.”

The man just stared at me, and it sent a chill up my spine. I was a second away from drawing the Kusanagi and threatening the man, but then he turned around and walked away. He walked a few feet before stopping and turning back at me.

“Does he want me to follow him?” I thought. Despite Admiral Ackbar screaming ‘It’s a trap!!’ in my head, I decided to go with my gut instincts and follow the man.

I had no idea where he was taking me. He was leading me through back alleys, over small canals, and through some really old and creepy spots. It made me really wish I took Jason up on his offer to come with me. A couple of times I lost track of the old guy when he walked straight through several streets filled to the brim with cars and Vespa drivers. I was able to spot him on the other side of the street. It’s refreshing to have a supernatural being be so polite as to wait for me to catch up.

He led me pretty far from the Argo II and I was getting worried. Mostly because this entire time there hasn’t been any random monster attacks on me. Whatever this guy really is, he’s scaring off any monster threats at the moment.

When he started leading me down less crowded parts of the city the smells of baked breads and freshly cut flowers filled the air. I passed a café and smelled the coffee beans that were brewing. The old guy then stood outside of a small shop that I could only make out one word of: gelato.
I looked between him and the gelato shop. “So…what now?” The old man just stared at me and then walked inside. I felt a vein throb in my head as I blindly followed him. “Ok, I’m getting a little tired of this whole silent treatme—” The old guy flickered like static before vanishing completely. “Oh no, not again.”

“Kon’nichiwa Tsuna. Sore wa anata o futatabi miru sekai o imi shimasu.”

I turned around so fast that I could have gotten whiplash. “Izanami.”

My grandmother, the goddess of creation and death. There she was just sitting there at a small table in the middle of the empty shop. Unlike the last time I saw her wasn’t in her eerie black kimono. This time she was wearing a black suit jacket with a matching business skirt. Her skin was still deathly pale, but that must come with the territory. And she had such a happy look in her face.

“Tsuna no koibito.” She smiled. “When did you decide to stop calling me your grandmother?”

“Owabi no sobo.” I bowed slightly.

“It’s alright dear. Come, sit. I haven’t seen you in so long.” She gestured to the chair opposite of hers. I cautiously did as she said. “You like gelato, right? Here.”

She raised her hand and a man, a hypnotized Mortal by the looks of it came over and dropped off two bowls of the iced treat. Mine was topped with chocolate pearls and strawberries, while my grandmother’s was simply two scoops of vanilla gelato.

“Thanks.” I said to the man. He didn’t say anything and walked to the back. “So, my guide, who was he?”

“Just a low tier Reaper.” She stirred her cup of gelato. “How have you been Tsuna?”

“Uh, fine I guess, all things considered.”

“That’s good. Anybody special in your life.”

I nibbled on the spoon. “Sort of. But is that why you’re here? To discuss my day-to-day life? Let’s be honest, when that creepy guy brought me here I was expecting Death. This seems like his type of venue.”

“He does like his human foods. But no, my sweet child, this is not entirely a social visit. Death is a little busy at the moment, cosmic level things, you wouldn’t understand, so he sent me because I wanted to see you.”

“So…you’re doing a status report on me or something? Bāchan, this is the first time since I met Death that you’ve contacted me. Have to admit, I’m a little hurt, since you say you love me.”

“I do love you dear, don’t ever doubt that.”

“Hm.” I looked out the window. “You said Death sent you. What’s his message? Is it about his ring?”

“Nothing like that all. He said that you are just not living up to your potential.” She took a bit of her treat and shrugged her shoulders. “He mentioned that you need to let go and use what you have at your disposal, or else this Quest you on will fail by the time you reach Greece.”
“What do you mean exactly? The Regalia? I’m still trying to figure out all of their powers.”

“I’m not sure dear, I don’t pretend to know what he means. And you know as well as I that Death doesn’t explain himself. I mean, he did give you his ring without telling you anything about it.”

“I figured out a power of the ring.”

“Really? Which one?”

“Some of my friends were possessed by Eidolons, and my powers from the Yomi weren’t enough, so I tapped into Death’s ring to banish them back to the Underworld.”

“Oh Tsuna, it has so much more power than you can possibly imagine. You have no idea what you have on your finger.”

“I figured.” I sighed. “Dad said the same thing, about letting go.”

“He did? And do you understand what he and Death meant?”

“Not really.”

“Really? No ideas at all.”

“Nope.”

“You’re not serious, are you?”

“Bāchan if I knew what they meant, I would do what they expect of me.”

“Have…you tried to figure it out?”

“I haven’t really had a chance to sit down and think about it.”

My grandmother shook her head. “Well, let’s not think about that right now. I passed along my message, and I want to hear what you’ve been up to.”

“What, really?” I asked.

“Oh course. I know this year hasn’t been easy for you, but I want to hear about your adventures.”

“Well…okay…”

So I told her what I have dealt with since I last saw her. From discovering Percy being kidnapped to my travels with Nico all the way up to me finding Percy in Seattle and to where we are right now. I did leave out Storybrooke specifically, but I let her know that I had harnessed magic and have been training myself to use it. She didn’t say much, just letting me talk and occasionally asking questions when she wanted me to go into greater detail. I lost track of the time, until I happened to glance up at the clock.

I jumped out of my seat. “Holy crap, is it that late already?!”

“Is something the matter?”

“I have to get back to the ship.” I explained. “I’m supposed to be helping find Nico before we face the Giants. I-I should have been looking for Nico this entire time. I have to go.”
“Are—are you sure?”

“Yeah, I’m sorry Bāchan, but I need to get going.”

“If you’re sure, then…” She stood up and hugged me. “I love you Tsuna.”

“I love you too Bāchan. Maybe, once I’m back in America, we can do this again. If you’re not busy, that is.”

“I’m never too busy for you dear. There are more than enough Shinigami to take of my duties so I can have dinner with you.” She pulled away, and she looked like she was about to say something, but she must have decided against it because she merely kissed my forehead and let me go.

“Well…see you later then.” I said. “Sayōnara.”

“Sayōnara, Tsu-kun.” With that I went towards the door. “Tsuna, wait.”

“Bāchan, I have to go.”

“Listen to me Tsunayoshi.” She took a moment to find her words. “I know that you care about Nico di Angelo. He was the one who kept you from joining me in the Yomi.”

“You’re not going to make him suffer because of that, are you?”

“No, no, I wouldn’t do that to someone you hold so dear. But…maybe you should…let him be rescued by his family.”

I just stood there shocked. “I don’t believe this. Bāchan, Nico is my family.”

“You have a duty Tsuna, since you enlisted yourself into this Quest. The gods of this pantheon rarely help their children due to their arrogance. But you, you have the Sacred Regalia. They contain the essence of the Noble Three. You have the power to destroy the Giants and stop that conniving Gaea.”

“I’m not supposed to be here in the first place!” I argued. “What would happen if I wasn’t here? I know Percy and the others can do this without me, they’re stronger than the gods can are willing to admit. Despite what I say Percy will be fine without me, but Nico—”

“You need to trust me on this Tsuna.” She begged, gently cradling my face in her hands. “I can see things more clearly than you can, and Nico will be better with his sister than you. You need to assist your brother in destroying Gaea’s ridiculous twins. If not, Nico will perish, as will Percy and your new friends. If you don’t, Rome will fall today, and in time, so will the world. If that happens…”

“What?” I asked. “What will happen?”

She gave me a sad smile. “It’s best not to think about it. The repercussions of such a calamity is even above my paygrade. But you have to trust me Tsuna, it’s best for the fate of everyone and everything you hold dear to go with your brother. Slay the Giants that have claimed Rome as theirs.”

“But…Nico…” I started crying, unable to accept not being there for Nico when he needs me most.

“Shh, shh, shh, it’ll be alright.” Bāchan soothed. She hugged me close and hummed.

Despite how I feel, I think deep down she’s right. No matter how I feel, Nico should be
found by Hazel. She would be the best support Nico needs right now. Not someone like me, someone who…

“Maybe-maybe you’re right.” I mumbled.

“I’m sorry Tsuna, but this is for the best.” She said, wiping my tears away. “You’ll understand in time.”

“I hope so.” I said, doing everything in my power to ignore the way my heart felt about not being there for Nico, as if my heart was being stabbed through again.

“You should get going.” Izanami said.

“Okay.” I nodded.

“Just remember that I’m watching over you, and you have your family here.” She touched the Regalia. “And remember your new friends will keep you safe. They’re your family too.”

With another kiss to my forehead, she vanished. “Bye, Bāchan.”

Without anywhere else to go I began my trek back to the Argo II. I head hung low, and I fought the urge to cry. I saw some old Roman spirits and heard them say some things, but I ignored them. My mind was too focused on Nico being in that damn jar and how badly I want to be there for him.

I don’t know how long it was taking me to get back to the ship. However long it took, it felt longer than it probably really was. My mind was so full of thoughts. I wasn’t even paying attention when I bumped into someone.

“Watch it—Tsuna?”

“Percy…” I said. “Is Annabeth—”

“She’s on her own.” He said, and he didn’t look happy about it.

“Are you okay? You don’t look good.”

“You’re one to talk. Why are you out here by yourself? And Why does it look like you’ve been crying?”

“That obvious huh?” I ran my hand down my face. “I had a rendezvous with my grandmother.”

“Izanami?” he asked. “Is she trying to get you to off yourself again?”

“No, nothing like that.” I said. “Besides, Death has forbade her from even thinking of doing that. No, she came to pass along a message from Death himself and to give me a warning.”

“It’s really creepy that Death sends you messages.” Percy said. “It gives me the willies.”

“Willies?” I asked. “Sounds like something Paul would say.”

He smiled. “Yeah, it does, doesn’t it? What was the message anyways?”

“Well, from what I interpreted it he’s disappointed in the fact that I’m not living up to my potential, whatever that means. He said that I need to ‘let go’.”
“Let go? What’s that supposed to mean?”

“No clue. But he thinks that if I do I’ll be even greater help to you all in this war.”

“Think it’s about the Regalia or your magic?”

“Could be, but Death is…enigmatic.”

“Uh-huh. And what did your grandmother warn you about?”

A stabbing sensation went through my heart again. “She told me to not go after Nico.”

“What? Why?”

“Because…because it’s my duty to help you kill the Giants.”

“I guess that part makes sense. I’ve already figured you’d help us. But I don’t understand why she told you not to save Nico.”

“It must be because my duty is meant to be above my desire to be there for my friends.” I explained. “But even if that’s the case, not being there for Nico hurts more than you know.”

“Actually, I know what it feels like.” Percy said. “Annabeth is fighting Arachne by herself remember.”

“Right, sorry. I didn’t—”

“It’s fine Tsuna, you’re just being emotional again.”

“Gee, thanks bro.”

Percy chuckled. “Come on crybaby. Back to the ship. Maybe Hazel and the others found something and that’ll soothe your wounded soul.”

“Gods, what kind of influence is Paul Blofis?”

“The good kind.”

“Yeah, he really is.” I sniffed and rubbed my eyes. “So, what ended up happening with Annabeth?”

Percy told about how he and Annabeth met Rhea Silvia and the river god Tiberinus. They gave them some advice and took Annabeth away on a scooter towards the location of the Athena Parthenos. And in no time we made it back to the park where the Argo was parked. I was going to head straight to the ship, but Percy grabbed my arm and pointed towards a small pond that sat underneath a willow tree. Jason and Piper were sitting on t having a picnic.

“Uh, hey guys.” I said. “What’s going on here?”

“Oh, uh, just a picnic.” Piper said.

“Really?” I asked. “Cause it looks more like a date to me.”

“We are a couple Tsuna.” Jason said.

“True, but this isn’t really the time for a romantic outing.” I said.

“Let them have it Tsuna.” Percy said. “Just because you’re going to be single forever.”
“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Well, compared to me you are the less attractive brother.” He joked. “Who’d want you when they can fawn over me?”

“Oh har-dee-har-har.” I rolled my eyes. “I’m sure Annabeth would love to hear that when she gets back.” I looked back at the lovebirds and saw a cake with candles. “Uh, I’m I missing something or is it someone’s birthday?”

“Yeah, it’s my birthday actually.” Jason said, although he didn’t seem to want to admit it.

“Oh, well…happy birthday man.” I said. “Wished I’d known. I would’ve gotten you a present.”

“I appreciate the thought Tsuna, but the only gift I want is everyone to make it out alive today.”

“Best gift there can be.” Percy said. “Hey, can I get some of that cake?”

“Uh, sure.” said Piper, cutting him a piece. “Any for you Tsuna?”

“No, I’m fine.” I said. “Have you heard anything from Hazel?”

The two of them shook their heads. “Nothing yet.” Jason said.

“It’s getting close to three right?” Percy asked over a mouthful of cake. “They should be on their way back now.”

“By the way, how was Annabeth.” Piper wondered.

Percy’s face darkened and he swallowed the cake. “About that…”

Percy insisted that we go back to the ship before he told Piper and Jason what happened, saying that he also wanted Coach Hedge to hear it as well. We helped the Piper and Jason pack up their picnic and called out to Hedge once we were on the ship.

Once Percy finished explaining what happened Piper looked shocked. “So Annabeth was kidnapped on a motor scooter by Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn.” Piper summed up.

“Not kidnapped, exactly,” Percy said. “But I’ve got this bad feeling…” He took a deep breath, as if he was trying not to have a panic attack. “Anyway, she’s—she’s gone. Maybe I shouldn’t have let her, but—”

“You had to,” Piper said. “You knew she had to go alone.”

“And you swore you’d leave once you went as far as you could with her.” I reminded him. Percy nodded his understanding.

“And you should know how tough and smart Annabeth is.” Piper added. “She’ll be fine.”

Percy’s shoulders relaxed a little. “Maybe you’re right. Anyway, Gregory—I mean Tiberinus—said we had less time to rescue Nico than we thought.”

“WHAT?!” I screeched. “Why didn’t you say something to me sooner?”

“Because Tiberinus said that Piper can find him.” Percy explained.

“How?” I demanded to know.
“With that.” He pointed to Piper’s dagger. “He said it can tell us Nico’s location.”

“I…I’ve tried.” Piper admitted after biting her lip. “The dagger doesn’t always show what I want to see. In fact, it hardly ever does.”

“Please, try again.” Percy said.

“Percy, for all I know Gaea can make Katoptris show me what she wants me to see.”

“Piper the life of someone I care about is at risk.” I said. “We have less time than we thought to save him, so we need to know where he is now.”

“Fine.” She sighed, drawing her dagger.

“While you’re at it,” started Coach Hedge, “See if you can get the latest baseball scores. Italians don’t cover baseball worth beans.”

“Shh.” Piper focused on the polished bronze blade.

All of us drew in as close as we could to Piper so we could see what the dagger would reveal. The light on the blade started shimmering and what looked like a loft apartment was revealed. It was filled with a dozen armored Roman demigods standing around a dining table, with Octavian pointing at a map. Reyna was pacing next to the windows, gazing at Central Park.

“That’s not good.” Jason muttered.

“They’re already in Manhattan.” I said.

“And that’s a map of Long Island.” noted Percy.

“Their scouting the territory.” guessed Jason. “Discussing invasion routes.”

“The barrier should protect Camp though, right?” I said.

“It might protect Camp Half-Blood from projectiles, maybe, but the Romans can easily walk in without the barrier doing anything.” Coach said.

“And if they get in I don’t think Camp Half-Blood will last long.”

“Will.” I thought, worry filling my chest.

The images in the blade changed. Now ruins were reflecting off its surface—a few crumbling walls, a single column, a stone floor covered in moss—all clustered on a grassy hillside dotted with pine trees.

“I was just there.” Percy said. “That’s in the old Forum.”

As if on cue the image zoomed in like a live camera. On one side of the stone floor, a set of stairs had been excavated, leading down to a modern iron gate with a padlock. The image zoomed past the gate, down a spiral stairwell, and into a dark cylindrical chamber. That’s when Piper dropped her blade.

“What’s wrong?” Jason asked. “It was showing us something.”

“We can’t go there.” Piper whimpered.
“Why not?” I asked.

“Piper, Nico is dying.” My heart hurt again as Percy said that. “We’ve got to find him. Not to
mention, Rome is about to get destroyed.”

“And if we fail here, then the world will fall.” I said. “If we beat the Giants here in Rome and get
back the Athena Parthenos, and especially save Nico, we’ll have an edge in this war that can lead
us to beating Gaea.”

I had a feeling that Piper was hiding something. It was as if she had seen this room before
in another vision. It was like she was terrified of what that room is, or what’s in it.

“Piper—” I started right as she picked up her knife.

The daughter of Aphrodite focused on the blade, making the blade shimmer until new
images formed. This time two Giants in gladiator armor were sitting in oversized praetor thrones.
They were toasting each other with golden goblets, clearly assuming that they’ve already won. And
between them was the bronze jar.

I swallowed the lump in my throat as the image zoomed inside the jar. It revealed Nico
curled up into a ball, no longer moving. Sitting next to him was the supernatural pomegranate, and
all of its seeds were eaten.

“We’re too late.” Jason said.

“No.” Percy said. “No, I can’t believe that. Maybe he’s gone into a deeper trance to buy time. We
have to hurry.”

“I know he’s your friend Percy but look at him!” Jason exclaimed. “Even as a Son of Hades, I
don’t think even Nico can survive what he’s been through.”

“Nico is not dead.” I said adamantly.

“Tsuna you have think rationally here.” The blonde tried to argue.

“I am Jason.” I said with a glare.

“How do you know?” Piper asked as she slid her blade into its sheathe.

I looked her right in the eyes. “I would know if Nico was dead.” I looked off into the distance. “We
have to go now.”

“Maybe we should wait for the others.” Piper suggested. “Hazel, Frank, and Leo should be back
soon.”

“We can’t wait.” Percy insisted.

“Nico needs us now.” I said. “He’s not dead now, but his time is running out. If you’re going to sit
and wait for the others, I’m going ahead of you.”

Coach Hedge grunted. “It’s just two Giants. If you guys want, I can take them.” You have to
appreciate his tenacity.

“Uh, Coach,” Jason said, “That’s a great offer, really it is, but we need you to man the ship—or
goat the ship. Whatever.”
“And let you four have all the fun?” scowled the satyr.

Percy gripped Coach’s arm. “Hazel and the others need you here. When they get back, they’ll need your leadership. You’re their rock.”

“Yeah.” Jason said while barely managing keeping a straight face. “Leo always says you’re his rock. You can tell them where we’ve gone and bring a ship around to meet us at the Forum.”

“And here.” Piper unstrapped Katoptris and handed it over to Coach Hedge. “Keep an eye on us with the blade. And yes, you can check the baseball scores.”

Coach nodded grimly. “All right, but if any Giants come this way—”

“Feel free to blast them.” said Jason.

“What about annoying tourists?”

“No.” We all said in unison.

“Bah.” Coach bleated. “Fine. Just don’t take too long, or I’m coming after you with ballistae blazing.”

“Good, we’re all agreed.” I said. “Let’s go. I’m not waiting another second to save Nico.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and Kudos are appreciated.
Finding where we needed to go was the easy part. I led everyone along the same path me and Annabeth took. It wasn’t that hard to find the entrance either. The abandoned stretch of hillside was easy to spot.

There wasn’t much talking going on. Jason was holding on tight to Piper’s hand. It made me think about Annabeth and how much I want to be with her right now. I still hate that I’m not allowed to be with her when she’s facing Arachne. I swallowed that feeling down and looked over my shoulder at Tsuna who looked…I can’t even read him right now.

Usually Tsuna is easy to read, he wears his heart on his sleeve. But ever since we left the ship to go save Nico, it’s like he closed himself off. It’s never a good thing when he does this. I want to save Nico too, but Tsuna is making it his only focus.

I slowed my walk and got next to Tsuna. “You alright man?”

“I’m fine.”

“You’re not acting like you are.”

He shot me a glare from the corner of his eye. “What do want me to say?”

“I want you tell me what’s bothering you.”

“There’s nothing to tell you. Nico’s in trouble, we know exactly where he is, and we’re going to save him. That’s that.”

“But something is clearly bothering you.” I gripped his shoulder and stopped us. “Does it have anything to do with what Izanami told you? About not going after Nico?”

He didn’t make eye contact with me. “…Maybe.”

“Come on man, you promised you’d talk to me about anything that’s affecting you.”

“I know.” He hissed out. “Sorry. It’s just…I can’t help but think that Bachan might have known where Nico was this whole time. She told me that Nico should be saved by Hazel, but maybe that was her way to tell me that Hazel was going to end up in the wrong place no matter what. But what she said still hit hard.”

“I get it Tsuna, I do. But Nico is too important to you for you not to go save him. Nico might need Hazel, but he needs you just as much.”

“Thanks Perce.”

“Hey Percy, I think we found something.” Jason called. Tsuna and I ran over to the couple who were standing at a metal gate sealed with a padlock.

“This the entrance then?” asked Tsuna.

“Yeah, it’s just like my vision.” explained Piper.
“The Giants are down there, right?” Jason asked.

“Definitely.” I said.

“More importantly Nico is down there.” Tsuna determinedly said.

“You guys sure we should go down there without the others?” Piper asked.

“We don’t have time to wait for them.” I said before Tsuna could overreact. “Nico needs our help now, and I’m sure the Giants aren’t going to wait for us and the others.”

“Okay.” Piper said quietly.

It didn’t take much effort to get through the rusted gate. Jason cut the padlock with his gold sword. The gate creaked open, making me think we’re in a horror movie and about to head to our deaths. Well, I’m technically right. Just on the other side of the gate were stone steps that spiraled down into the dark.

“I’ll go first.” Jason said.

“No!” Piper yelped. The three of us turned towards her.

“Pipes, what is it?” asked Jason. “That image in the blade…you’ve seen it before, haven’t you?”

She nodded. “I didn’t know how to tell you. I saw the room down there filling with water. I saw the three of us drowning.”

“I can’t drown.” I said, but that fear I’ve been having since Alaska still makes my chest clench. I tried to put on a brave face for Tsuna though so he wouldn’t worry. But looking over at him, he seemed to be deep in thought. “Tsuna—?”

“Only three?” Tsuna asked.

“I never saw you Tsuna.” Piper said. “I… I don’t think you’re supposed to be here.”

“Yeah, I figured that.” Tsuna said. “I was never supposed to join this quest. My presence here has thrown this entire Quest out of whack. The future has changed.”

“And that image you showed us there was no water.” Jason said. “I think we’ll be fine.” Piper didn’t look too sure.

“Maybe, but what if you had already died before the moment in the vision?” Piper asked. “Maybe you—”

“Look,” I said. “I’ll check it out first. It’s fine. Be right back.”

Before she or anyone else could object I walked down the stairwell. I used Riptide to light my way down. I kept going down like a spiral, sort of like a corkscrew. Keeping my guard up I looked around for any traps that could have been set, but luckily nothing sprung out. No walls that squish me like a pancake, poisoned darts, the stairs didn’t suddenly turn into a slide and drop me down into a pit of spikes.

Nothing really but some graffiti gouged into the stones. Roman numerals, names and phrases in Italian. There even was some pretty cool artsy graffiti that went over my head as to what it was supposed to mean, but it looked cool.
I almost fell on my face if I didn’t notice that the sudden drop at the last step. I could make out the floor, so it’s not that much of a drop, maybe…five feet, I think. I can’t make too much of the room, there’s not enough light, although I could just make out alcoves in the darkness. I could also tell that there’s no water down here. No sound of moving water, I can’t sense anything of my element down here. It seemed safe enough, for now at least, so I jumped down and started looking around.

Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, at least from what I could see. And still no traps were sprung. I stepped into the center of the room and all of a sudden, this blue and green light shined along the walls, like light shining through water, and I thought I heard a fountain. It kinda freaked me out, so I decided to go back up to Tsuna and the others.

“Good news: no water.” I said once I got back up. “Bad news: I didn’t see any exits down there. And, uh, weird news: well, you should see this…”

I took the lead, Riptide out and ready to go just in case anything happened to jump out this time. Piper followed behind me, and Jason behind her. Tsuna took the rear, making sure to be extra careful. Even if I gave the all clear, we still had no idea what can pop up between now and then, so it was a good decision to stay on guard.

“Watch the last step.” I said once we reached the bottom. I jumped down and reached out to help Piper. She grabbed my hand and hopped down. Jason followed, and so did Tsuna.

With the light coming from our three swords it was a lot easier to see down here. There were paintings that might have looked beautiful years ago, but since then have faded into white echoes of their former selves, with only a few speckles of color remaining to show what they used to be. Above us was a domed ceiling about fifty feet in height or so.

“What do you think these are for?” Tsuna asked, pointing to the nine alcoves.

“No idea.” I said.

“Is it me, or is it cold in here?” Piper asked.

“Yeah, a bit.” I said.

“The air feels really dry too.” added Jason.

“It’s making me thirsty.” Tsuna said. “Like the air is sucking the water from my mouth.”

“Try to ignore that for now buddy.” I said. “Now, here’s the weird part. Just watch.”

I stepped in the middle of the room and instantly that green and blue light rippled across the walls again. Piper gasped as the light appeared. And I was sure of it, it sounded like a babbling fountain in here now. And then I smelled it.

“Tsuna, do you smell that?” I asked.

He took a sniff of the air. “Is that…the ocean?”

“Isn’t that how the two of you smell normally?” asked Piper.

“You know how they smell Pipes?” Jason asked sounding jealous.

“Um, no…I—” Piper struggled to think of something to say, her face red with embarrassment. The
smell of the ocean started getting a lot stronger. “Uh, is this an illusion?”

“It’s not.” Tsuna said. “Illusions aren’t like this.”

“There should would be water here, I can feel that.” I said, rubbing my hand across the floor. Tsuna nodded in agreement. “Like, lots of water. But there isn’t any. I’ve never been in a place like this.”

Jason moved to one of the alcoves. He touched the bottom shelf of the niche, which was just at eye level for him, which is pretty high. He was studying it, like Annabeth would.

“This stone…” he started. “It’s embedded with seashells.” He turned back towards us and had a look of realization. “This a nymphaeum.”

Piper swallowed loudly. “A what?”

“We have one at one at Camp Jupiter.” Jason said. “On Temple Hill. It’s a shrine to the nymphs.”

I never had anything against nymphs. They always seemed to like me. Especially water nymphs. Maybe it’s because I’m a son of Poseidon and they’re drawn to me. When I first arrived to Camp Half-Blood Annabeth once warned me that nymphs are big flirts. They get along great with the Aphrodite Cabin, sharing beauty tips and gossip, but they never were enemies of mine.

In the Canoe Lake back at Camp, the nymphs made the lake feel alive. This place though, it felt unnatural. My spider senses were tingling, telling me that this place had a hostile feel to it, and was it just me, or was it feeling very dry in here?

“So what were these places for Jase?” asked Tsuna.

“Shrines like these were all over the place in Ancient Rome.” Jason started. “Rich people had them outside their villas to honor the nymphs, to make sure the local water supply was always fresh and clean. Some shrines were built around natural springs, but most were man-made.”

“So…so no actual nymphs lived here?” Piper asked hopefully.

“Not sure.” admitted Jason. He looked around again. “This place where we’re standing would have been a pool with a fountain. A lot of the times, if the nymphaeum belonged to a demigod, he or she would invite nymphs to live there. If the spirits took up residence, that was considered good luck.”

“For the owner.” I guessed. “But that would also bind the nymphs to a new water source, which would be great if the fountain was in a nice sunny park with fresh water pumped in through the aqueducts—”

“But this place looks like its been underground for centuries.” Piper said. “Dry and buried.”

“Nymphs are nature spirits.” Tsuna said. “They are literally tied with their element. If you cut a tree down a dryad would die. If a water spirit is taken away from their water source for centuries —”

“What would happen to the nymphs?” Piper finished.

The sound of water changed to loud hissing, like ghostly snakes. The rippling light shifted from sea blue and green to purple and sickly lime. The four of us huddled together, keeping Piper in the middle since she doesn’t have a weapon on her to protect herself.

Above us the nine alcoves glowed, and once the light faded they were no longer empty.
Standing in them were these old women so dry that they were like mummies. Their eyes were dark purple, like cartoonish polluted pools of water you’d see on Captain Planet or something. What used to be fine silk dresses were now tattered and faded. Their hair, probably beautifully done two thousand years ago like Roman noblewomen, were disheveled and draw as straw.

“What would happen to the nymphs?” mocked the nymph in the center niche.

She looked worse than the other water spirits, and that’s really saying something. Her back was hunched like the handle of a pitcher, almost to Quasimodo levels. Her hands were paper thin and skeletal. In her roadkill style hair was a battered wreath of what used to be gold laurels.

Her gaze fixed on Piper. “What an interesting question, my dear. Perhaps the nymphs would still be here, suffering, waiting for revenge.”

“Percy, the stairs are gone,” Tsuna said.

I looked over my shoulder and he was right, the stairs vanished leaving only a blank wall. “Dammit.” I tightened my grip on Riptide. “Who are you?”

The central nymph turned her attention to me. “Ah…names. We once had names. I was Hagno, the first of the nine!”

“Hagno?” Tsuna whispered in my ear. “Bit on the nose, isn’t it?”

“The nine,” Jason repeated, “The nymphs of this shrine. There were always nine niches.”

“Of course,” Hagno hissed while barring her teeth in a viscous smile. “But we are the original nine, Jason Grace, the ones who attended the birth of your father.”

Jason’s sword dropped a little, like hearing about his father shook him. “You mean Jupiter? You were there when he was born?”

“Zeus, we called him then.” Hagno said. “Such a squealing whelp. We attended Rhea in her labor. When the baby arrived, we hid him so that his father, Kronos,” I tightened my grip on Riptide at the mention of the Titan Lord, “Would not eat him. Ah, he had lungs, that baby! It was all we could do to drown out the noise so that Kronos could not find him. When Zeus grew up, we were promised eternal honors. But that was in the old country, in Greece.”

The other nymphs wailed and clawed at their niches. It was like they were trapped in them, since they never got past the edges of the alcoves. Even their feet didn’t move with all their thrashing, like they were glued in place.

“When Rome rose to power, we were invited here,” Hagno said, “A son of Jupiter tempted us with favors. A new home, he promised. Bigger and better! No down payment, an excellent neighborhood. Rome will last forever.”

“Forever!” the others hissed.

“We gave in to temptation,” Hagno continued, “We left our simple wells and springs on Mount Lycaeus and moved here. For centuries, our lives were wonderful! Parties, sacrifices in our honor, new dresses and jewelry every week. All the demigods in Rome flirted with us and honored us.”

The nymphs wailed again. “But Rome did not last,” snarled Hagno, “The aqueducts were diverted. Our master’s villa was abandoned and torn down. We were forgotten, buried under the earth, but we could not leave. Our life sources were bound to this place. Our old master never saw fit to
release us. For centuries, we have withered here in the darkness, thirsty...so thirsty.” All nine of
the water spirits clawed at their throats.

“I-I’m so sorry for you.” Piper said. “That must have been terrible. But we are not your enemies.”
Her voice sounded so soothing and reassuring that the nymphs looked like they believed her, and I
even believed her. She must be using her powers. “If we can help you in any way—”

“Oh, such a sweet voice!” Hagno cried. “Such beautiful features. I was once young like you. My
voice was soothing as a mountain stream. But do you know what happens to a nymph’s mind when
she is trapped in the dark, with nothing to feed on but hatred, nothing to drink but thoughts of
violence? Yes, my dear. You can help us.”

I did not like the way she was staring at Piper, so I raised my hand. “Uh…I’m the son of Poseidon.
Maybe I can summon a new water source? And my brother Tsuna can help. He—”

Hagno hissed. “Whatever that thing is, he is not the son of Poseidon.” Oh gods, Tsuna is going to
be pissed being called a ‘thing’ again. “He maybe a son of a sea god, but one not of this land. His
water is too foreign, too...unpredictable. We will kill him once we’re done with you.”

“Hey it’s not like I’m bringing back the Waters of Mars.” Tsuna said angrily. “That stuff would kill
you.”

“Can you stop acting like Doctor Who for five seconds?” I growled.

“And we know your father well, Percy Jackson.” Hagno said. “Ephialtes and Otis promised us you
would come.”

“The Giants,” Piper said. “You’re working for them?”

“They are our neighbors.” Hagno smiled. “Their chambers lie beyond this place, where the
aqueduct’s water was diverted for the games. Once we have dealt with you...once you have helped
us...the twins have promised we will never suffer again.” She turned her gaze towards Jason, and I
just barely noticed him shake a little. “You, child of Jupiter—for the horrible betrayal of your
predecessor who brought us here, you shall pay. I know the sky god’s powers. I raised him as a
baby! Once we nymphs controlled the rain above our wells and springs. When I am done with you,
we will have that power again. And Percy Jackson, child of the sea god...from you, we will take
water, and endless supply of water.”

“Endless?” I said, trying to sound brave. I darted my eyes from one nymph to another. “Uh...look, I
don’t know about endless. But maybe I could spare a few gallons.” When I felt my arm being
squeezed, I glanced my eyes over to Tsuna, who looked worried.

Hagno didn’t seem to hear my joke as she went to Piper next. “And you, Piper McLean. So young,
so lovely, so gifted with your sweet voice. From you, we will reclaim our beauty. We have saved
our last life force for this day. We are very thirsty. From you three, we shall drink!”

“And what about me Hagno?” Tsuna asked. “What will you take from me?”

The nymph sneered. “We will take nothing from you. The Earth Mother herself has contacted us,
promising us treasures and waters so pure, untouched by the filth of mankind. And all she wanted
was you, the foreigner that travels with the Chosen Seven, alive, to do with as she pleases. A
simple offering for the goddess in exchange for what we rightfully deserve. Don’t worry child,
we’ll make sure that your stay with us will be...relatively painless, until Gaea rises.”

“I am not going to be your prisoner.” Tsuna said. “And I’m sure as hell not going to be Gaea’s
Hagno started laughing, and her nymph friends echoed her. All nine niches started glowing and the nymphs disappeared, but their laughter still rang in the air. Then water started pouring from the alcoves. But it didn’t really look like water. It looked more like oil, sickly and dark.

“We need to get out of here.” Piper said. She ran to the walls and started pounding on them, trying to find an exit.

“Piper, Piper, please calm down.” Jason said, running over trying to soothe her. Already each step of his splashed the nasty water around.

“The water is climbing too fast.” Tsuna said. “They’re trying to drown us.”

“Good thing we can’t drown.” I said.

“Yeah, but those two can.” He pointed to Jason and Piper. “And I don’t like Piper’s vision her dagger showed her.”

“What do you want to do then?” I asked.

“Let’s try holding the water back, maybe buy some time to find an exit.”

“Got it.”

The water was rising alarmingly fast, it already up to my shins. Tsuna gave me a nod and I focused on my powers. I threw out my hands and willed the water to move away. But it didn’t react to me. That never happened before, at least not that I noticed. I tried again, but still nothing happened.

“That’s not good.” Tsuna said. He must be having the same performance issue, which wasn’t good since the water was at our waists now.

“Guys, we can’t find an exit.” Jason said, holding onto Piper.

“And our powers aren’t working.” I said.

Piper’s eyes widened. “Not working? Then that means—”

“Let’s not think about it.” Tsuna said. “We need to get to higher ground. Hurry, into the alcoves.”

The four of us rushed to the niches. Jason and Piper took one, and Tsuna and I took the another. But even in the niches it took no time for the water to reach our knees, and with how it was pouring out it was difficult to stay standing.

“I could try lightning.” Jason said. “Maybe blast a hole in the roof?”

“That could bring down the whole room and crush us.” Piper said.

“Or electrocute us.” I said.

“It’s not like we have a lot of choices.” Tsuna said.

“Could you use your magic?” I asked. “Freeze the water?”

“Even if I could control my magic, at this point we’d be trapped in ice and die of hypothermia.”
“Right, stupid question.” I said. “Let me search the bottom. If this place was built as a fountain, there *has* to be a way to drain the thing. You guys, check the niches for secret exits. Maybe the seashells are knobs, or something.” I hated that I could only come up with something so desperate, but what other option did we have now?

“Be careful.” Tsuna said.

“I’ll try.”

I jumped in the water and was completely submerged. I couldn’t see anything or feel anything. I tried going down, but I started feeling really weak, like I was being drained. And then I tried breathing in like I would normally in water, but I started choking. I was choking in water. I put everything I had left in me to get back to the surface. Once I broke through the surface I coughed out the water.

“Percy!” Tsuna yelled. He held his hand out and reached for it. I almost pulled him in with me when he helped me up.

“What happened?” he asked.


“You couldn’t breath underwater, and we couldn’t control it.” Tsuna said. “It’s the nymphs, they’re —”

He didn’t finish. Like the nymphs knew he was going to say something to piss them off, so to shut him up they blasted him out of the niche with water. He was forced under and my heart stopped for a second.

“Oh gods!” Piper screamed.

“No!” Jason yelled.

Tsuna burst from the water, gasping for breath. The color was drained from his face. He bobbed underwater before struggling to stay afloat. I dove in and supported him, but I felt so tired. It’s like I was running out of energy.

“They’re taking out power.” I heard Piper say. “Draining us.”

Tsuna started shivering. “This never happens…”

“Jason, do the lightning!” I yelled. “We won’t last much longer in here.”

Jason raised his sword. I felt the room rumbled but no lightning appeared. The roof didn’t even crack, let alone break. Instead, rain started to fall, making the water rise even faster. It was as dark as the water I was swimming in, and every drop stung.

“Percy, we need to fight this…” Tsuna said.

“Resisting won’t help you.” Hagno’s voice echoed.

The water swirled around until it pulled me away from Tsuna. We tried to swim back to each other, but the water pushed me away and blasted Tsuna in the other direction. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t get close to my brother. My strength was fading fast.
“Percy, stop!” Tsuna yelled through the torrents of water. “They’re targeting me! Focus on getting us all out of here. I think I can buy a little time, but I don’t know how much time I can give us.” Tsuna raised the Kusanagi over his head and it started glowing.

The nymphs laughed. “That sword will do nothing here. Whatever power it has will be drained.”

“You can try, you old hag.” Tsuna gave me a nod before taking a deep breath and diving underneath the water.

After a few seconds this bright blue light shined in the center of the room. The water went down by maybe two feet, if I’m being generous, but it was started to rise again, but a bit slower than earlier.

I swam over to Jason and Piper. “We have to figure something out fast.”

“What’s Tsuna doing?” Piper asked.

“I think he’s using the Kusanagi to fight back against the nymphs.” I explained. “It’s the only thing that makes sense, but I don’t know how long Tsuna will last.”

“But how can his sword do this when the two of you together couldn’t?” Jason asked.

“It’s as strong as my dad’s Trident.” I said. “No nymph should be able to fight back, but then his father sealed its powers.”

“His father?”

“Susanoo. He’s the god of the seas in Japan.” I said. “Tsuna’ll explain later, but his essence is in the sword too, so maybe, hopefully he’s protecting Tsuna.”

“But what can we do?” Jason asked. “The water is rising too fast now.” He’s right, whatever Tsuna was doing down there wasn’t lasting. The water was rising again, high enough that the three of us were floating over the floor of the niches.

“We can’t fight this.” Piper said. “If we hold back, that just makes us weaker.”

“What do you mean?” asked Jason, shouting over the rain.

Supporting herself on Jason Piper lifted up the horn thing she got after what happened with Hercules. “The horn of plenty,” she said. “We have to overwhelm the nymphs with fresh water, give them more than they can use. If we can dilute this poisonous stuff—”

“Can your horn do that?” I asked, scared out of my mind about the drowning in here, and worried about Tsuna.

“Only with your help.” She said. “Both of you. If you two channel everything you’ve got into the cornucopia, we might be able to beat the nymphs.”

“What about Tsuna?” I asked.

“If you can get him up here it should help, but we don’t have time.” Piper said.

“Tsuna is down there buying us time now, and with him that horn will do the job.”

“Percy—” Jason started.
“I’ll be back.” I said. “Just stay above the water, start by yourselves if you want.”

Taking a deep breath (I don’t remember the last time I actually had to take a breath for this before) and dove under the water. It was hard to see where I was swimming to, but whatever light Tsuna was giving off helped me find him. He was in this bubble of pure clean water that was shining in blue light, his sword stabbed in the center of the floor. I swam through into the bubble and felt better, reenergized.

“Are you okay?” I asked.

“I’m losing this fight Percy.” He said, falling to his knees. The light, which was coming from the Kusanagi, was blinking in and out. “The nymphs are too strong, and a lot of the Kusanagi’s powers are still locked.”

“How much longer can you hold out?” I asked desperately.

“Few minutes, at best, if I push it.”

“Just hold out for as long as you can.” I said. “Piper has a plan, and it’s our best shot. We’re going to pour everything we got into her cornucopia and purify the nymphs. Can you let go and help us out?”

Tsuna shook his head. “If I let go for even a second the water’s going to rise and drown us. The three of you are going to have to be enough.”

“Tsuna—”

“Go!” He pushed my chest, and he must have used his magic or something because I went flying out of the bubble. I felt my energy draining away pretty quickly so I went as fast as I could to the surface.

Even with Tsuna holding the water back it was pretty high. The water was maybe a foot, maybe two from the ceiling. Piper was hanging on Jason, holding the horn above her head. I swam over to them grabbed a hold to keep us afloat.

“Where’s Tsuna?” Jason asked.

“He’s going to try and keep the water from rising for as long as he can.” I said. “We need to do your plan now Piper. I don’t think he’ll last much longer.”

“Let’s do it then.” Jason said.

Jason and I grabbed the cornucopia and I just thought about water. Clean, salt water. I thought about pouring my powers into the horn, but nothing was coming out. How did Piper make this thing spew Diet Coke?

“No good!” Jason yelled, spitting out the black water.

“We’re getting nowhere!” I agreed, glancing down at the light underneath the water, seeing it flicker a lot more.

“You have to work together.” cried Piper. “Both of you need to think of clean water—a storm of water. Don’t hold anything back. Picture all your power, all your strength leaving you.”

“That’s not hard!” I said.
“But force it out!” she said. “Offer up everything, like—like you’re already dead, and your only goal is to help the nymphs. It’s got to be a gift…a sacrifice.”

“Let’s try again.” Jason said after a second of silence as we took in the word sacrifice. He looked me right in the eye. “Together.”

I nodded. The thing Jason and I had in common with our powers were storms, and storms are strongest at sea. And the water there is the cleanest that I can think of. I poured everything I got into the horn. I felt myself getting weaker and weaker, and I don’t know if it was the poisonous water or the horn. But then clear water started to blast out of the cornucopia with so much force that we slammed into the wall behind us. Even the black rain was turning white, and it felt so cold and good.

“It’s working!” Jason cried.

“Too well,” I said. “We’re filling up the room even faster!”

With what the nymphs were doing and our plan the water was rising so much faster. It wouldn’t take long at this rate for the water to cover the entire room and drown us. I looked over at where Tsuna was underwater and saw the light of his barrier dimming.

“Hold on Tsuna, please.” I prayed.

“We can’t stop now.” Piper said. “We have to dilute the poison until the nymphs are cleansed.”

“What if they can’t be cleansed?” Jason asked. “They’ve been down here turning evil for thousands of years.”

“Just don’t anything back.” Piper said. “Give them everything. Even if we go under—”

Gods, we’re already touching the ceiling with our heads. The rain clouds melted into the water. Under the black water the horn of plenty kept blasting out the clear and clean torrent. I poured everything I had left into the horn.

“Jason…” Piper said, drawing my attention. I watched as she pulled Jason closer to her and kissed him. “I love you.”

There was no hesitation, no doubt. Piper was in love with Jason. If they were going to die today, at least they’ll die knowing how much they love each other. I wished Annabeth was here, or I was with her. That way I could be with my Wise Girl, tell her how much she means to me in person, and be with her in case we both died.

Just before the water went over our heads I took what might be my last breath of fresh air. The horn kept spewing out it’s clean water. Bubbles swirled around us. Light was rippling through the room, But the only light that I wanted to see was gone. Tsuna’s barrier was gone, and in what light that I could see with there were air bubbles coming from where my brother was supposed to be.

“TSUNA!!” I screamed, trying to call out to him, but he never responded.

I pushed through, forcing every once of power I had into this stupid horn. My lungs were burning, something that felt so alien to me. I had to purify the nymphs. If they turn good again then they’ll lower the water and I can get to my brother. At this point there wasn’t any more room for water. If the walls break down, then the water will flow out faster than both the nymphs and us can create the water.
I was starting to see black spots in my vision. I never had to hold my breath this long before, I don’t think I could hold it in much longer. And then I felt the water begin to swirl around me, and before I knew it we were sinking. I didn’t have much strength left, so if it wasn’t for Piper I don’t think I could have made it to the surface. She hoisted me and Jason up and I took a huge gulp of fresh air.

“Oh gods, Jason!” Piper cried. I looked over and saw Jason, who was as lifeless as a rag doll. Piper clung to him, yelling his name, shaking him to wake up, even gave him a good slap. All while the water was now all drained away. “Jason please, wake up.”

“Piper,” I said. “I can help.” I crawled over and touched Jason’s forehead. Water, clean water, gushed from his mouth. At that moment his eyes popped open and a thunderclap threw me a few feet away from him. I shook my head, and when I looked up I saw my brother.

“Sorry,” he coughed, “Didn’t mean to—”

“Tsuna!!” I yelled. I kicked my self off the ground and ran to Tsuna. He wasn’t moving and his sword was a couple feet away. I placed my hand on his chest and sensed he had water in his lungs, so I forced it out of him, but he still wasn’t breathing. “No, no, no, please wake up.” I started doing chest compressions and blowing into his mouth. “You are not leaving me like this Tsuna.” I saw the Magatama and started screaming. “Amaterasu, I know you’re in there and that you can hear me! So do something! Save Tsuna! Please!”

The jewels didn’t glow in their warm red light like they would do for Tsuna when he uses them. Why isn’t Tsuna’s aunt not doing anything? He’s always saying how loved he is by his pantheon and that he’s their sole heir, so why?

I haven’t felt this powerless to save Tsuna since Japan, when I watched as Tsuna killed himself to save me and Nico. This isn’t fair, Tsuna doesn’t deserve to die, especially by drowning! He’s the son of a sea god! I kept performing CPR, refusing to give up.

“I told you Tsuna, I’ll drag your ass out of the Underworld or the Yomi or wherever it is you go and bring you back here if you die on me again.” I said to him. “Just wake up! Breath!”

“Percy, let me handle this.” Jason said, suddenly right next to me. Piper grabbed my hands and pulled me away as electricity started crackling around blonde Superman’s fingers. “Clear.”

He placed his hands on Tsuna’s chest and sent the electricity into my brother. Almost instantly Tsuna shot right up, choking on a huge gulp of air as he tried to scream at the same time. His hair was standing on end, eyes wide with shock. His shirt was smoking from where Jason jumped started him.

I pulled Tsuna in a hug. “It’s okay, breath.” Tsuna slowly took calmed down, gripping the back of my shirt tightly. “You’re going to be okay.”

“So that’s what it’s been like for you.” He said. “I thought you were just doubting yourself, but now I get it. I’m so sorry.”

I shook my head. “It’s fine.” I hugged him tighter. “I was afraid I lost you again.”

“I was afraid Death himself was going to Reap me there for a second.” He said, pulling away. “But I never saw him, and I don’t think my soul left my body.”

Jason gripped Tsuna’s shoulder from behind. “Hey.” He smiled. “Thought we lost you there for a second.”
“Yeah…did…you save me?”

Jason nodded. “I never thought it would work though, if I’m being honest.” He showed his fingers to Tsuna, making sparks crackle.

“Did…you defibrillate me?” Tsuna asked. “Cool.”

“How many times am I going to save you man?”

“I don’t know.” smiled Tsuna. “Let’s see what the score is by the time we reach Greece, shall we?”

“Thank the gods we’re all safe.” Piper said, visibly relaxing. “I honestly didn’t think it would work.”

“But it did Pipes.” Jason said, intertwining their fingers. “You’re a real hero. You saved us all.”

“Yes, she did.” A voice echoed through the chamber.

The niches glowed. The four of us tensed up, expecting the nymphs to attack us. But they didn’t. Actually, the didn’t even look like the dried-up mummies that they were earlier. They were young, beautiful too, wearing shimmering blue gowns. Their hair was glossy now and pined up with silver and gold brooches. And their eyes showed such much kindness in them now. Eight of the nymphs smiled at us before dissolving into mist and floating upwards.

Only one nymph remained, the one in the center niche. “Hagno?” asked Piper.

The nymph smiled. “Yes, my dear. I didn’t think such selflessness existed in mortals…especially in demigods. No offense.”

“How could we take offense?” I asked as I helped Tsuna off the ground. “You just tried to drown us and suck out our lives.”

“And offer me up to Gaea.” Tsuna mumbled.

Hagno winced. “I am truly sorry about that, for everything. I…was not myself. But you have reminded me of the sun and the rain and the streams in the meadows. Percy and Jason, thanks to you, I remembered the sea and the sky. I am cleansed. But mostly, thanks to Piper. She shared something even better than clear running water.” Hagno turned to her. “You have a good nature Piper. And I am a nature spirit, I know what I am talking about. Oh, and Tsuna was it? I am sorry for focusing on you in our…delirium. The Earth Mother’s promise was too good to pass up in the state we were in.”

“It’s…fine.” Tsuna said. “Like you said, you were not yourselves.”

Hagno smiled and nodded, appreciating Tsuna’s ability to forgive. She pointed to the other side of the room, where the stairs reappeared. Directly underneath, a circular opening shimmered into existence, like a sewer pipe, just big enough to crawl through.

“You may return to the surface,” Hagno offered, “Or, if you insist, you may follow the waterway to the Giants. But choose quickly, because both doors will fade soon after I am gone. The pipe connects to the old aqueduct line, which feeds both this nymphaeum and the hypogeum that the Giants call home.”

My head started throbbing. “Ugh, please, no more complicated words.”
“Oh, home is not a complicated word.” Hagno sincerely said. “I thought it was, but now you have unbound us from this place. My sisters have gone to seek new homes…a mountain stream, perhaps, or a lake in a meadow. I will follow them. I cannot wait to see the forests and grasslands again, and the clear running water.”

“Uh,” I started fidgeting nervously, “Things have changed up above in the last few thousand years.”

“Nonsense.” Hagno waved me off. “How bad could it be? Pan would not allow nature to become tainted. I can’t wait to see him, in fact.”

I felt my stomach drop. I don’t think I can break it to her, but Pan Faded years ago. I was there, in the Labyrinth when he did. Grover, Annabeth, Racheal Elizabeth Dare, Nico and I were there. It was the first time I saw a god, well, die. And watching it made me feel so guilty about being human, with what humanity has done to nature for thousands of years.

“Good luck Hagno.” Piper said. “And thank you.”

The old nymph smiled one more time and vaporized like her sisters. After she left, for a brief second, the nympheum glowed with a softer light than earlier. I even heard some distant music and happy laughter, like the echoes of the nymphs celebrating their new freedom. Just under the smell of damp stone was the scent of roses and exotic spices.

“What was that?” Jason asked nervously.

“The ghosts are dancing.” Piper said. “It’s like hundreds of years of parties and memories that have been held here were released with the nymphs.” She slipped her hand into Jason’s. “Come on. We’d better go meet the Giants.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and Kudos are appreciated.
Once Hagno disappeared Piper and Jason went over to the new entrance that she made, the one that went into the Giant’s lair. I was still drained and my chest hurt a bit so I kept sitting on the damp floor.

“Here.” Percy said, holding the hilt of the Kusanagi towards me. “Don’t want you to lose this again.”

“Thanks.” I said taking my sword back.

“You doing okay?”

I nodded. “Yeah, just need a second.”

“I wish we had some Ambrosia or Nectar.” said Percy. “We need to get moving soon, and I hate having you like this.”

“Trust me, I’ll be fine.” I held my hand out. “Help me up?”

Percy stood and pulled me to my feet. “Just take it easy for me. Save as much as your strength as you can.”

“Got it.” Percy smiled, before it dropped when he eyed my necklace. “What’s wrong?”

He touched the Magatama. “It’s this, and you’re aunt. She usually helps out when you’re in danger like that. But when you weren’t breathing, she didn’t heal you or anything. And it scared me.”

“I’m sorry.” I said, although I don’t know why. “I can’t explain why my family does the things they do. You know gods, they’re…fickle. And it’s not like they can awaken their consciousness whenever they want.”

“I know, but if it wasn’t for Jason shocking you, you wouldn’t be talking to me now.” He swiped a hand down his face. “I just don’t want to lose you again. When you died the first time, I wanted to…” Percy stopped and put on a smile. “Never mind, you’re alright now, that’s all that matters.”

“Are you sure?” I asked. “It sounds like you want to talk some m—”

“Let’s get going guys.” Jason said from the aqueduct entrance.


“Hope you aren’t afraid of getting dirty.” Piper said once Percy and I stood next to her. “Looks like we’re going to have to crawl through here.”

“Little bit of dirt won’t hurt anyone.” I said.
Percy took the lead down, then Piper, me, and Jason was last. It was a snug fit, but it was manageable. It allowed me to gather my thoughts. My brother was scared of me dying again, not that I can blame him. Until Storybrooke I was terrified he was killed in the time I was searching for him. And he did see me kill myself, so that had to leave an impression on him. But Percy with all his care and worry is able to put it all aside when the time needs it.

Thinking back to what just happened in the nymphaeum, I thought about how I need to apologize to Percy. Ever since I found him in Seattle he’s been scared of drowning. No matter how much I try assuring him that he’d be fine, after what we just went through I know how he’s been feeling.

Ever since I discovered my abilities, I never had trouble in water, but today that was proven false with the nymphs. Their power overwhelmed mine. Instead of feeling strengthened by water, it was sucking the strength from me. I couldn’t control the water.

What scared me most at the time was that the power of the Kusanagi wasn’t enough either. I get that Dad sealed its full powers in order to appease Lord Sky-Ass, but it’s usually enough for me to fight back against creatures like the nymphs. It even enhances my own powers.

But the nymphs overpowered it and me. To be honest, I never thought it be possible, unless I was going up against Grandpa Poseidon or other water gods of equal caliber. I felt so…powerless to save my friends and myself. It took everything I had and more just to hold back the water for as long as I did.

When the barrier fell, when that poisonous water went down my throat, I was terrified. I was drowning, unable to breathe like I have been able to do. My life flashed before my eyes, and I felt so many regrets piling up and weighing me down. To be honest, right now I’d rather be laying on some random Italian beach with my friends, and Nico too, laying in the sun, eating gelato, swimming in beautiful waters instead of going to fight some Giants.

And let’s not forget the fact that Gaea really has been warning her pawns about me, even if she doesn’t give them every detail she can about me. And it seems that she wants me alive now so she can have me all to herself. I really hate that, to be honest. Not only because of the obvious fact that Gaea wants me to be her eternal tortured plaything, but the fact I actually liked being the wildcard that our enemies didn’t know anything about.

Thirty feet of crawling later the aqueduct widened into a tunnel big enough for the four of us to stand. Somewhere to our left I heard the faint echoes of machines rumbling and creaking. Whatever it was making that sound needed a good oiling. I bet Leo would be going crazy right now, dragging some machinery lubricant out of his magical toolbelt to fix whatever the issue was. My instincts were saying to stay away from what was making those noises, so it had to be the right way.

Percy kept looking back at me every so often. His face screamed concern. I love him, I really do, but both of us need to focus. He needs to focus on beating the Giants so he can get back to Annabeth, while I need to focus on saving Nico. I motioned him to keep looking on ahead as we came to a turn in the tunnel. Percy held up his hand, signaling for us to stop as he peeked around the corner.

“What is it?” Piper whispered.

Percy shook his head. “I have no idea. You should check it out.”

All of us slowly went around the corner, weapons at the ready. The tunnel opened up into a
vast chamber with twenty-foot columns. It looked just like that parking garage that Gaea kept showing me, the one where the bronze jar Nico is trapped in is supposed to be. But this time it was crowded with a lot more stuff.

There were boxes that were labeled CELESTIAL BRONZE WEAPONS (WARNING: BE CAREFUL OR DIE), CARDBOARD CUTOUTS, and PROPS. The creaking and groaning came from the machinery that was being powered by Hellhounds in large hamster wheels. I felt bad for them, even if they won’t be friendly like Mrs. O’Leary. And as we continued we saw large water wheels that must have helped in powering this place. Conveyor belts moved large stacks of weapons and armor, like at the Amazon’s Amazon warehouse back in Seattle. Hanging from the ceiling were cages of live animals: a lion, several zebras, a pack of hyenas, even an eight headed hydra who looked like it lost its spark of life.

As we walked alongside a conveyor belt a life size wooden cutout of a gladiator popped up out of the floor. It was mechanically flipped onto the belt where it got hooked on a rope and dragged through a slot in the roof.

“What the heck?” Jason murmured.

It wasn’t until a few minutes later when I saw large series of paintings and backdrops that I knew what this place was. “This is a giant back stage area.”

“What?” asked Jason.

“This whole place,” I started, “It’s filled with props and sets and everything else Theatre people would want, more or less. Without the monsters, it’s a production company’s dream come true. There’s a specific name for this kind of place, but I can’t recall it.”

Jason chuckled. “I’d never peg you as a theatre geek Tsuna.”

“Are you kidding?” Percy laughed. “Tsuna is so into theatre, it’s in his blood. He’s been in the Seattle Shakespeare Festival, the same thing but in Oregon, he’s done children’s theatre, and before I was kidnapped by Hera he was auditioning for the play at our school. My stepdad Paul kept telling him to update his resume, but then all this crap happened.”

“Really?” Jason said surprised. “Dude, that’s cool. But isn’t it hard to do with Dyslexia?”

“A bit, but I’ve had years of training.” I said.

“You did say you’d want to pursue it after the Quest.” Piper said.

“Like I said, I’m leaning towards it. But right now, let’s win this war so there is a future for me to even attempt an acting career.”

We kept heading deeper in the chamber, making sure to stay as quiet as possible. As I looked up for any surprise attacks I saw a few of the carnivorous animals in cages eyeing us for a moment before losing interest. The poor creatures, not even remotely interested in fresh meat. They need to be set free, or at the very least rescued and checked out by specialists.

“Look.” Percy said.

About a hundred yards away was a raised dais. There were two empty, oversized Praetor chairs, large enough to fit a couple of Giants. And in between those two chairs was a bronze jar big enough to hold a person. The bronze jar that within it held—
“Nico.” I said. I broke out into a run, not caring about anything other than getting Nico out of that damn jar.

“Tsuna!” yelled Jason.

“Stop God dammit!” Percy cursed. They quickly caught me and grabbed me by my elbows, holding me back.

“Let go of me!” I struggled against their hold. “Nico’s right there! I need to get him out of there!”

“Calm down man!” Jason demanded, using what I can only guess is his Praetor voice.

“Tsuna think for a second.” Percy said. “This is way too easy. There’s no way the Giants or Gaea would let it be that easy for us to save Nico. I know you care about him, but do you really think Nico would want you to get hurt by just rushing into a trap?”

“Percy’s right.” Piper said. “The Giants could have laid traps. Gaea must know how much you care for Nico and I bet she told Ephialtes and Otis to prepare something for all of us. So please calm down.”

I started calming down. Oh great, she’s using Charmspeak again. But it was helping me chill out and take a breath. After a moment I slowly nodded to the boys and they let me go. I mumbled an apology to them as Jason rubbed my shoulder.

“Everyone ready yourselves.” Jason said. “We really don’t have a choice but to go up there. We’ve got to save Nico, and we have to be ready for anything.”

“Yeah.” Percy said, carefully leading the way around conveyor belts and moving platforms. We passed Hellhounds which paid us no mind, and even more animals gave us bored looks.

We all kept a careful watch out for traps, which is a lot harder than it sounds because everything looked like a trap just waiting to be sprung. We ended up jumping over a water trench and ducked under a row of caged wolves. And just as we were about halfway to the bronze jar the ceiling opened up over us.

Descending on the platform was a Giant, one hand raised and head held high. He was small for a Giant, at least compared to Polybotes and Alcyoneus, about twelve feet tall. His purple hair glinted in the light with the silver and gold coins braided in it. His outfit was loud and gawdy. I bet even Mr. D would find this thing’s Hawaiian shirt to be vulgar, it’s print made of dying heroes, horrible tortures that even Clive Barker would find unnerving, and other things that just screamed bad for demigods. Strapped to his back was a ten-foot spear. And he was wearing some ugly bright white jeans and leather sandals which had snake heads popping out the fronts.

“Gaea really wanted creatures that look like that?” I thought. “But I guess you’ll never know what’ll pop out when primordial entities procreate.”

“Ephialtes.” Piper said under her breath.

“At last!” bellowed the Giant with a large toothy smile at us. “So very happy! Honestly, I didn’t think you’d make it past the nymphs, but it’s so much better that you did. Much more entertaining. You’re just in time for the main event!”

Jason and I closed ranks on Percy’s sides and Piper stood just behind her boyfriend, ready for the fight but still protected enough by Jason’s form. I was really unnerved by the mad glint in Ephialtes eyes.
“We’re here.” Percy said. “Now let our friend go.”

“Of course!” Ephialtes said. “Though I fear he’s a bit past his expiration date.” I grinded my teeth at Ephialtes’s comment as the Giant looked around. “Otis, where are you?” Barely a few feet away a door in the floor opened and another Giant rose on a platform. “Otis, finally! You’re not dressed the same as me. You’re… What in Mother’s name are you wearing?!”

The other Giant, Otis, looked like the world’s largest, grumpiest ballet dancer. His baby blue leotard was skin tight, and from my perspective a lot tighter looking than what it was designed for. There was literally nothing left for the imagination and I gagged a little. A top his fire cracker braided green hair was a diamond tiara. He bowed and looked ticked off. I saw that he also carried a spear on his back.

“Gods and Titans!” roared Ephialtes. “It’s showtime! What are you thinking?”

“I didn’t want to wear the gladiator outfit,” Otis complained. “I still think a ballet would be perfect, you know, while Armageddon is going on.” He looked over at us, looking hopeful. “I have some extra costumes—”

“Absolutely not!” Ephialtes snapped, and I for one agreed. The purple one turned to face us, staring right at Percy and grinned maniacally. “Please excuse my brother. His stage presence is awful, and he has no sense of style.”

“Okaaay.” Percy said. “Now, about our friend…”

Ephialtes sneered. “Oh, him… We were going to let him finish dying in public, but he has no entertainment value. He’s spent days curled up sleeping. What sort of spectacle is that? Otis, tip over the jar.”

Otis grumbled as he meandered his way to the bronze jar. The moment he laid his monstrous hands on it my whole body tensed up. Percy noticed and carefully reached out to touch my wrist, his attempt to ground me. But it was pointless because the moment Otis tipped the jar and I saw Nico tumble out, I started to run to him, too concerned over my friend to care about the consequences. Percy was quick to react and pulled me back, his grip tight on me.

After shooting Percy a death glare I looked back at Nico. I can’t believe the condition he’s in. His body was far too skinny for my liking, and he was deathly pale, well, more so than usual, sicker. From here I couldn’t tell if he was breathing, and it made my heart stop.

“Please breathe Nico, please…” I begged under my breath.

“Now we have to hurry.” said Ephialtes. “We should go through your stage directions. The hypogeum is all set!”

“Oh, so that’s the word I was trying to remember.” I thought. I also wanted to slice both Giants in half when they took a step closer to Nico.

Jason raised his gold gladius. “We’re not going to be part of any show. And what’s a hypo— whatever-you-call-it?”

“Hypogeum!” Ephialtes said. “You’re a Roman demigod, aren’t you? You should know! Ah, but I suppose if we do our job right down here in the underworks, you really wouldn’t know the hypogeum exists.”

“I remember that word.” Piper said. “It’s the area under the coliseum. It housed all the set pieces
and machinery use to create special effects.”

Ephialtes clapped enthusiastically. “Exactly so! Are you a student of the theatre, my girl?”

“Oh…my dad’s an actor.”

“Wonderful!” The purple Giant turned towards his twin. “Did you hear that Otis?”

“Actor,” murmured Otis. “Everybody’s an actor. No one can dance.”

“Be nice.” Ephialtes scolded his brother. “At any rate, my girl, you’re absolutely right, but this hypogeum is much more than the stage works for a coliseum. You’ve heard that in the old days some Giants were imprisoned under the earth, and from time to time they would cause earthquakes when they tried to break free? Well, we’ve done much better! Otis and I have been imprisoned under Rome for eons, but we’ve kept busy building our very own hypogeum. Now we’re ready to create the greatest spectacle Rome has ever seen—and the last!”

Before I could make a comment, I saw Nico shudder. He’s alive, really alive. We weren’t too late. My heart felt warm and drummed in my chest as I let out a sigh of relief. I took a single step towards him before Percy stepped in front of me and blocked my path.

“So!” Percy said, ignoring the holes I was staring into the back of his head. “Stage directions, you said?”

“Yes!” Ephialtes said. “Now, I know the bounty stipulates that you and the girl Annabeth should be kept alive if possible, but honestly, the girl is already doomed, so I hope you don’t mind if we deviate from the plan.”

“Already doomed?” Percy gulped. “You don’t mean she’s—”

“Dead?” The Giant asked. “No, not yet.” Oh, thank the gods. She’s still alive, but whatever horrors she’s facing with Arachne, I can’t spare a thought to worry about her. She can handle herself. I need to focus on saving Nico. “But don’t worry Percy Jackson and company! We’ve got your other friends locked up, you see.”

Piper made a strangled sound. “Leo? Hazel and Frank?”

“Those are the ones,” Ephialtes confirmed. “So we can use them for the sacrifice.” Great, just what we needed, more hostages. I pray they can take care of themselves. “We can let the Athena girl die, which will please Her Ladyship. And we can use you three…sorry, the four of you for the show! Gaea will be disappointed, but really, this is a win-win. Your deaths will be much more entertaining. Except you, Tsuna Noble. Gaea has special plans for you.”

“I’ve heard.” I said, keeping Nico in my direct line of sight.

“If guys want something entertaining so badly,” growled Jason, “I’ll give you entertaining.”

He made a move forward, only to be stopped by Piper. “I’ve got an idea. Why don’t you let us go? That would be an incredible twist. Wonderful entertainment, and it would prove to the world how cool you are.” She’s laying the Charmspeak on thick. Nico began to stir, which was drawing the attention of Otis. “Plus!” Piper quickly added. “Plus, we could do some dance moves as we’re escaping. Perhaps a ballet number!”

Otis smiled and lumbered over to his brother and wagged his finger at him. “Ha! You see? That’s what I was telling you! It would be incredible!” Ephialtes rubbed his chin in thought, potentially
considering the idea.

In the end he shook his head, hair sparkling when it catches the light. “No…no, I’m afraid not. You see my girl, I am the anti-Dionysus.” Otis cleared his throat, earning him a sideways glance from his twin. “We are the anti-Dionysus. I have a reputation to uphold. Dionysus thinks he knows parties? He’s wrong! His revels are tame in comparison to what I…to what we can do. That old stunt we pulled, for instance, when we piled up mountains to reach Olympus—”

“I told you that it would never work.” Otis murmured. “I don’t take credit for that idea.”

“And the time my brother covered himself in meat and ran through an obstacle course of drakons —”

“You said Hephaestus TV would show it during prime time. No one even saw me.”

“Well,” Ephialtes ignored his brother, “This spectacle will be even better. The Romans always wanted bread and circuses—food and entertainment! As we destroy their city, I will offer them both. Behold, a sample!” On cue, something white with yellow and red dots fell at Percy’s feet.

“Wonder bread?”

“Magnificent, isn’t it?” Ephialtes looked crazy excited. “You can keep that loaf. A parting gift to you, if you will. I plan on distributing millions to the people of Rome as I obliterate them.”

“Wonder bread is good.” admitted Otis. “Though the Romans should dance for it.”

During the Giants bragging session Nico started to move. He was slowly regaining consciousness, but he needed to get moving now. I have no idea how long any of us can stall the twins. The sooner he is able to crawl away the better. If he stays there the twins can and will use him against us.

“Please Nico, hurry.” I prayed.

“Maybe you should bring our other friends here.” Percy suggested. “You know, spectacular deaths…the more the merrier, right?”

“Hmm.” Ephialtes hummed. “No, no it’s really too late to change the choreography. But never fear. The circuses will be marvelous! Ah…not the modern sort of circus, mind you. That would require clowns, and I hate clowns.”

“Everyone hates clowns.” Otis said. “Even other clowns hate clowns.”

“Exactly.” His brother agreed. “But we have much better entertainment planned! Three of you will die in terrible agony, up above, where all the gods and mortals can watch. The Shinto demigod, he will face humiliation in defeat as he watches his friends die before Gaea can have her fun with him. But that’s just the opening ceremony! In the old days, games went on for days or weeks! Our spectacle—the destruction of Rome—will go on for one full month until Gaea awakens.”

“Wait,” Jason said. “One month, and Gaea wakes up?”

“Yes, yes.” Ephialtes waved the question away. “It has something to with August First being the best date to destroy all humanity.”

Oh…that’s just great. Gaea is planning to wake up the day before my birthday. And then I’m supposed to be tortured for all of time by her because I pissed her off. It’s exactly what I’ve
always wanted as a birthday present—NOT!

“But that’s not important!” continued Ephialtes. “In her infinite wisdom, the Earth Mother has agreed that Rome can be destroyed first, slowly and spectacularly. It’s only fitting.”

“So…” Percy said. “You’re basically Gaea’s warm-up act.”

The Giants’ face darkened. “This is no warm up, demigod! We’ll release wild animals and monsters into the streets. Our special effects department will produce fires and earthquakes! Sinkholes and volcanoes will appear randomly out of nowhere! Ghosts will run rampant!”

“The ghost thing won’t work.” Otis said. “Our focus groups say it won’t pull ratings.”

“Bah!” Ephialtes stormed over to a big table covered in a tarp. When he pulled it way, it revealed a series of levers and knobs that resembles Leo’s control panel. “This button here, this will eject a dozen rabid wolves into the Forum. And this one will summon automaton gladiators to battle tourists at the Trevi Fountain. This one will cause the Tiber to flood its banks so we can reenact a naval battle right in the Piazza Navona! Percy Jackson, you should appreciate that, as a son of Poseidon.”

“Uh…I still think the letting us go idea is better.” Percy said.

“He’s right.” Piper added. “Otherwise, we get into this whole confrontation thing. We fight you, you fight us. You know, we’ve defeated a lot of Giants lately. I’d hate for things to get out of control.”

“No, we can’t let things get out of control.” The Giant agreed. “Everything has to be timed perfectly. But don’t worry. I’ve choreographed your deaths. You’ll love it.”

A small groan caught my attention. It was Nico. He must have regained consciousness and realized what was happening. Thank goodness, my prayers were heard. I just wish he’d groan less, because he’d draw the attention of the Giants. But between his groans and his simple movement the snakes that were Otis’s feet started looking in his direction.

My hand started to feel tingly. When I looked down I saw that my sword was crackling with electricity. It wasn’t too noticeable, at least, not even Jason, Mr. Bolt Boy himself, didn’t take notice. But this is weird. I’ve been able to harness lightning three times. The first was when I was fighting the Orochi and I summoned a whole storm worth of lightning into one bolt to kill a single head of the big snake, the time when I scared off the Minitour back in Storybrooke, and that time at Fort Sumter. In all this time, it took so much out of me to do so, but the Kusangi is emitting its own electricity. Maybe the sword or even Dad was trying to help me.

“And if we refuse to cooperate with your spectacle?” asked Jason.

“Well, you can’t kill us.” chuckled Ephialtes. “You have no gods with you, and that’s the only way you could hope to triumph. So really, it would be more sensible to die painfully. Sorry, but the show must go on.”

“Is that so.” I said aloud, stepping out from behind Percy.

“Oh yes, Tsunayoshi Noble.” Ephialtes said. “That is how it will be. And don’t think we don’t know about your little sword. Gaea has told us and all the remaining Giants about your weapon. You won’t be getting a chance to use it.”

“And what makes you say that?” I asked.
“Because Mother has also told us about your weakness for the son of Hades there.” He waved his hand in Nico’s direction, who was smart enough to stop moving for a second. “If you attack us, he will not survive.”

I tightened my grip on the Kusanagi, feeling its power continue to grow. “If Gaea has told you to use Nico against me, then she must have told you that I will stop at nothing to save him.”

“Oh, she did, but that’s the whole reason that you won’t attack us.” Ephialtes smiled cruelly. “You won’t risk his life.”

I glanced back at Nico and saw him slowly moving away again. However, Otis’s snake feet fully noticed Nico and started hissing at Nico. Nico froze for a second before he kept going, which caused the snakes to hiss more, which started to gain Otis’s attention. Nico turned his head towards the four of us, his eyes widening when his dark brown orbs locked with my green eyes. After a moment Nico simply nodded in my direction.

I realized that it was his okay for me to do whatever was necessary. “You guys say you’re the anti-Dionysus, but from the sound of things you’re more like Dionysus on steroids. Mr. D is a god of out of control parties, yeah, but you two? You go about ruin and destruction just for the mere pleasure of it.”

“Is that all you have to offer, Shinto?” Ephialtes wondered. “Some type of psyche analysis?”

“Far from it.”

With that I raised the Kusanagi and aimed it right at Ephialtes, just as Otis was starting to turn to look at Nico. The Kusanagi, in a flash of light, blasted a bolt of lightning that struck Ephialtes square in the chest. The Giant roared in pain and backed off from the control panel. Otis called after brother and went to check on him, allowing Nico to crawl farther away.

“Gods man!” Jason said. “A little warning next time.”

“No time, now look alive!”

“Argh!” Ephialtes groaned, his hair standing straight on end and sparking. Otis was busy trying to put out his brothers flaming shirt. “You little—what in Tartarus—” Otis pulled away, which revealed that Ephialtes’s shirt had a charred hole in it and his skin was badly burnt, but it was regenerating. “That hurt! And do you know how hard it is to find a shirt in my size?!”

“Does it look like I care?” I asked. All of a sudden, my vision went a little fuzzy, but it faded a second later. “Huh, I guess that lightning bolt took more out of me that I thought. Unexpected, but I’ll deal with it.” Looking back over to Nico, he was on all fours, but shaking a lot.

“I’m going to kill you!” Ephialtes roared. He started to charge for us, only to be stopped by his twin.

“Wait!” Otis said, holding Ephialtes back. “Remember that Mother wants him alive for herself!”

“I don’t care! I’m going to bite his head off! Mother can berate me all she wants, but he’s mine!”

“You’ll have to get past us for that!” Jason said.

Jason, Percy, and Piper stood in front of me, proving his words. It was then that they charged towards the Giants and I followed behind them. The Giants growled at us before grabbing their spears and vanishing in puffs of smoke.
“Oh, yeah, that’s fair.” I out loud to myself. “They can teleport with no trouble, but I can’t even make some fruit appear in my hand.”

“Focus Tsuna.” Jason said, his back to mine. “Leave the Giants to me and Percy. You need to get to Nico and keep him safe.”

“You sure you don’t want my help?” I asked. “I am the only one here that can kill the twins.”

“We can handle them until you know Nico’s safe.” said Jason. “I know he’s your top priority.”

I looked between Jason and Nico. “I owe you one.”

“You owe me more than that. Now go!”

I nodded and booked to where Nico was. I was halfway there when Ephialtes poofed in front of me, and he looked pissed. With a roar he swung his spear which I dodge rolled out of the way, feeling a bit like Sora from Kingdom Hearts. Ephialtes raised his fist and punched at me, but I jumped back and his fist slammed into the ground. With quick reaction time I sliced the back of his hand.

“Gah!” he yelled, Ichor dripping form his wound, which was healing incredibly slow. “You’ll pay for that!” With another scream he continued his attack. I kept dodging but he wasn’t allowing me a chance to land a hit. In fact, it was like he was trying to push me somewhere. When I jumped back as he stabbed his spear in the ground he smiled. “NOW OTIS!”

“What?!”

I looked over and saw Otis at the control panel. He pressed a button and it was like the whole hypogaeum came alive. The entire room vibrated and it started changing. I wasn’t able to what changed, exactly, because the floor beneath my feet opened up into a pit. I fell, and as I did I stabbed the Kusanagi into the wall. From here I could hear the humming and echoes of machinery down here.

Ephialtes laughed as he loomed above me. “You have some quick reflexes boy.”

“Shut up.”

The Giant laughed again. “There’s no need to be rude. Now, do you know what’s down there?” I looked down and only saw darkness. “Down there is a cave, a natural cave. And once you fall in there, you’ll be in Mother’s embrace.”

“Gross.” I said, earning his grimace. “And didn’t you just say that you wanted to bite my head off?”

“I was, but then I remembered that whatever Gaea has planned for you is much worse than the instantaneous death I was going to give you.”

“Don’t do me any favors.”

“TSUNA, HOLD ON!” I heard Percy scream.

“Oh, would you look at that.” Ephialtes said. “The son of Poseidon is here to help. Don’t know what good he’ll do.”

“Don’t underestimate my brother.” I said, struggling to keep a hold of my sword. My arms were
getting tired and my hands were sweating.

Ephialtes laughed. Next thing I heard was Percy yelling and the Giant grunting, the sound of metal being swung through the air. The Giant wasn’t letting Percy get a hit in, as far as I could tell from down in this hole.

And then Ephialtes screamed. Something was thrown in the hole and as it passed it looked like one of his snake feet. There was a poofing sound before Percy leaned over the edge.

“I’m here!” he said reaching down. I stretched to grip his hand, only to barely touch the tips of his fingers a few times. Percy leaned farther down so we could clasp hands. With a grunt Percy pulled me up. “You okay?”

“For now.” I said, seeing that the hypogeum was constantly shifting around. I looked over to the dais and saw Nico, dazed and weaponless Nico, being stalked by a pair of leopards. “Nico!!”

“I got him!” screamed Piper, who was playing a deadly game of hop scotch over fiery pits.

“I need to get over there.” I said.

“I’ll back you up.”

“You won’t get far boys!” Ephialtes yelled, appearing next to the control panel. “This is only the dress rehearsal! How about we go to the next scene, where the morals at the Spanish Steps are attacked by a blood thirsty Hydra?!” He pulled a lever and the cage holding the Hydra started to ascend.

“Damnit.” Percy didn’t even take the time to think about it before he threw Riptide at the chain holding the cage.

If it wasn’t for the situation I might praised him for the throw. The Celestial Bronze blade sliced through the chain like it was warm butter, sending the cage tumbling sideways. Once the cage hit the ground the door broke open, which caused the Hydra to spill out—right in front of us.

“Uh oh…” I said, staring as the Hydra started to regain its senses.

“Oh, you are a spoil sport, Jackson!” Ephialtes called. “Very well. Battle it here, if you must, but your death won’t be nearly as good without the cheering crowds.”

The Hydra started hissing so Percy stepped forward in order to confront the creature—only to remember he threw his sword. “I’ll handle this until Riptide comes back.” I stood in front of Percy, the Kusanagi ready as the Hydra rose up, shaking it’s eight heads.

“Just be careful, I don’t think your sword can stop its heads from growing—watch out!” Percy tackled me out of the way as one of the Hydra heads spat acid where we were standing. It must have regained its senses faster than the others.

I looked between my sword and the Hydra before looking at Percy. “Run.”

He nodded. “Run.”

We picked ourselves up and ran just as the Hydra’s eight heads spat out another wad of acid, turning where we stood into a steaming crater of melted stone. I’m going to be honest, I have no experience fighting Hydras. The Orochi was the closest thing, but he was more of a giant snake/dragon thing, but Hydras, nope, nada, dōitashimashite.
I could hear Ephialtes laughing so hard he couldn’t breath as he watched us being chased by the Hydra. During our chase sequence I saw Jason fighting Otis on his own, while the Giant looked like he’d rather be dancing to the Nutcracker or something. Piper had gotten to Nico, blasting pot roasts over the leopards from her Cornucopia. The leopards must have liked the smell because they chased after the food instead of attacking Piper and Nico.

“Thank the gods, he’s safe.” I said.

“Can you focus on us right now!” Percy yelled as a Hydra head snapped at his heel.

“Sorry!” Another Hydra head came at me from my side and barred its fangs. As it lunged I jumped back a little and (stupidly on my part, I can admit that) sliced its head off.

“What the hell?!” Percy screamed as the stump started regenerating two new heads.

“I was acting on instinct, I wasn’t thinking!”

“I can see that!”

“Oh, shut up!”

Then Percy grabbed me and pulled me to one of the large hamster wheels, ducking on the other side as the Hydra rammed into it. Luckily for us the wheel was a lot stronger than it looked. I noticed Percy was scanning the area for something.

“Are you looking for something?” I asked.

“A box, something I’ve seen in my dreams.” He explained.

“Maybe if you would tell me what you’re looking for, I could help.”

A Hydra head snapped its teeth behind Percy’s head. “I think you’ve helped enough.”

“I made one mistake.”

“A stupid one.”

“Don’t hold it over me.” The Hydra hissed loudly behind me. “I really wish Leo was here.”

“Can’t you use the Magatama to kill it?! Blast the heads with sun fire or something.”

“I haven’t figured that skill out yet!”

In my periphery I saw how Jason was doing with Otis. The Giant had lost his tiara, and he looked pissed about it. As good as Jason was in a fight, he was fighting sword against spear, and a spear fit for a Giant had a lot more reach. If he wasn’t being a prima ballerina and pirouetting with every attack he might have impaled Jason.

And then there was Ephialtes, pressing more of the control panels buttons, flicking switches, and pulling levers. He was laughing like a mad man. With each action something in the hypogeum was activated and moving. The conveyor belts moved like their dial has been set to ‘11’, random animal cages opened, sets and props were moved.

“Watch out!” Percy yelled, pulling me closer to him as the Hydra charged around the hamster wheel.
He pulled us up and grabbed a garbage bag from behind a column. The Hydra reared its heads back with a hacking noise. As the monster spat more acid Percy swung the garbage bag at its faces. The acid melted the bag and into the Wonder Bread inside, turning the bread into this nasty foam that splattered against the Hydra, covering it in a sticky, steaming layer of cheap, high calorie, poisonous goo.

“There!”

Percy booked it like a star Track athlete towards a device that, spelled in carnations, said the words: Happy Destruction, Rome! I sprung after him as the Hydra gave chase. The monster stumbled as the foam stuck in its many eyes. The closer I got I saw that this…contraption… was fitted with missile launchers, a bazooka, a giant Roman Candle, and so many dangerous military grade weapons.

“I know!” Ephialtes cried out with glee. “We can start with explosions along the Via Labicana! We can’t keep our audience waiting forever.”

“Distract the Hydra!” Percy ordered. “I have an idea!”

Giving him my trust, I stopped in my tracks and swung the Kusanagi and sliced the Hydra’s chest, just under its many necks. It hissed and backed off a few steps before it finally shook off the poisonous goop. It hissed and chomped its teeth.

“Percy better act fast, I don’t know how long I can keep this thing distracted.” I thought.

The Hydra lunged like a cobra, its mouths dripping the corrosive saliva. My first instinct was to slice its heads off, but I held myself back to keep from decreasing my odds of survival. I just kept the creatures focus on me as I dodged each of its attacks.

“I got it!” Percy yelled. “Lead it over here Tsuna!”

I took that as my cue and hoofed it to where Percy was. The Hydra roared and barreled itself after me. I saw Percy was waiting to pull a lever, and that the stack of weapons was pointed right at Ephialtes and his control panel. I get it now. He plans on destroying the panel and severely damaging Ephialtes while he’s at it.

“Fire it!” I yelled.

“But you’re in the way!”

“Just do it!”

Percy cursed and screamed at the top of his lungs “Duck and cover!!”

I hope the others heard it because once he did Percy pulled the lever. Just as there was a flash of light I dove to my right and felt the heat as the rockets and salvos blasted past. The Hydra didn’t get a scream out as it was instantly vaporized. Unfortunately, it seemed Percy’s new toy had some massive recoil because it started going off at random and shooting all over the room.

A chunk of ceiling collapsed and crushed a waterwheel. More cages snapped off their chains and smashed into the ground. Some of the animals didn’t make it sadly, but those that did broke out of their imprisonment. A hellhound burst out of its fallen cage and charged at me only to be taken down and turned into shadows. I ran to Percy to help him up.

An explosion detonated over Ephialtes head, but it only looked like it stunned him when it
knocked him on his ass. The explosions all across the hypogeum caused sandbags to fall over Nico and Piper. She tried to pull him to safety but a bag landed on her shoulder and she screamed. It must have broke.

“Piper!” Jason cried. He started running after her, only for Otis to heft his spear over his shoulder and took aim at Jason’s back.

“Look out!” Percy yelled.

If it wasn’t for natural demigod reflexes, honed by years of training, Jason might have been skewered. Jason had rolled out of the way of Otis’s spear, and then used his powers over the wind by making the spear fly through Ephialtes’s side just as he was getting to his feet.

“Argh! Otis!” Ephialtes stumbled away and leaned on the control panel for support as he began to fall apart into monster dust. “Would you stop killing me!”

“It wasn’t my fault this time!” his brother argued.

I noticed the ‘modern’ art sculpture of a cannon was still smoking and making noises. “Uh, Percy, we need to move.”

He looked over and gulped. “Maybe you’re right.”

I pulled him to his feet and we ran just as the Roman candle shot out a sphere of pink flaming death. It went rocketing to the ceiling just above Otis and exploded, bathing him in an admittedly beautiful shower of light. He stood there amazed as he watched the sparks dance around him…and then a ten-foot chunk of ceiling crushed him like a pancake.

“Come on.” I said once the dust settled. “Let’s regroup with the others.”

“Right.”

We ran over to the dais, where Jason was checking his girlfriend over. Piper yelped when Jason touched her shoulder. She said she was fine, but she was clearly in pain, holding on to her arm herself. And next to her was Nico, looking around in bewilderment, like his head has finally cleared from the haze his Death Trance left behind.

Percy elbowed my side. “Go on man, I know you want to.” I nodded to him and ran to Nico, dropping the Kusanagi to our side.

I dove into him and hugged him tight, my face in his hair. “I found you.” Tears started dripping from the corners of my eyes. “I finally found you.”

“Tsu—” Nico swallowed the lump in his throat. “Tsuna…” I pulled back and put my hands on his face.

“Yeah, Neeks, it’s me.” I said. “I was scared Nico. Terrified. Gaea kept tormenting me with images of you stuck in that damned jar, dreams of you dying in gruesome ways. But I knew how strong you are, that you’d hold out until I... I mean, we... came and save you.”

Nico started to struggle against my hold before he quickly relented, accepting his fate. “You shouldn’t have come but...thanks.”

“I’ll do anything to make sure you’re safe.” I said. “Nothing was going to stop me once I found out you were in danger.”
“You’re an idiot.”

“Maybe.”

“GRRRRRAAAAAAGHHHH!” A roar echoed in the chamber.

Ephialtes was reforming, his head and shoulders rising from the dust. Otis grunted and pushed the slab of stone off of him. His head was slightly caved in, kind of like those old Looney Toons cartoons when they would get hit on the head with a rolling pin or a pan. All the firecrackers in his hair had popped and singed it.

“Percy!” Jason shouted. “Get to the controls!”

Percy shook his head and reached into his pocket, drawing out the returned Riptide and lunged for the control panel. He sliced the switchboard, sending out a shower of bronze sparks.

“No!” Ephialtes wailed. “You ruined the spectacle!”

The Giant swung his spear like a club and hit Percy square in the chest. Percy struggled to make a sound, probable because the wind was knocked out of him. After being sent flying he tried to pick himself, only to fall to his knees and clutching his stomach.

“Percy!” I yelled.

I glared at Ephialtes and grabbed the Kusanagi. Aiming it at the Giant I blasted out a lightning bolt that struck. Ephialtes backed off a few feet, but unlike last time he didn’t seem to be in much pain. I also felt drained, but I tried to push that feeling away. Jason had gone ahead and ran to Percy’s side

“Tsuna.” Nico gripped my shoulder wanting my attention. He looked me right in the eyes. “Go. I’ll be fine.”

I nodded. “Stick with Piper, I’ll be back for you.”

With that I ran to my brother and friend and stood shoulder to shoulder with them. The Giants were reforming faster now. Maybe Gaea was helping them, or they were focusing on healing so they can get up and kill us. I was feeling exhausted. After dealing with the nymphs and then fighting the Giants, I really don’t know how much longer I can keep fighting. Percy and Jason didn’t look any better.

“Tired boys?” Ephialtes said, almost apologetically as he fully formed and stood up. “As I said, you cannot kill us. And the Shinto trinkets don’t seem to be helping you. So I guess we’re at an impasse. Oh, wait…no we’re not! Because we can kill you!”

Otis grumbled and picked up his spear. “That is the first sensible thing you’ve said in centuries brother.”

The Giants lumbered towards us, taking their sweet time. They must have thought that we’d die here without putting up a fight. At this point, they might be right.

“We need to work together.” I whispered. “Combine our powers, just like Fort Sumter. At the very least, we can buy Nico and Piper time to escape and get to Leo and the others.”

“I don’t have any better ideas.” Percy said, eyeing the Giants. “Do you Jason?”

“Can’t say that I do.” He admitted. “Let’s do it.”
“Wait for my mark.” I said. “It’s best if we surprise them.”

They nodded in agreement. We watched as the Giants got closer and closer. Ephialtes was smiling like a Bond villain who is sure he’s accomplished his master plan and beat 007. Otis was grumbling under his breath. Once they got close enough they raised their spears.

“Now!” I yelled.

With that the three of us crossed our swords. Just like Fort Sumter, I felt stronger. It was like a storm was brewing inside me. Electricity crackled around us before diverting into our swords and shooting out streams of lighting that struck the spears and the Giants full force. It was like King Ghidorah was blasting the Giants himself.

We weren’t able to hold it for long, we were getting way too tired. We dropped our swords and leaned against each other. The Giants were on their hands and knees, spasming out and their hair on end. Electricity was still crackling around them.

“How…was that?” Percy asked.

Otis groaned while Ephialtes stood up. “Not—not bad demigod.” He was twitching like crazy. “Not bad at all. But even the three of you are no Zeus. Now that is real thunder power.”

“It still hurt though.” Otis said, using his spear to help him stand up.

“But it looks like you three are on your last legs now.” Ephialtes said. “No more tricks. I don’t even think you have the energy to Improv anything. You should just give in and accept your fate. The journey of the Chosen Seven will end here in Rome. The Son of Hades and the Shinto demiGod will be the eternal playthings of Gaea.”

Jason growled, sounding a bit like a wolf. “We won’t give up. We’ll cut you into pieces like Jupiter did to Saturn.”

“That’s right.” Percy said. “You’re both dead. I don’t care if we have one of the Olympians on our side our not. Who needs them? We have Tsuna’s gods with us all the time!”

“Oh, well that’s a shame.” said a new voice. “I guess I should just go home for nothing.” A spotlight shined from the ceiling, where a platform descended, supported by chains. On the platform, leaning on what looked like a pinecone-topped staff, was a man in a purple button up shirt, khaki shorts, and sandals with white socks. On his head was a broad brimmed hat, and underneath it his eyes flickered with purple fire. “I’d hate to think I made a special trip for nothing.”

“Is that…really Mr. D?” I asked Percy. This god looked a bit like Mr. D, but leaner and a bit meaner, and his potbelly was less pronounced.

“Actually, foreigner, my name is Bacchus.” said the wine god, and I easily identified the annoyance in his voice when he was talking to me.

“Oh, I hate being called that.”

“Just deal with it for now man.” Percy said.

Dion-I mean, Bacchus finished his grand entrance and sure took his sweet time walking towards us. He was ‘In the Moment’. It was then that I noticed that all the machinery in the chamber were silenced, and all the wild animals stopped growling. The two leopards that were stalking Nico and Piper earlier sprinted over to Bacchus and butted their heads affectionately
against the gods’ legs. Bacchus scratched them behind the ears with a genuine smile on his face. I forgot that leopards were a symbol of Mr. D, and apparently his Roman counterpart.

“Really Ephialtes,” chided Bacchus, “Killing demigods is one thing, and I can sympathize with that. But using leopards for your spectacle? Now that’s over the line.”

“Yeah, cause stopping the Giants from destroying Rome isn’t over the line.” Percy sarcastically said.

The Giants made a squeaking sound. “This—this is impossible. D-D—”

“I know you have a better memory than that, my old friend.” The wine god said. “I did just tell the Shinto that I’m Bacchus. And of course it’s possible. Someone told me there was a party going on.”

“You—you gods are doomed!” quivered Ephialtes. “Be gone! In the name of Gaea!”

Unimpressed, Bacchus turned and strolled through the ruined props and sets. “Well this is tacky.” He waved off a wooden gladiator. He kept pointing at various props. “Cheap. Boring. And this…” He nudged the still smoking missile mash-up that Percy used earlier with his foot. “Tacky, cheap and boring. Honestly Ephialtes, you have no sense of style.”

“STYLE?!” flushed the Giant. “I have mountains of style. I define style. I—I—”

“My brother oozes style,” suggested Otis.

“Thank you!” Ephialtes cried. When Bacchus stepped forward the Giants took a step back.

“Have you two gotten shorter?” he asked, cocking his head to the side.

“Oh that’s low.” Ephialtes growled.

I leaned over to Jason. “I feel like we should be selling tickets to this.”

“Who would pay to watch this?”

“You don’t watch a lot of television, do you?”

“Not really.”

“And I am plenty tall enough to destroy you, Bacchus!” Ephialtes continued. “You gods, always hiding behind your mortal heroes, trusting the fate of Olympus to the likes of *these*.” He sneered at us ‘mere mortals.’

“Lord Bacchus,” Jason hefted his listed his sword. “Are we going to kill these Giants or what?”

“Well, I certainly hope so.” Bacchus said, leaning casually on his staff. “Please, do carry on.”

“I’m sorry, I’m a bit far from you, what did you just say Bacchus?” I asked.

He waved his hand in a ‘shooing’ motion. “Carry on.”

“Wait, didn’t you come here to help us?” asked Percy. “We sacrificed a whole ships worth of treasure in your name.”

The god shrugged. “Oh, I appreciate that little sacrifice at sea.”
“Little?”

“A whole ship of Diet Coke, very nice.” He continued. “Although I would’ve preferred Diet Pepsi.”

“A whole ship of Diet Coke and six million in gold and jewels.” muttered Percy.

“Yes,” Bacchus said, “Although with demigod parties of five or more the gratuity is included, so that wasn’t necessary.”

“What!”

“Never mind,” Bacchus said. “At any rate, you got my attention. I’m here. Now I need to see if you’re worthy of my help. Go ahead. Battle. If I’m impressed, I’ll jump in for the grand finale.”

“If you’re impressed?!” I asked, not believing the gall he had.

“We speared one,” Percy said, “Dropped a roof on the other, even shot them with enough lighting to get Zeus’s attention! What do you consider impressive?”

Bacchus tapped his chin with his pinecone. “Ah, good question…” After a moment of thought he smiled and had a mad glint in his flaming eyes. “Perhaps you need inspiration! The stage hasn’t been properly set. You call this a spectacle, Ephialtes, Otis? Let me show you how it’s done.” Bacchus then tapped the base of his staff against the floor before turning into purple mist.

“Piper!” Jason cried out.

I turned and saw Piper dissolve into the same purple mist. Nico tried to grab her, but his fingers slipped through her. And then he started breaking apart.

“No, Nico!” I reached out for him, but I was too far. Not that me being closer would have made a difference, since he vanished in mere seconds.

“Bacchus!” screamed Jason. “Where did you send them?!”

Instead of the god himself answering, the hypogeum started shaking and the floor began to rise. Lights started filtering in from above, where the ceiling opened up into a series of folding panels. The air was shimmering like a mirage, and there was a roar of a crowd above us. After our ascension, we were in the Coliseum.

Through a combination of Bacchus’s godly power and the Giant’s machines the ancient coliseum was being restored to its former glory. Ruined support beams were repaired by planks so the arena had a floor again. The old, weathered stone of the bleachers transitioned to their original pristine white, looking like ivory. When everything was given a slight red tint, I noticed that a canopy extended overhead, probably to provide shade for spectators. The cheers were coming from Lares, the ghosts of Rome, who appeared like a ripple all round the stands. Maybe Bacchus summoned them for the Coliseum’s encore performance.

Along the sides vents opened up in the flor and sprayed sand across the arena. The huge props that Ephialtes and Otis set up sprang up like bombs. Garage-sized mountains of plaster, stone columns, and, oddly enough, life-size plastic barnyard animals. I felt water nearby and saw a small spring sprout out and form what I would (generously) call a lake. And then the sand caved in on itself and formed trenches. Once everything settled, it was Jason, Percy, and I against the twin Giants.
“Now this will be a proper show!” boomed the voice of Bacchus.

He stood in the emperor’s box, which was draped with purple silk. It was flanked with SPQR banners and golden eagles. In a burst of his trademark purple mist appeared the wine god, wearing purple robes over his gawdy Hawaiian attire, with a wreath of laurels on his head.

To the gods left was Nico and Piper. The daughter of Aphrodite was having her arm tended to by a nymph. At his right was a poor satyr, or faun I guess (when in Rome, am I right) offering the god a plate of Doritos and grapes. The crowds cheered louder at Bacchus’s appearance, but he silenced them with a raise of his Diet Pepsi can.

“You’re just going to sit there?” glared Percy.

“The demigod is right!” bellowed Ephialtes. “Fight us yourself, coward! Um, without the demigods.”

Bacchus smiled lazily and chuckled. “Juno says she’s assembled a worthy crew of demigods. Show me. Entertain me, Heroes of Olympus. Give me a reason to do more. Being a god has its privileges. But you should know, that with the Shinto demigod here, and his little toys, you’re going to have to do a lot to impress me. But if you do, I’ll step in for the finale.”

“So you can hog all the lime light?” I muttered. I moved my gaze back to Nico. “Don’t worry Neeks, I’ll be with you shortly.”

“Come now Bacchus!” Ephialtes said. “That boy holds three gods with him! Gaea has told us this herself! How would this impress you enough to get off your throne when we kill these heroes?!”

Bacchus took a handful of chips and grapes and shoved them into his mouth as he took a moment to think. “Fight harder.” He suggested. “And it’s not like the boys’ weapons are at full strength. Maybe it’s a god thing, but I sense that those things are sealed, even though they hold the power of the three strongest gods in his pantheon, he can’t access their full might. So, have fun and put on a good show. Break legs everyone!”

“Very well then.” Ephialtes said. “I’m going to enjoy myself though.”

“Remember that Mother wants the Shinto for herself.” reminded Otis. “Whatever tortures she has planned for him will be much more satisfying than what we can do.”

“I know!” Ephialtes spun his spear around. “But that doesn’t mean we can’t wound him. He’s the biggest threat right now, with that damn sword.”

Tightening my grip on the Kusanagi I looked over to Percy and Jason. “This isn’t going to be easy.”

“I won’t let them hurt you.” Percy said.

“Me too.” Jason said.

“You should focus on yourselves.” I said. “I can hold my own until you get that lazy god off his ass and helps.”

“Uh, insulting him won’t help us.” Jason said.

“Maybe, but I really don’t care.” I said. “The gods play us as fools, use us as expendable tools and weapons that they can throw away the moment they’re done with us. Maybe a few gods
legitimately care about us in general, or maybe even love us if we’re their children, but really, they’re not human. We’re not like them. But I can tell that they don’t want Gaea and her Giants to win, because that would mean their deaths. The gods are arrogant, but you’d think they’d want to survive.”

“Oh stop talking!!” bellowed Ephialtes. He and his brother picked up a fake mountain and hefted it at the three of us.

We bolted. In the chaos of dodging I was separated from Percy and Jason. Once the mountain landed and shattered and rained down plaster shrapnel. It wasn’t deadly, but it stung like hell.

“Tsuna look out!” Percy screamed, just as Ephialtes and Otis rushed me.

“Come here you little pest!” Ephialtes ordered, slamming the point of his spear at me.

I jumped out of the way, only for Otis’s spear to come straight for me. I was able to block it with the Kusanagi, sending sparks flying. It did leave a painful gash on my upper arm though, but its better than being skewered.

“Look brother,” Otis said, waving his spear in front of his twins’ face. “I got the first blood.” He licked my blood off of his spear point.

“Otis I was supposed to get his blood first!” argued Ephialtes.

“Yes, keep arguing amongst yourselves.” I thought, gripping my arm tightly. For some reason the Magatama aren’t healing me.

I started running only for a spear to be lodged right in front of me. “Uh-uh, Shinto. You’re not going anywhere.”

Unable to see Percy or Jason anywhere, I decided to stare down the Giant and be a smartass. “What are you going to do to me?” I smirked. “You said so yourself that Gaea wants me alive for herself. You won’t kill me.”

“True,” Ephialtes said, his sneer turning incredible cruel looking. “But she didn’t say you had to be one piece when you’re brought before her. I’m sure she’ll be happy to play with you if you were, say, armless?” My eyes widened and my heart stopped for a second. “We don’t want you using that little toothpick of yours, now do we?”

I swallowed the lump in my throat. I wanted, needed to know where Percy and Jason were. The crowd was getting on my nerves with their continuous chanting of ‘Fight! Fight!’ These undead bastards really wanted to see blood. I guess haunting the streets of Rome wasn’t enough entertainment.

The Giants started to sprint towards me, I had to act fast. I can’t rely on my friends to save me, wherever they are. Hopefully their planning something, but for the meantime I’m on my own. My blood was dripping into my fingers, making my grip on the Kusanagi’s handle slippery.

As Ephialtes reached his large hand towards me, I swung the Kusanagi, slicing his palm. As he reared back in pain his brother snarled and hefted his spear to throw. I felt a pull in my stomach and swung my sword again, this time using my powers to make a localized sandstorm that swirled around the twins, just like I did with Hercules back at Gibraltar.

As they screamed from the sand tearing at their flesh I made a run for it. The sandstorm
wouldn’t distract them for long so I started yelling for Percy and Jason. Even if they were screaming back, I don’t think I could hear them between the crowds’ cheers and the pounding in my head.

“GRAAAAGH!” bellowed out the Giants.

Looking over my shoulder I saw the Giants blindly run out of the sandstorm. Their skin was raw and bleeding Ichor. Their faces were red and both of them were trying to rub the sand out their eyes.

“Your tricks won’t work demigod!” Ephialtes cried. He ripped Otis’s spear out of his hand. “Gimme that! I’ll try not to aim for anything vital Shinto, but Mother would still appreciate damaged goods. It’s not like she won’t be able heal you.”

Because I was paying more attention to the Giants than what was ahead of me, I didn’t notice the rock that I happened to trip over. I fell and slid a few feet, the Kusanagi sliding a bit further away. I felt my arms and legs get scrapped up pretty back between the coarse sand and rocks.

“Do me a favor Shinto and bow out for the rest of the performance!” Ephialtes said as I was reaching for the Kusanagi.

Just as I grabbed my sword the Giant launched the spear at me. It was coming at me too fast, I couldn’t block it. I couldn’t jump out of the way. I can’t believe it, this is how I’m going to die?

With a sudden whoosh I was tackled out of the way of the spear and felt the wind blowing in my hair, as well as the warm body that held me close. Glancing up I saw golden blonde hair.

“Jace?”

“I got ya Tsuna, don’t worry.” Jason said, looking a bit like Superman if he were blonde. “Jeez, you’re cut up bad.”

“Get me to the lake and I’ll heal.” I said. “Where’s Percy?”

“At the lake, trying to reenergize.” He said.

“Good, good.” Once we landed I saw Percy ankle deep in the water. When he saw me, he ran over and hugged me tight.

“Are you okay?” he asked. “Gods, you’re bleeding pretty bad. Why aren’t the Magatama healing you?”

“I have no idea.” I said as he helped me to the water. As soon as I stepped foot in it the water traveled up my body and started healing the scrapes and the gash in my arm, with some of my strength returning. “Do you guys have a plan?”

“We do, but you’re not going to like it.” Jason said.

“Why?”

“We need you to distract the Giants.”

“You have got to be kidding me.”
Percy shook his head. “I wish we were. But we need to divide the Giant’s attention. If you can keep their attention, even if it’s just Ephialtes, then me and Jason can take out Otis.”

“He’s the weaker one we believe.” Jason said. “Imperial Gold and Celestial Bronze together should keep him from reforming as fast, and then we can go after Ephialtes so you can finish off Otis.”

“And then do the same thing to the obviously smarter twin?” I asked with a huff. “It’s not like I have a better idea. But they’re going to know something is up. And they’re not going to just stand there while the other is being attacked.”

“We actually thought about that.” Jason said.

“Jason will use the wind—”

“And Percy will use the water pipes around here and the lake to divide their remains so they won’t reconstitute.”

I looked between the two of them, seeing how proud they were of their plan. It’s good that they are working together and not fighting over who’s the leader. And is that spark in their eyes, dare I say that’s friendship.

“Not bad.” I said. “But I don’t know how long I can distract them. Between the nymphs and what we’ve already been through with these guys, I’m running low.”

“Us too.” Percy said.

“Which is why we have to kill them quickly.” added Jason.

“And if you’re able to get any hits in, that’d help too.” Percy said.

“WHERE ARE YOU SHINTO?!” Ephialtes screamed, shaking the stadium with his voice. Now that’s pretty good projection. Good for him. “GET OUT HERE NOW!!”

“You ready?” Percy asked.

“Do I have a choice?” I said with a roll of my eyes. “At least my arm’s healed. Get into position then. Let’s hope no one dies.”

“Great positivity man.” Jason said.

“Yeah, yeah.”

“On three?” Percy said.

“Why wait?” I asked, running out into the open.

“SHINTOOOOO!!”

“Over here you bastard!” I waved him down.

He turned and snarled at me and tightened his grip in his spear. Otis was glaring at me from behind his brother. Together they charged at me. I ran as fast as I could to get away from them. All I needed to do was distract them, which how they insist I’m the biggest threat here will be easy.

As I ran in circles around the arena I saw Jason hiding behind a plastic bull. Percy was
crouched low, hand on the ground and faced scrunch in concentration. Our chase scene must have tired out the Giants, or at least annoyed the living hell out of Ephialtes, because they stopped following me.

“I’m tired of this!” Ephialtes said.

“Yeah, we did enough warm-up exercises before the demigods arrived.” Otis complained. “I need to save my energy for the show.”


“But Mother—”

“He’ll live, but he won’t be walking anytime soon.” Ephialtes said.

He ran over and started lifting another plaster mountain. He demanded Otis to help and together they raised it over their heads. Just as the muscles in their arms tensed, ready to throw the giant prop I heard a loud groaning noise from beneath before a there was an explosion at the feet of the Giants. Water sprayed everywhere, flooding at their feet.

That had to be Jason’s cue because he flew into the air and sent a blast of wind right into Ephialtes’s chest. When he fell Otis lost his grip on the mountain, making it fall on his brother. Only Ephialtes snake feet were visible, making him look like the Wicked Witch of the East.


“AHHHHHH!” Otis grabbed his spear and threw, but his anger blinded him making him unable to aim straight. Jason deflected it over my brother’s head and into the lake. Percy and I locked gazes and he nodded, making sure I was ready to do the next part.

Jason landed next to Percy and together they kept making cracks about ballet. I really don’t know how much they know about the subject, but it looked like it was a struggle to come up with stuff. It didn’t seem to matter since it still pissed off Otis. He barreled towards them empty-handed.

As Ephialtes groaned and started pushing the mountain off of him, I decided to use a lightning bolt on him, probably the last one I have left in me until I get some rest. I raised the Kusanagi to the sky, feeling electricity surge in the blade. I then stabbed the sword into the edge of the flooded area the Giant was laying in and released the lightning. As it surged forth Ephialtes screamed (muffled as it was with all that plaster on him) before he stopped.

“Stupid demigods!” Otis laughed. “How dumb do you think I am?!”

It seems we weren’t giving Otis enough credit. He didn’t fall for being blindly led into a small lake to fight a son of Poseidon. He backed up away from them and reached for a couple of plastic animals that he was throwing at my friends. Jason was doing some sick aerial dodges while Percy was using the water to skate around out of the way of the projectiles.

With Ephialtes shocked into submission he should be out long enough for me to help my friends. I ran right behind Otis, signaling Jason as I did. He flew behind Otis, who didn’t even have time to turn around before I sliced his Achilles heels. As he leaned forward Jason blasted him with a strong blast of wind, knocking him into the water.

“Do it!” I yelled.

Jason dove down like a kamikaze pilot and Percy launched himself into the air. With their
swords in hand they brought them down at the same time and sliced Otis’s head off. The Giant exploded into powder on the lake’s surface like a huge packet of Kool-Aid mix. And just as he started to reform, Percy churned the lake into a whirlpool. Otis’s head formed enough to break the water, only to be blasted apart again by Jason calling down the lightning again.

“Finish him off!” Percy yelled, stopping the whirlpool so Otis could start to pull himself back together. Just as Otis reformed his head and shoulders I ran into the water and aimed for a killing blow, ready to put an end to this clown.

“NNNOOO!!” was all I heard before something hard was thrown in my back and sending me flying across the lake. All the air was knocked out of me and the only thing I could feel was the immense pain between my shoulder blades.

When I finally was able to breathe I got lungs full of water, making me so grateful I’m the child of a sea god. Floating next to me was a plastic pig, so that must have been what hit me. When I surfaced I looked around, seeing Otis continuing to reform. He was just legless right now, trying to drag himself to the shore, but I don’t know how long that’ll last.

Meanwhile Percy and Jason were fighting Ephialtes. That monster had to have thrown the pig, no doubt about it. The Giant was throwing whatever he could reach for at Jason, rocks and plastic animals, and the son of Jupiter was moving around like a fly (Ephialtes even demanded that he stop ‘buzzing around’ so he could get hit.)

Percy was trying to get in close, but Ephialtes was surprisingly light on his feet, not letting Percy come near him. He would swipe at my brother with his spear to keep him away. The Giant was pissed that we got as far as we did, that much is clear.

“Get them Ephialtes!” Otis cheered on.

“Kill! Kill!” the crowd yelled.

“Gods I wish they’d shut up.” I said.

It was at this moment things took a turn for the worse. Percy saw an opening, or thought he did, because he ran straight to Ephialtes. After faking out Jason Ephialtes swiped at Percy and gripped him tight his meaty hand. Percy barely let out a gasp before Ephialtes slammed him down roughly in the ground, hard enough that Percy had to be in serious danger.

“No!” “Percy!” Jason and I yelled.

I made the water propel me to the shore, making sure to slice Otis across his side for good measure on my way. Just as I started running to Percy and the Giant that held him in his hand Jason was trying to divebomb him to save Percy, who looked like a ragdoll.

“There you are Shinto!” Ephialtes said. He waved Percy around, his head lolling from side to side. “Look what I got!” I could just make out some blood coming from Percy’s mouth.

“Let. Him. Go.”

“I don’t think so.” Ephialtes sneered. “As long as I have him you won’t do anything.”

“Using a hostage won’t buy time for Otis to reconstitute.” I said.

The Giant ‘tsked’. “Like I need him right now. Not while I have the son of Poseidon in my grasp. What Polybotes would have given to have him in the same position.”
“You do realize what will happen to you if he dies, right?” I asked. “Not even your mother will be able to bring you back.”

Ephialtes laughed. “You don’t have that kind of power. You kill me here and I’ll just come back through the Doors.”

“You think I don’t have connections?”

“There’s no being with the power you’re bragging about.”

“I know someone who’d beg to differ, if he cared about such things.”

As much as I wanted to use the power of Death’s Ring, I’d rather not. I have no idea what it is capable of doing, and this isn’t the time or place to experiment. And it seems Gaea hasn’t told anyone about Death or the fact I have his ring. I wonder why she keeps withholding information from her pawns.

I tried to focus what I could into another lightning bolt, which might make me pass out at this point. “Don’t even think about it Shinto. Who knows what a surge of electricity might do. I might twitch and squeeze a little too hard.”

Jason was nowhere to be seen, so hopefully he was planning something. “Then what do you want me to do?”

“Good, you’re finally realizing you’ll never win.” He gloated. “Throw your sword over here, nice and easy.”

“My sword?”

“Yes, that’s the biggest threat here.” He said. “I don’t want running about if, by some cosmic miracle, you escape mother’s clutches with that thing.”

Over his shoulder I saw Jason sneaking close, his gladius ready to strike. I had to keep up the act and follow Ephialtes orders. I threw the Kusanagi blade first right in front of the Giant, making it stand straight up.

“That made me nearly jump boy, and we all wouldn’t want me to be jumpy now.”

“Let my brother down gently, I’ve done what you want.” I said. “Besides, imagine the joy Gaea would have if you brought me, the ‘Shinto Interloper’, and one of her chosen sacrifices for her little blood ritual. She might have you write, stage, and direct a show in honor of her triumph and rise to power.”

That got his attention. “You think so?”

“Imagine it, the greatest triumphs of the Giants, brought out not by any of your brothers, but by you. And you get to tell future generations of…your kind the story of your glorious victory.”

Ephialtes rubbed his chin. “Huh…you’ve got a point there…Mother does want the two of you and one of the girls. And to have the honor to tell the story for the rest of eternity.” Jason floated right behind him now.

“But none of that will happen as long as Percy dies.” I said. “Just, let him down, gently, and I’ll go with you. Everything will fall into place. Percy and I will be in Gaea’s clutches, and you can choose any of the girls once they get to Greece, if uh, they survive Rome that is.”
Jason raised his sword arm. “All true.” Ephialtes said. “And being in Mother’s favor, becoming her favorite child would be—” He looked at his arm holding Percy and saw his hair standing up. His eyes went wide as he turned around and spotted Jason.

Jason called down another lightning strike, but Ephialtes caught it on this spear and deflected the blast, melting a life-size plastic cow. As he swung his spear at Jason I rushed forward, grabbing my sword and with a scream sliced through his left foot.

“GAH!” he groaned as he stumbled. “You little—”

Pivoting on his good foot he spun and punched at me with the hand holding Percy. I jumped back and swung up, cutting a few of his fingers off. Percy went flying out of his hand, still limp.

“Jason!”

“I got him!”

The blonde tackled Percy in a skydive and crash landed, his sword skidding away and his back probably pretty scrapped as well. I conjured another sandstorm around Ephialtes to keep him busy. I then ran over to Percy and Jason, before looking my brother over.

His breathing was really labored, but I couldn’t have heard it if I didn’t lean in close. Blood was dripping form his mouth. I lifted up his shirt and had Jason gently support him as I looked at his back, which was covered in dark bruises.

“How bad is it?” Jason asked.

“I’m not sure.” I said honestly. “His breathing is labored and he isn’t opening his eyes. And I don’t like how his back looks.”

“Can you heal him?”

“I’ll try.”

I put my hands in front of me and silently prayed to Amaterasu. The Magatama shined and floated to my hands. Grabbing the necklace I placed it on Percy’s chest and prayed again. Shining brighter the Jewels worked their magic, until they flickered like a dying light and stopped.

“What?”

“What’s wrong?”

“The Magatama, they just…stopped.”

“Does that usually happen?”

“No. It doesn’t.”

“OTIS!! GET UP AND HELP ME!!”

“I’M COMING!!”

“Come on Tsuna, we don’t have time for jokes.”

“Do you think I would joke about my brother’s health?!”
“No I don’t. But with two Giants trying to kill us—” He just stopped and looked down. He leaned down and put his ear to Percy’s mouth.

“Jason—”

“He’s not breathing.”

“No.” I said, pressing my ear to his chest hoping to hear something—even the crackling of broken ribs as he breaths. But I didn’t even hear a heartbeat. “No, no, no.”

I started doing chest compressions and blowing into his mouth. I was not going to lose Percy. I felt that pain back in Japan when I was trying to get these USELESS Jewels. In a moment of desperation, I tied the Magatama around his neck, praying to Amaterasu, but it didn’t work.

“Shock him like you did me.” I ordered.

“I can’t.” he said. “That lightning bolt earlier took the last bit of it out of me.”

“You have to try, Percy can’t die. Fate is not taking him away from me.”

“Tsuna—”

“And if you’re just going to sit there and not help, then go fight the Twins.”

“Tsuna—”

“What’s the point of having a son of Jupiter if he can’t help. Some friend you are, I can’t believe I had a crush—”

“TSUNA!!”

“WHAT?!?”

“Look at your hands.”

“My hands?” I raised them up and saw that they were glowing in blue light and covered in a thin layer of frost. “How—”

“Is this like back at the Argo?” asked Jason. The frost then started to recede.

“No, no, no, stop—” I started, trying to keep the magic going.

“This only happens when you get upset…” Jason said under his breath. He then grabbed my shirt and brought me close. “Tsuna, stay pissed. Be mad at the Giants, at Gaea. Keep your anger going, think about killing the Giants. Think about what we have had to do in order to ‘impress’ Bacchus. Don’t let Percy’s death go in vain. Avenge him.”

“Jason, I can’t do it that way, that’s Dark Mag—”

He slu{g}ged me in the face. “Get over yourself and think you idiot! If we defeat the Giants now maybe Bacchus can save Percy! Get angry and end this!”

For a second I was still in shock that Jason Grace just hit me. As much as I don’t want to admit it, anger and hate is the only way I can do anything against the Giants now. So I focused on those feelings. My annoyance with the Olympians for putting my friends and family in this situation, risking their lives in another war. My hatred grew for Juno, or Hera, for kidnapping and
hiding Percy for six months. Thinking about Gaea and her plans to torture me and use Nico to do it made my blood boil.

Everything I have dealt with since Percy disappeared, from the judgmental looks and thoughts that the Romans had about me, the fear of losing my friends (both old and new), annoyance at the Giants (especially these two), my hatred for Gaea and some of the gods, all came bubbling to the surface.

I was breathing a bit heavier and my hands were starting to hurt with how hard I was clenching them. When I opened my eyes, Jason was shivering and I could see his breath come out in small puffs.

“You, uh, you good bro?”

I nodded. “Grab Percy and fly up. It’s going to get really cold. And keep him safe.”

“Okay, but isn’t he—”

“Thanatos hasn’t come to claim his soul, so we have time.”

“How do you know?”

I gave him an icy stare. “I just do. Now do as I say, unless you want to become an ice sculpture.”

With that Jason nodded and lifted Percy bridal style. After he lifted off, hovering just under the tarp, I stood up and gripped the Kusanagi. Frost spread from my hands all the way to the tip of the blade. Taking a breath to center all that anger, I turned towards Ephialtes.

“Ha!” he laughed. It seemed that while I was trying to heal Percy the sandstorm faded away and Otis had reformed and regrouped with his brother. “Look brother, the foreigner is all alone, abandoned by his friends!”

“Let’s take care of him now.” Otis grumbled. “I’m getting tired of dealing with him. And he doesn’t have the ballet spirit in him.”

“We can still eat his arms and legs though.” Ephialtes said. “He won’t be able to use his toys and he won’t run away.”

“My friends are not running.” I said. “They were sent away. By me.”

“You want to fight us alone?” laughed Ephialtes. He shook his head in disbelief. “You’re running on fumes now child. You can’t last much longer.”

“Then why don’t you come over and prove it.” I taunted. “Unless you’re scared.”

Both Giants scowled. “Don’t get cocky.”

They started stomping closer to me. Even with all the negativity I was using to power my magic, I don’t think I could hold that for much longer. So, I had maybe one chance to do this. Now, what this was going to be, hell if I know. I guess I’ll be surprised along with the Giants.

When the Giants were a few yards away I acted. With a wave of my arm I let out all of anger, all of my hate, into one burst of magic. Following a pulse that staggered the Giants, a wave of ice and frost spread out from where I stood, covering every surface.

“What’s going on?!” Otis asked.
“How—!” started Ephialtes, only to be enveloped in the ice with his twin.

The ice kept going and started to crawl up the stands. A few of the lower rows were unfortunate and the Lares were frozen solid. The wave of ice magic was stretching its way to where Bacchus stood. With a stamp of his pine cone staff the wave of ice and cold and frost stopped at the Emperor’s Box.

“You!” yelled Bacchus. “What in the name of Jupiter was that?!!”

I glared at him with such ferocity that he flinched. Piper and Nico, however, were looking around slack jawed. Piper saw me do something like this earlier back on the Argo, but Nico? He had no idea I could do this. He left me before I arrived in Storybrooke and I haven’t seen him since.

“FINISH THEM!!” Jason screamed from above. Oh good, the wave didn’t hit him and Percy up there like I hoped. I wasn’t really sure how the magic would work once I let it out.

Looking back at the Giants they were struggling to break free of the ice. Even with the heat of Italy, the ice was strong. Plus the fact that my magic also made the stadium really cold helped.

“Help me put an end to these monsters Father.” I said in prayer.

Tightening my grip, I walked over to the Giants, heading straight for Otis. I stood in front of the Giant, who as he was being frozen and kneeled over. His eyes were moving, looking between me, my sword, and his brother. I looked over to Ephialtes, making sure he was watching. And once I was sure, I stabbed Otis in the throat.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and Kudos are appreciated.
Otis exploded into a cloud of dust and ice shards. The frozen Ephialtes was making shocked, choking sounds so I looked over and saw his wide eyes. He was watching the dust as it settled, hoping, maybe even praying to Gaea for his twin to reform. Maybe I was being petty and cruel, but I was still pretty pissed, so I rubbed it in that his brother was not coming back by stomping on his remains.

Which…was a stupid thing to do. His ice coating was shaking and cracking. With a roar he burst out from his icy containment.

“How dare you?!” he screamed, knocking me on my feet.

He tried to stomp me with his feet, slammed his fists into the ground and everything else his rage fueled brain could come up with in order to kill me. I was barely able to get out of the way. Between his relentless assault and my running on practically nothing at this point, I’ll be a pancake any second.

“Mother can kill me herself, I don’t care!” he said. “I’m going to grind your bones with my teeth!”

He backed me up until my back was pressed against a cardboard cutout of a manticore eating children. Bit dreary, but the twin Giants designed it, so it makes sense. Ephialtes stood over me like some over the top Saturday morning cartoon thug, seething in rage and spittle flying out between his teeth.

As I stared up at him I realized that I’m terrified of being eaten alive. And I doubt that he’d just bite my head off and end it in an instant at this point. No, he’s going to eat me slowly and enjoy the hell I’m going to go through.

Maybe I was desperate, but I blindly swung my sword to keep him away. It caught his fingers and hands as he reached for me, but it’s not going to keep him at bay for long. As much as I wanted be the ‘damsel in distress’ and have Jason rescue me, I doubt he would have time to place Percy somewhere safe and fly over to fight a Giant as mad as the Hulk.

But as I wildly swung the Kusanagi I saw a shadow in the tarp covering the arena—a large dark oval descending rapidly. I could only pray that it’s what I think it is. But unfortunately, I wasn’t given a chance to dwell on it.

“Stop moving you brat!” Ephialtes slammed one fist to my right, and as I tried to move the other way he slammed his other fist to my left. “Now I got you.”

My heart skipped a beat staring right into his large, bloodshot eyes. I haven’t seen anger like that since the Orochi. With a feral growl he raised both his arms up and clasped his hands. He then brought them down with all of his strength. Reflexively I brought my hands up to defend myself. I waited for the hit to come and be crushed into paste, but it never came.

“What?” Ephialtes said, causing me to open my eyes. “Where did you go Shinto!?" Turns out, I wasn’t near the Giant anymore. I had somehow—

“I…teleported?” I said astounded.

“Watch out!” Jason yelled from above me.
Ephialtes apparently sniffed me out and started charging at me like a train. His stomps cracked the ice beneath his feet. In my stupor of actually being able to teleport I just stood there staring at the Giant.

I don’t know what I was thinking. Maybe I wasn’t really thinking in the first place. But I raised my hands ready to blast him with magic. I guess I believed that since I froze the arena and teleported I could do something as simple as pulse of magic.

I never found out if it would work though, since as I was about to thrust my hands at the Giant he was blasted in the back by the full artillery of the Argo II. I don’t know how I survived. I was basically right beneath Ephialtes when it happened.

“You’re the biggest idiot I have ever met!”

“Wha—?” I said.

“What do you think you were doing just standing there?” Shaking my head clear, I finally realized that it was my brother speaking.

“Percy? Oh thank God your alright!” I gave him a big hug.

“Yeah, it’s thanks to this.” He pulled at the Magatama, which were finally glowing and working.

“Amaterasu no obāsan ni tsuite.” I said in annoyance. “How did I get here?” I waved around the trench we were standing in.

“Yeah, over here.” Jason waved his hand in front of my face. “I dropped him off in here once I saw the Argo coming in and I saved you form being blasted and crushed by Ephialtes. And Percy’s right, you’re a big idiot for just standing there.”

“I wasn’t really thinking.” I admitted. “I just figured—”

“That you could control your magic and use that to stop the Drama Queen from turning you into his dinner.” finished Percy. He looked around. “It looks like you have some control over it. I like what you’ve done with the place.”

“Thanks.” I said, rubbing the back of my head. “I wasn’t sure what would happen when I released my magic.”

“So you still can’t control it?” I raised my hand and tried to make something appear in it. Mist appeared and started to swirl around, but nothing came into my hand.

“Doesn’t seem like it.”

“Uh, if you two are done gazing into each other’s eyes,” Jason said, floating so he could look over the edge of the trench. “We still have a Giant to finish off.”

Jason helped Percy and I out of the trench. When we got out the Argo II was coming in for a landing. When I heard groaning, I looked over and saw a charred Ephialtes laying on the arena floor. He must have been blasted with Greek Fire or something just as powerful to have also leave behind a halo of glass around him. Percy clapped Jason and I on the shoulders as the ghostly crowds gave us a standing ovation. As the ship extended its landing gear Percy handed me back the Magatama.

“Hey! You guys!” waved Leo from the helm. Frank and Hazel were grinning at his side. I knew
that they’d get out of whatever trap was set for them.

Coach Hedge was dancing around the firing platform, pumping his fists in the air. “Now that’s what I’m talking about!”

Jason cupped his hands around his mouth. “Good shot Coach!”

“No it wasn’t.” Ephialtes whimpered. He was so damaged that I can’t even see him healing.

“Shall we end this then?” I asked, point my sword at Ephialtes.

“Let’s see.” Percy said, turning to the emperor’s box. “Well? Was that entertaining enough for you, you wine-breathed little—”

“No need for that.” Suddenly the god of wine was standing right next to Percy here in the arena. “I have decided that you three are worthy partners for this combat.”

“Partners?” growled Jason. “You sat there and did nothing!”

“Do you want to rethink what you just said?” I said, glaring at the god.

“Careful.” warned Bacchus. “I could just leave.” He pointed his staff at me. “It’s not like you need me. You said so yourself son of Poseidon.”

“We just thought that you’d want the honor and glory of killing one of the Giants born to defeat you, Lord Bacchus.” Jason said, trying very hard to put on a smile.

Bacchus took a moment to consider this. “When you’re right, you’re right.” He said with a carefree shrug, as if Rome and the world itself wasn’t at stake not even ten minutes ago. “The honor should go to the worthy.”

“We did all the work, how are we not worthy?” I mumbled, only to be elbowed by Jason.

Bacchus strutted over and stood over the deep fried, eagle spread Ephialtes. The Lares in the stands were cheering and yelling in excitement, only to be silenced when the god raised his staff over his head. He bowed before the crowd and raised both his arms.

“What do the people of Rome say?!” asked Bacchus with a smile. Unanimously the crowd pointed their thumbs down. Again, Bacchus raised his staff.


“DON’T DO IT!” begged Ephialtes.

Without a moment’s hesitation Bacchus tapped the Giant on the nose, causing him to crumble into ash. The ghosts cheered and threw spectral confetti as Bacchus strolled around the stadium with his arms raised in triumph, exulting in the worship.

“Now that, my friends, is a show!” smiled Bacchus. “And of course I did something. I killed two Giants.”

“You so not taking credit for Otis, or ninety-nine percent of this entire battle!” I said.

“Of course I am.” Bacchus said. “If I weren’t here, you three wouldn’t have found the strength in you to fight on as you did.”
“Wait, wait, wait, time, time out, time right the hell out!” I felt a vein throbbing in my head. “Are you honestly telling us that your presence here is what caused us to fight and beat the Giants?” His response was a slight bow with a cocky smile. I stared him for a moment before turning away.

“Where are you going?” asked Percy.

“I need to walk away before I do something completely stupid.” I ended up calming down real fast though, because I saw Nico and Piper struggling down from the emperor’s box. Bacchus could have at least brought them down here with him.

“Yo! guys!” Leo yelled. He ran down the ramp of the ship, slipping a bit on the ice. “Hey, who went all ‘Let It Go’?”

“That would be Tsuna.” Percy said.

“Again?” asked Leo. “Didn’t know you had it in you Queen Elsa.” I laughed sarcastically.

“Do you think you could melt the ice?” Jason asked. “We wouldn’t want any civilians to wonder how the Coliseum could now host Disney on Ice.” I shrugged my shoulders and imagined the ice melting. Nothing happened, at least, the ice didn’t melt. Instead, everything went hazy and I nearly toppled over, if it wasn’t for Jason catching me.

“Whoa, you okay?”

“Uh, yeah, I’ll be fine.” I shook my head. “Guess that ice wave took a hell of a lot more out of me than I thought. I just need a sec’. But as for the ice, if I could control my magic, maybe, but not now.”

“Oh, allow me.” said Bacchus, tapping his staff twice on the ground. The ice faded away as if it never existed. Even the rest of the stadiums magical renovations began to turn into purple mist until the building looked like it didn’t just host a Giant killing battle. “Well, that was fun.” The god was smiling. “You have my permission to continue your voyage.”

I was going to say something that might have gotten me smited, but Percy was faster. “Your permission?” my brother snarled.

“Yes.” Bacchus raised an eyebrow. “Although your voyage may be a little harder than you expect, son of Neptune.”

“Poseidon.” Percy corrected automatically, me joining him at the same time. “What do you mean my voyage?”

Bacchus looked away, inspecting his nails. “You might want to try the parking lot behind the Emmanuel Building. Best place to break through.”

“What do you mean Lord Bacchus?” Jason asked. Well…I’ll give it Jason. He might get annoyed with the gods like the rest of us, but at least he can fake respect.

“It has something to do with Minerva’s spawn.” Bacchus shrugged.

“There’s more to it than that.” I said. “You know something. Tell us.”

The god glared. “You have no right to tell me what to do Shinto whelp. You shouldn’t even be here.”
“Not the first time I heard that. Your step-mommy and great grandmother told me the same thing. Luckily, I’m not bound to listen to you gods. It’s not like you listen to us, even though we do all your dirty work.”

“Well, that is one of the reasons I personally keep you around.” admitted Bacchus. “But I want to know how you did what you did. That little ice trick was not like anything I have seen before. It was unnatural, and Jupiter will hear of it.”

“If you want unnatural, Lord Bacchus, just piss me off. I won’t be responsible for my actions when I rip your heart out of your chest and crush it like glass.”

His scowl was heightened by his flaming purple eyes, but I didn’t waver. “Urgh, I’m too tired to deal with you. Good luck with that other little matter.” The god vaporized in a cloud of mist that smelled faintly like grape juice.

“Twat.”

“Really?” Percy asked. “Can you not be a smart ass and pick fights with gods?”

“Hi pot, meet kettle.”

Percy threw his hands up in frustration. “There’s no talking you.”

“Again—”

“Just go see if Nico is doing alright!”

“Yes sir!” I said with a mock salute.

Jason was already with Nico and Piper, checking on her shoulder. As I got closer Nico looked up and our eyes met. I smiled at him, feeling my heart flutter knowing he’s okay. And then a blur of curly cinnamon colored hair rushed past me.

“Nico!” Hazel cried into his shoulder. “You’re safe! Dad was looking out for you.” She grabbed his face and kissed all over- his cheeks, forehead and his nose. “I was so scared I was going to be alone. I can’t lose you Nico, you’re the only family I have left.”

“Hazel…” Nico wrapped his arms around her and buried his face in her curly hair.

“You need to eat something.” Hazel said. They separated from each other. “I can’t believe Tsuna was able to find you.”

“Yeah…” He looked over to me and I smiled at him. Nico held his arms out. “Get it over with. I know you want to.”

With that I rushed over and pulled him into a tight hug, which I lightened up a bit since he’s recovering. He drew his wrapped his arms around me and gave me the best squeeze he’s got in him before letting me go. I still held on, not wanting to let go of him so soon.

“Okay, you can let go now.” He said.

I did as he said, although I didn’t want to. I gripped his shoulders and took a good look at him. He did not look well. He was painfully thin, like he hasn’t really eaten since before Tartarus. There were really dark bags under his eyes, which when I peered into them looked…broken, shattered from his experience in that hellscape. Maybe Gaea was torturing him in his dreams since
he was in a Death Trance.

“You’re making me uncomfortable.” Nico said, rubbing his shoulder and looking away.

“Sorry, it’s just…seeing you like this…I can only guess what you went through since we last saw each other.”

He shrugged. “Nothing you can do about it.” An idea sparked in my mind.

“Actually, I just might.” I held my hands out and the Magatama flew to my hand.

“Tsuna, what are—”

“You need to heal. You’ve been through Tartarus and stuck in a jar for a week. You’re dehydrated and hungry, and with everything else your body experienced you need to recuperate.” Without giving him a chance to argue I put the Magatama over his head. “Please help him.”

The Magatama began to glow in a gentle, warm light. “Thank you.” Nico muttered.

I was hoping that the Jewels would have healed him instantly, but I guess Amaterasu had other ideas. I don’t get what with her or the Jewels. Its like they’re holding themselves back. But why hold back on their powers?

The floor shook. “What was that?” Jason asked.

“Guys!” Frank yelled. “Get back to the ship! We have to go!” The wooden planks were beginning to disappear, spilling sand into the hypogeum.

Everyone ran to get back on the Argo. Well, I had to basically drag Nico. As soon as everyone was on board the ship took off. Hazel basically ripped Nico from my grip and took him to one of the walls so he could sit and rest. She ordered him to sit still before she left and came back with some water, crackers, Nectar and Ambrosia.

As Hazel took care of Nico Leo and Frank took turns regaling us with the tale of their latest adventure. It turns out that Gaea and her mutant spawn used Nico’s Stygian Iron sword as bait, allowing Hazel to track it to Nico’s supposed position. Since Nico was in the hypogeum with Ephialtes and Otis, it was clearly a trap.

After finding a secret door in the Pantheon they were chased by Eidolons deeper into a secret chamber. In fact, it was the same Eidolons that I banished from the ship a couple of days ago. After I asked how they came back, Frank said that they didn’t disobey my orders to them. They never tried to possess them, so instead they took control of some ancient machinery and threatened to kill them all. Leo then used his new toy, an Archimedes Sphere, which from what I could tell was just a ball of solid bronze with details that looks like microchip wiring the size of a basketball, to trap the Eidolons in their mechanical bodies forever.

“What about Annabeth?” Percy asked. “You said she was hurt.”

“Gaea appeared before us.” Frank said.

“Yeah, she went all ‘Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall.’” Leo added. “Before I burnt it because she was annoying.”

“Anyway, Annabeth apparently has a broken ankle.” Frank continued. “And she’s fighting for her life down there in the tunnels.”
“She has to be fighting Arachne by now.” I said. “And with a broken ankle I don’t know how long she can fight the very thing that has the greatest vendetta against her mother.”

“Annabeth can take care of herself.” Percy said. “Even if she wasn’t able to fight, she’s smart enough and clever enough to find a way to stay alive.”

“Didn’t say I doubted her.” I said. “I’m just worried.”

“We should get going though.” Frank said. “Where did Bacchus say we’d find her?”

“The Emmanuel Building.” Percy said. “Can you find it?”

“I’ll look for it on the helm’s computer.” Frank said, running off. Leo tapped furiously at the controls muttering ‘Emmanuel Building, Emmanuel Building.

“Here, eat this.” Percy said, holding out a piece of Ambrosia. “I’m going to need you when we find Annabeth.”

“I thought you said Annabeth can take care of herself?”

“She can, but we’ll be going against Arachne.” He explained. “I’d rather not take any chances.”

“Noted.” I looked over at Nico and started to head over before Percy grabbed my arm.

“Give him some time.” said Percy. “Nico usually likes to take care of himself, but I’m sure right now he needs Hazel with him, not you smothering him.”

I let out an annoyed breath. “I hate it when you’re right. It’s just…I’ve been so scared not knowing where Nico was since we separated, and then the dreams Gaea sent me, where Nico was dying…I don’t want him out of my sight.”

“After everything that happened in Japan I know you two are close, I mean, he gave up his blood for you. But he needs his space. I’m sure he’ll let you know when he’s ready for you.”

“Yeah, I know.” I sighed. “Let’s go check on Piper then.”

We walked over and Percy knelt next to Jason and Piper. “How’s the shoulder?”

Piper smiled. “It’ll heal. You all did great.”

“Yeah, we make a great team.” Jason put his arms around mine and Percy’s shoulders and pulls us close.

“Better than jousting in a Kansas cornfield.” Agreed Percy.

“Or watching you two fight for the spot as this pack’s Alpha.” I said.

“Huh?” the boys looked confused.

“Anyway,” Piper said, “That thing you did Tsuna, with the ice, that was incredible. Is it a part of your demigod powers?”

“Uh, not really.” I said. “Just…something I picked up a few months ago. I don’t have a lot of control over it.”

“I hope you get a hang of it soon.” Piper said. “It would help us out a lot.”
“Tell me about it.” I said. “Oh, and uh, sorry about healing your arm, I didn’t really think about it.”

“Don’t worry about it.” She said. “I just need some Ambrosia and I should be fine in a day or two. And besides, Nico looks like he needs it more.” I gave her a smile as a show of thanks.

“There it is!” Leo cried, jabbing his finger on a monitor. “Frank, you’re amazing! I’m setting course!”

Frank hunched his shoulders. “I just read the name off the screen. Some Chinese tourist marked it on Google Maps.”

Leo grinned. “He reads Chinese.”

“Just a tiny bit.” Frank blushed.

“How cool is that?” Not that cool, if I’m being honest. I think everybody on this ship can speak more than one language.

“Guys,” Hazel broke in. “I hate to interrupt your admiration session, but you should hear this.”

She helped Nico to his feet. Despite the Magatama and Ambrosia combo, he didn’t look much better. In fact, he almost looked like a prisoner of war from World War II (kind of apt, considering when Nico was born.) I guess, technically he was a POW. Doesn’t mean I have to like that fact.

“Thank you.” Nico said quietly. His eyes darted nervously around the group. “I’d given up hope.” My heart broke at that, and I wanted nothing more than to hold him in my arms.

“You knew about the two camps all along.” Percy said, sounding more and more angry. “You could have told me who I was the first day I arrived at Camp Jupiter, but you didn’t.”

“Percy—” I started.

“He’s right Tsuna.” Nico admitted, slumping against the helm. “He has every right to be angry at me. Percy, I’m so sorry. I didn’t want to not tell you, but I had to.”

“How did you know about the Camps Nico?” Jason asked.

“I discovered Camp Jupiter last year after the Battle in Manhattan after…after Japan.”

“That’s where you went after the council meeting.” I said. “You never told me…”

“Dad told me not to, though I wasn’t sure why. He told me that gods kept the camps separate for centuries and I couldn’t tell anyone, even you, despite the fact you aren’t technically apart of either camps.”

“I could have been the only person you could have told.”

“I’m sorry, but Dad said the time wasn’t right for anyone to know, except, he also said that it would be important for me to know.” Nico looked guilty, like this secret was killing him. Maybe it was. He knew where Camp Jupiter was and never took me or anyone else to go and wait for Percy to appear. “I—I thought Dad meant because of Hazel. I’d need a safe place to take her. But now…I think he wanted me to know about both camps so I’d understand how important your quest was, and so I’d search for the Doors of Death.”

Jason started throwing off sparks. “Did you find the Doors?” Percy asked.
Nico nodded. “I was a fool. I thought I could go anywhere in the Underworld, but I walked right into Gaea’s trap. I might as well have tried running from a black hole.”

“Um…” Frank started chewing his lip. “What kind of black hole are you talking about.”

Nico started to speak, but I spoke up for him. “Tartarus.”

“How did you know?” Nico asked surprised.

“Gaea sent me visions.” I explained. “She showed me how you were trying to make your way through that place, right up to the point you collapsed on the ground, where you were picked up by the manticore.”

“Nico, is that true?” Hazel asked.

“Yeah, it is…” nodded Nico.


Hazel put her hand on her brother’s arm. “Nico told me that the Doors of Death have two sides—one in the mortal world, one in the Underworld. The mortal side of the portal is in Greece. It’s heavily guarded by Gaea’s forces. That’s where they brought Nico up into the upper world. Then they transported him to Rome.”

Out of nowhere a cheeseburger plopped onto the floor by Piper’s feet. “Where exactly in Greece is this doorway?”

Nico took a rattling breath. “The House of Hades. It’s an underground temple in Epirus. I can mark it on a map, but—but the mortal side of the portal isn’t the problem. In the Underworld, the Doors of Death are in…in…” I went over and gripped his arm, anchoring myself to him.


“I was pulled into the pit, Percy. The things I saw down there…” his voice trailed off.

“No mortal has ever been in Tartarus before.” Hazel said with pursed lips. “At least, no one has ever gone in and returned alive. It’s the maximum-security prison of Hades, where the old Titans and the other enemies of the gods are bound. It’s where all monsters go when they die on earth. It’s…well, no one knows exactly what it’s like.” Her eyes drifted to her brother, but no one needed her to verbalize her thought. No one except Nico.

“It’s Hell.” I said.

“How—?”

“Like I said, Gaea sent me visions.” I continued. “But what I saw, it’s what you’d expect when you’d imagine the Christian Hell. Fire and brimstone, sulfur, rivers of fire, screams and anguish of all the creatures down there. An endless hunt for survival until the monsters can reform. A place of pure hatred and malice. To sum it up: Hell.”

“But Death himself could easily rectify all of this if he wanted to.” I thought.
“So let me guess,” Leo said, “We’ll have to go there.”

Nico shook his head. “It’s impossible. I’m the son of Hades, and even I barely survived. Gaea’s forces overwhelmed me instantly. There’s so powerful down there…no demigod would stand a chance. I almost went insane.”

“Then we’ll sail for Epirus.” Percy said. We’ll just close the gates on this side.”

“I wish it was that easy.” Nico said. “The Doors would have to be controlled on both sides to be closed. It’s like a double seal. Maybe, just maybe, all eight of you working together could defeat Gaea’s forces on the mortal side, at the House of Hades. But unless you had a team powerful enough to defeat a legion of monsters in their home territory—”

“There has to be a way.” Jason said. Nobody said anything. No one had any ideas.

All of a sudden I noticed the ship was descending towards a big building like a palace. That must be the Emmanuel Building. It was a very beautiful building, with its white stone pillars and all the statues around it. Annabeth must be down there somewhere, deep within the sublevels or catacombs of this place.

“We’ll figure out the Tartarus problem later.” said Percy. “I’m guessing that’s the Emmanuel Building?”

Leo nodded. “Bacchus said something about the parking lot in back? Well, there it is. What now?”

Percy’s face, while stern with determination, was also terribly pale, most likely due to the fear of knowing that Annabeth is facing the mother of all spiders down there by herself with a broken ankle. “We have to get her out.”

“Well, yeah,” agreed Leo, “But, uh…” He looked like he wanted to say ‘What if we’re too late?’ but he changed his mind. “There’s a parking lot in the way.”

Percy turned towards Coach Hedge. “Bacchus said something about breaking through. Coach, you still have some ammo for those ballistae?”

The satyr grinded madly. “I thought you’d never ask.” He ran over to the crossbow and started prepping it.

“Everyone else, get ready,” ordered Percy. “We’re going in hot, so be prepared for anything.” As everyone went to their stations I walked up to Percy who was looking down at the parking lot.

“You can stare at it all you want, but I doubt you’ll get X-Ray vision.” I said.

“Sorry, I’m just trying to focus on Annabeth.”

“I could tell. And I know you’re scared for her. But she’ll be fine. You know her better than anyone.”

“Doesn’t mean I can’t be worried.” He looked me over. “How are you doing, by the way?”

“I’m fine.”

“Are you sure?” Percy looked worried about me now. “You’ve been pushing yourself a lot today.”

“So have you, and Jason, and Leo and the others.”
“I’m not saying you shouldn’t, but between everything that’s happened today, I’m surprised your still standing.”

“Your heart stopped, and yet here you are.”

“Shut up and let me be concerned.” My brother scowled. “I think you’re more drained than any of us. That ice pulse/magic thing you did took a toll on you, I can tell.”

“Magic always comes with a price Percy. That’s the first thing I was taught. But it doesn’t matter. No price is too high if it means all of you are kept safe.”

“Even your life?”

“Especially my life. You know that.”

Percy sighed and looked back down at the Emmanuel Building. “I just need to know that you can handle yourself down there.”

“So you can focus on Annabeth, yeah, I figured. I can handle myself. Just bring our girl back.”

“Our girl?” smiled Percy.

My face heated up a bit in embarrassment. “You know what I mean.”

“Everyone ready?!” screamed Coach Hedge.

Don’t know why he even bothered asking. The moment he had the shot he fired. As soon as the salvo touched the asphalt of the parking lot it detonated, releasing a blast of fiery light. At the same moment the ground caved in on itself. Chucks of concrete and cars fell through the hole in the ground.

As the Argo II started its steady descent into the hole Percy ran to the ledge and looked over, until he saw her. “Annabeth!!”

“Percy!!” Annabeth sobbed. Percy smiled in relief, just seeing her alive again.

The Argo II came to a stop and hovered about forty feet from the crumbling floor. Percy ran until he got to the ladder and threw it over. I don’t think it was fully extended before I started climbing down. Jason took off in flight while everyone else climbed down. I followed after Nico. Once I touched down, noticing how unstable the floor was, Annabeth was already in Percy’s arms, holding onto him tight as he took her away from the black pit before her.

Annabeth had started crying into Percy’s chest. While it pained me to see Annabeth like this, I knew she had to let it out. She might be one of the strongest people I have ever met, but she’s not indestructible. She’s only human. There’s only so much she can bury and bottle up inside her.

After she settled herself down enough to pull away from her boyfriend she was swarmed by everyone else. They hugged her tight, with Piper breaking into tears of joy. I held her close when it was my turn.

“I’m glad you’re okay Wise Girl.”

“Thank you, Tuna Head.” I gave her a small kiss on the cheek. When we pulled away, Percy immediately grabbing her hand and intertwining their fingers, I noticed that Nico was hanging back.
“Gods, your leg.” Piper said, kneeling down to examine it. “Oh, Annabeth, what happened?”

Annabeth went into detail about her Quest. After she and Percy went their separate ways, she ended up going down a long tunnel, until she reached a long drop. She had come up with an idea to create a rope ladder out of plastic swords and kite string. Impressive, really.

She then ended up in a chamber of some god named Mithras. She had to trick them using her genius of architecture to make the chamber she was in to make the ceiling collapse. Her broken foot was explained by her diving for the only opening the collapsing chamber. No matter how much I see it, but Annabeth is resourceful. She made a cast out of bubble wrap! And after that, she had to walk across a pit with spiders following her until she entered this chamber and encountered Arachne.

Wise Girl had to use her smarts in this fight. Knowing Arachne would kill her right away, she had to convince Arachne that she was better than Athena and that the gods would want her tapestries and art on Mount Olympus, but only if she could prove it by making something amazing—a giant set of Chinese finger cuffs, inspired by Frank of all people. Annabeth was able to trick Arachne into going inside to inspect a flaw, trapping her, and in the giant’s spider’s angry thrashing caused her to fall into the black pit.

All the while Annabeth was telling this story, I looked up at the statue in the center of the chamber. It looked just like Athena did back on Olympus after I came back from Japan. The same stern, analytical face stared back at me. It was made of shining white ivory, wearing a toga made of solid gold. In her hand was a small figure, probably another goddess, while in her other hand was a shield with a snake coming out from behind it.

While the statue was amazing to simply look at, it gave off so much raw power, like radiation. It was magic, no doubt about it. Raw magic, like the power of Athena herself was carved into the stone.

“Gods of Olympus,” Jason said. “You did all that alone. With a broken ankle.”

“Well...some of it with a broken ankle.” I wasn’t expecting her to be humble, but considering she’s alive and went through all this, I’ll let her have her moment.”

Percy grinned with the utmost pride for his girlfriend. “You made Arachne weave her own trap? I knew you were good, but Holy Hera—Annabeth, you did it. Generations of Athena kids tried and failed. You found the Athena Parthenos!”

We all looked at the statue. “What do we do with her?” Frank asked. “She’s huge.”

“We’ll have to take her with us to Greece.” Annabeth said. “The statue is powerful. Something about it will help us stop the Giants.”

“The Giants’ bane stands gold and pale,” Hazel recited, “Won through pain from a woven jail. It was Arachne’s jail. You tricked her into weaving it.”

Leo raised his hands and made a finger picture frame around the statue of Athena. “Well…” Leo scratched his head. “It might take some rearranging, but I think we can fit her through the bay doors in the stable. If she sticks out the end, I might have to wrap a flag around her feet or something.”

“What about you guys?” Annabeth asked. “What happened with the Giants?”

As Percy told her about the nymphs and the hypogeum I walked over to Nico, who had
wandered over close to the black pit. He had his arms tightly wrapped around himself as he stared into the void. He was shaking a little, and he wasn’t blinking.

“Nico?” I asked quietly so I wouldn’t spook him. “Neeks, are you okay?” He didn’t answer. “Nico…” I reached out to touch him.

He jumped when my hand touched his shoulder. “Sorry, I was just…” He looked back down the pit, which was giving the bad vibes. Like millennia of hate and envy was radiating from it. I only felt something like this once.

“That’s Tartarus, isn’t it?” I asked.

He nodded. “I was kind of hoping I wouldn’t get this close to it again.”

“Maybe we should back away from it then.” I said, leading him away from the black hole. “I’d rather none of us be too close it. It’s like it has its own gravitational pull.”

When we got back to the Seven, Percy was finishing up talking about the Doors of Death. “So the mortal side is in Epirus.” Annabeth said, her brain already coming up with plans and ideas. “At least that’s somewhere we can reach.”

Nico grimaced. “But the other side is in the problem.” He looked back to the pit. “Tartarus.” All of a sudden, this blast of cold air, not caused by me, was exhaled from the pit behind us. WE all moved further away from it.

“Bacchus mentioned something about my voyage being harder than I expected.” Percy spoke. “Not sure why—”

The chamber suddenly groaned. The Athena Parthenos started to tilt to one side, its head catching on one of the support beams made of monstrous, magically enhanced spider silk. The marble foundation under the pedestal began to crumble away.

“Secure it!” cried Annabeth, all of us acting immediately.

“Zhang!” Leo yelled. “Get me to the helm, quick! The Coach in up there alone!” Frank transformed into a giant eagle, Leo hopped on his back and they flew to the ship.

Jason wrapped his arms around Piper. “Back for you guys in a sec.” he said before summoning the winds and shooting off into the air.

“This floor won’t last!” Hazel warned. “The rest of us should get to the ladder!” No one disagreed. We all started running, but Nico must have tripped. “Nico!”

“I got him!” I yelled to Hazel. “You get to safety!” I rushed over and grabbed onto Nico, holding onto him princess style.

“Not one word.” He mumbled.

“Wouldn’t dream of it.” I smirked.

Running to the ladder I had to dodge around plumes of dust and cobwebs that blasted from the holes in the floor. I narrowly missed being hit by a falling spider’s silk cables as they snapped. From the Argo II, grappling lines shot out and wrapped around the Athena Parthenos. One of them wrapped around the statue’s throat like a noose. A bit ironic, considering Arachne tried to hang herself after her loss to the war goddess. Leo was shouting something to Jason and Frank. The two
aerial heroes tried frantically to secure the lines in time.

Just as I got to the ladder with Nico I heard Annabeth gasp. “What is it?” Percy asked.

I turned around just to see Annabeth fall on her face and slide towards the pit.

“Her ankle!” Hazel shouted from halfway up the ladder. “Cut it! Cut it!” It was too late, because she was already pulled halfway into the pit.

I set Nico down. “You get out of here now.”

“Where are you going?”

“I have to help them, and I can’t worry about you while I do it.”

“Tsuna—”

I didn’t hear the rest of what he said. I ran as fast as I could to get to Percy and Annabeth, jumping over holes in the floor. Percy was struggling to hold on to her, so I ran faster. Not that it did much good, because just as I got close both Percy and Annabeth tumbled into the pit to Tartarus.

“No!” I screamed. I fell and slid the rest of the way, leaning over the pit.

Maybe it was fate, or a universal amount of luck, but my two friends didn’t fall all the way. Instead Percy had managed to grab hold of Annabeth with one hand and a ledge about fifteen feet below the top of the chasm. Despite that, I tried to reach down.

“I’m coming you guys!” I said.

“You’re too far!” Percy said. “You won’t be able to reach!”

“I can try!” The pit shook, loosing Percy’s hold on the outcropping. Nico appeared next to me, also trying to reach down.

“I told you to get out of here!”

“They’re my friends too! I have to help!”

Annabeth screamed as there looked like something was tugging at her leg. Percy’s face was white with effort. He looked at Annabeth before looking at me. His eyes…I could see it in his eyes that he believed it was hopeless.

“Tsuna—”

“I am not leaving you!” I screamed. “I lost you once, I refuse to do it again! I’ll save the both of you!”

I did everything I was taught, remembering my emotions I felt fighting the Giants. I used everything I could think of to power my magic. At Annabeth’s feet mist began to swirl. It was just like when I tried to teleport the apple, but this time it had to work. I teleported myself without thinking about it, so I have to do it now. But the mist never went farther than her ankles, no matter how much I put into it.

“Come on, come on!! Please! Work!” I begged. “I’ll do anything! I’ll blacken my heart! I’ll give up my life! I’ll become a god and work for Olympus! I don’t care! Just let me save them!”
“How very enticing.”


Gaea laughed. “This is going to be incredibly...pleasurable to see this suffering from you. I admit, I was hoping for Ephialtes and Otis to take you prisoner, but this...well, taking your brother away from you is almost as bad a torture there can be, at least until I rise and get my hands on you.”

“You will not take them from me!”

“Whatever ‘magic’ you possess, it’s clear it is not enough. My consort, Tartarus, is eager to get his hands on your dear Percy and Annabeth. He’ll have his fun before he sends them to me so I can truly awaken.”

“Percy!” Annabeth cried. “Let me go! You can’t pull me up. Let Tsuna save you, please!

“Ah, the daughter of Athena, giving up hope after facing her greatest fear and her mother’s worst enemy.”

Percy was breathing heavy from the strain, looking at his girlfriend, the girl I know he loves most. “Never.”

“Percy, please don’t—” Tears fell from my face and into the abyss.

“Nico! The other side!” Percy yelled.

“Percy I can save you!” I yelled

“We’ll see you there, understand?” he continued.

“But—”

“Lead them there!” Percy shouted. “Promise me!”

Nico slowly nodded. “I-I will.”

“Percy, please don’t!” I begged, shaking off Nico's attempt to pull me away. “I can do this! I can save you!” I tried harder to make the teleportation spell work, but the mist just faded away.

“It will be alright Tsuna.” Percy said, smiling. “Trust me.”

“Please...no...”

“I love you Tsuna.” He was crying now. “Nico, get him out of here!”

“No, no, no, please don—” Percy looked back at Annabeth and let go. “NNNNOOOOOO!!”

They didn’t scream as they fell. I couldn’t hear Nico screaming in my ear. All I heard, as I stared into the void, was the cackling of earth goddess relishing in my pain.
As Percy let go of the ledge, letting himself and Annabeth fall into Tartarus, I tried to pull Tsuna away. He kept fighting against me, trying to use his magic (which I’m going to have to ask him about later) to try and save our friends. I barely had any strength in me as it is, even with the Yasakani no Magatama giving off its healing light, so I could barely move him.

The floor kept cracking and falling into the darkness. “Come on Tsuna! We have to go!”

“Percy…Annabeth…” he cried, tears streaming down his face. His arm was still stretched out towards the pit. He wasn’t even listening to me now.

“If we don’t leave we’ll be sucked down there too.” I said.

I kept trying to pull Tsuna away from the pit. I heard Hazel yelling from the rope ladder to the ship, probably yelling at me and Tsuna. The Athena Parthenos was being stuffed into the Argo II. Jason and Hazel’s friend Frank (who was an eagle, somehow) were flying back to the ship.

“Jason!” I waved him down. “Help us!”

Both he and Frank flew down as I finally pulled Tsuna away from the pit just as the slab of rock he was on fell into the darkness. Tsuna kept struggling and broke out of the weak grip I had on him. He was about to jump into the black hole when Jason tackled him and rocketed up towards the surface.

Right before the floor I was standing on broke apart Frank flew down. I hopped onto his back, gripping his feathers as hard as I could. He flew up next to Jason, who was struggling to keep a hold on Tsuna. My best friend was fighting against Jason, demanding to be let go so he can save his brother.

“Let me go dammit!” Tsuna yelled. “I need to save them! I can still save them!”

“No, you can’t.” Jason said, and he looked like he was in pain doing so.

“Please, I need to try!” he begged.

“I’m sorry Tsuna.” Jason cried, holding tighter onto Tsuna.

Tears fell from Tsuna’s face as he pounded his fists into Jason’s back. “PLEASE!!” Tsuna said. “SOMEONE HELP THEM!!”

Around my neck I felt an explosion of light and heat. Tsuna’s Magatama were glowing in a blinding light. It was almost painful, like I was getting a bad sunburn that kept getting worse. The Sacred Treasure started pulling at my neck until four of the seven Jewels broke off. I tried to reach for them but they flew out of my reach and towards the pit.

I turned around and saw the four Jewels just hovering over the pit, shining like stars. They pulsed like heartbeats, their glow getting brighter. Then one by one, the four Jewels of the Yasakani no Magatama shot down in the black abyss, looking like comets. I don’t understand how or why, but maybe Tsuna knows.

“Guys, come on!” Leo screamed. He starting to get the ship to move skyward.
Tsuna kept fighting against Jason, but he just kept a tight hold around Tsuna. The second Jason touched down on the Argo Tsuna pushed him away and they both tumbled on the floor. Tsuna picked himself up faster and started running to the edge of the ship. Jason tried to stop him but Tsuna pushed him away.

Frank had landed just as Tsuna pushed Jason away and had changed into a large bear, making me slide off his back. He grabbed Tsuna and hugged him to his chest, tight enough that he wouldn’t get away but loose enough that he wouldn’t get crushed.

“Let go of me!” Tsuna struggled, but Frank didn’t look fazed from Tsuna’s thrashing.

“Leo get us out of here!” Jason yelled.

While Tsuna fought against Frank I looked back down to the pit. As the ship rose the parking lot collapsed and buried the pit to Tartarus under several tons of concrete and rubble. Smoke and dust billowed up into the sky.

“Take us somewhere away safe.” Jason directed. “We need…we need to regroup…”

“You got it Superman.” Leo said over an intercom.

“Please don’t call me that man.” Jason said under his breath.

Leo piloted the ship to a hill overlooking the city. Jason and Hazel went back to the Emmanuel Building to see if they could dig through the rubble to find Percy and Annabeth, but I knew they wouldn’t find them. Frank would have gone too, but he had to hold onto Tsuna.

The Satyr Coach Hedge and Leo came out and looked around. Leo made great effort to avoid Tsuna thrashing about. When Jason and Hazel came back, they reported in that the cavern was simply gone and swarmed with the local police. They said no Mortals were hurt in the collapse, so at least there’s some good news, I guess.

“What about the Parthenos?” Jason asked, avoiding looking at Tsuna.

“What?” Leo said dazed. “Oh, yeah…I was able to get it secured in the hold. It’s a good thing I installed those hydraulic winches. It’s just barely fitting, though.”

“As long as its secured, it’s fine.”

“What are we supposed to do with it?” Piper asked, dried tears covering her cheeks.

“No idea.” Jason admitted.

All of us stood on the quarterdeck, watching the pillar of smoke from the remains of the cavern. Hazel held my hand as she cried. Piper clung to Jason’s arm. Leo was tapping his fingers nervously against a bronze sphere attached to his belt.

“Frank…” Tsuna said, getting everyone’s attention. “Let me down…please…”

Frank the Bear looked at us for permission. We all looked at Tsuna and each other before Jason nodded. Frank loosened his arms and Tsuna slid to the floor, falling on his knees. He was still crying.

Jason carefully walked over to Tsuna and reached for his shoulder. “Tsuna—”

“Don’t touch me.” Tsuna glared at Jason, and his eyes held so much anger in them. Tsuna picked
himself up and ran down into the ship.

“We should get going.” Jason said after watching Tsuna vanish down the stairs.

“What’s our heading then?” asked Frank.

“Greece.” I said. “We need to head to Epirus, that’s where the House of Hades is, and the Doors of Death. It’s where we’ll be able to stop monsters from coming back as quick, and hopefully, save Percy and Annabeth.”

“Are you sure Nico?” Hazel asked. “It’s going to be dangerous.”

“And Gaea is sure to have it guarded.” Jason said.

“It’s our only hope.” I said.

“Alright then.” Jason said. “Let’s head to Epirus then. Leo can you put in the coordinates? Leo?”

“What?” Leo replied, clearly not listening.

“We have a heading.” Jason said. “We should get going.”

“Oh…right.”

“Leo, are you okay?” asked Piper as she tried to comfort him. “I know we’re all hurting, but you look—”

“It’s my fault.”

“What’s your fault?” asked Frank.

“Percy and Annabeth.” Leo said. “It’s because of me that they fell.”

“How is that your fault Leo?” Hazel wondered.

“I just had to open that maldita galleta.” Leo said.

“A…a cookie?” Hazel questioned. “What does a cookie have to do with any of this?”

“Do you remember when we went looking for Celestial Bronze and ran into Nemesis?” Hazel nodded. “She gave me a fortune cookie, and told me to open it when I was in trouble for help. And I did, back when the Eidolons trapped us in Archimedes’ Workshop. I…I had to use it to get the password for the sphere.”

“But you saved us Leo,” Frank said.

“But it came with a cost!” Leo shrieked. “Nemesis is also the goddess of balance. Her help required a sacrifice!” He clutched his hair and began to pull, tears falling from his eyes. “If I knew what the cost was, if I knew this is what would have happened—”

“Oh enough of your self-loathing Valdez.” We all turned to see Tsuna standing at the entrance the ships lower levels, tightly holding onto a weird looking book. He was glaring at Leo, his eyes red from crying.

“That’s a bit harsh man.” Jason said.
“I don’t care.” Tsuna replied. “This isn’t your fault. You had to save Hazel and Frank, there’s no way you could have thought that this is what price Nemesis wanted you to pay. And what could you do? Let Frank, Hazel, and yourself get killed or captured?”

“No, but—” Leo started.

“Be quiet.” Tsuna ordered. “There is only one person to blame for what happened to Percy and Annabeth, and it’s me.”

“You can’t take all the blame for yourself.” Hazel said, trying to approach Tsuna. With a look from my best friend she stopped frozen in her tracks.

“I can, because I am the one to blame.” Tsuna argued. “Nico is too weak to Shadow Travel as it is, so he couldn’t get to them. Piper and Hazel needed to get on the ship and help Leo rig the statue. That pit was like a black hole, meaning that if Jason or Frank tried to fly down, they would have sucked in too.” Tsuna brought his book to his chest and dug his fingers into the leather. “But me? I was there. I was on the edge of the pit, and when I couldn’t reach him, I thought I could use magic to save them. And it could’ve worked…if only I was stronger…”

“Tsuna, you’re one of the strongest people I have ever met.” Jason said.

“NO, I’M NOT!!” Tsuna screamed. “I’m not strong! I’m pathetic. I have this magic, I have the power of the Sacred Regalia, but it wasn’t enough. I am so weak I couldn’t save Annabeth or my own brother.” He held out his book. “I spent all that time learning how to use magic, and when I have the right motivation to use it, I failed. I could have teleported them out of the pit, if only I was strong enough. What’s the point of being able to use magic if I can’t use it to save the people I love?”

Yelling loudly Tsuna slammed his book onto the ground, it sliding off somewhere. He fell to his knees and grabbed his shoulders, crying. I felt so bad for him. He’s been through so much in the last year, and he keep getting the short end of the stick. I wanted to go over to support him, but I don’t know what he needs right now. And no one else really knew what to do either it seemed.

After a minute of letting the tears fall, Tsuna wiped his eyes and stood up. “Leo, let’s get going. We need to get to Greece now.”

“We need some time—”

“I don’t recall giving you a choice. Pilot the ship. Now.”

“You’re not in charge Tsuna.” Jason said, placing his hand on Tsuna’s shoulder.

“Jason, I wouldn’t—” I tried to warn. Tsuna grimaced and grabbed Jason’s wrist, spinning him around and pining him to the wall.

“I really don’t care.” Tsuna said. I could feel his rage from here. “For now, you’ll do what I say. And I say let’s get going. We have to get to the Doors of Death in Epirus.” Tsuna let go of Jason and stepped away. “Jason you should be in charge from here. But we need to get going. Even as strong as they are, I don’t know how long they can survive in Tartarus…in Hell.”

Tsuna walked away, everyone avoiding him. Piper rubbed Jason’s shoulder to soothe him. He’s obviously mad, but…we all are. While we’re all blaming ourselves, Tsuna is taking this a lot harder than everyone else is, and they don’t understand.

I’m the only one on this ship that knows Tsuna. I know how he loves unconditionally. I was there
for him when Percy disappeared. He didn’t take it well, in fact he cried into my shoulder until he agreed to help take him search for Percy. I know the pain of loss, but Tsuna has lost the person he cares about most twice now.

When everyone went to get the ship heading towards Greece, I told Hazel I was going to lay down for a little bit. She whole heartedly agreed, even insisted that I ate a bit more Ambrosia and something more Mortal friendly to ‘get me meat on my bones.’ On our way into the ship’s interior, I ended up stepping on Tsuna’s book. I grabbed it and held it in a pocket inside my jacket. Hazel led me to her bedroom and laid me down. She tried to reach down to take the Magatama off my neck, but I pushed her hand away.

“Tsuna gave me this so I could heal.” I explained. “And I think it’s working.” The three remaining Jewels were glowing dimly, but they were still giving off this comforting warmth, reminding me of the sun from when I was a kid in Venice.

“If you say so…” Hazel said. “Are you sure Tsuna is going to be okay? I’ve never seen him that angry.”

“He’s hurting Hazel.” I said.

“We’re all hurting.”

“I know, but Tsuna…he’s…he’s fragile. When he loves someone, he loves them with all his heart, and he can’t bare to lose anyone. You never saw him after Hera kidnapped Percy. He was a mess. Annabeth was too, but Tsuna comforted her, while she didn’t seem to think about how he was feeling.” I brought my legs to my chest. “There was this one time, when he, Percy and I went to Japan. When we were in the temple designed to protect the Jewels, a minor god, a nature spirit really, used the Yata no Kagami, Tsuna’s Mirror, to make him believe me and Percy were killed. He told me later what he went through, how he blamed himself so much that he even swore to have the Olympians kill him in order to pay for our deaths.”

“Gods…” gasped Hazel.

“Right now, I think he just needs some time alone.” I said. “He needs to think and calm down. I know he’s sorry for what he did to Jason and the mean things he said. Once he calms down, he’ll apologize, I’m sure.”

“Okay, I’ll let the others know. Not that they want to be around Tsuna right now. You could feel his anger from a mile away. But you should rest for now. The Death Trance couldn’t have given you any real rest.”

I nodded. “You’re right.” I took off my jacket and laid my head down on the pillow. Hazel brought the blanket up and tucked me in.

“Sleep well Nico.” She said, kissing my forehead.

“I will Hazel.” I said smiling. She left the room and turned the light out as she did so. I closed my eyes and tried to sleep.

I kept tossing and turning, not being able to sleep despite how exhausted my body is. Every time I closed my eyes I kept seeing the horrors of Tartarus, the nightmares I was cursed with when I was in the Death Trance, and I kept imaging what Percy and Annabeth are going through. I threw the blanket over my head and kept trying to sleep.

It didn’t end up working because a couple of hours later I sat up and turned on the light.
Looking out the porthole I saw that it had gotten darker outside. As I reached for my jacket I felt Tsuna’s book in the pocket. Curious, I grabbed it and looked through it.

Inside were weird letters and diagrams that even if I didn’t have Dyslexia I wouldn’t be able to make heads or tails of it. I don’t know how Tsuna could read it. I still can’t even believe he could use magic. It’s not like what I’ve seen the Children of Hecate do. I wonder if it’s a Shinto thing.

Deciding to get up since I couldn’t sleep, I put on my jacket and went to the deck to look for Tsuna. He should have calmed down some by now. Everyone else must have been asleep or doing something since I couldn’t hear them around.

It didn’t take long for me to find Tsuna. He was standing next to the masthead. He wasn’t doing anything other than stare up into the clouds.

“Shouldn’t you be asleep?” he asked out of nowhere.

“How did you know I was here?” I asked.

He looked over his shoulder to look at me. “I always know when you’re around.” That made me stop in my track. I didn’t know how to react to that. Thank the gods that he faced forwards again, otherwise he would have seen my face turn bright red.

“Uh, what you did at the Colosseum...” I started, wanting to get to a different topic. “All that ice, it was amazing.”

“If only I could control it.” Tsuna said, not even looking at me as I stood next to him.

“Where did you even learn to use magic? Is it something about being a Shinto demigod?”

“No, nothing as simple as that. It’s a long story.”

“I don’t have anywhere to be.”

Tsuna sighed and turned his head towards me. “I’m really not in the mood to talk Nico.”

“You need to talk though.”

“You’re the king of not talking about personal issues.”

“You don’t need to be an ass.”

“How do you expect me to act?! I lost my brother for the second time!”

“Because I hate watching you hate yourself for something you can’t control!”

“That’s the point Nico! I can’t control my magic! No matter how hard I try, no matter how much I practice, it only works when it wants to! The one time that I needed it to work, it didn’t.” Tears pooled in the corner of his eyes before they streamed down his face. “It didn’t work...”

I just stared at him, unsure how I could comfort him. “I wish I could help you Tsuna, I really do. But I can’t unless you talk to me.” He didn’t say anything. I know I wasn’t going to get through to him, so I sighed. I placed his book on the railing and slid it over to him. “I don’t understand how you did it, but when you get control, I know it will help us on our way to Greece.” I carefully reached out and touched his arm, making him tense up. “I believe in you Tsuna. I know you will make this power your own.” He still needs time alone, so I decided to leave him alone. “Thank you
for risking your life to save me by the way. And...while we were separated...I missed you.”

Tsuna was quiet for a minute, so I decided to simply leave. “I’d do anything to save you Nico.” Tsuna said. I could barely hear him say it. “I care about you more than anything.” My heart started beating really fast.

I shook my head and went to the entry way. But instead of going all the way inside, I stood just inside. Turning back, I watched as Tsuna stood there. Tsuna then reached for his book and stared at it before he held it over his shoulder like he was going to throw it over the edge of the ship. But he stopped himself from before he did. It was like he was having a war within himself over that book. He eventually lowered his arms, the book slipping through his fingers and crashing onto the floor, with Tsuna collapsing on his knees right after.

“Tsuna…” I whispered.

Just as I was about to go to him, he let out this primal scream that shook me to my core. As his scream rang through the air the ship began to shake as wind started blowing harshly. Lightning cracked the sky and nearly blinded me. Rain started pelting the ship. It was like the weather was responding to Tsuna. Oh right. Son of the storm god.

As fast as this storm came, it was over. Tsuna stared crying so loud, even with his face buried in his hand. His shoulders shook with each sob that racked his body. Just as I took a step to check on him someone grabbed my wrist. I turned to see Jason, who shook his head, a silent message to leave Tsuna alone. I nodded and he let go of me.

We both watched as Tsuna cried. If this was the only way for him to let out all of his anger, then so be it. I just wish I could help him. As me and Jason watched Tsuna cry something strange happened. A light snow began to fall, the flakes barely clinging to the ship, and barely sticking to Tsuna. I don’t think Tsuna even noticed it. I could feel the cold through my jacket, despite it being summer in Italy. It was like Tsuna wasn’t bothered by the cold at all.

End Notes

Comments and kudos are appreciated.

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