I'm Begging You, Please Don't Go

by fistitout

Summary

Since the day he was born, Percy’s destined to rule his kingdom and marry a beautiful princess.

Somewhere along the way, he sorta fell in love with Annabeth Chase, the outcast daughter of Athena stuck in Poseidon’s kingdom.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
Annabeth Chase didn’t belong.

She was a daughter of Athena in Poseidon’s kingdom. She was an outcast, shunned and ridiculed by most, even her own family. She had accepted she’d never fit in, a long time ago. Not long after, she decided she would just let their words roll off her back. They were just a bunch of insignificant mortals anyway. Who cares what they think? Certainly not her.

She dressed more freely, once she let go of the weight of fitting in. She could be whoever she wanted, wear whatever, act however. Either way, no one would still like her.

And Annabeth decided, a warm day when she was fourteen, that she’d rather be feared and avoided then outcasted and avoided.

The next morning, she went into her father’s room, taking as much cash as she’d anticipated she’d need, and disappeared for three full days. She was pretty sure no one had noticed her absence, and returned that weekend changed. Her seven year old brothers stared at her as she came in, her stepmother coming from the kitchen and promptly dropping the cup in her hands.

And, she understood why they looked so shocked. Just a few days ago, she went about in light jeans and a normal tee shirt, some old converse that she wore constantly. Now she stood before them, the right half of her hair shaved to a soft buzz while the rest of her curls hung loosely. She was sporting four new piercings on her upper right ear, sparkling, silver rings. Her dark gray tank top showed off the tattoo she was sporting on her upper left arm: an owl the size of her palm with the Greek lettering ‘θαθυμθώ’. She had on black jeans, shreds threading through the material, tucked into black boots. She had on dark eyeliner and mascara, the ends of her hair dyed bright blue.

She scowled at the three, pushing her hair behind her ear. “Is there a problem?”

Her stepmother was he first to recover, frowning deeply. “Where have you been this weekend, young lady? You’ve got some nerve, coming here dressed like that.”

“I was with Thalia, my friend,” Annabeth stated. “And last I checked, I have the freedom to look however I want.”

Annabeth ended that conversation, walking—or more stomping—up the stairs.

Within the next three years, she managed to accumulate several more tattoos, along the same arm. She was just lucky she didn’t go to private school, where she’d end up having to cover her tattoos or removing her piercings. She went to the most populous high school in the kingdom, where most demigods attended, along with the prince, Perseus.

Prince Perseus just so happened to be a month younger than her, in her grade. He was a son of Poseidon, his mother the designated queen of the land. He fit the prince-persona, too: perfectly groomed black hair, strong jawline, tall with just the right amount of muscle, tan skin. He was devilishly handsome, so much it should be a crime. He always looked perfect— slacks (usually khakis) with sweaters or vests or button-down shirts, whatever the weather permitted.

In Annabeth’s book, he was a snob—a rich snob born with a silver spoon lodged down his throat. Therefore, she never actually held a conversation with him. He had friends—equally rich friends or other powerful demigods. He wasn’t in her crowd, which consisted of herself and a nice daughter of Aphrodite named Piper. They were both perceived as strange in the kingdom, since Piper didn’t...
concern herself with looks or boys like her siblings.

Unfortunately, Piper was in regular a sophomore in English II while Annabeth managed her way into AP English III. Which also happened to be the English Prince Perseus was in. Their class was small, seated in alphabetical order, which ended up with Annabeth being the first in the alphabet and Prince Perseus directly behind her.

He liked to touch her hair. A *lot*.

For most of the 75 minute class, he ran his long, nimble fingers through her curls, pulling out the knots and overall getting on her last nerve. The class was too quite, for a class in the afternoon, so she couldn’t turn and scold him.

But on this particular day in September, Mr. Blofis (the teacher) had assigned a partner assignment. Annabeth was definitely prepared to sit and wait for either someone to approach her or to get whoever was left. Until, she felt a poke in her back. Obviously, she ignored it, staring hard at her notebook. The poking continued three more times, before she turned quickly, raising a pierced eyebrow at the prince.

“What?” she hissed.

He smiled kindly at her, cradling his jaw in his hands. “Hello Annabeth Chase, fancy talking to you.”

“Why were you poking me?”

“Let’s work together,” Perseus suggested.

Annabeth scowled, but he didn’t even flinch. “*Fuck* no.”

“You hair is soft,” he pointed out.

Annabeth glared at him, before sliding from her chair. She walked up to Mr. Blofis desk, snatching up the bathroom pass before strutting from the classroom.

“Just go then,” Mr. Blofis muttered loudly.

She liked that about Mr. Blofis; he wasn’t afraid to treat her like he treated everyone else. He was fair, at least with her. He didn’t act like she would kill him with a wrong move, or that she was a disgrace and wasn’t worth his time. Almost her entire period had dyslexia, so it wasn’t like she was being singled out for mixing up words.

Her English class was on the second floor of the L building, one of the two buildings on campus that didn’t have a bathroom in it. If you were to ask Annabeth, she’d say it was shitty design, and that they should probably fix that. But there were no plans to install a bathroom, so Annabeth had to make the trek to the main building, not too far away.

She didn’t actually use the bathroom, just stood in front of the mirror for five minutes, before starting back to English. Hopefully Perseus had gotten a new partner she could stick with someone like Katie Gardner or Miranda Gardiner, or maybe Valentina Diaz.

She was walking across the courtyard, her eyes focused on some large birds flying over head, like vultures waiting on prey, when she walked right into a wall. “*Oof!*” she grunted, falling backwards. Someone reached out and grabbed her arms, steadying her.
And she was face to face with Prince Perseus. “Why hello Annabeth Chase.”

Instinctively, she scowled. Prince Perseus was, though, much stronger then her, his hands gripping her upper arms tightly. “What do you want?” Annabeth spat.

Perseus smiled, a genuine smile (he’s so sweet it was sickening). “I asked Mr. Blofis if I could go and bother you. He said no, told me to find a partner. I said you were my partner, and that I needed to make sure you weren’t ditching.” Perseus shrugged.

"I am not your fucking partner. And let go of me!"

“I’m supposed to save the damsel in distress,” Perseus pointed out.

Annabeth growled, because she was most definitely not a damsel in distress. She twisted her way out of his grip, giving him a hard shove, sending him back into the fountain.

Which she soon realized was a bad idea. Water splashed back from impact, drenching her. And Prince Perseus was completely dry.

Irrationally, Annabeth glared at him with complete anger. “You dick!” Annabeth screeched.

Perseus looked at her in horror, scrambling out of the water. Annabeth was already turned, storming back toward the English building.

“Annabeth! Annabeth wait up!” he called.

“Leave me alone!”

All this shouting was probably drawing attention from classes in session, but it wasn’t like Annabeth didn’t already have a reputation for being a public disturbance. She took the stairs two at a time, a pace that clearly wasn’t fast enough to keep Prince Perseus away.

"Why are you so mad at me?” Perseus questioned, following behind her.

“You’re snotty and a stupid prince and you’re the son of Poseidon, for the love of Athena!” Annabeth shouted.

“You can’t just make assumptions, Annabeth Chase!” He called. “We’ve still go two more years together.”

“Not if I drop out.”

“You wouldn’t do that, you don’t want to disappoint your mother.”

Annabeth turned suddenly, a low growl coming from her throat. “I do not—never have and never will—live my life, for anyone.” she stated in a steel voice. “Not my mother or father, not the gods, and especially ‘Prince Perseus’.” She said his title in a condescending tone.

Perseus huffed, his eyes trained on her nose (or new nose ring) quite obviously. He didn’t say anything, though. They remained like that for another second, before Annabeth turned, finishing her route up the stairs.

“Why are you still following me?” Annabeth grumbled.

"We’re in the same class, Annabeth Chase.”
Annabeth stepped into the hall, turning down the hall. The series of events that followed were pretty shitty, Annabeth’s opinion.

First, Annabeth had forgotten that between 1 and 1:20, the janitor mopped the second floor of the L building, using way more water than necessary. The floor was slippery with water.

Second, Annabeth had neglected the fact that it was October, the campus being heavily decorated in Halloween decorations. The sophomores were in charge of decorating the L building, and they were a sucky class. The decorations were poorly hung.

One thing led to another, and a large, fuzzy spider fell from the ceiling and right on her head. Her brain stopped processing all and any information. She barely registered her scream, her ears ringing loudly as she stumbled backwards, tripping over her own feet (and the water). The spice fell in front of her as she landed hard on her butt, scrambling backwards.

Annabeth was stopped only when she felt hands on her shoulder. She was being shaken. Her senses came back to her like a freight train, her heart beating wildly in her chest, a fire of pain tearing through her leg. Someone took hold of her head, and she was staring into pretty, green eyes.

She was struggling to find her breathing.

“Come on, get up,” Perseus goaded.

Her hands were shaking—no, she was shaking. And then she was being lifted up, hauled in Perseus’s arms brid style as he carried her across the hall and into a supply closet. She hid her face in his chest, breathing in his scent: he smelt like the sea. Like, she was at the beach, a nice breeze blowing. Normally, Annabeth hated the beach, cause of her mother and Poseidon’s rivalry. But he smell, it was calming, soothing, relaxing. She took a few deep breaths, collecting her bearings.

“Put me down,” she grumbled.

“You’ve got a strong grip on my shirt,” Perseus pointed out. Annabeth hadn’t realized she was clutching his shirt, immediately releasing it.

Perseus slowly set her down. As she put weight on her legs, a burning pain shot through her left. She muffled a yelp, stumbling backwards and into Perseus’s arms. “Are you okay?” Perseus asked, his voice laced with concern.

Annabeth wanted to say yes; she wanted him to just leave her alone. There was no way, however, to get away with lying, so she shook her head. In a second, she was being hauled up on top of boxes, Perseus then kneeling down in front of her.

"Where does it hurt?"

"Stop being all nice," she answered.

Perseus looked up at her, raising an eyebrow. “Don’t make this difficult, Annabeth Chase.”

She huffed, rolling her eyes. “Don’t make this worse for you, Annabeth.”

“My leg kinda hurts,” she mumbled.

“Which one?”

“Left.”
He softly touched her left knee. He moved slowly, putting a slight pressure against her leg. Down he went, watching her neutral expression until he reached her ankle. Annabeth hissed, retracting her leg back.

"I believe," Perseus said, eyeing her. "You’ve sprained your ankle.”

“What was your first clue, genius?”

Perseus frowned. “You’re being very difficult, Annabeth Chase. And by the way, you can just call me Percy, like everyone else does.”

“You see the difference in that, is that they want to be your friend,” Annabeth stated. “I don’t like you. I don’t want to be your friend, I don’t want to address you by your nickname. I don’t even want to be in this fucking closet right now!”

“Then leave!” Perseus snapped. “Just get out then! Get up and walk out of here!”

Annabeth scowled, pushing off of the crates and promptly crumbling to the ground with a cry of pain. She swallowed thickly, moving into a sitting position.

"Are you ready to stop being difficult, Annabeth?” Perseus asked.

She nodded gravely.

Perseus sat next to her. “You should go home. There’s no point in staying if you can’t walk. Plus, you’d probably have some ambrosia or something there.”

“There’s none here?”

Perseus shook his head sadly. “A few years ago this kid faked a monster attack to get some nectar. Spontaneous combustion, lawsuit, all that stuff. No school’s allowed to carry any. In the handbook—that you signed to go here—you’ve agreed to be responsible for your own nectar and or ambrosia.”

“Then where’s your ambrosia?” Annabeth pointed out.

“Gave my last piece to this freshman; he had shown up late this morning cause of an encounter with a hellhound.” Perseus explained.

“How noble of you,” she mocked.

Perseus shrugged, not catching her tone. “I’ll drive you home,” he offered.

“I don’t need your—“

“Holy Hera you’re stubborn,” he interrupted. “Look, I know you ride that motorcycle to school everyday. You can’t do that with a hopefully sprained ankle.”

“Hopefully?”

“If it’s broken it’ll take longer to heal, no matter how much ambrosia or nectar you use.” Perseus explained. “Anyway, your next class is all the way across campus. You won’t even make it back to Paul’s room—“

“Paul?”

“—with that leg.” Perseus finished, ignoring her comment. “Just…just let me drive you home, and
take care of you. Unless you’ve got someone at home waiting to take care of you.”

Perseus knew he struck a nerve with that one. “I guess,” Annabeth mumbled quietly. “I need my bag; it’s still in Mr. Blofis’s room.”

“I’ll go get it for you,” Perseus said, standing up. “I won’t be long, I promise. Don’t inhale too many fumes and try to kill yourself or something.”

“I’m not suicidal,” she pointed out as he walked out.

Perseus drove through the kingdom, leaving behind the fancy neighborhoods and mainstream stores, into family owned, moderate homes, until they got to the outskirts, where Annabeth lived. The road was bumpy, several traffic lights broken. Sneakers tied together hung from power line after power line. Annabeth wanted to hide her face from the prince; although she acted as if it didn’t bug her, showing someone so high on the scale her house—her small and gross house in the sticks—was definitely embarrassing.

He didn’t say anything, though, just parallel parked along the curb, shutting the engine off. “You can get in the drive way,” Annabeth pointed out.

“What if your parents come home?”

Annabeth shrugged. “They won’t, by the way. It’s their annual famity reunion, this week.”

Perseus raised an eyebrow, as if asking ‘why aren’t you there?’ but didn’t say anything else. He held out his hand in front of her. “Gimme your house keys,” he said.

Annabeth dropped them in his open palm, opening the car door. Perseus got out, going around and picking her up. “Lock it please?” he asked, sliding his keys in her hand.

They got inside, Perseus kicking the door closed behind them. He paused to look around, whistling lowly. “Nice place, Chase,” he said.

“You don’t have to lie.”

“Do you wanna go to your room?” Perseus asked. “And I’m not lying. It’s nice and homey. Seems…relaxing.”

Annabeth hummed, just agreeing blindly, as he reached the top of the stairs. He opened her room door, depositing her on the bed before looking around. “It’s very…it’s very pink.”

Annabeth raised an eyebrow at him. “Were you expecting something else?”

“I don’t imagine what your bedroom looks like, if that’s what you’re implying,” he clarified. “But if I had, I wouldn’t expect pink.”

“It’s been this color since the day I came,” she said. “I only freshen it up, every few years.”

“Didn’t think you’d ever even like pink.”

Annabeth laughed dryly. “You’d be surprised, your highness.”

Perseus scowled, turning to look at her. “Why do you love mocking me, Annabeth? Just call me Percy.”
“I’m not your friend.”

“I don’t care, okay? Just stop saying ‘your highness’ or ‘prince Perseus’ in your condescending tone.”

“Well, Percy,” Annabeth said. “Why are you still here?”

“Ambrosia, nectar. Where is it?” Percy asked.

“There’s something under my bed. It’s in a red shoe box, size 13.”

“You’re a size 13?” Percy asked, raising an eyebrow.

“No, I’m a size six. That’s baby sizes, idiot. It’s a shoe box, I’ve had, since I was young and junk.” Annabeth shrugged.

Percy sat on the floor, sticking his head and arms under her bed. “Fucking Hades, it’s a mess down here. Ah! It’s a blade! Why do you have weapons down here? It’s covered in spiderwebs, uck. Where even is it, Annabeth Chase?”

“Keep looking, Pri—I mean Percy.”

Percy continued to mutter things about spiders and dust, before emerging again, holding the red shoebox. He placed it carefully on her bed, smiling triumphantly. “Ta-da!”

Annabeth rolled her eyes without any actual meaning, pulling the box open. “Stepmother doesn’t like when I’ve got demigod shit lying around. Says it’s a danger to her children.” Annabeth scoffed, shaking her head. “Everything I’ve got fits in this box, in case I gotta make an emergency run. I take my sword with me to school—Chiron always says to keep a weapon handy. But, I keep a handy dagger here, just in case.”

“You’re so prepared.”

“I like to think of it more as ‘world ending supplies’,,” Annabeth smiling slightly. She continued rummaging through the box, before pulling out a small, vile, barely the size of her palm. Inside, it contained a thick, sloshy, dark green liquid.

"Here’s what you’re gonna do,” Annabeth said. “Go downstairs, in the kitchen. Go to the blender. Dumb this shit in there, pour in a half cup of milk, take some of those gross greens in the fridge and add three-fourths a cup of that, blend it up real nice and smooth, and bring it back.”

Percy made a face. “That sounds disgusting.”

Annabeth waved him off, watching as he left her room, leaving her door open. Annabeth looked down at her open box, covering the opening quickly. She picked it up, doing her best to toss it under the bed, before sitting up straight, sighing heavily.

'Might as well get changed,' she thought, moving uncomfortably in her tight jeans.

She managed to get her right boot off, glaring angrily at her left before moving on to her shirt. She pulled off her black, long-sleeved, crop top, tossing it across the room, before twisting on her bed, leaning over to rummage through her drawers. She grabbed a plain white tee shirt, pulling it on before getting to work on getting her other shoe off. She hit her bottom lip, drawing blood and nearly blacking out before pulling her shoe off, throwing it at the wall in frustration.
“Stupid ankle,” she muttered.

Before she could do anymore damage, Percy returned, carrying both the vile of nectar and Annabeth’s juice. “You changed.” he noticed.

"Barely,” she muttered. "Gimme that, Percy. And drop the rest back in the box too.”

Annabeth paid no mind to Percy as he did as told, before sitting down on her carpet, watching as she forced the mixture down. “What is that, anyway?” Percy asked.

“Nectar.”

“Really? I had no idea.”

Annabeth rolled her eyes before tilting her head back, swallowing the remaining drops. “Why I have to put all that stuff in it?”

“You just don’t stop, do you?” Annabeth asked, avoiding the question.

“Annabeth Chase, I’m being serious.”

“Cause you’re a prince, who likes to be all prince-ly and save ‘damsels in distress’ to get your prince status filled and shit.”

Percy gave her a look, which she simply shrugged. “No other reason for to kidnap me and bring me here,”

“This is your house,” he deadpanned.

“Ah,” Annabeth held up a finger, shaking her head. “This is my dad’s house. I am trapped here until I’m eighteen. Then I can get the fuck out of this shitty kingdom.”

Percy made a face, similar to a hurt puppy—an absolutely adorable hurt puppy, Annabeth noticed. She knew what she had said had hurt him. He was the prince, after all. His mom made all the final decisions, she was queen. He’d be next in line for the throne, official king on his eighteenth birthday in two years (Annabeth had Government this year, unsurprisingly with Percy. It must be weird having to study these things, knowing it’s your only future career).

“Why do you hate it here so much?”

“Why do you ask so many questions?”

“I’m curious,” Percy said, shrugging. “I want to know how to make everyone happy. Or, at least, make you happy.”

“I’d be happy if you stopped talking.”

“You’re avoiding the question, Annabeth Chase,” he pointed out.

Annabeth placed her cup on her bedside table, before laying back on her bed. “I’m not telling you. It’s not your business.”

“But I can try and fix it.”

Annabeth scoffed. “As if anyone can fix me. I’ve got too many problems that you most certainly can’t fix.”
It was quiet for a moment. Annabeth refused to look at Percy—to see his stupid green eyes searching for answers. It wasn’t like they were on the surface (they were so far down that sometimes she didn’t even know if they were there). But there was just something about him that made her want to just… just break down every wall she’d spent her entire life building.

“Date me.”

Annabeth choked on air, coughing roughly. “Excuse me?” she said harshly, sitting up to glare at him. He didn’t even flinch, a stupid, casual smile on his face.

“Go on a date with me.” Percy clarified. “We could see a movie, or get some dinner. Maybe ride some pegasi or—“

“No.”

Percy raised an eyebrow in question. “Get out of my house, Percy.”

“Why? Why won’t you date?”

Annabeth clenched her fists, turning her glare to her window. “I said get out.”

Percy stood up, but instead of moving to the door he stood over her, arms crossed challengingly. “You can’t avoid every question I ask.”

“Get the fuck out of my house,” she spat, glaring up at him.

“I thought you said this wasn’t—“

“I said out!” Annabeth shouted furiously.

“I don’t even know what I did wrong!” Percy defended.

“Just leave me alone! Get out and leave me alone!”

Percy looked as if he were going to put up a fight, but ultimately decided to leave it at that, quietly exiting her room. Annabeth fell back on her bed, closing her eyes and listening to the sounds of Prince Percy leaving her house and driving away.
we were both young when i first saw you

Piper McLean

7:09 am

Do you need a ride?

7:11 am

Yeah sure

7:12 am

K. Be there in about 5 min

The nectar had done its trick; Annabeth was sure that her ankle wasn’t sprained (or broken) anymore, though it was still sore. Either way, she had left her motorcycle at school (since, you know, Percy took her home). She’d have had to walk, if not for Piper McLean, the kindest soul she knew.

Annabeth had known Piper since the previous year, since Piper was in the year below. That didn’t change the fact Piper was in many of Annabeth’s classes then, and now (like Algebra 2, her elective, her lunch and homeroom, AP Biology, and Spanish 3). Like Mr. Blofis, Piper wasn’t afraid of her. She made that pretty clear the day she dragged Annabeth by her hair to the library (“I don’t care how cute he is, let me go!”).

If you had asked Annabeth two years ago if she would be friends (maybe even best friends) with someone like Piper McLean, she’d have punched you in the face. Piper was a member of one of the wealthiest families in the kingdom. It didn’t help the fact that she was also very pretty (some might say beautiful), being that her father was a handsome movie star and her mother was Aphrodite (the goddess).

She didn’t let the fame and beauty go to her head, though. She wasn’t stuck up or snotty or threw her name around. She acted like a normal person, and treated everyone as equally as she felt they deserved (meaning, she was bitchy to bitchy people).

Annabeth sat on the porch steps, waiting, until Piper pulled up approximately 9 minutes later. Annabeth walked to the end of the driveway, ducking into the passenger seat. Piper was driving again before Annabeth was even fully seat.

“Morning bitch,” Piper greeted. “Eat?”

“I’m fucking starving,” Annabeth said. “But we’re gonna be late.”

Piper scoffed. “You don’t care.”

“I do, actually,” Annabeth countered. “We’ve got Demigod 101 this morning. I heard on the nerd web that Chiron’s giving us a project today, and I do not want to end up in a group with you or some other loser.”
Piper flipped her off casually. “Lucky for you, I stopped for some muffins on my way.”

“Really?” Annabeth raised an eyebrow.

“Oh yeah. Three large, double chocolate chip for your fatass, and some chocolate chip for me. And I got you coffee.”

“A vanilla bean—“

“frap with 2 pumps of caramel, 2 pumps of toffee nut, and a caramel drizzle.” Piper stated.

Annabeth smiled genuinely. “Aw, you’re amazing.”

“So I’ve been told,” Piper said, brushing her off. “It’s in the cup holder, btw. Muffins are in the backseat. Enjoy, before Mr. Tucker catches you eating.”

Annabeth let out a chuckle, reaching into the backseat for the bag. She pulled out a muffin, letting the scent of still warm chocolate fill the car. “I bet he’s already pissed at me leaving my bike in the parking lot.”

“You are in for some serious shit today, Annabeth,” Piper laughed. “So…um…where’d you go yesterday?”

“What’d you mean?”

“I didn’t see you in last period, so I asked around. Jason Grace said you went to the bathroom and never came back. What’s that all about?”

“Sprained my ankle, went home.” Annabeth said simply, before ripping off a chunk of her muffin.

Piper hummed, leaving the car in almost silence, save the engine and the low radio. Five minutes in, they were out of the common place and into the more expensive, lavish region. They got to school with seven minutes to spare, heading straight to Demiology.

“Morning Annabeth Chase,” Percy chimed, standing next to her usual seat.

Annabeth frowned, raising an eyebrow at him. “Fuck off,—what’s your last name?”

“Jackson.”

“Fuck off, Jackson.”

Percy simply smiled, eyes scanning over her body. “I see you’re upright.”

“Stop checking me out, Jackson.” Annabeth countered. “And get away from my seat.”

“Date me.”

“I’d rather shoot myself in the mouth.”

Percy clicked his tongue, the 8 o’clock bell ringing. “I know you wouldn’t. I’m charming.”

“You’re a dick.”

“A charming dick.”

Chiron, the famed-centaur who was known for training demigods, entered the classroom.
"Just...can you fuck off?"

“Date me.”

“Mr. Jackson and Ms. Chase. If you wouldn’t mind, please take your seats.” Chiron announced, drawing snickers from the rest of the class.

Annabeth turned, shooting a glare at those in the back of the room, reducing them to quiet. She went around Percy, sliding into her seat. Not a second later, an announcement rang. “Chiron, if you could please send Annabeth Chase to the Dean of Students office.”

Annabeth made eye contact with the centaur, sliding out of her chair. “She’s on her way.”

Annabeth and Mr. Tucker (the Dean of Students) had a rough history. Most of the students didn’t really like him, seeing as how—since they were teens and against most things—they got written up constantly. The hatred Annabeth generally felt when in the presence of others increased tenfold whenever she was called down to his office (at least twice a week).

Annabeth sat down with a huff in her usual chair, looking at him bored. Mr. Tucker turned from his computer, looking at Annabeth seriously. “You’re motorcycle was on school grounds over night.”

“I’m aware.”

"Are you aware that’s prohibited?”

“I went home sick yesterday, There was no way—“

“Ms. Chase,” Mr. Tucker interrupted. “I didn’t call you down here to scold or write you up.”

Annabeth raised an eyebrow in question. That was an actual surprise.

Mr. Tucker sigh, leaning back in his chair. “A student came by after school yesterday, to explain. We came to the conclusion to put a boot on your bike, to prevent anyone from removing it from the property. And the fee has already been paid. Just remember to see me after school to release your vehicle.”

Annabeth glared at the wall behind him. Only one person would do something like. She focused on Mr. Tucker, nodding before leaving, walking with her fists clenched at her side.

Percy could feel tapping against his neck. It wasn’t something unusual, seeing as only Jason knew how someone touching his neck made him shiver violently, and would do it to purpose aggravate him (or get his attention in a emergency). The first two times, he ignored it, trying to concentrate on what Chiron was saying. After the third time, Percy leaned his head back, tilting it to the side.

“What did you do to Annabeth Chase?” Jason whispered in his ear, saying her name as if it were a disease.

Percy shrugged. “She’s kinda cute,” he whispered.

“She’s going to kill you.”

“She’s all bark and no bite.”

“Not necessarily true,” Jason whispered. “She bit Drew Tanaka last year.”
“But Drew Tanaka’s a bitch. She probably deserved.”

“She bit someone! You don’t go biting people!” Jason whispered harshly.

Chiron sent them both a look. “Problem, gentlemen?”

“None at all,” Percy replied, fixing himself in his seat.

“Later,” Jason whispered, before leaning back in his seat.

Not long after, Annabeth Chase returned, her jaw set as if she were holding back unabashed anger. Percy openly stared at her, watching as she walked across the room before dropping in her seat. Annabeth Chase was definitely someone he had had a mild obsession with for a while now (close to five years now).

His first day outside of the castle, coincided with the first day of seventh grade. Annabeth was just like everyone else—quite and mundane, dressed in her uniform, nothing special. Percy had definitely noticed how pretty she was—the way her hair was perfectly curled around her shoulders, so natural and so…princess-like; or her shy smile and her calculating (sometimes scary) grey eyes. She wasn’t the hot topic in seventh grade, seeing as she didn’t get (visible) boobs till like, ninth, tenth grade. And weigh in the fact that she was a daughter of Athena in Poseidon’s kingdom, that always found its way into conversation.

Still, Percy was infatuated with the thought of Annabeth Chase. He’d seen her fight a monster too—she wasn’t a weak damsel in distress. She was tough, especially for a thirteen year old. He never talked to her, though. She didn’t talk to anyone, ever, and everyone seemed to go berserk at the idea of the prince in their school. Things didn’t change for eighth grade either.

It was all pretty normal until the start of ninth grade. It took the whole of September to release that Annabeth had gone to the same school as him—she looked so different. She had matured over the summer, definitely taking advantage of their new freedom in outfit choice. She had shaved half of her head to blonde stubble, dyeing the ends of the rest bright blue. Blue! Percy loves blue.

Annabeth came to school with multiple piercings and a handful of tattoos, straying completely from the quiet, primed and proper private school girl Percy was used to, making him wonder if she’d been like that the whole time. She was terrifying, though. It was like she was asking for people to not like her.

Annabeth turned, giving Percy a glare, as if saying ‘Quit staring.’

He smiled softly, turning in his chair to actually pay attention.

"I need you to get into pairs, preferably with someone not of your same parentage.” Chiron announced. “Maybe mortal and demigod pairs? Five minutes to figure it out. If you don’t have an answer, I will place you in groups myself.”

With a nod, Chiron moved to his desk, leaving the class to the madness of choosing partners. Percy turned, facing a smirking Jason. “Partners.” Jason stated, acting as if it were a fact of life (it usually was).

"Um, no.” Jason’s face fell. “Work with Piper.”

“I wanna work with you,” he whined.

“And I wanna work with Annabeth, But Annabeth wants to work with Piper. So you work with
Piper, which means I get to work with Annabeth. We both win.”

Jason furrowed his brows together. “But I don’t win, Piper doesn’t, and neither does Annabeth,” he pointed out.

“It’ll work out in the long run.”

Jason groaned, dropping his head. “Percy, you aren’t the Oracle. You always say it’ll work out in the long run, and so far nothing’s happened.”

Percy shrugged innocently. “More time. Just trust me, Jace. When have I ever been wrong?”

Percy turned, avoiding Jason’s pointed look. He watched as the centaur went to work writing down the eighteen names of his students on the whiteboard. Once he’d finished, he turned to the class.

“Anyone ready?” Chiron asked.

Jason’s hand shot up (which wasn’t a strange occurrence with his star-student behavior). “Yes Mr. Grace?”

Jason replied, “Piper McLean.”

Percy could hear Piper’s sound of shock from where he sat, the complete opposite side of the room. Chiron nodded, adding her name beside Jason’s and erasing it from the board. Slowly, the remainder of the class picked out their partners, Percy watching idly until only he and Annabeth remained.

Percy felt pretty triumphant when he was partnered with Annabeth Chase, although he could hear people around him muttering apologies, as if it were their faults. Though, none of them would have chosen her.

“Imagine,” Chiron began. “Your science class. You have a partner, and they’re your partner for the semester. Now, that is how this will work. For anything partner related—projects, sparing, everything really—this is who you will work with until next semester. For the remainder of class, you and your partner will discuss your strengths and weaknesses—let it be physically, mentally, socially, whatever. Create a list and submit on paper.”

“Good luck,” Jason mumbled, as Percy stood, moving to the back of the room to take Piper’s seat next to Annabeth.

Annabeth dragged the nos vacant desk next to him, dropping down heavily. “What do you want from me?” she demanded. “First you force me to work with you in English, then you act all nice and shit and pay the stupid parking fee and now you’re forcing me to work with you again? I don’t understand!”

“A date,” Percy answered simply.

Annabeth narrowed her eyes. “I am this close to ripping your fucking heart out of your chest.”

“I’ll add that to the list.” She raised an eyebrow in question, causing him to smile endearingly. “The assignment. You know, so we don’t get an F. I thought you cared about grades?”

“Don’t put words in my mouth, Jack-ass.”

“I see we’re on a nickname basis, Annabeth Chase.”

Annabeth right eye twitched in aggravation. She looked cute when agitated. He’d tell her that, too. “You’re cute when you’re mad.”
“I swear to god I am gonna fucking murder you,” she said in a low, dark voice.

Percy smiled endearingly. ‘She’s so cute when she threatens murder,’ he thought.

It wasn’t even noon yet and Annabeth already had a headache, named Percy Jackson.

No matter what she said, he just wouldn’t get offended. He’d just smile the perfect, prince smile of his and say something sweet. His polite, adorable nature was just so aggravating. After a slow, annoying, seventy five minutes, the bell finally rung. Annabeth shouldered her bag, rushing out of the classroom.

Her next class, Government, was just downstairs. She shoved through the crowded hall, before getting stuck behind a slow moving, talking group of friends. She counted down from ten, waiting for one of them to move. When that failed, she pushed one of them—a short, redhead boy—against the railing. “Dude what the fuck?” the smaller boy asked, frustrated, shooting a glare her way.

“Out of my way, or next time you’re going over,” Annabeth threatened.

"Fuck off," a little blonde commented.

“Gladly,” she said sarcastically, rolling her eyes as she moved down the stairs.

She heard someone call “Bitch,” after her.

It wasn’t anything she wasn’t used to. She actually had an encounter with the same group at least twice a week. They were just some annoying sophomores who thought they were the shit anyway.

She got to her Government class, sliding into her seat in the back row. She didn’t have any friends or acquaintance in the class (as per usual). She glanced around the room, her eyes falling on the whiteboard, reading the agenda for the day.

"Why hello Annabeth Chase, fancy seeing you here,” Percy greeted, sliding into the seat beside her.

Annabeth rolled her eyes. “Shouldn’t you be sitting with your friends?”

“Date me.”

“Stop avoiding my question,” Annabeth countered.

“Once you stop avoiding mine,” he interjected. “And I am sitting with my friend. Her name is Annabeth Chase, and she’s pretty awesome.”

“I swear to god Jackson, I will throttle you in your sleep.”

“I see you’re getting more creative with your death threats. Never heard that one before.” Percy pointed out.

“Literally fuck off.”

Percy let out a short laugh, turning in his new seat. With a sigh, Annabeth pulled out her notebook, flipping to a mostly blank page before tacking the date in the margins, tapping her pen on the page. She glanced at Percy, seeing him getting his own supplies ready. He wasn’t watching her or anything. It was strange, to say the least, that he wasn’t bothering her. With his sudden interest in making her life hell—what was she thinking? Percy wasn’t doing anything to her; it was stupid, it
was all stupid. He wasn’t suddenly interested in her, he’d simply been dared to rope the outcast into a
date.

‘That’s the only logical explanation a prince would ask someone like me out anyway.’

Annabeth sighed again, pushing her hair behind her ear before the bell rung, signaling the beginning
of class. Mr. Rojas shut the door quickly, taking three long strides to the middle of the room. It was
only mid-September, but Annabeth was already sick of this class. It was basically Mr. Rojas teaching
the class the ‘struggle’ that would be the rest of Percy’s life.

Annabeth took some basic notes, mostly things she didn’t already know from the reading, drawing
lazily wherever she could. The eighty minute class drowned on slowly, Annabeth glanced at the
clock every few minutes, waiting for the bell to finally ring.

“Pretty drawings,” Percy whispered to her.

She gave him a bored look, not bothering with a response. He could try all he wanted, but she was
not falling for his games.

“Hey Perce,” Grover Underwood said, catching his attention. “Where were you in Government
today?”

“Yeah man,” Jason chimed. “Didn’t see you.”

“I was there,” Percy stated. “I was sitting with my new friend Annabeth.”

Percy noticed the blonde walking past them. “We aren’t friends, Perseus,” she pointed out.

"You love me," he said.

“Fuck off.”

Percy smiled, watching her walk to her motorcycle across the parking lot. He then looked at his own
friends, seeing them staring at him in disbelief. “Why, the fuck, are you socializing with her?” Jason
asked, slowly, with an undertone of disgust.

"She’s not even scary,” Percy stated.

Jason’s eyes bugged out. “Did you forget she bit someone!”

“You reminded me earlier today,” Percy grumbled.

Jason gaped, slapping Grover’s shoulder. “Dude! Tell him he’s being a fucking idiot!”

Grover shrugged. “Have you met Annabeth? She’s scary, yeah. But I’m on her good side, unlike
any of you.”

Percy raised an eyebrow. “Since when have you and Annabeth been friends?”

Grover shrugged, his posture stiff. “Not my story to tell.”

“If you two are such great friends, why don’t you ask her?” Jason challenged.

Percy hummed. “I will.”
The blonde was not expecting that. “Say what?”

“Oh, I’ll swing by her house later and ask her.” Percy shrugged, giving his friends a happy smile. “How hard can it be?”

Grover smirked, as if knowing something Percy didn’t. To be fair, Grover usually knew what Percy didn’t. Like, all the time. It didn’t help that, as a satyr, Grover had a lot more experience in life as Percy, seeing as he was chronologically twice his age.

“It’s very hard,” Grover pointed out, patting his friend’s shoulder.

As Grover said, it be very hard.

Percy knocked on her door graciously. After a good two minutes, the door swung open, Annabeth standing on the other side in a pristine white bathroom, her blonde hair dripping around her shoulders.

She gave him an uninterested look, simply asking, “What?”

Percy smiled perfectly, the way he’d practiced for years on end. “May I come in?”

She scowled at him. “Literally fuck off.”

He smiled brighter. Annabeth rolled her eyes, moving to close the door. Percy shoved his foot between, stopping it. “I wanna talk to you,” he continued.

“Interesting. And stop blocking my door.”

“Stop ignoring me.”

“Stop bothering me.”

‘Breathe. Just stop, and breathe,’ Percy thought. ‘You are acting really desperate. Give her space. Be cool. Just be cool.’


Annabeth seemed caught off guard. After a beat, she snuck her head around the door, slowly repeating him. “Okay?”

“Okay,” he said again. “I’ll…uh…see you tomorrow then. At school, I mean.”


She pushed the door closed, leaving Percy standing there. He sighed, muttering to himself, “Idiot,” before turning down the porch, heading back to his car. Maybe if he didn’t act so desperate he’d have a better chance.

Surprising to most people, Percy didn’t grow up in the castle. Hell, he didn’t even live in his own kingdom. For the first thirteen years of his life, he lived in a small, lawless little crap town, about ten miles from the castle with his mother. After a summer spent with Chiron, however, it was decided that he’d officially move to the castle, and attend the local middle school.

Said castle wasn’t even in the center of the kingdom. It was more so in northwest corner, between some lawless communities and the ocean. From school, it was more then a ten, maybe fifteen minute
drive. But Annabeth lived on the way outskirts, a couple of miles from some monster-infested forest, which was close to thirty minutes...from school. He spent close to an hour getting back home, sitting in complete silence.

The main gates opened automatically, the man at the post giving him the normal, fake smile as Percy drove through. Once he’d gotten through the main gates, he pulled over, grabbing his bag from the backseat before climbing out, allowing the valet to take his car to the garage.

“Have a good day, Perseus?” Mr. Carmichael asked, joining him at his side.


“Impromptu conference in Vienna this week,” Mr. Carmichael explained. “I’m your caretaker while Lady Sally is away.”

“You’re always my caretaker,” Percy muttered. He gave the elder man a look, saying, “I’m almost seventeen. I don’t need a constant babysitter.”

“You don’t know what you need I know what you need. And you need a nice, hot bath. Some relaxing music to help you focus on your studies. Maybe a nice meal. I’ll have Jeffery cook some of your favorites. Roast beef, some potato wedges, a nice Caesar salad, and some nice bubbly.”

“I’m too young to drink.”

“Oh you know what I meant.”

“Did I though?”

“You’re getting quite mouthy, Perseus,” Mr. Carmichael pointed out. “Shall I schedule some classes with Madam Jean-Fur?”

Percy stopped, giving him a look. “Her name is Ms. Jeanette Franklin, not Jean-Fur. And you don’t. I don’t have time for classes at the moment.”

“You’re just a child, Perseus. You’ve got hours to kill. Which will be done with some extra prepared-ness for your future.” Mr. Carmichael explained, as if he were an actual child. “The only way to become a great king is to prepare. And we’re running out of time, as it is. You’re already almost eighteen.”

‘I just turned sixteen.’ Percy nodded.

Mr. Carmichael smiled, pleased. “Good. Now go get out of these smelly clothes. Goodness, where were you? In the North?” He let out a laugh at his own joke. Percy was definitely not telling him about his venture to the North Side.

“Go, Perseus. I’ll be expecting you in the grand foyer of the North Tower in two hours. Homework completed and all.”

“Alright.”

“What do we say, Perseus?” Mr. Carmichael said, his voice exasperated and condescending.

Percy plastered on his ‘prince-smile’, before saying, “As you wish, Mr. Carmichael,” in a bittersweet voice.

The man seemed pleased with this response, nodding before continuing on his walk toward the main
entrance. Percy sighed, turning toward the Northern Keep—the structure that was basically all his.

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Piper McLean

4:03 pm

I’m bored.

Can I come over?

4:07 pm

Sorry, was in shower

4:08 pm

Who df uses punctuation

4:09 pm

People who need to practice perfect grammar to actually get a decent scholarship.

4:11

FYI don’t come over

My bitch house keeper is doing the usual, so we’re currently in a war sooooooo

Not a good idea

4:11 pm

What am I supposed to do?

4:12 pm

I’ll die of boredom

4:13 pm

Get a job, or a hobby, or some shit
Bitch called the cops. Gtg (hopefully not to jail)

Don’t call me for bail money.

4:16 pm

No promises

“You need a girlfriend.”

Percy glanced up from his laptop, raising an eyebrow at his advisor. “Excuse me?”

“Maybe that nice princess from Corinth. Or her sister.”

“Mathew, what are you talking about?” Percy asked.

“You’ll need a companion. You know, to reproduce. We can’t have Lord Poseidon burdening us without another of his spawns.”

Percy kept a straight face, ignoring the pang in his chest. “What if I don’t want a girlfriend?”

“It’s not about what you want, Perseus.” Mathew said, as if it were obvious. “It’s about the ways you can better your kingdom. Marrying a nice, beautiful, princess and producing some strong children will aid.”

“Mom only has me,” Percy pointed out. “She’s not even married.”

“Your mother wasn’t born into the throne. We don’t want to have to force someone into the thrown again.”

“What if,” Percy took a breath, leaning back in his chair. “I didn’t want to marry a princess?”

“Sure, marry some common slob, why don’t you,” Mathew scoffed. “Reminds me. You need to stop with this fascination with the Athenian.”

“Not an obsession,” he pointed out. “Also, whoever I marry, will be someone that I love. I don’t care whether she’s a princess or a common folk…or even a daughter of Athena.”

Mathew groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose. Percy forced a smile. “Kidding.”

Mathew gave him a serious look. “You’d better. I’d hate to have to explain to the castle about you and…and that she-devil.”

“Her name is Annabeth.” Percy ground out.

“I don’t care,” Mathew said. “Finish your homework. And stop with this Annabeth girl too.”

Percy shook his head, looking back at his computer. “As you wish,” he lied easily.
Annabeth woke up the next morning to a heavy, crushing weight on her chest. She grunted, her eyes flying open as she came face to face with her younger brother.

“What the hell Matt?” Annabeth grunted. “Why are you even here?”

“Bobby got sick. We came home last night, but Mommy said not to wake you up,” Matt explained. “Now it’s time for school.”

Annabeth squirmed under him. “Get off me,” she grunted. Matt let out a laugh, sliding off of her and into the corner of her bed. Annabeth got up on her elbows, glancing at her clock before turning to her brother.

“How was Virginia, Matt?”

The boy shrugged. “It was alright. I had a cheeseburger from McDonald’s. Auntie Elle sent fudge. I ate a lot of it on the drive.”

“Going to school today?”

He shook his head. “Mommy says I might be contagious. She’s taking me and Bobby to the doctor after you leave.”


“Mm, no thank you.”

Annabeth rolled her eyes. “I don’t just get to cut school whenever I want, like you. Got school and shit.”

“Mommy said you’re not supposed to curse.”

Annabeth smirked, leaning in closer to her brother, whispering, “My room, my rules.”

It seemed to dawn on him all the encounters he’d had in her room in his seven years of life. He scurried off the bed, nearly tripping as he rushed out the door. She smirked proudly, sitting up on her bed. With a sigh, she got out of bed, moving about her morning routine. About an hour after initially waking up, Annabeth was bounding down the stairs, entering the kitchen. She dropped her school bag on the counter, her stepmother barely sparing her a glance as she rummaged through the fridge.

“I need you to pick up a few things after school,” she said in lieu of greeting.

Annabeth was several inches taller than her, standing over her stepmother as she reached into the fridge. “And why would I do that?” Annabeth questioned. She pulled out some apples and a water bottle, before going back to her bag.

“Because I just put seventy-five dollars in your account and will gladly stop funding you if you don’t.”

“Good answer,” the blonde mumbled.

“I send you a list of what I need later.”

“Mhm,” Annabeth hummed. She grabbed a paper bag, dropped in one of the apples, before getting a cold sub, adding it to her lunch. She put the bag in her backpack, before slinging it over her shoulder.

“See you later,” her stepmother called as she grabbed her keys.
“Maybe,” Annabeth responded curtly.

Annabeth grabbed her helmet, exiting her house. The ride to school was uneventful. It was longer than necessary, seeing as she needed to drive all the way around the small community between the lower class and the middle class, filled with drug lords and gangs. Pardon her for not wanted to be attacked by creepy old men (although she did know people who lived there).

She pulled into her usual parking space, silencing her engine before removing her helmet, fluffing out her loose curls. She could hear the general chatter of the morning, where friends would meet up in the parking lot to discuss stupid, mindless things. She turned up the volume on her earbuds, climbing off of her motorcycle. Annabeth then made the trek across the park lot, pushing open the school doors before heading down the hall to her locker.

Piper stood, leaning against Annabeth’s locker. “Hey bitch,” the former greeted.

Annabeth rolled her eyes, shoving her away before opening her locker. “My stupid family camp back last night.” Annabeth stated. “I woke up because Matt was sitting on my fucking chest. I thought I was going to kill him. Said that his stupid clone got sick, and he might contagious. Like shithead, what if you got me sick!”

“Sounds like you had a rough morning.”

“Always,” Annabeth rolled her eyes, depositing her helmet in her locker. “Oh, and Steph wants me to go grocery shopping or some shit. Like bitch, I don’t have an actual car. How the fuck am I supposed to carry all your shit home?”

“On the bright side,” Piper said. “You only have one class with Prince Perseus today.”

Annabeth groaned. “I never thought anyone’d be mad to have class with Prince Perseus.” Piper pointed out.

Annabeth slammed her locker closed. “Why the fuck won’t he leave me alone.”

Piper shrugged. “Maybe he genuinely wants to date you,” she suggested.

Annabeth gave her a look. “Boys like Prince Perseus don’t date girls like me. It’s science, Piper.” Annabeth explained. “In Government, we all learn that the king marries a beautiful princess and they make beautiful babies and when the king dies his oldest goes in power. I am not a princess. I’m not where close to a princess. Hell, I’m a daughter of Athena, for fuck’s sake.”

Piper shrugged. “Fair point. You’re nothing compared to him.”

Annabeth glared at her, making Piper smile sheepishly. “Just summarizing what you said.”

“When you say it it’s rude. When I say it it’s—”

“Self-loathing.”

“Just shut up.”

Percy couldn’t help himself as he watch Annabeth walk past him, chatting with her own friend Piper while simultaneously blaring loud music through her headphone. If she wasn’t so infamous, she’d have walked right into several people. Most people, however, knew her face and name, and were
wise enough to move out of her way before they had to face her wrath.

‘I wonder what’s the worst thing she’s done.’ Percy thought. ‘Is Annabeth even that bad? Sure, she’s attacked a few people. Probably in good reason, though. She seems really pissed a lot of the time, too. Maybe…bad experiences? I have read that does happen to some—’


“What were you…?” Jason started, following the direction in which Percy had been looked. With a groan, he shook his head, flicking Percy’s forehead. “Stop creeping after Annabeth.”

Percy scowled. “I am not creeping. I just happen to have a mild fascination with her, as is justified. Seeing as I will be King in two years, I should know about our well-known criminals.”

“Annabeth’s not a criminal.” Grover pointed out.

“Yeah she is,” Jason argued.

Grover frowned, shaking his head. “She’s never done anything illegal, never been arrested. The scariest things about her is probably all the piercings and tattoos.”

Jason looked between he two, gaping. “Are you kidding me? Are you all forgetting all the kids she put in the hospital? She fucking bit someone.”

Percy was getting annoyed of him. “Is that the only argument you have, Jason?”

Jason huffed. “Trust me on this, Percy. I know what I’m talking about.”

Percy wasn’t too sure about that. Jason was too ‘goody-goody’ to really have any solid, concrete evidence. He was Mr. Perfect, the only son of Jupiter in the kingdom (still was more well-liked than Annabeth Chase). He was well off, living it up in Rome until recent months. He’d never had to struggle in his life.

Granted, Percy hadn’t either.

“Just let it go, man,” Grover said, patting his shoulder.

Percy huffed indignantly but complied, adjusting his bag as the bell rang. “I’ve got math, today. See you in English.” With that, Jason turned, heading in the opposite direction.

“Sometimes he can be a real dick,” Percy grumbled.

Grover nodded in agreement. “How’d your conversation with Annabeth go anyway?”

Percy shrugged. “She slammed the door in my face.”

“Classy.”

“Mr. Blofis had to leave, so I’ll be your sub. I’m sure some of you know me. I am Mrs. Healton. I’ll take attendance before any further instructions. Annabeth Chase.”

Annabeth raised her hand, barely lifting her head to acknowledge the substitute teacher. The roll call was just background noise to her, seeing as she was always first. When Mrs. Healton had finished roll, she proceeded with the assignment. “Mr. Blofis says that ‘the students will be continuing their
assignments from the previous class. They are working in pairs already assigned, as followed: Valentina Diaz and Miranda Gardiner, Katie Gardner and Will Solace, Connor Stoll and Rachel McDonnel, Percy Jackson and Annabeth Chase, and Ronnie McDonnel and Jason Grace.’ Get to working, don’t be too loud, and we won’t have a problem.”

Annabeth didn’t move, continuing to sketch in her notebook. It was turning into a really beautiful design, maybe she’d add it to her tattoo collection.

“Annabeth.”

She ignored Percy the first time he called her, continuing drawing loops in her notebook.

"Hey, Annabeth, do you mind not ignoring me? I’d rather not fail.”

“Do it alone.”

Percy groaned, making Annabeth smile in satisfaction. Maybe he’d get so annoyed he’d leave her alone. It seemed to work; Percy hadn’t said anything for a good ten minutes, not even playing with her hair or poking her neck. Of course, that only lasted ten minutes.

Percy slid up in front of her, resting his chin on her desk. With a sigh, Annabeth looked up, meeting his green eyes. She was expecting one of his charming one-liners or his proper speeches about ‘teamwork’ and ‘unity’ she’d heard him say on the news.

However, he didn’t say anything at all, just pouted. An incredibly adorable pout, like a baby seal that just made her want to give him the world. For a split second, her ‘resting bitch face’ vanished, her jaw slack as she gaped at him in wonder. Then he was grinning and she was scowling all over again.

“I knew I could break you.”

She narrowed her eyes at him. “I figured no one can be a bitch all the time. The pout usually does the trick. It’s how I constantly get out of detention with my lady teachers.”

"Completely ignoring the fact that you’re a prince.”

He shrugged. “Anyway, I just wanted to ask you if you were planning on doodling all class, like in Government, or if you wanted to do the assignment.”

“Fuck off.”

“You can’t ignore me forever.”

Annabeth raised a challenging eyebrow. “Bet I can.”

Percy smirked. “We betting now.”

“We’ve always been betting.”

Gods, was that flirting? Did she just have a flirty conversation with him? It didn’t even feel weird or fake. It felt so...normal. Like second nature.

Percy didn’t say anything, just smiled softly, his eyes bright like he got an idea. “Annabeth,” he said softly. “There’s this really pretty girl I’d like to take out, and seeing as you are also a girl—”

“I hadn’t noticed.”
“—and one of the only girls I have actual conversations with, I’d like your opinion.”

“My opinion is not free,” she pointed out. “And you talk to plenty of girls.”

Percy shrugged. “I finished the assignment already, by the way.”

Annabeth gestured for him to go on.

“So I’d like to take said girl out, to say, a movie or dinner or something. Only problem, I’ve never taken a girl out before.”

“Shocking.”

Percy gave her a pointed look; she cracked a small smile. “So I was hoping that maybe you’d accompany to one of these events and give me your girl-opinion.”

That sounded suspiciously like a date. The same date she had been avoiding for the past two days, for obvious reasons. She had to admit, though, he was getting more creative in his asks. Maybe, just maybe

"Depends," she said.

"Really?" Percy asked, a hopeful look on his face. He was really adorable, like a little kid.

Annabeth shrugging. “I guess. Though I don’t think this girl would be unsatisfied seeing as Prince Perseus is asking her out.”

“Oh, she’s not fooled by the whole ‘prince’ thing,” Percy said. “I think she wants a man who genuinely likes her. She doesn’t believe that I genuinely wanna date her, though.”

“Probably with good reason.”

Percy shrugged. “She really pretty, you know. Seems like she’s got a great personality.”

Annabeth scoffed. ‘Bullshit.” No way she had a ‘great personality’. Percy shrugged, standing up.

“After school today?” he asked.

Annabeth nodded, looking back at her notebook.

“It’s a date, then.”
and the flashbacks start

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

'Stepmother'

2:41 pm

I need rolls ziti pasta sauce and meatballs for dinner tonight

2:42 pm

Anything else I can get tomorrow

Annabeth cursed silently. She had completely forgotten that she was supposed to get groceries. Now she was supposed to ‘go out’ with Percy, too. With a sigh, she realized she have to cancel on one, and it wasn’t going to be the one supplying her steady income. Percy’d be fine, anyway. It wasn’t like this was the first time she’d rejected him (she honestly stopped counting and it had only been three days!).

She pushed thoughts of Percy and her stepmother out of her head, looking up as Piper turned around the face her. “What’re you doing this weekend?”

Annabeth shrugged. “I got some money this morning so I’m thinking getting a new tattoo. Go throw some old sketches, see what I want to be permanent.”

“I’m sure you’ll find something awesome, though I doubt you’ve got any empty space on your arm.”

“I have two, and shoulders and a neck.” Annabeth pointed out.

“Yes, but your dad was pissed when you got the birds.”

“Fuck him,” Annabeth scoffed. “My body, my choice.”

Piper let out a short laugh, before turning back around. Annabeth leaned back with a satisfied grin, picking her pen up again. “Hey, excuse me,” she heard from behind her. Annabeth turned, raising an eyebrow at Rachel Elizabeth Dare, a pale redhead who was, in fact, in a lot of her classes. She also happened to be the Oracle of Delphi, one of the most famous mortals in the kingdom.

Rachel smiled shyly. “I couldn’t help but eavesdrop on your conversation—because it was pretty interesting—and, if you’re planning on getting a new tattoo, maybe I could design it?”

Annabeth’s eyebrows nearly disappeared in her hairline. “What?”

“You’ve designed all your tats, right?”

“Most of them, yeah,” Annabeth responded.

“Well, how about a surprise tat? I promise it won’t be a dick or some crude thing like that.” Rachel explained.

Annabeth frowned, wondering why. It wasn’t like she and Rachel were friends. They weren’t on
bad terms, per se, but they never really talked much either.

“Thanks, but I’ll pass.”

“A w come on,” Rachel whined. “No art gallery will take my pieces seriously for some unknown reason. A human canvas sounds like a perfect way to get my name out there.”

Annabeth scowled. “I’m not your fucking proxy, Dare.”

Rachel raised her eyebrows in surprise. “No! That’s not what I meant! That’s not what I meant at all!”

Annabeth rolled her eyes. “Whatever.”

She began turning around, only to be stopped by Rachel. “Don’t you turn your back to me, Annabeth.”

‘She’s got spunk. Respect.’ Annabeth thought.

“What do you want from me?” Annabeth sighed.

Rachel’s face was flushed red. She glared slightly, her face serious. “I am going to design your tattoo and you are going to fucking love it or so help me I will fuck up your motorbike.”

Annabeth snorted. This girl had a lot of grit. “I’m only considering because you forcibly grabbed me. And lucky you caught me in good mood today, otherwise—“

“I don’t care,” Rachel interrupted. “Are we doing this or not?”

Annabeth pretended to think for a moment. “I’ll be at the tattoo shop on Elks Road tomorrow at ten am. Be there with something or this isn’t happening.”

“Noon.”

“This isn’t a negotiation,” Annabeth stated. “Those are my terms. Take it or leave, I don’t care.”

With that, she turned back around, shaking her pen to get some more ink.

“Five more minutes,” Grover muttered. He turned to Percy, saying, “What’re you doing this weekend?”

Percy smiled to himself. “I’m hanging with Annabeth today. Right after school, actually.”

Grover groaned, shaking his head. “You just don’t quit, do you?”

“My mommy says I’m persistent,” Percy said in a baby voice.

"For the love of Pan," Grover murmured.

Percy let out a laugh. "Relax, man. I’m a big boy, I can handle myself in a risky situation. Do you not remember who single-handed took down the Minotaur with zero training?"

“That was four years ago,” Grover pointed out. “And Annabeth isn’t a monster. She’s so much worse. She’s a teenage girl who owns a sword and a fucking dagger and can probably take you down with a Bobby pin and a lighter.”
Percy looked at him in confusion. “How do you know that?”

Grover shrugged. “You don’t need to worry about what I know about Annabeth Chase. Just know who’s always right and who’s always fucking wrong.”

“I’m not always wrong.”

Grover gave him a look. The end-of-day bell rang, the rest of the class getting up and heading to the door. “Just don’t tell Carmichael or Mathew or anyone in that stupid castle. Don’t even go there, actually.”

“You want me to lie for you?”

“It’s not lying if you don’t mention it. I’m not telling you to just be like ‘oh, you know Percy? He’s not with a daughter of Athena. No not at all.’ That would be lying.” Percy shrugged, sliding out of his seat. “If you don’t go there, then you don’t lie.”

“Your Mother would be so disappointed,” Grover sighed, shaking his head.

Percy let out a short laugh. “Tomorrow?”

Grover nodded. “See ya.”

The two parted ways, Percy heading toward the student parking lot while Grover went to the main entrance.

To say Percy was excited was an understatement. After years of silently pining, he’d finally gotten the courage to actually ask Annabeth out. Of course, it didn’t work out the first couple of times. It wasn’t like she had said no, which was the only reason why he kept asking. He wasn’t expecting it to be easy, no. It didn’t take as long as he’d anticipated to (he thought at least a few weeks before she got over herself, not three days), but he was glad.

He’d purposely parked close to her usual spot, using it as an excuse to see her at the end of the day. When he reached her, though, she was straddling her motorcycle, turning the engine on. She turned to look at him, flipping her visor opened.

“I gotta cancel, by the way,” she said. “Errands to run for my stupid stepmother.”

“Oh.” Which, okay. That hurt a lot. He could handle her rejection (he’d done so for two days) but her lying to him? That hurt way more. He remembered he telling him they were in the States for some family reunion. She didn’t have to lie to him now, she could’ve just told him to fuck off. He put on a smile though, saying, “See you Monday, then?”

“We’ll see,” she responded.

She flicked her visor down, revving the engine. Percy sighed, turning to head back to his own car.

“Stop looking like a stray puppy, Jackson.”

Percy frowned, turning around to face Annabeth. Her eyes were narrowed as she looked at him cautiously, frowning. “You’re making me feel all bad and shit.”

He raised an eyebrow.

“Look,” she sighed, pulling her helmet off. “I seriously gotta do this. Steph asked me before I left school and she already paid me for the chore. If she hadn’t paid me I sure as fuck wouldn’t be doing
“Who’s Steph?”

“Stepmother.”

“I thought,” Percy said slowly, taking a few steps toward her. “They were in America?”

“The details aren’t important,” she said. “Just…stop looking like that.”

“Like what?”

“Like, you know.” She gestured vaguely at his face. “Yeah.”

Percy chuckled. “Yeah?”

Percy smiled brighter at her blush. “Shut up,” she grumbled, looking at the ground.

“I can’t help it. Seeing you be cute makes me smile.”

If even possible, she got even more red. Percy couldn’t help his grin, watching as she dropped her head in her hands. She groaned, shaking her head before looking up at him again.

“I mean, it is Friday. I’m sure Steph wouldn’t mind if I don’t come home until later.”

Percy grinned (he was grinning pretty much constantly around her); it sounded like she was implying a way to go out with him.

“There’s a bakery, a few blocks away,” she continued. “Something fast, because I do need to get dinner.”

“Awesome!” Percy said excitedly. Annabeth raised her eyebrows in surprise; he cleared his throat, saying again, “I mean, great. Sure, whatever.”

“I’ll…um…you lead, I think. I’ll follow you, is what I…yeah.”

Annabeth smirked. “Um, yeah,” she mocked.

Percy felt his cheeks heat up, turning his head to look the other way. “Yes, Percy Jackson. I will lead, seeing as I don’t have any spare helmets and Tucker would be pissed if I left my motorcycle again.”

“Okay. That sounds…yeah.”

Annabeth chuckled, pulling her helmet back on. Percy took that as his cue to head to his car, unlocking it and tossing his bag in the passenger seat before climbing in. Once he’d turned on the engine, Annabeth peeled out of her parking space, speeding through the parking lot, narrowly avoiding other students. He followed, much more cautiously, smiling the whole way there.

Sweet on the Side was only four blocks from the high school, a cutesy little diner-styled bakery. It was owned and operated by Katie Gardiner, a daughter of Demeter who’d graduated just the year before. She had her own garden out back, growing everything the diner needed to operate. Percy was glad that Annabeth had suggested this place; it was one of his favorites and Katie was a great person.
**Annabeth got there first (obviously), standing by his door, waiting for him to climb out. She held up her helmet, saying, “Can I leave this in your car?”**

“Yeah sure,” Percy responded.

He stepped out, shuffling back to let Annabeth reach in. Once she’d closed the door, they began walking in silence to the entrance. He can hear someone from across the street talking about him; it’s definitely becoming a problem how well he can hear others talking about him. He grabs the door for Annabeth, letting her walk in first before ducking inside.

It was relatively empty for a Friday afternoon, only occupied by a group of middle schoolers huddled in one booth in the far right. Percy noticed a few of them see him, whispering to their friends about it. He shook his head, moving to slide into a booth along the wall. Annabeth slid in next to him, completely avoiding the other side of the table. She nudged his shoulder lightly. “Hey.”

Percy grinned, nudging her back. “Hi.”

“I’m considering just getting a milkshake,” Annabeth said. “These milkshakes are the bomb. Have you had before?”

Percy let out a laugh, looking down at her. “I’ve been drinking Katie’s milkshakes since we were in middle school.”

Annabeth scoffed. “Everyone knows Katie. Every fucking person.”

“It’s cause Katie is a great person,” he said, causing her to let out a soft snort.

He smiled; she was so adorable, he wanted to make her giggle and snort and laugh all day long.

One of the middle schoolers—a short blonde with pigtails, still in her uniform—leaned over the table, clearing her throat. Both demigods looking up, Percy inwardly groaning, plastering on a smile. She returned it rather shyly.

“Sorry to bother you,” she said in a soft voice. “But I couldn’t help but notice that you’re…you’re Prince Perseus.”

He nodded. “That’s true,” he said.

She smiled wider. “I knew it!” She turned, falling back to her table: “Janna! It’s him, it’s really him!”

Percy smiled politely, glancing down at Annabeth, seeing her fiddling with a fork. He leaned down, whispering in her ear, “I’m sorry about this.” She gave a curt nod.

Percy gave her one last fleeting look before returning his attention the the little girl. She smiled, twisting her smartphone in her hands. “Can I have a picture? My stupid brothers would never believe I saw Prince Perseus in person, let alone here.”

Percy was definitely used to this, agreeing in a heartbeat and leaning over the table to get in the frame. Most people—middle schoolers and adults mainly—would stop him for pictures. He was, though, more commonly known with people in and around his age. They’d gone berserk the first few years of having the prince in their class, but had eventually gotten used to it.

Once the little girl had taken a picture, she squealed happily. “Thank you! I won’t bother you again!”

Percy smiled, saying, “It was my pleasure.”
The little girl skipped away happily. Percy grinned, before turning to look at Annabeth. She didn’t look up at him, spotting a few inches away. He nudged her with his foot, but she didn’t budge. “Hey, what’s wrong?” Percy questioned.

Instead of answering, Annabeth slid out from the booth, asking, “What’d you want? I’m gonna go order.”

“A chocolate milkshake please,” he said politely. He leaned over, pulling his wallet from his back pocket.

Annabeth gave him a strange, questioning look. “What do you think you’re doing?”

“Um, paying?” Percy raised an eyebrow, pulling a twenty out. “Why?”

“Because I’m paying.”

Percy let out a laugh. “You’re funny, Annabeth.”

“I’m not—you know what? Never mind.” She snatched the bill from his hand, turning on her heels and heading to the counter.

Katie Gardiner was wiping down the counter when Annabeth approached. She raised an eyebrow at the blonde, leaning on the counter. “What brings you here, Chase?” Katie questioned.

Annabeth glanced at Percy, sitting patiently at their booth. Katie leaned over the counter, whistling lowly.

“A prince, I see. What’s that about, huh?”

Annabeth cracked a smile. “Apparently, we’re on a milkshake date.”

“Oh,” Katie gushed, leaning back. “Cute. Didn’t think you’d date anyone, really. Especially not Percy.”

“Just gimme my milkshakes, two please, both chocolate.”

Katie hummed, moving back to her milkshake machine. Annabeth rested her elbows on the counter, glancing at the clock. 3:42. Stephanie would start on pasta until around five o’clock, so she’d bail on Percy by at least 4:30. She glanced back at Percy, seeing him taking another picture with some snotty middle schooler. She rolled her eyes, forcing her gaze back to Katie.

It was stupid. Why was she getting so annoyed with him? It’s not like this was an actual date. It was just to get him off her back. It wasn’t like she was actually interested in him. Not to say he wasn’t cute—hell he was extremely hot, and at the same time adorable and cute and really charming like… like a fucking prince. It was just how he was. And she wasn’t buying into his charm. Nope, not one bit.

“Order up,” Katie slid one large, chocolate milkshake onto the counter. “That’s seven forty-nine.”

“I ordered two smalls,” Annabeth pointed out.

“It’s more romantic if you share.” Katie smirked knowingly, placing two straws on the counter. “Trust me. I have a boyfriend, you know.”
Annabeth rolled her eyes, reaching into her pocket and pulling out a ten. Katie rang her up, smiling brightly. “Have a good day. I totally won’t be watching your date.”

Annabeth gave her a bored look, staring, “I hate you” before picking up the milkshake, heading back to the table. She shot a glare toward the table, locking eyes with the middle school boy, causing him to tense up. She heard him muttered a thanks to Percy before he scurried back to his table.

Annabeth slid in across from Percy, setting down the milkshake between them. He raised an eyebrow at her, the corner of his lip quirking up slightly. “Where’s mine?” Percy asked, leaning over.

Annabeth gave him a bored look, opening up a straw and dipping it into the whipped cream. “I didn’t get you one. I don’t think you deserve any.”

Percy wasn’t fazed by her blandness, smiling endearingly. She was getting sick of his stupid smile. “Really?”

She nodded, leaning over to take a gracious slurp of the beverage. He watched her, smiling that stupid smile of his. After a prolonged period of about thirty seconds, Annabeth slid him his straw, leaning back. “Katie said that this is a ‘date-shake’ or some shit.”

“Ahh,” he said.

He definitely smiled too much, in her opinion. His stupid, charming smile, which was not making her feel anyway. She leaned forward to take another sip. Percy did the same, smiling as he sipped, mere inches from her face. Annabeth looked anywhere but his face, feeling the heat rise in her cheeks. This blushing thing was getting on her nerves.

She pulled back, crossing her arms and glaring at the ground. She could still hear him slurping at the chocolate drink; at that rate he’d drink it all (he didn’t). “Stop looking so mad,” he said, his voice sluggish as if full of milkshake.

She blew a piece of hair out of her face, turning to glare at him. "I don’t look mad,” she argued.

“Yeah you do. Your eyebrows get all scrunched up and your eyes are all scary but really pretty all at the same time,” Percy explained in a rather rushed voice.

He was a little red, not smiling widely but not frowning either. In her opinion, he look a little embarrassed. She was definitely going to milk it. She raised an eyebrow, asking “You think I’m pretty, huh?”

"More like beautiful,” He blurted, glancing down at the table. His blush deepened, his eyes going slightly wider. Annabeth smirked, resting her chin on her hand.

"I mean, look at you,” he said, trying to defend himself. He gestured to her face: “You’ve got a little dimple and those long eyelashes and an adorable freckle and whipped cream on your nose—“

“What?”

“And you’re hair is so perfect and…” he stammered, glancing from her face to her arms (or chest, she wasn’t sure yet). “A-and those tattoos are so amazing!” he gushed.

Annabeth quirked an eyebrow in surprise. She hadn’t heard that in a while (except from Rachel Dare, although she wasn’t sure that counted since she didn’t directly say it). “You like my tattoos?” Annabeth asked.
Percy nodded, grinning like a kid on monkey bars. “They’re so cool. Sometimes I wished I—”

He was cut off by a scream on the other side of the bakery. Both teens stood, turning to see the group of middle schoolers looking out the window, petrified. Annabeth followed the gaze to a giant, scaly, lizard-like monster.

“Shit,” Percy cursed. Annabeth glanced at him, catching the end of his sword materializing in his hand. He glanced at her, nodding his head to the door. With a groan, she followed him, running out and onto the sidewalk.

She could see the monster now fully, it’s nine, long heads, snapping and clawing at the terrified pedestrians. She gave Percy a fleeting look; he kept his attention on the hydra, curling his sword in his hand expertly.

Percy charged into battle, shoving two passerby’s out of the line of fire of the spray of acid. He ducked down, narrowly escaping a snapping head. This wasn’t his first encounter with a hydra; hell, he was surprised to see it back after four years of reforming. One of its legs smacked into his chest, causing him to stumble backwards, knocking the breath right out of him.

He thought back to the last time he’d fought this monster—he was around twelve, on vacation in south Florida. Him and a strangely friendly cyclops were just going in, trying to kill the beast by severing it’s heads. Except, that didn’t work out well when two more grew back in each’s place. He’d been burned bad by one of the middle heads, before being rescued by a daughter of Ares, Clarisse la Rue. They had cut off the heads and burned off the stubs until there were none left, and the monster vaporized.

He didn’t know any pyrokinetics in the area (or in general), and he didn’t know any other way to kill the hydra. Maybe someone would spread the word of the hydra and he’d get some help. For now, though, he’d have to keep it from harming people.

Percy gripped his sword tightly, catching the sun in the blade. The glow of celestial bronze attracted the attention of all nine heads. Great for pedestrians, bad for Percy. One head snapped at him, another spewing fire. He narrowly avoided the snapping head, ducking and dodging a few others. He rolled, poking and probing at an unguarded neck while trying not to sever it.

“Percy!” Close to ten feet away, Annabeth was battling the monster with a long, ivory sword. Percy looked in confusion; was that even a regulation weapon? She wielded it like an expert though. He’d never seen her in combat, and she looked like a freaking goddess. Her curls bounced with every movement, her expression hard. She bit her lip in concentration. Her movements were precise and sharp. She put the cute in execute.

His moment of distraction was ended when another leg kicked him, sending him crashing through the window of the bakery. He heard screams in his ringing ears. Black spots danced in the corner of his eyes.

‘Get up,’ he told himself, groaning slowly. He sluggishly got his feet, wincing at the sensitivity in his back. He heard another scream, this time from Annabeth. Squinting against the bright sun, he watched as Annabeth lay on the ground, spitting out blood.

‘That doesn’t look good,’ he thought. She got up, growling lowly. Percy climbed out of the mangled window, watching Annabeth charge the beast. She cut and turned and zig-zagged, ducking and dodging sprays of acid. Her ivory sword sliced off a head.
Percy wanted to scream for her to stop, but he couldn’t find his voice. Annabeth breathed out fire, burning of the stump.

His eyes went wide. Daughters of Athena don’t typically have pyrokinesis. Hell, most people don’t have pyrokinesis. She went about, cutting and firing six more heads before the hydra vaporized.

“Oh my gods.” Percy turned, seeing Katie standing from behind the counter. He wanted to apologize for destroying part of her business. Before he could get a chance, he was ambushed by a group of people, still scuffed and dirty from running from the hydra.

He could barely hear what they were shouting, catching a few sentences:

“You saved us!”

“You’re a hero!”

“You’re bleeding!”

“I can’t believe I got to see that!”

“Prince Perseus defeated the hydra!”

He was pretty sure a lot of that wasn’t right. He tried to get past them, to check on Annabeth. It was more like the crowd was getting bigger, pushing him further into the diner.

Some people might say that Annabeth was mad. She wasn’t mad, no. She was livid. She does all the work while that stupid prince just lays in a pile of glass and he gets all the credit, all the attention. Boys.

By the time she’d gotten to the grocery store, the bleeding had stopped. She was still in a hell a lot of pain, but is not like anyone noticed. She wasn’t even in the mood the drive all the way around those stupid obnoxious gangs. They wouldn’t bother her, anyway. She had a three foot long, pure white sword dripping blood and hydraic acid. She was even more unapproachable now, anyway.

She carried the two grocery bags and her own backpack inside, kicking the door closed. “Steph, I’m back. I brought your shit.”

Her stepmother came out from the kitchen, frowning. “What have we said about the cursing?” Annabeth gave her a bored look, walking past her and into a kitchen. “And why are you so dirty? And gross? Where have you been young lady?”

“That,” Annabeth gritted out, slipping her bag off. “is none of your business.” Steph was frowning at her. Annabeth stated at her for a few more seconds, before moving to the stairs. “I’m going to shower.”

Her back hurts like hell from how she’d landed on it. She had cuts and bruises all over, her shirt in tatters and her Jan’s with several rips. But did anyone out there care? No, no one fucking cared. All they cared about was ‘poor Prince Perseus’.

She grabbed an old bag filled with ‘memorabilia’ from previous encounters with monsters. It was mostly filled with her ruined clothes and some spoils of war, like a drakon tooth she’d had lodged in her calf for a week. In the bathroom, she examined herself for any burns—from fire or from acid. Luckily she’d managed to avoid any acid sprays. She didn’t have the same like with fire, though. Her shirt had fused in different places to her skin.
“This is going to be fun,” she muttered, reaching for a pair of scissors. Carefully, she cut the remains of her shirt around the burns, tossing any free pieces into the bag.

The bathroom door opened, her stepmother walking in. “Annabeth I think we seriously—“ She stopped in her tracks, looking with wide eyes at Annabeth’s flesh. “What the hell!” Stephanie demanded. “You’re all bloody and bruised and—“ She pointed at one of her burns, finishing, “what even is this? I demand an explanation, Annabeth.”

“You don’t care,” Annabeth mumbled.

Steph’s face was red with anger. Annabeth figured she would scream and bitch some more before leaving, probably muttering to herself for the rest of the weekend. “I don’t care? Of course I care! How dense are you, Annabeth? Tell me what happened right now.”

Annabeth blinked twice. Her brain dug up an old memory, one that had hurt more than anything. She was seven years old, back when she had to walk home.

Some sixth and seventh graders had taken the opportunity of Annabeth being alone on her way home. It’s not like anyone would have helped her if she wasn’t alone either; she was an outcast. They'd pushed and punched and kicked; the dumped out the contents of her backpack into a river; to top it all off, the took her hammer (the weapon she used against monsters at the time) and chucked it, tying her wrists around a tree.

To put it simply, it wasn’t one of her best days. In retrospect, she’d seen worst (like being pushed from the top of the slide when she was four, which was a good six feet high). After a good hour or so of crying (she was still partially human), she’d resolved to figuring her way out, like she always did. She spent a good fifteen minutes trying to find a way to get her wrists untied. Unfortunately, those middle schoolers seemed to have taken a few knot-tying classes.

She heard the sound of leaves and branches breaking; someone was headed her way. The confrontation could go two ways—she’d either get help or get ignored. She turned her head in the direction of the steps, watch as a shrimpy satyr with a mess of ginger curls cautious approached. He seemed a little shocked to see her there.

“Oh, hey,” he said. “Um…do you need my help?”

“Well duh,’ she thought. Being the ever respectful child, she didn’t voice her thoughts, only nodding. He nodded, moving behind the tree to untie her wrists. “Some tree nymphs spread the word that you were in a sticky situation. Specifically Carola, this tree,” he went on. “I'm Grover, by the way.”

“Annabeth,” she muttered.


It was silent as he worked, the bark on the tree pinched her arms painfully. “Do you wanna…maybe tell me? How this happened?”

“No.”

“Okay. That's cool, I mean.” Another pause, before he said, “I don’t have anything on me for wounds. I could walk you home, though. Offer some satyr protection.”

Again, Annabeth declined.
“Oh, okay then.” The ropes fell loose off her wrists; she pulled her arms back to herself. Pain shot from her shoulder, spreading through her torso. Grover came around, helping her get to her feet. “Stay safe, Annabeth,” he warned. “But you know, if you ever need anything, I’ll find you. Somehow, at least. Especially if you’re close to nature. Cause, like, it’s a lot harder to find you in the city. Satyrs are creates of Pan, you know.”


Grover smiled shyly, shuffling his feet (or hooves). “My pleasure.” He turned to head back into the wood. He stopped a few paces in, turning back and waving. “See you around.”

She’d gotten home, ready to go and ask her new mommy for some help with cleaning up. The first floor was relatively empty. She climbed the stairs, taking mental note of anywhere she felt any pain. First she glanced in her parents’ room, finding it empty. Her daddy’s office door was closed, the light shining through under the door. Daddy was always busy. He didn’t like it when Annabeth would bother him with silly demigod stuff, anyway.

At the end of the hall was the babies’ room. Annabeth could hear crying and her mommy’s soothing (pleading) voice. She peeked in; both twins were crying and fussing, her mommy trying to rock them to sleep one at a time. Annabeth pushed the door open more to announce her presence. Her mommy barely spared her a glance.

“Annabeth, where have you been?” she asked. She continued, not letting Annabeth get a word in. “It’s really late, and I needed to know if you’d be home. Be more considerate next time.”

“I need you’re help,” Annabeth said quietly.

“I’m a little busy right now.”

Annabeth frowned. She’d heard other second graders talking about how fast their mommies would get them a bandaid if the skimmed their knee or got a paper cut. And her new mommy was even giving her the time of day.

“But it’s ‘important,” she urged out.

Her new mommy let out a frustrated sigh. “If it’s so important, you can go to your father.”

“Daddy doesn’t like it when I bother him,” Annabeth explained.

“And neither do I,” she muttered so low Annabeth almost didn’t hear. Almost.

“Please?” Annabeth pleaded. She was starting to regret not taking Grover up on his offer.

“Jesus Annabeth,” she said exasperated. “I’m a busy right now. I’m currently more concerned with the twins.” She didn’t say it, but Annabeth knew what she actually meant. She was more worried about her actual kids. Annabeth was just an accessory of marrying her dad, not something she actually had to worry about.

Her stepmother snapped, pulling her out of thought. “Hello? Earth to Annabeth?”

“Uh…” with a sigh, Annabeth went on. What was the point in fighting it. “I was on a date,” Annabeth started, her voice above a mumble. She heard her stepmother question it, but continued. “And there was a hydra and the idiot couldn’t keep the damned thing distracted so I had to get in there and kill it because I seem to be the only competent person in the fucking kingdom.”
It was silent, Annabeth looking at the ground sullenly. She waited for a response. Her stepmother closed the bathroom door, taking a step closer. “And your shirt, it melted on your skin?” she asked. Annabeth nodded slowly. Steph sighed slowly. “Well, it’s best to wait for it to cool. Once it’s cool, we’ll remove the cloth with a damp rag, like hot candle wax. And we’ll have to treat those burns. It’d be best to let them heal on their own, but I’m sure I’ve got something for burns. You won’t be able to wear anything tight or that’ll irritate them for a while. And try wearing cotton; it turns to ash if burned.”

Annabeth’s face was a mix of surprise and confusion. Her stepmother had never been so helpful before (or ever). This wasn’t the first time Annabeth had come home after a monster fight, but it was the first time she’d ever actually drawn any attention.

“What we can do,” Steph continued, gingerly lifting Annabeth’s arm. “Run these under some cool water. It’ll help them cool faster. And we can treat some of those other wounds while we’re at it.”

Annabeth nodded mutely. She stood there quietly, letting her stepmother care to her needs. She barely reacted to the stinging pain as she cleaned and dressed her wounds. Her stepmother had a steady hand, working carefully but quickly. Once she’d gotten through all her cuts, she went back to the burns. The pain, Annabeth noticed, wasn’t as bad as she’d thought.

Her stepmother finished, straightening up. “Be careful in the shower, don’t use too hot water. I’ll leave some salve on your bed to apply on the burns,” Steph explained. Annabeth nodded mutely, slowly examining her arms. “I’m going to get started on dinner. Will you be alright?”

“I—I’ll be fine,” she muttered in response.

Her stepmother gave her a once-over before nodding, exiting the small bathroom. Annabeth’s still a little numb—more mentally than physically. She goes about her business, taking an actual hour to shower and dry off. She knows. Instead of actually decoding what the hell just happens, she counts down the seconds, notching the minutes in the bar of soap.

Once she’s finished, she wraps herself in a towel, grabbing her garbage bag and heading to her room. One of the twins nearly runs into her, instead flattening against the wall. Annabeth ignores him to the point she can’t even tell which one it is, pushing open her room door.

To say she was surprised to see Percy Jackson sitting on her carpet was an understatement. She stopped in her tracks (maybe even squeaking a little), looking down at him with wide eyes. He was still scratched and bruised, the blood dried on his skin. He had changed into a loose tee-shirt, gym shorts, and sneakers, giving her a small smile.

“You’re…uh, brother—I think—he let me in,” Percy offered as an explanation. “You broke into my car, by the way. And kinda left me hanging to dry out there.”

Annabeth wasn’t amused. She was feeling like arguing or being bitchy and a smartass. “Let me put on clothes before you try to talk to me at least.”

Percy nodded, getting to his feet. He went past her, closing the door behind himself as he left.

Annabeth ignored the voice in her head that kept asking the questions she didn’t want to think about (why is he even here? what does he even want? why won’t he leave you alone? stuff like that). On her bed sat the salve, as well as a package of bandages and a note from her stepmother, telling her to carefully wrap the burns on her arms and to call her for the rest of them. There’s also a pile of clothes—a tee shirt two sizes bigger than normal and some gym shorts—folded neatly beside the products.
Thirty minutes later, she went down the stairs where Percy was sitting in her living room. Her brother—it was definitely Matt—was sitting beside him, probing him with millions of questions. She casually walked up to them, sitting on Percy’s other side slowly. Percy ignores the most recent question—something about a preference of regular or Dino-chicken nuggets—turning and giving her a small smile.

“Hi.”

“Hello,” Annabeth responded blandly.

Percy gives her a puzzled look, his brows furrowed. “You okay?”

Annabeth nodded. “Just thinking,” she said quietly.

Percy raised an eyebrow. “Are you sure? You disappeared after the hydra and I didn’t know if you were alright or not.” His eyes drifted to her bandaged arm. Annabeth watched him swallow thickly, moving her arms from view. “You got hurt,” Percy pointed out.

She shrugged casually. “Shit happens when you fight a hydra.”

“You said a bad word!” Matt chimed.

Annabeth shot him a bored look before returning to look at Percy. “You’re also covered in blood and shit. You should go home.”

The corner of his lips quirked up slightly. “And shit?” he added mockingly.

He smiled turned to a look of concern when she didn’t provide any type of reaction. “Are you sure you’re alright.”

Matt supplied an answer. “Sometimes she gets like this,” he simply said. “She’ll be really mean and very Annabeth and then she’ll get really distant and stuff. Usually around her period.”

“Yeah I’m leaving,” Annabeth mumbled, standing up. “I’ll see you Monday, Percy.”

“O-Okay,” he stammer softly. “Hope you feel better.”

She turned up the stairs, hearing Matt go back into his series of questions.

Percy spent every weekends training. A lot of the time he was alone in the arena, slicing through dummies. Other times, he'd be joined by some friends and they'd gang up on him, four or five on one. This weekend, he was only joined by Charlie Beckendorf, a son of Hephaestus two years his senior.

Percy had known Beckendorf since he was twelve. He'd been one of the first people to help him with his demigod abilities, besides Chiron and Grover. He went to the college in the UK, but occasionally made the trip down to visit. And absolutely destroy Percy in combat.

His sword skidded a few feet away as he landed hard on his back, the wind getting knocked out of him. He grunted in frustration, glaring as Beckendorf smirked proudly. “You suck, Percy,” he stated. “Get up so we can go again.”

Percy groaned. He was tired and still in pain from the hydra, and from being beaten up now four times. He wasn't even sure if Beckendorf cared that he'd just fought with a hydra (we'll maybe not just, but his wounds were still pretty fresh). Either way he got to his feet, picking up Riptide (his
trusty sword). He turned to face Beck, his shoulder hunched over.

“Tired yet?” Beckendorf asked. “We can take a break if you'd like.”

Percy shook his head. “Out there, monsters won’t stop for a time out.”

Beckendorf smirked; he seemed pretty pleased that Percy had remembered his training mantra.

Beckendorf was more skilled at trickery—traps and bombs and stuff—but also used a sword. Percy envied his ability to have done many natural talents; he couldn't even control water. His reign over water was, unfortunately, tied to his emotions, which was a really bad thing.

Beckendorf was also really fast for such a big guy. The first two times Percy had managed to keep up with him, getting disarmed in only fifteen minutes. Those last times, though, he was down in less the seven, a personal low. This time, he was down in two minutes flat.

“Honestly Percy, this is getting embarrassing,” Beckendorf sympathized. “You're pretty bad, but never this bad.”

“I am not bad,” Percy argued.

Beckendorf eyed him suspiciously. “You seem distracted,” he pointed out.

Percy raised an eyebrow at him. He wasn't distracted. He was completely, one-hundred percent focused on training.

Beckendorf sat down on the ground beside Percy. “C’mon, tell me what's up.”

“Nothing is up,” Percy protested.

“You're a horrible actor, Percy,” Beckendorf sighed. “Your know you can trust me, right?”

“I’m fine,” Percy insisted. “Probably just tired. I'll be better in the morning, and we can continue then.”

Beckendorf raised an eyebrow at him. “You sure?” Percy nodded affirmatively.

Beckendorf got up, pulling Percy to his feet. “Gimme a ride to the gate.”

Percy let a small smile fall on his face. “I’m gonna fall asleep at the wheel, but whatever.”

“Fair point, I'm driving.”

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Percy was sitting in a tree, so deep in the forest he could barely see the daylight. He startled, nearly falling out. ‘Okay, this is a dream,’ he thought. ‘Just need to figure out where I am and why.’

The sound of leaves crunching came, hushed voices overlapping. Percy peered over his branch, watching as two preteens—a boy and a girl—made their way through the clearing. The boy was taller then the other, clearly older, with pale blonde hair, in contrast to his partners cropped, oil-black hair. Percy couldn't see much more from where he sat.

“…just a little nibble!” he heard the girl whine. “I won't even eat much!”

“No Thalia,” the boy insisted. “We’ve only got a little left. We'll eat at dusk once we’ve cleared out this part of the forest. No more snacks.”
The girl—Thalia—huffed indignantly, but complied, grumbling to herself. Movement farther behind them caught Percy attention. A flash of blonde darting between trees. The tweens stopped, the boy beginning to search around. “I think I found some animal tracks,” he said. “Wait there.”

“I’m not incapable, Luke. I’m a daughter of Zeus for Pete’s sake.” Thalia said exasperated.

Percy noticed a little blonde girl slowly creeping up behind Thalia, a regular hammer clenched in her small fist. She reached up for Thalia's backpack, slowly sticking her free hand inside.

Percy blinked, and in an instant the little blonde girl was on the ground, Thalia spear pointed at her throat. The branch underneath him vanished and he fell to the ground, much closer to the scene. The little blonde stared at her with wide eyes, her breath caught in her throat.

“What do you think you're doing?” Thalia demanded. The little girl didn't respond, her eyes locked with Thalia's. “I asked you a question,” the elder demanded. She glanced at the discarded tool, raising a slightly amused eyebrow. “Were you going to beat me with a hammer?”

“No.”

“Were you trying to steal from me?”

The little blonde had the audacity to look ashamed. Her little lip quivered slightly. (Percy were any closer, he'd say there were tears in her eyes) “I've been following you for two days,” she admitted in a shaky voice. “I've been following you for two days.” she admitted in a shaky voice. “Eating whatever you leave behind. I-I thought you might have a granola bar or something and I'm so hungry and lost and scared…” she trailed off, sniffing slightly.

The one called Thalia's face softened, though her grip on her spear didn't. “You can't sneak up on people like that, kid. I could'a killed you.”

“I'm not a little kid,” she protested. “I can fight.”

The boy, who had been watching the exchanged, quirked a smile, walking over to join the conversation. “Not with a weapon like that, you can't. At least not against fearsome demigods like us.”

“You're a shitty demigod,” Thalia muttered, earning a punch to the shoulder.

“I am a demigod,” the little blonde said. She looked between the two of them, her face surprisingly serious for a little kid. “I'm a demigod,” she admitted. “I've been following you for two days.”

(Percy's eyes went wide; Why was he seeing this? Why did the Fates think this day was important, or even relevant to his life?)

Thalia stood up, looking Annabeth up and down. “How old are you, Annabeth Chase?”

Annabeth sat up. “Seven years, two months, three days, four hours and six and a half minutes,” she stated perfectly.

The boy whistled lowly. “Definitely a child of Athena,” he mumbled. “I've always wondered,” he said off-handedly, turning to Thalia. “—if they had belly-buttons.”

Annabeth's face seemed to fall at that. She scrambled backwards, grabbing her hammer. “Y-you aren't gon’ do mean things to me, right?” she asked in a quivering voice. Her lips trembled, a few tears rolling down her cheeks. “P-please...please don't touch me.”
The two tweens exchanged worrisome looks. The blonde took a step forward, holding out his hand. “Hey, relax,” he said in a soft voice. “We won't touch you.”

"Why aren't you home? You're only a little girl, Annabeth,” Thalia asked. “You should be home, with your family.”

Annabeth looked away bashfully. “I ran away. Like you guys.”

“How—?”

Luke was interrupted by Thalia, who dug her spear in the ground, drawing a line between the two of them and Annabeth. “What're you doing?” Annabeth asked.

Thalia shrugged. “You seem a little worried, so I drew some boundaries,” she explained. “You can come with us. Luke and I'll protect you.”

“We'll protect each other.” Luke corrected.

Thalia gave him a look, before returning her gaze to Annabeth. “Sound like a plan, Blondie?”

“I-I don't have any cool talents like you do,” she mumbled. “I'll just be dead weight.”

Thalia crouched down close to the line. She motioned for Annabeth to come a little closer, before continuing. “You're a daughter of Athena. You have the coolest talent ever.” She tapped her own forehead. “—your brain. I mean, I've been around the block a few times, seen some cool things. But I've also seen what Athena could do. I'm more glad you're on my team more than anything.”

Annabeth blinked her grey eyes, nodding slowly. Thalia smiled genuinely, standing up and taking a step back. She watched as Annabeth glanced at her hammer. “I don't even have a cool weapon,” she said glumly.

“Don't worry kiddo,” Luke said, smiling brightly. “We're family now. Family protects each other. And…” He patted his waist, pulling a dagger from it's sheath. (Percy had definitely seen it somewhere) Annabeth looked at it with wide eyes, crawling over to her side of the line where Luke was waiting. “I'll give this to you. But I gotta get your hammer in return.”

She nodded excitedly, sliding the tool across the dirt. She made grabby hands for the knife. “There's a catch, though,” he warned, smiling a little trickster smile. (Percy had seen a smile like that before, he just couldn't figure out where)

"Only the fastest and cleverest demigod can have it. Think you're up for a challenge?” Annabeth nodded roughly. “Okay kiddo,” he said, handing her the knife. “You got my back now. You got Thalia's back too. And we've got yours.”

“Is that how a family is?” Annabeth asked, looking at him with big eyes.

“Yeah,” Thalia said, her voice soft. (Although unheard, Percy knew what she wanted to say: ‘That's how it should be’)

Annabeth spent most of the morning examining her body. She made a mental list of the general location of the burns and cuts, before getting ready for the day. She put on a loose tee-shirt and cotton jeans, paired with black combat boots. Her body didn’t have enough open space to get a tattoo larger than her palm, so Rachel would have to compromise.
Annabeth knew well enough that she shouldn’t even get a tattoo at all, with all the places she might get an infection. She’d be a lot more worried with she didn’t have an in with the parlor; specifically Thalia Grace, one of the only people she’d call a best friend, who managed the small parlor (on weekends) and provided Annabeth with almost all of her tattoos.

The shop didn’t open until eleven on weekends, and was usually empty until around midday. As she pulled up, she could see Rachel Elizabeth Dare sitting on the curb, a notepad on her lap as she draw hastily. ‘She actually showed up,’ Annabeth mused. She climbed off her bike, pulling her helmet off as she made her way over to the Oracle.

“Morning Annabeth,” Rachel greeted, sparing her a glance. “I saw you on the news yesterday.”

Annabeth raised an eyebrow in question. Rachel looked up, pushing a loose curl behind her ear. “My tv is locked on the news. Anyway, they were talking about a hydra attack. They had a lot of footage; different cellphone angles and stuff. Percy and his stupid self, destroying that bakery. I heard the city plans on charging you for damages, though. I doubt Katie Gardiner will let that happen, though.”

“Fucking hell,” Annabeth muttered. “I hate this shit-town.”

Rachel nudged her shoulder. “Don’t be so mad, it’s a beautiful morning. And you’re alive and awake, you’re getting a new tattoo. All these things.”

Annabeth gazed her a look. “Don’t. Don’t try and be empowering. Just show me the design so I can get on with my life.”

Rachel smiled as if she knew something Annabeth didn’t, her gaze lingering for a minute before flipping through her sketchbook. “Also,” Annabeth added, folding her hands in her lap. “It can’t be very big. I’ve got a lot of…uh…open wounds. Everywhere. Like can’t even put on a fucking bra without it hurting.”

“Oh, is Annabeth not wearing a bra?” Rachel teased, wiggling her eyebrows.

"Oh my god,” Annabeth groaned, a light blush dusting her cheeks.

Rachel laughed. “Found it!” she exclaimed suddenly. “I’ve been sitting on this for so long, but I think it’s perfect for you.”

Annabeth leaned over, looking at the notebook. In the center of the page was a drawing of dainty hands cradling a crown, the entire drawing done in ink. Annabeth raised an eyebrow at it, Chase she had no ideas how it was perfect for her. She didn’t even really get it.

“Yeah, um, the—the Spirit of Delphi had me draw that, a few months ago. I had no idea what the fuck it was or why I couldn’t put it on a canvas or do it pencil at least.” Rachel shrugged. “Then, I felt like—I had this feeling yesterday, when you and Piper McLean were talking. I can’t explain it, I really can’t. But I knew that this—“ she tapped the paper twice. “—this is for you. One hundred percent definitely for you.”

Annabeth nodded. “So you had a vision or some shit, where I have to get this inked on my skin?” she asked.

“Not necessarily,” Rachel said. “But basically, yes. I don’t know why, though. Hell I barely remember drawing that. B-but I can’t shake this feeling. Somehow, someway, this will be important in your life.”
When Annabeth looked up at her, she noticed Rachel had become a lot paler than usual, her expression a little foggy. Tentatively, Annabeth shook her shoulder, first gently the rougher, drawing the red-head out of her haze.


Annabeth nodded. "You can go home. You don’t need to stay here, you know."

Rachel shrugged. "I’m interested in the whole tattoo process. I want to watch."

Particularly, Annabeth didn’t want an audience. Inking time was personal time, the only time she could visit Thalia. She didn’t want someone intruding. But Rachel was surprisingly nice. And, technically, she had the right to watch her design be put in place. She also didn’t leave room for option.

Rachel’s phone rang, a soft melody that wasn’t too sharp or loud. She looked at the screen in confusion, standing up. "I’ll be back, I gotta take this."

Annabeth nodded, watching her walk to the end of the street, answering her phone.

Every Saturday morning, Percy would run two miles before breakfast, and weight training, before taking a quick shower and deciding his plans for the day. This time, he sat in bed for an hour, trying to decipher his dream. He didn’t dream often, and when he did it was usually important. Demigod dreams always held some significance, showing something from the present or past.

The dream was still vivid in his mind as he wrote down all the details he could remember. Once he’d finished, he set to work on doing a little digging. He had (some) access to the records of the citizens; a good part of the Morning was spent researching every Thalia that ever lived in and around the kingdom limits (he searches for ‘Thalia’ ‘Talia’ and every spelling variation he can think of). All the names have to most recent picture available, an address and age a relatives.

Percy knows that the Thalia he’s looking for would have some indication of running away. He’s also figured out that she should be between his age (sixteen) and late twenties, which, yeah, is a really big range. He didn’t see much of her in his dream, but he did catch her blue eyes and her hair (which he figured was dyed black; he could see the roots growing out, a dark blonde). To say the least, it was a lot harder then he thought.

There were only three ‘Thalia’s—one around ten, another in her late thirties, and the last one just in her twenties. Percy figured she was the Thalia, thought she didn’t have a local address, or a last name listed. The only information about her was a little tattoo parlor down on Elks Road called Get Inked (sounded very threatening in his opinion).

After breakfast and a quick shower, Percy tapped in the address on his GPS. He pulled out of the gates before parking on the curb. He knew he’d need some backup (some sensible back up, sorry Jason), dialing the only person he knew could handle shit like that.

"Hello?"

Ho-ho-Holy shit this is long. Definitely be expected the rest of this story to be long like this one! Comments and kudos appreciated! ❤ ❤ ❤
Before Annabeth had even shown Thalia the design, Rachel had let everyone know that it was to go on her left shoulder. Even though Annabeth insisted it was too close to a fresh burn, Rachel insisted. “The Oracle wills it,” and all that. Annabeth was getting annoyed with all her mystical knowledge.

The space on her left shoulder was occupied by a fresh burn that extended from her clavicle to right above her *supraspinatus* (look it up), and a tattoo of a bundle of dandelions fluttering in the wind just on the bottom and under her shoulder blade. The space between was about the size of her hand, definitely not big enough for Rachel’s design.

“When there’s a will, there’s a way.” Thalia assured her she could do it. Those were the words she had inked across her collar bone, her life motto.

Of course, a tattoo on her back meant she’d have to remove her shirt, which she could not do. For one she couldn’t even get it on, her stepmother had helped her into it (not the irritate any burns or stretch the healing skin, she had said). And her second (and only other point) was that she didn’t want to worry Thalia with her problems. She had enough going on as it was, without Annabeth adding onto her stress.

Thalia (bless her soul) doesn’t ask about the patches of bandages in random places around her now exposed upper body. Neither does Rachel, but Rachel already knew about the fight. Prep takes a lot longer then usual, Thalia taking her time to find and sterilize all her necessary tools, clear the desired spot, detail details.

Annabeth sits on a massage chair, her chin resting on a cushion with her back toward everyone else. Rachel buried herself with looking around like a curious puppy. It’s around noon when Thalia starts.

It hurts, because of course it’ll hurt. That’s the thing Annabeth loves about getting a tattoo when she’s feeling off. It’s hard to figure out mental and emotional pain. The sting of the tattoo, it gravitates the pain to a spot. It’s a good distraction too. She can barely even remember why she was feeling so off.

“Thalia.” One of workers who manned the register had come to the backroom. He usually only ever left his post if it were an emergency or he needed more cash. “You’ve got someone wanting to see you.”

“I’m with a customer,” Thalia replied offhandedly.

“I don’t think he’ll mind,” the worker went on. “He seems really insistent on talking to you.”

“Tell ‘me to fuck off,” she insisted.

Annabeth can hear his mortified gasp. Who was here that’s making him so tense? As if hearing her question, he whispers, “It’s Prince Perseus.”

Thalia paused; Annabeth groaned. That, that was the problem she was trying to forget. Thalia tells him to send the prince in, before going back to work, slower then before.

“Stop being tense,” Thalia instructed. “You’ll mess up the ink.”

Annabeth forced herself to relax. Maybe if she kept her head down, he wouldn’t notice her. She’s not in the mood to talk to Percy; she’s definitely not planning on telling him anything. Hell, she
didn’t really know what was wrong.

She heard him approaching, having a silent conversation with Rachel as they moved closer. Thalia and her ever rude self told him that he had five minutes to catch her interest. After a pause, in which Annabeth assumed he was standing there in surprise at her curt rudeness, Percy went on.

"I just have a few questions that I swear aren’t related to politics or I’d sell out or anything,” he began. “You’re name is Thalia? And you’re a demigod?” After a beat, Thalia confirmed this information. “Daughter of Zeus?”

“Unfortunately,” she mumbled. Louder, addressing him, she asked, “How do you know this information?”

“I had a dream last night,” he explained. “I’m pretty sure you were in it. It wasn’t anything recent, promise. I think I saw someone’s memory, and I just wanted to figure out why.”

Thalia pulled the needle from Annabeth skin, her chair squeaking as she turned to face him. “I doubt any memory someone has of me is good, so if you’re here to put me in jail or some shit I’ll have you know—”

“No,” Percy interrupted. “It was a really old memory. From…ten years ago? Maybe a little more, a little less. I don’t know.”

Annabeth could feel the tension radiating off of Thalia. “I didn’t live here ten years ago,” Thalia stated coldly.

Annabeth’s mind drifted to ten years ago. She knew where Thalia was about ten years ago; she was with her, on the run from home. Granted, Annabeth was gone for only a few months before going back home, but in her seven year old mind it felt like forever.

“If you don’t mind me asking, where did you live?”

He was definitely pushing. And Annabeth knew Thalia hated being pushed. “I don’t think that’s your business,” she answered shortly.

“You know—“ Annabeth was hoping he wouldn’t say anything that would push him for the fence. “I was looking, and it seemed that you don’t have a marked address. Or last name.”

Thalia growled lowly. Annabeth figured she had two options: watch this play out or intervene. The obvious, smart choice would be to intervene. But maybe this once, she wouldn’t act like the adult in the situation. Thalia was (hopefully) perfectly capable of keeping her cool and not killing the prince. She didn’t have to babysit an adult. She wouldn’t, actually. She just hoped Thalia didn’t decide to go back to her tattoo while angry.

“Looking where?” Thalia challenged.

“Database from the last census,” Percy simply said. “It was weird that you weren’t marked as a citizen, but you do own a business here. Last I checked you could only own a business if you lived in or around Potaris.”

“I don’t own this place,” Thalia answered curtly.

Annabeth hoped Percy was satisfied with that.

"I just…do you know Annabeth Chase?” On reflex, Annabeth looked up at the sound of her name.
She silently cursed herself. Percy looked at her, raising his eyebrows in surprise.

“Oh!” he squeaked. He cleared his throat, saying in a stronger voice, “Hey Annabeth.”

Annabeth shifted, glancing at Thalia. The latter had her jaw clenched as if she were holding off on snapping. Rachel had disappeared at some point. Percy was staring at her, though, a light blush dusting his cheeks. Annabeth gave a small finger wave.

“Do you mind not harassing my friend while she’s trying to give me a tattoo?”

Percy nodded quickly. “Yeah. Yeah it’s just…I mean it’s weird. And I’m curious and I don’t like not know. If that makes any sense.”

Annabeth arched an eyebrow. “You could’ve just asked me, you know.”

“Yeah I know. But like…you tend to ignore my questions. Or answer with other questions.” Percy rushed out. He was incredibly nervous (nervousness looked cute on him). “I just…I wanted answers.”

“You came to the wrong person,” Thalia mumbled, folding her arms.

Annabeth glanced her briefly. “You mind giving us a minute?” she asked.

Thalia raised her eyebrows in disbelief. “Great, great. I get harassed by this jackass and you want me to leave you alone with him? Perfect.” Thalia grumbled to herself. She slid off her stole, pulling off her latex gloves. “Hurry up so I can finish. Two minutes, Annabeth.”

She went out of the backroom, most likely heading to the break room. Once she was gone, Annabeth turned her attention to Percy, who’s face was still bright red. ‘Weird,’ she thought.

“So I’m guessing,” Annabeth started plainly, “you had a dream, about me.” Percy nodded nervously. “Well you can’t ask now, I’m kinda busy.”

Percy smiled sheepishly, looking down at the ground. Annabeth wasn’t used to seeing the usually confident prince looking so nervous. “Technically I didn’t come to see you. I come to see Thalia.”

“Yeah don’t do that again,” Annabeth advised. Percy had the decency to look ashamed, rubbing the back of his neck. Annabeth forced a frown; no one should be able to look that embarrassed and cute at the same time. It was unnatural. Unlawful. It was so…Percy.

"Look,” Annabeth said, sighing. “Since I’m in a fairly good mood today, I’ll answer your questions. Or, some of them. But not now. Later.”

“Later?”

“Do you have kelp in your ears?” she asked teasingly. “Yes later, I’m busy right now.”

“Right right,” he said, nodding along.

“I’ll pick you up at your castle or some shit, whatever it’s called.” Percy nodded some more. “Bye.”

“Right,” he said. “I’ll be…I’m just gonna…yeah.”

Annabeth smiled smugly. “Yeah,” she mocked. If Percy weren’t already blushing, he would’ve blushed some more. Annabeth let out a breath of laugh. She’d never tell him (or anyone for that matter) how utterly adorable he looked.
He nodded again, glancing up at her. “Later?”

“If I remember correctly, yes, that’s what I said.”

Percy, bless his soul, turned on his heals, heading toward the front of the shop. “I’ll…Uh…I’ll see you.”

“Later,” Annabeth mocked, letting out a laugh.

Once Percy had left Thalia had returned, pulling on a new pair of gloves as she straddled her stool. Annabeth turned, repositioning herself. The buzz of the needle sounded as she went back to work silently. After five minutes, Thalia asked, “So, what was that all about?”

“I’m going to kill you Rachel,” Percy grumbled lowly, causing Rachel to laugh. “It’ll be a slow, painful death. I’ll drown you, periodically. Give you some time so you can feel all the pain.”

Rachel glanced at him, pinching his bicep. “You’re too sweet to kill me.”

Percy frowned. “Did you not think it was important to mention that, I don’t know, Annabeth Chase was there?”

Rachel’s laugh had died down to quiet giggle. “In my defense,” she started, “I didn’t know if that was an important point.”

Percy groaned again. It was bad enough that he had just had a very embarrassing conversation with Annabeth—while she sat there, in a bra. He had also passed off a daughter of Zeus, of all people. When it Cosme to other children of the Big Three gods, things only went two ways: really well or really, really bad. Gods, Annabeth probably despised him now, even more than usual.

Things with Annabeth were so…confusing. One minute it was hated and anger and the next she was sharing a milkshake with him and laughing at his jokes. It was difficult in an endearing way. With anyone else he’d have cut the bullshit, but with Annabeth it was…fun and nice. She was a puzzle, asking to be solved while simultaneously hiding the pieces farther and making it harder to find.

Once he’d gotten back home—after making sure the gatekeeper knew he was expecting company between now and midnight—he took another, longer shower, standing in front of his closet for a solid half hour as he contemplated what to wear.

The first thing he realized was that he had a lot of sweaters. And khakis. “It’s not even cold,” he thought aloud. He owned two pairs of jeans, both dark and old from at least a year ago. He was able to fit into one that, surprisingly, hung a little off his waist.

He had no idea what Annabeth was planning. Hell, he didn’t even know if they would even be leaving the property. It wasn’t like she had a car. But it didn’t seem like she had plans on staying there, either.

If it wasn’t obvious, Percy wasn’t a fan of surprises. He liked being able to prepare. If it’s school, he’ll wear some semblance of professional will also comfortable. If it were training, he’d go for something breathable and light. It it were cold, he’d layer up, and vice versa. But this…’meeting’ so the speak…with Annabeth was too spontaneous.

“Maybe something casual,” he said. “Great, I’m talking to myself now. I’m losing my goddamn mind.” He paused, glancing at himself in the mirror. “And I’m still talk to myself.”
He sighed, frowning at himself. It was in moments like these—where he stood partially naked in front of a mirror, trying to decide what the wear—when he wondered if he was a loser. Sure, people talked to him, they laughed at his jokes and always wanted to hang out. But they weren’t really his friends. He had power—money, a title, he could get you places. He’d taken Intro to Business last year, he knew what that meant; people wanted to be in his good graces, if they ever needing anything. He wasn’t blind.

Sometimes, he wondered what it would be like if he weren’t in line for the throne. He’d never admit it, but he had dreams about it, where he could mind his own business, live his own life. Be disgusted by something without horrible backlash. Get a date with a girl not because he was ‘Prince Perseus of Potaris’, but because he was Percy Jackson, maybe an interesting guy.

Or maybe he was a boring son of Poseidon who couldn’t even control water.

“Focus Percy,” he scolded himself. He turned back to his closet, narrowing his eyes at his shirts and sweaters. He found a plain white tee shirt, one that hung loosely around his torso that he usually reserved for sleep or workouts. It was casual, and not exactly a sleep shirt. It’d have to do for now, anyway.

"Jeans and a tee shirt, nice,” he muttered. “It’s a little chilly out though.” It wasn’t. “Maybe I should wear something more?"

Percy rifled through his closet, looking for a jacket or long sleeved shirt he could wear that wasn’t too formal. There was no way he was going out showing his arms. It felt…weird. After a few minutes he found a simple, aqua colored hoodie, sliding it on.

Percy jumped at the sound of a knock at his door. He jogged back to the main bedroom, swinging open the door. Standing on the other side was his mother, in all her glory. A grin spread across his face. “Hey, when’d you get back?” he greeted.

His mother shrugged. “Oh about five, six minutes ago.”

He pulled her into a hug, leaning down to rest his head on top of hers. “I feel like I haven’t seen you in forever,” he mumbled.

His mother pulled back, patting his head. With a shrug, she said, "You haven’t. But I should be around more. At least for the next few weeks.” Percy grinned at that. “Do you have plans for today? I was considering treating my favorite, well-behaved son to something tasty. Like ice cream. Or maybe some candy, or milkshakes. Or—“

Percy groaned. “I take it you heard about yesterday.”

His mom gave him a look—one that said ’I hear everything’ that all mothers have. “If you were trying to hide it, you’d have to do better at it. Like, I don’t know, not make the news and break the internet.”

Percy smiled sheepishly, leaning against the doorframe. “It’s not like I told the hydra to come attack us.”

She raised her eyebrows in question. “Us?” Percy’s eyes went wide as he realized his mistake. “Who’s is ‘us’?”

“Us? I meant me. Yep, totally meant me, all me. I was all alone.”

“Mhm.” She folded her arms over her chest, giving Percy a look.
“Okay so,” Percy cracked, “O wasn’t alone, but I don’t think it’s important who I was with.”

He could hear the words she would have said in his head: ‘If it weren’t important I wouldn’t be asking, now would I?’

“Okay so I was on a date, with this girl. This really, really pretty girl. She’s cool and funny and she may not be the nicest but I don’t think it’s because of her personality it’s probably because she’s never experienced kindness.” Percy rushed out in one breath, shifting his gaze from the ground to her face and back to the ground.

He heard his mom sigh. It wasn’t a sigh of disappoint, more like a sigh of ‘what am I gonna do with you?’ after a beat, she said: “Percy, who you go on dates with is none of my business. All I care about is if they make you happy. Now, does this ‘mystery girl’ make you happy?”

Percy thought about. He didn’t really know Annabeth Chase. Sure, he knew of her, but he didn’t know her. He only knew what people thought of her: mean and rude and disrespectful. When he was with her at the bakery, though, he didn’t see any of that. She smiled and laughed and snorted. By the gods, she snorted, and blushed and was so adorable it made his heart hurt.

He nodded slowly. “Yeah, she makes me happy.” After a pause, he added: “She doesn’t know it, but she does.”

She smiled a soft smile. “That’s good then. Now, I was serious about that ice cream.”

“I’d love to,” Percy started. “But, I have a Maybe-Not quite sure yet-date today.”

His mother raised her eyebrows. “A what?”

Percy shrugged. “An—I mean the girl, said she’d come by sometime between now and tomorrow because…well it’s a long story. But I’m just waiting for her. She could show up at any moment. I’m not lying, though.”

“You are incapable of lying, you show too much emotion.”

‘Thanks for the vote of confidence, Mom,’ he thought. “Maybe tomorrow, though?” he offered up.

She nodded. “Right, of course. Tomorrow then.”

Percy nodded. “I’ll see you around.”

She gave him a small smile, turning to head toward the staircase. Percy watched for a second, before sliding back into his bedroom, closing the door.

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Things between Annabeth and Thalia were awkwardly stiff as she finished her tattoo. Annabeth paid wordlessly before leaving. Once she was at home, she changed the bandages covering her burns. She glanced at the clock, seeing that it was a little before two.

She didn’t want to keep Percy waiting, but at the same time she didn’t want to seem eager. She had definitely run out of things to do, that was certain. She first changed into a pair of jean shorts, before changing her shoes four times—first to some batty old converses then flats, before trying out some sandals and ultimately ending up in a tan pair of hiking boots.

Annabeth dumped the contents of her bag on her bed, stuffing it now full of supplies—a towel and spare shirt, emergency medical supplies, and her dagger. She found her spare helmet in her closet,
making sure to grab it as well as her phone, before headed down to the kitchen and packed a light lunch for two, shoving it in her bag.

Her stepmother glanced at her. Annabeth felt inclined to let her know her plans. Or at least she was leaving. “I’m going out,” she stated.

“Where to?” Steph asked.

Annabeth grabbed her keys off the counter. “Not sure.”

Steph hummed. “Alone?”

Annabeth stepped out of the kitchen, not turning around to say; “With Percy.”

Before she could make a quick exit, her stepmother called out, “Freeze.” Annabeth stopped in her tracks. Stephanie just had that no nonsense tone that made Annabeth not want to move. She’d never used it before, at least with Annabeth. Annabeth turned, smiling innocently.

“Percy? Is that the young man who was here last night?” Annabeth nodded. “You know he had a great semblance to Prince Perseus. But that couldn’t be. You hate the prince. At least, you scoff and groan and roll your eyes whenever he’s mentioned anywhere.”

Annabeth shrugged. “Things have…changed, I guess.”

Her Steph other raised a knowing eyebrow. “Well then, be back before it’s dark. I’m serious, now. Or dinner. Whichever comes first.”

Annabeth nodded, her finger tapping her bag anxiously. “And be careful, Annabeth.”

“As always,” she mumbled. “I’m gonna…go now.”

Her stepmother nodded, not adding anything after that. Annabeth took it as her cue to go, taking long strides out the front door before practically sprinting down the driveway to her motorcycle.

The castle was on the other side of of the kingdom, a good fifty minute drive, not including stop lights and traffic. It was hot, the mid-September sun making her wish she had an air conditioner. She’d been on a field trip to the castle once, when she was sixth grade, which also happened to be the year that Percy started at their school. The tour guide had been picking on him a lot, to the point that he had walked alongside Annabeth, practically hiding behind her (she was taller than him for a good three years).

That was about...five-ish years ago. The castle was still mesmerizing—it was so wide and tall you could see it literally from a mile away. There were two gates before she was actually on the property—the first just asked for her ID, and the second an actual person. The man at the gate looked like a mix of not wanting to be there and loving his job.

“How can I help you?” he asked. Annabeth glanced at his royal blue shirt, reading ‘Ted’ from the white embroidery.

“I’m here for pe—Prince Perseus,” she stated.

He nodded, saying, “One second,” before returning back to his little booth. He was farther away, but he didn’t close the window exactly. “Sorry to bother you, Prince Perseus, but I’ve got an ‘Annabeth
“Chase’ here to see you?” There was a pause, Percy probably responding on the other line, before Ted nodded, more for himself then anything. “Okay sir. I’ll send her right up.”

Ted pushed open a door, stepping out of his booth. “You’ll need to leave weapons here: swords, daggers, spears, guns, the works.”

Annabeth raised a questioning eyebrow. “You’re kidding.”

He shrugged. “It’s policy. I’ll have to check your bag for any hidden or potential weapons, or you can leave it here. It’s your choice.”

Annabeth frowned, putting her motorcycle in park before climbing off. She slid him her backpack, before reaching under the seat, detaching her sword, passing it to him. “That’s my only sword,” she warned. “It’s made from the bone of a dead drakon. And I will be getting it back, one way or another.”

So threatening the security guard probably wasn’t the smartest thing to do, but Ted didn’t do anything to stop her. He wordlessly passed her a map, tapping a circled tower near the front. “That’s where you’re headed,” he said in a weak voice.

Annabeth got on her bike, fixing her helmet as she started the engine. The large gate opened slowly, Annabeth cursing inside. It was a pretty straight drive for a good half mile before she got to the tower, where Percy was sitting on the curb.

She was a little surprised to see him dressed so casually. After getting out of middle school, gaining the freedom to dress however, all she had seen him in were sweaters and khakis, or something professional. Never jeans and a tee shirt. It was strange…strangely appealing. Sure, Percy could make professional look good. But dressed as a normal teenager—his hair messy and his sneakers a little old, his jeans faded—he looked…hot.

‘Fucking Hades,’ Annabeth thought. ‘What’s wrong with me?’

She pulled off her helmet, tilting her head at him. Percy smiled at her, his typical, prince smile. But his new appearance, it made it look more…sarcastic. Like a trouble-maker, sort of look. “You gave Ted a heart attack, you know.” Percy said in lieu of hello.

“Get on,” Annabeth commanded.

Percy raised a questioning eyebrow. “On your motorcycle?”

“No on my back so I can carry you,” she deadpanned.

Percy breathed out a laugh, a small smile on his face. Annabeth rolled her eyes, tossing him the spare helmet. He put it on, struggling only a little, before standing up, getting behind her. “Don’t hold on too tightly,” she warned, revving the engine after.

Percy’s hands darted to her waist, making her wince. Yesterday, when she was fighting the hydra she reopened an old wound that refused to fully heal, just a little below her waist. The skin around it was still tender, though. She was probably going to get an infection there, too.

She decided to ignore the pain. She’d live. And it wasn’t like his touch wasn’t welcoming, either. Once the initial surprise (and slight pain) had faded, Annabeth felt a little warm inside. Percy was leaning close to her, his chest pressed against her back. She couldn’t literally his heartbeat, but she could feel him—his presence, warmth, his whole essence. It was calming and nice, like how she’d heard people talk about the beach.
She made a u-turn, heading back toward the main gate. In the five or so minutes she spent inside the gates, Ted had switched places with a new guard, a lady who Percy called Marcella, who returned Annabeth’s belongings begrudgingly.

It was an hour drive without traffic, but the afternoon rush had settled in. Annabeth sat in stop-and-go traffic for about five minutes before weaving her way through. Percy gripped her tightly, his fingers trembling slightly. Annabeth pulled out of traffic a few miles before leaving the kingdom, a little ways outside of the sticks. The neighborhoods turned into dirty old fields, which led to the edge of the kingdom, signified by the large, worn sign reading: ‘Now leaving The Kingdom of Potaris’.

Annabeth knew that it was at least several years old; she’d seen it when she was around seven, and even then it was pretty old.

She stopped at the sign, switching the engine off and pulling her helmet off. She turned in her seat, shaking Percy’s hands off of her. She unbuckled his helmet, pulling it off his head. His hair flopped out, a much bigger mess than before, sticking up in random places. He smiled dopily at her, before glancing around.

“Where are we?” Percy asked.

“Not our final destination,” Annabeth stated. “We gotta walk from here. I don’t want to offend any nymphs with the emission.”

Percy nodded, sliding off first. “Where are we going, then?”

Annabeth hummed to herself, sliding off the seat. She glanced at Percy, smirking. “It’s a surprise.”

Percy had once spent a few hours in the woods, hunting down a little kid he had upset. Of course, that was a thin forest in the United States, which he now knew was nothing compared to the woods that wrapped around his own kingdom. If he had known they were going hiking, he would’ve better prepared. Well, he didn’t have hiking gear, per se, but he wouldn’t’ve worn a hoodie and jeans.

Although she wasn’t laughing aloud, he knew Annabeth was getting a kick out of his misery. She moved and climbed the terrain expertly, leaning him in her shadows to either get left behind or follow and fall. She made up for her lack of empathy by being absolutely adorable. It was like she was in her element, with her sword hanging from her belt loop, the slight breeze ruffling her curls and the sun making her skin glow.

Every once in a while she’d turn back to make sure she was following, smiling softly. He was so in love with her, it was starting to hurt a little.

“I take it,” she said suddenly, “you’ve never been in the woods?”

Percy shook his head, though Annabeth couldn’t see. “Not these ones, at least. I’ve been in America a lot, though. I had a lot of quests there, if I’m being honest.”

Annabeth nodded. “So now will you tell me where you’re going? Or are we hiking?”

Annabeth stopped and turned, a knowing smile on her face. “So before we continue,” she said, “I want you to know that this is a very special place to me. Please treat it with the respect it deserves. Keep its location a secret; it’s my special place, no one knows about it.”

Annabeth nodded, biting her lip as she blushed. “Good. Thank you.”

She turned on her heels, pushing back the curtain of vines and branches. Percy felt like he was in that Disney movie, the one about Rapunzel, looking up in wonder as he entered the beautiful clearing—a glistening blue lake surrounded by long, hair-like grass thinly dispersed. There was a waterfall leading into the lake, a rocky wall-like cliff behind it. It was beautiful, spectacular, breath-taking.

“Wow,” he managed breathless. He had no idea that the forest could be so beautiful, at least not in real life.

He glanced at Annabeth, seeing her smiling shyly at the ground. He liked this side of her, the shy and adorable side. Though, show him any side of Annabeth and he’d be all smiles and so in love.

“Can I ask why it’s so special? Is it just causes it’s so…amazing?”

“Well that,” she said, “but it’s also were Thalia and Luke and I made camp. It was our rendezvous point; like our home away from home. It’s…it’s everything to me.”

Percy smiled softly, moving to stand next to her. “I love it, you know.” he said I’m a soft voice. “Thanks for showing me, I mean. I…I get that that time you ran away isn’t something you like talking about.”

Annabeth gave a short nod.

“It means a lot to me, that you showed me this.”

The corner of her lip quirked up. “This opening up shit won’t happen often, just letting you know.”

Percy let out a breath of laugh. “Yeah, I got that.”

She started for the lake, motioning for him to follow. “There’s a little cave thing behind the waterfall. It’s nice and peaceful; that’s where you’ll get your answers, Jackson.”

He followed her.

The cave behind the waterfall had a few beanbag chairs surrounded by a fur rug (animal yet to be determined) with a few weapons scattered around.

Annabeth flopped into one of the chairs, letting out a pleased sigh. Percy glanced at the one next to her briefly. He’d never actually sat on one of those, and he didn’t feel like looking stupid in front of her, so he opted for sitting on the floor. Annabeth gave him a strange look but otherwise said nothing.

“So tell me what you want to hear.”

Percy frowned. “We should do this the fun way. Like…twenty questions or something.”

She raised an eyebrow at that. “The fuck is twenty questions?”

Percy shrugged. “It’s like a date game. Or a get to know you game. You ask, I answer. I ask and you answer. We alternate like that until we don’t want to anymore. You’ve never heard of this?”

“You mean a conversation?” Annabeth deadpanned.

Percy let out a short laugh. “No, cause you can’t avoid the question. And you can only ask one at a time, too.”
Annabeth nodded along. “Sounds good. You go first, though.”

Percy nodded. He didn’t want to just jump right in with all the heavy stuff that’d set her on edge, so he started off with something easy. “When’s your birthday?”

“That’s easy; blue.”

“Blue’s cool.” she said, nodding along. “Ask me a few weeks ago, I’d probably say mine was a pastel color, like purple or pink or maybe even yellow. But now, I’m leaning toward green. Like the ocean. It’s really pretty.”

Percy had been told that his eyes were sea green, like the ocean. Pictures didn’t do them much justice, so he wasn’t quite sure how they looked. It didn’t change the fact that Annabeth saying that it was becoming her new favorite color made him blush.

"Uh..." he muttered, thinking of another question. “Okay. If you like pastels and stuff, why do you wear such dark colors?”

He glanced at her, watching as her eyebrows scrunched together. She frowned, glancing from her hand to the opposite wall aging and again. She had a cute thinking face.

“I guess,” she finally said. “It was more for attention then anything.”

“Why would—“ he was cut off when she held a finger to his face.

“My turn, Percy.” He nodded, because of course it was her turn. “Do you know any other demigods?”

“Yes,” he said quickly. “Okay so, why do you want attention?”

She raised an eyebrow at him, a smirk playing at her lips as if she were amused. “You know the only gift my mom ever gave me? A hat, that makes you invisible.”

“That’s cool,” Percy conceded.

She snorted in disbelief, standing up from her bag. “No, it isn’t. You put it on and no one can see you. Seemed appropriate.”

She walked across the room, reaching into her discarded bag and pulling out a navy baseball cap embellished with white letters NY overlapping. “My whole life,” she started, “has been filled with being ignored and overlooked. No one wanted my around. Trust me, I know. My dad tried to return me to Athena multiple times. Kids at school would call me names and push and kick me and treat me like absolute dirt. I’ve been pushed from the top of the slide, when I was three. A three year old little girl, Percy. No one wanted me around.

“So I tried leaving. And they all blew their top, saying how I was ungrateful and horrible and a brat. Can you believe that? So I stayed, and was again treated horribly. Sp—” she paused, swallowing thickly before continuing in a strained voice, “spiders would crawl in my bed at night an no matter how much I cried and screamed and yelled no one would come to help me. Everyone ignores me...
and hates me and treats me like absolute dog shit. I ran away three times and nothing changed.”

She stopped, breathing hard. Running a hand through her hair, she dropped the hat on the ground. Her tone was harsh as she finished, “I’d rather be feared then ignored. If you’re gonna hate me, I’m going to give you an actual reason to hate me. You can’t do that in pretty pink and sunset yellow.”

Percy didn’t know what the day after that spiel. He’d known that most people didn’t like her, yeah, but what she’d just said? That was completely harsh. She was a child, a toddler, hated among the masses. Stuff like that scars people, makes them into, well, Annabeth Chase.

He got to his feet, moving across to room the stand next to her. She barely flinched when he wrapped his arms around her, standing stiffly against him. “Stop that,” she grumbled. “I’m trying to be upset.”

“I’m trying to make you feel…not alone.”

Annabeth snorted, slowly leaning against his chest. She brought her arms up stiffly, wrapping them loosely around his torso.

“Still mad?” Percy asked quietly.

“It’s not your turn,” Annabeth grumbled.

Percy grinned. Annabeth let out a sigh, melting against him. Percy grin softened into a small smile; he rested he cheek on top of her head, breathing in the scent of her shampoo: lemons.

They went on with easier questions: “What does your dad do?” “He’s an online professor for some Ivy League school and does boring science stuff.” “That’s really awesome.” “Not when he spends all day locked in his office and you can barely remember if he even had a beard.”

Stuff like that.

It didn’t take long for the game to change to a conversation. They spent most of the afternoon in the cave, talking and eating lunch. It was great, in simplest terms. Percy didn’t want it to end, ever, though when it did he was lucky enough to exchange numbers with her. He hadn’t realized until he was back in his room that he’d never asked about his dream.

‘Probably for the best,’ he decided. She’d already had an emotional spiel, which seemed pretty out of character for her anyway. Pushing her for more wouldn’t have been a good idea. ‘Maybe another time.’
(they’re tryna tell me) how i feel

Chapter Notes

So this took forever. It’s not even finished, this is only the first half of this chapter because it wasn’t getting too long for my liking. Hopefully I don’t take as long with Part 2!

Annabeth had checked her calendar twice Monday morning to make sure she was headed to the right class. It was just her luck, really. The (school) day after her sorta-kind-maybe-date with Percy just so happens to be the same day where her schedule lines up perfectly with the aforementioned prince.

She had gotten to class mostly on time, taking her usual seat in the back beside Piper. Piper, as well as several other people in her class, were openly staring at her. Annabeth would’ve said something snarky, but Piper didn’t deserve her attitude—at least not until after lunch. She went with a simple question in her best ‘polite’ tone.

“Is there a problem, Piper?”

Piper blinked at her, raising her eyebrows. “What are you wearing?” she asked.

“Clothes,” Annabeth deadpanned.


Annabeth made a face at her. “What does that even mean?”

Piper gestured to her outfit—a white tank top paired with a (cotton, light-washed) jean jacket and light jeans. “That’s not what you usually wear and you know it,” Piper stated.

Annabeth shrugged. “I can’t put on anything else,” she said. “Don’t know if you saw the news or not—”

“Uh of course I saw the news!” Piper interrupted. “You badass monster-slaying Queen. That was so fucking awesome! You were like ‘Bam!’ And it was like ‘Rawr!’ it was so awesome!”

“Incredible,” Annabeth said dryly. “I got terrible burns, Piper. It was incredibly difficult to get this one, let alone anything else in my closet.”

“Hey.” Annabeth turned forward, giving the boy in front of her a bored look. He’d never tried engaging in any conversation before. Annabeth assumed he—like a lot of the other sophomores in the class (though if she didn’t know already she’d have guessed he was a freshman, or middle schooler)—was afraid to even look at her.

“Um…I was eavesdropping, obviously.”

“Obviously.” Annabeth repeated.

“I didn’t know other people had pyrokinesis,” he finished.
“What’s pyrokinesis?” Piper asked, her voice sounding more like background noise than anything.

Annabeth ignored Piper’s statement, answering the boy with, “I don’t. But I assume you do, don’t you? And you wanted to have some amazing conversation filled with bonding and shit, huh?”

The boy gave her a cheeky grin. “You know you’re not as horrible as people say.”

“Aw, I guess I gotta kidnap more children then, huh?”

“You’re a lot more sarcastic too,” he added.

Piper asked again, “Is no one gonna answer my question?”

The boy spared her a glance before returning his attention back to Annabeth. “You look a lot more approachable. Like a sarcastic babe.”

Annabeth realized that most of her class—at least most of the ones who were already there three minutes before the bell—were listening in on their conversation until now, when she heard several of them gasp in surprise. She looked up, glaring at them before her turning her attention back to the boy in front of her.

She didn’t care that she didn’t know his name, using the pronoun harshly. “You’re very ballsy, Boy.”

“Confidence is key.”

"Hm," Annabeth hummed, the sound drowned out by the warning bell ringing. Once the noise ended, she gave her final statement to the little sophomore. “Please refrain from any further conversation and calling me ‘babe’, if you know what’s best for you.”

The kid was smart enough to turn facing forwards again, dropping his head down to scribble away in his notebook. Annabeth frowned once again—she had no idea who this kid was but he was a little weird. She shifted her body to face Piper again, watching as the latter scrolled through her phone.

“Class starts in…one minute,” Annabeth pointed out.

“My ‘bestie’ refused to answer me so I turned to the one person I could count on: Google.” Piper grumbled.

"You're such a whiny bitch.”

“Fuck off.”

Annabeth turned to hide her grin. She caught sight of Percy as he strolled into the classroom, engaged in a conversation with Jason Grace. They made short eye-contact, Percy’s grin widening ever so slight as he took his usual seat near the front. She gave him a small smile, quickly dropping her eyes down to the floor.

"Oh my gods,” Piper muttered. ‘Dear gods,’ Annabeth thought to herself. “Did you just…oh my gods…” Piper muttered to herself.

The bell rang, signaling the beginning of class. Annabeth frowned out the sounds of the standard announcements and Piper’s silent revelation, both lasting until Chiron put up his presentation for the day—it was titled “surviving a quest in extremes”.

“Annabeth,” Piper whispered harshly.
Naturally, Annabeth ignored her, writing down the title in her notebook. Maybe if she pretended she didn’t hear Piper, she’d stop bothering her. That plan worked for about five minutes, before Piper started throwing little paper balls at her. It was annoying, to say the least.

Piper leaned over a little, "Annabeth,” Piper whispered.

“Shut up,” Annabeth replied in a hushed tone. “Take notes.”

“How can I take notes when you gave the Prince those flirty eyes,” Piper whispered furiously.

Annabeth let out an indignant huff. “There were no flirty eyes.”

“You were blushing,” Piper pointed out. “And smiled! You can’t tell me that wasn’t a cutesy ‘we should kiss or date’ smile? I’m a daughter of Aphrodite, for Pete’s sake! I know a flirty smile when I see one!”

If it weren’t for the circumstances, everyone in the class would know what they were talking about. But lucky for Annabeth, it was the point in the presentation where they were copying notes, which meant that they weren’t the only ones trying to have a hushed conversation.

“If I promise to tell you later will you drop it?”

“You have to triple chocolate swear on your great grandmother’s grave that you’ll tell me?”

She heard the kid in front of her let out a confused (but amused) noise. It was a stupid phrase, but it was better than Piper’s charmspeak.

“Yes, I triple chocolate swear on my great grandmother’s grave.” Piper gave her a satisfied look, turning her attention back to the projection.

Annabeth hadn’t realized later meant the transition period. All she had wanted was for Piper to help her redress one of her burns (it started to feel irritated and itchy in the middle of class, but she wasn’t keen on drawing any unwanted attention or concern).

Piper, the ever respectful friend, didn’t ask about all the bandages and newer bruises and cuts under her shirt, silently replacing the bandages for her (They weren’t really concerned with time, either; They had five minutes to get to class, which is way too much time if you asked Annabeth).

Of course it was then that Piper demanded answers. “Why on earth were you and Prince Perseus doing that cutesy, cliché little lock eyes and blush and smile shit? Tell me now.”

“Cause he’s stupid,” Annabeth muttered, more to herself.

Piper raised an eyebrow at her in the mirror. “He was being an idiot on Saturday.” Annabeth explained.

“So you went on a date with the guy who you kept rejecting on Saturday?”

Annabeth frowned. “No. I was getting a tattoo, remember? I guess he didn’t know I was there but he was bothering Thalia with all these questions…shit.”

“What? What happened?”

‘What happened is that the whole reason I took him to the cave was complete ignored! Fucking hell.’
“Nothing,” Annabeth muttered. “One way or another we went out. To the forest, not on a date. And we just…we ate lunch and I answered questions for him so he could stop harassing Thalia.”

Piper stopped, narrowing her eyes. “You went on a date…with Prince Perseus. Like, the guy who lives in the castle. The son of Queen Sarra.”

“It wasn’t…it wasn’t like that.” Annabeth said in an exasperated tone.

Piper hummed, pulling Annabeth’s shirt back down. “It sounds like it was exactly like that,” she pointed out. “It’s good, though. He’s cute. Not my type, though, but maybe for you.”

Annabeth frowned, pulling her bag on and following Piper out of the bathroom. “Can we just…just drop it? Please? It’s nothing, Piper.”

Piper eyed her curiously, nodding slowly. “Whatever you want, Annabeth. Just…don’t be afraid or anything. I doubt he’s like that.”

Annabeth hummed silently, both acknowledging her statement and in lieu of a goodbye, turning into her government class.

Percy didn’t learn anything in Government.

Their teacher was absent (something about a wedding or a funeral or funnel or something, who cares), leaving them with one of the typical substitutes; the defensive football coach, Coach Ross. They had some reading and highlighting assignment (baby work, really) that no one was doing, opting for the unspoken option of talking to their friends. The only rule Coach Ross cared about was them not getting up and moving seats to talk to their friends.

Not Percy, no. He’d decided that whatever Mr. Rojas could (poorly) teach him about government, he could also figure out from his mother (or maybe the other countless people constantly hounding him about his responsibilities once he’s crowned). He wouldn’t even be in the class if it weren’t a graduation requirement. And since Coach Ross was so lenient with the rules, Percy figured there were better things he could be doing (like talking to Annabeth).

The only problem with that was that she sat in the opposite corner of the room, hidden in the back corner. So he’d have to resort to a little rule breaking (not like Coach cared anyway).

________________________

Annabeth Chase
9:42 am

Hey

________________________

He wasn’t expecting her to answer—or even notice—right away. Unlike the majority of their class, she was actually doing the assignment. Percy would glance her way and she’d be reading, biting the end of her pen (she actually took notes, along with the highlighting).

________________________

Annabeth Chase
9:46 am
Do your work

9:48 am

I’d much rather talk to you

9:53 am

I don’t understand how our grades are practically the same

9:54 am

Wanna expand on that

9:56 am

All you do is talk to your friends and creepily watch me yet I have to work my ass off to get a C

Percy frowned at his phone; he spent just as much time (or maybe even more) as she did on schoolwork. School was hard, believe it or not, and only a few teachers was nice enough to excuse his lack of attention (ADD) or his misinterpretation/spelling mistakes (dyslexia). Of course it wasn’t just him, since most demigods had one or the other or both.

He struggled, but that didn’t mean that he was the only one. That still didn’t give Annabeth the right to assume he was lazy in his schoolwork.

Annabeth Chase

10:00 am

I work harder than you and you know it. I’m struggling as it is in the classes I’ve got. You’re a daughter of wisdom

it’s probably 100x easier for you than it is for me.

10:02 am

I didn’t mean it like that

Don’t get all offended

10:03 am

All I was saying was that you should do your work

10:05 am

Sorry

10:06 am

I like your outfit btw
Percy glanced at her, seeing her frowning at him (though her blush gave way to her ‘anger’).

Annabeth Chase

10:08 am
Shut up you stupid fucker

10:08 am
You’re cute when you get angry

10:08 am
I literally cannot stand you

10:09 am
You love me

10:09 am
You annoy me more than I ever thought physically possible

10:10 am
In Annabeth language that translates to ‘you adorable and I can’t wait to go out with you again’ ;)

10:14 am
That doesn’t sound bad

Another date

Though you plan it this time

10:16 am
I’m excited now

I’ll plan it

It’ll be perfect and amazing

10:18 am
I can’t wait

Please note the sarcasm
Percy was typing out a cheeky response—something along the lines of ‘You’re a horrible actress’ or something. Unfortunately, the Dean of Discipline, Mrs. Faison, had shown up and promptly taken his phone from his hands. ‘Shit,’ he thought. The whole room was dead silent, Mrs. Faison glaring at him intensely.

"Mr. Jackson you know the rules,” she stated. “No cellphones during school hours, no exceptions.”

Percy knew that there was absolutely no way he was getting out of this scratch free. He nodded along, glancing down in mock-shame.

“Well then I’m sure you also know that you’ll be serving detention, after school today. Where you’ll be able to reclaim your property.”

"Yes ma’am.”

The only way this could get any worse was: “Ms. Chase!” All heads turned to look curiously at Annabeth in the back of the room. “Your cellphone, please.”

Percy internally groaned because of course Mrs. Faison would check who he was texting. He refused to make eye contact with Annabeth. He could feel her glaring as she crossed the silent room, depositing her phone in Mrs. Faison’s waiting hand.

“I’ll be seeing both of you in detention.”

Right after being shamed in front of her entire Government class was lunch. So technically she wasn’t shamed, but it wasn’t great being called out because of a stupid text. And to top it all off she’d have to pay the twenty dollar fee to get her phone back.

Annabeth was glad when the bell rang and class was over. After Mrs. Faison’s visit—where she busted every single student violating the dress code rules—the class was completely silent. Everyone was quick to leave the room once the bell rang.

Up to that point in the day, Annabeth had avoided any confrontations. Obviously, that didn’t last long. She wasn’t even in the cafeteria yet, but Romona McGill and her entourage of copycats were already hot on her tail (none of them had lunch that period; they were so just trying to bitch at Annabeth). She gave Annabeth that sickly sweet smile, with a small head tilt.

“I heard you got detention,” she stated.

“I didn’t realize you cared so much about what I did,” Annabeth said boredly.

“I don’t,” Romona corrected.

“She doesn’t,” Trina Epstein, Romona’s notorious echo, chimed.

Romona soared her a glance before continuing. “I do care when it’s because you’re texting my boyfriend.”

It was typical of people like Romona to believe that just because they were pretty and rich and Ladies of the Court that they were automatically promised to Percy.

“You know I’d gladly show you our conversation, so you could see who texted first, but
unfortunately it’s been confiscated.” Annabeth turned to walk away; Romona grabbed her arm, keeping her from leaving.

Annabeth raised an annoyed eyebrow. “Angie heard you and Madam Indian in the bathroom this morning,” she went on. “I just wanted to make a few things clear.”

“Humor me.”

“Don’t talk,” she demanded. “You’re a worthless bitch. A blonde wannabe of the picture of perfection. Prince Perseus will never date a scum like you. You’re worse than the gum on the bottom of your shoe. Go ahead and delete his number from his phone. If you know what’s good for your and your Fake Yank, you’d better erase any ideas you have.”

Annabeth narrowed her eyes at them. “I can gut you in three seconds flat. You really think threatening me is a good idea?”

“We aren’t scared of you,” Angelica Lemieux stated fiercely.

“You’re all bark and no bite,” Trina chimed. “Oh wait, I forgot you gave that daughter of Aphrodite rabies last year.”

They all thought it was hilariously funny, laughing their annoying, high-pitched laughs. Annabeth took a deep breath; she already had detention, but if she punched any one of them she’d get suspended. The staff was definitely biased when it came to mortals versus demigods.

Romana gave Annabeth one finally once over, scowling in disgust before turning away. “Get her lunch money ladies,” she called back to her entourage.

The two remaining gave Annabeth an expectant look. “I thought you caught on by now; I don’t have lunch money.”

They rolled their eyes in perfect unison, turning to chase after their leader. ‘Stupid motherfuckers,’ Annabeth thought.

She went into the lunchroom just as the bell rang, making a beeline for her usual spot by the outside patio, where Piper was already sitting. Annabeth’s eyebrows scrunched together as she saw who she was with—the ballsy, annoying kid from Demiology. He’d changed since she saw him first period, now wearing an extra large gym shirt with scorch marks on his exposing skin. His brown curls were pushed up by one of Piper’s Head sweatbands.

Piper grinned as Annabeth plopped beside her. “Annabeth! Leo set the football field on fire!”

Annabeth’s eyebrows raised in surprise. There was a lot wrong with that statement, from the lack of a fire alarm setting to the kid (Leo) having the ability to set the field on fire. Except, now it made sense why he asked if she had pyrokinesis, because obviously he had it. It was an extremely rare trait that mostly children of Hephaestus had, too.

“You…you set the field. On fire?”

He nodded enthusiastically. “It wasn’t on purpose, though Fiaison’s still giving me detention.”

“The football team has it out for him.” Annabeth eyed Piper; she talked like she did whenever she had too much sugar, which usually resulted in some charmspeak accident.

“They’re gonna kick my ass,” Leo whined, though his giddy smile gave way to any actual concern.
Piper and Annabeth went about their daily routine of Annabeth handing off her five dollars and Piper buying her food, while Annabeth warmed up Piper’s lunch. Leo had opted to go with Piper, seeing that Annabeth wasn’t planning on participating in any type of conversation.

Annabeth was fine with sitting quietly while Piper got to know Leo. It wasn’t like she was going to join the conversation. She’d rather Piper decide whether or not this Leo guy was a worthwhile friendship (it was what she did best). Annabeth got some homework done, which was always good. You know, having more free time to sit and contemplate life.

“Yo Chase.” Annabeth lifted her eyes to Leo. “I heard you got detention for texting Prince Perseus in class.”

“Yes I was sending nudes.” Annabeth deadpanned, making Piper let out a short laugh while Leo snorted.

“I told you it wasn’t true,” Piper stated brightly.

Annabeth sat up at that, letting her pen drop on her notebook. “I didn’t say it wasn’t true,” she argued. “Percy and I were texting, in class. Mrs. Faison came in, took his phone cause the idiot doesn’t know how to be slick. She looked and saw who he was texting. She took my phone. Go ahead and check.”

“Can we strip search you!” Leo explained, earning Annabeth’s middle finger.

Annabeth folded her arms on the table, leaning into the pair. “So who keeps telling everyone about me and my phone?”

“Jake McCarthy texted Julia Swarthmez that Prince Perseus got detention for fraternizing with Annabeth Chase, and Julia took a screenshot and posted it on Instagram and Twitter. Then practically everyone retweeted it. It’s probably still swarming the Internet right now.”

Annabeth nodded along. Jake McCarthy sat two seats to her right in Government. He was an annoying loud mouth who told his on-again-off-again girlfriend Julia Swarthmez everything that happened all the time. And Julie was an even bigger gossip, where basically everyone got their information on the latest information, true or not (it was almost always true).

“Can we not talk about this anymore?” Annabeth asked. She’d said once that she didn’t care what people thought of her. Then she’d said that she was giving them something to talk about, since she wanted to have some sort of control over what they thought of her. She couldn’t control gossip, though. And she definitely didn’t want to be heard discussing the gossip about her and Prince Perseus in the crowded lunchroom, adding fire to the flames.

Piper, the best friend she is, seemed to read Annabeth’s mind. She launched into another topic, more addressed to Annabeth than Leo. “You know I finished a new design? I want you to model it, so I can see any adjustments.”

Annabeth rolled her eyes. “I don’t want to put on a dress, Piper.”

“You make dresses?” Leo asked from across the table.


“Why? I bet they’re really good, and you could sell them and make big money.”

Piper shrugged. “It’s easier this way. I can only handle Annabeth’s scrutiny, cause I’m so used to it
now anyway. I made the jacket she’s wearing from a bunch of old jeans I found at the thrift store and some material I bought.” After a beat, she added, “I also got the fabric from the thrift store. I don’t shop at those big stores.”

Leo raised an eyebrow in mundane surprise.

Annabeth answered him before he could ask. “If you wanna know why, talk to Grover Underwood.”

For the first time since Annabeth had heard from Leo, he didn’t push any further. Instead, he asked, “So how could you have known that she made a dress, if she makes all types of clothes?”

“Piper’s been trying to get me in a dress since I agreed to model her clothes last year. Which I won’t, by the way.”

“Well it’s not a dress, anyway,” Piper said. “It’s some formal wear. A cute jumpsuit. I hope, at least.”

Annabeth rolled her eyes at her friend. She didn’t even have any where to wear formal clothes. But of course, Piper got her way, and not just because of the charmspeak.

“Yeah sure,” she agreed. With a groan, she added, “After detention.”

Usually, every person in detention was separated by offense. For some weird reason, the number of students in detention wasn’t high enough to separate them like that, so Percy’s first time in detention was spent with two kleptomaniacs, a reckless pyrokinetic, two pairs of handsy teens, and Annabeth.

Percy was stuck copying word for word the Terms of Agreement and Privacy Policy for the iPhone (if he finished that he’d do Androids, and if he finished that he’d do for Google Pixel) for the hour. He wasn’t sure what everyone else got, but they all pretty much had the same assignment—copy word for word some long and pretentious manual or something until four o’clock.

It was ludicrous—Mrs. Faison had given him a pen which mean he could erase anything; he was crossing words out left and right, only getting more and more frustrated as the clock ticked down. He was completely agitated, wanting to get up and stretch or just do something other than writing a fucking privacy policy for an hour. Every time he’d look up Faison would be glaring at him.

He practically bolted out of his chair once the alarm rang, signaling the end of the hour. He shouldered his bag, dropping the pages on the front desk before exiting the room. Part of him wanted to wait for Annabeth—apologize and talk to her because it just made him feel so happy talking to her—but another part wanted to get out of there and maybe run a marathon (or something more normal like take a walk).

Lucky for him he didn’t have to choose, Annabeth practically running into him as she exited. “Come on, Jackson. Some of us would like to get our phone back before the office closes.”

“There’s fifteen minutes, you’ve got time.” He didn’t mean to come off so rude, but honestly he was pretty annoyed and agitated and restless and…there wasn’t me for her bullshit attitude at the moment.

Annabeth rolled her eyes. Percy watched her stuck her fingers in her jean pockets then on her backpack straps and back again twice. “Don’t get all aggy with me. I didn’t get us detention.”

Percy scoffed. “Like it was all my fault.”

Annabeth stopped in front of him. “You texted me first, remember? Or does your brain only recall
moments where you look amazing and everyone else around you worships the ground you walk on?”

Percy’s eye twitched—the day was long and annoying and he had detention for the love of Poseidon and now he had to deal with this crap? Not today. He was not going to feed her snide little ego of always being right. It didn’t matter how pretty and awesome she was, how much he wanted her to like him, she said the same thing all the time and it was getting irritating. Someone had to call her out on it, and it looked like it would be him.

“Literally fuck off, Annabeth.”

“And why’s that? Can’t handle the truth?”

“You’re so fucking annoying and I’m not in the mood because now I have to explain to every person ever why I was in detention.”

“If I recall correctly it was all. Your. Fault.” She punctuated each word by stepped closer to him, poking him the chest in the most annoying way. It was almost as if she were asking for him to explode.

“Do you just blame anyone but yourself for everything that happens to you?”

Annabeth scoffed. She was a little shorter than him, but her glare still stood, their faces mere inches apart. “I don’t have to deal with this.”

“Then leave,” Percy challenged in a low voice.

Annabeth was, in fact, intimidating. He was sure that she could have a stare down with a monster and probably win. That being said, Percy wasn’t in the mood to back down from her, no matter how squeamish she made him feel. He was seriously getting sick of everyone looking down on him (metaphorically), treating him like he was five years old, like he couldn’t even wipe his own ass.

He wasn’t sure how long they kept up their staring contest—he wasn’t planning on backing down and it was clear she wasn’t either. The strangest thing happened: Annabeth’s eyes glanced down at his lips for a split second. When her gaze returned to his eyes, she looked more like a deer caught in headlights than standing her ground (what were they even arguing about?).

“I saw that,” he said with a smirk, folding his arms over his chest.

“No you didn’t,” she said quickly, her cheeks flushing red.

“I so saw that. I can’t unsee it!” Percy teased, holding back his laugh.

“Oh my gods,” she grumbled, dropping her head in her hands.

This time he couldn’t help it, laughing loudly. Annabeth turned on her heels toward the exit, only to be stopped by Percy pulling her back to him. “Hey,” he said softly. “I’m sorry. About today. Don’t be all mad and embarrassed.”

“I hate you,” she said, her tone lacking any bite.

“Are we still on for this weekend?”

“Gimme twenty bucks so I can get my phone.” Which was a good enough answer (for now, at least).
“We’re having company stay here this weekend, Perseus.”

Percy hummed, acknowledging his royal advisor while also trying to end the conversation (he was pretty busy with his physics homework, and honestly wasn’t in the mood for Mathew).

“They’ll be arriving Wednesday afternoon and will stay through Sunday.”

“Cool.”

Mathew knew how to get his attention, adding with a resigned sigh. “Duke Weston of Leerás and his family are coming.”

Percy broke out in a grin, dropping his pen on his desk. “No shit! No shit? Seriously?”

Mathew groaned, pinching the bridge of his nose. “What did we say about the cursing, Perseus?”

“Sorry, sorry,” he didn’t mean his apology, it was just an automatic response. “They’re really gonna be here? You’re not trying to trick me again?”

“Sorry, Queen Sarra forbade trickery in our lessons after the last time.”

Percy made a face at that; he’d been completely played two years before and snitched on his entire advisory team as quickly as he could. That was when the team went from six to two people.

“Where are they staying?” Percy asked.

“The Duke and Duchess are staying in the guest tower with Lady Madeline Evangeline and Lord Lucas McArthur. Lady Sophia Angelica and Lord Mattius Bartholomew have requested your permission to reside in your tower for their stay, if you will allow it.”

Percy furrowed his brows for a second. Sometimes it was really hard to understand what he was saying, especially when it was long and had a lot of names (like everything he just said). Once he’d finally deciphered the sentence (the Duke of Leerás and his family were coming and their oldest twins wanted to stay in his tower) he broke into a grin.

The first time he’d met royal family of Leerás was barely a month after he’d been thrown into this life, the summer he turned twelve. He was stressed and overwhelmed, dealing with just discovering his demigod heritage and his royal lineage, everyone in his face telling him exactly how the rest of his life would be.

He’d met the Duke and his family during their annual visit to the mainland, where all the leaders of Potaris’s islands met, along with the Queen of Potaris. Percy was charged with spending the entire week with ten other kids—the four children of Leerás, the one child of Yetlee, the three children of Erechká, and the two children of Bol. Four were younger than him, two were in his year, and the remaining four were at least over twenty, waiting for their parents to kick the bucket so they could be in power.

Percy had felt awkward around them. They’d grown up prim and proper, while he was still learning that things like food and clothes and money weren’t a problem and he didn’t have to save parts of his meal in case he got hungry the next day.

They’d all stayed in their respective cliques, leaving Percy to sulk in his room for most of the day. A few of the older ones had talked to him once in a while (“What’s your name?” Percy. “You’re eleven? That’s pretty young.” Only cause your twenty-seven, Sebastian. “Your mother is a nice lady, you know.” I’m aware). Other than that, he had almost no interaction with them. Some were just
babies (Maddie) and others just weren’t interest in him enough to even look his way.

In simplest terms, Percy would rather have his old life.

At least, until the fourth day, when he’d been woken up by the twins of Leerás instead of his stupid alarm clock (tat blared the national anthem). They were the only two in his year, who’d spent most of the trip watching their baby sister. “But our mom is watching her now, so we get to play with you.” Sophia Angelica had said.

“Well it’s seven in the morning, so I’d like to get more sleep.”

“The sun is up from nine to thirteen hours everyday, which means that between bathing, lessons, and meals, we’ve got only four to nine hours to play outside,” Mattius, her twin brother, had pointed out.

“That’s a long time.”

“But were only here for three more days, which is—“

“—twelve to twenty-seven hours—“

“—to mold you into our bestest friend ever.”

Percy had thought it oddly cool that they finished each other’s sentence (like twin telepathy). He let them have their way, though their numbers were extremely high, and eventually they had become close friends.

In his best professional voice, he said to Mathew, “They have my permission to reside here.”

Mathew nodded, scribbling something in his binder. “And your mother had requested your presence. She’s in the dining hall.”

“Okay.” Not that it would do anything, he added, “Let her know I’m on my way.”

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Percy Jackson

5:42 pm

Annabeth guess what

I got in trouble!

5:42 pm

You don't sound distressed

5:43 pm

This is the first time my mom has gotten mom-mad at me in YEARS

She’s always too busy to even care about what I’m doing

5:43 pm
I have babysitters all the time
But she personally got mom-mad
It was great!

5:45 pm
You're a weirdo
So what happened
And what is ‘mom-mad’

5:48 pm
I’m not mad I’m disappointed
She was all lie how I shouldn’t be texting in class
and shouldn’t be provoking bad press

5:50 pm
Especially with coronation in a few years
that I didn’t deserve to have my phone still
She took my car keys too
BTW can you pick me up for school tmrw

5:52 pm
I'll consider
Its a long drive tho

5:54 pm
I know
But I like seeing you

5:56 pm
I hate you
She didn’t get mad that you were texting me

5:58 pm
My mother is the last person who’d tell me who to date

6:01 pm
We aren’t dating
We’re just hanging out

6:01 pm
Why does it take you so long to answer

6:06 pm
It takes like two minutes
I’m doing homework
And babysitting
I hate my brothers

6:07 pm
Also how would feel about moving our not-date to tmrw?
Cause the royal family of Leerás is coming Wednesday
Matt and Sophie are gonna stay in my tower
its gonna be great!

6:10 pm
ive never met someone so optimistic
who can switch to angry so fast
Kinda endearing

6:11 pm
:*

6:15 pm
I changed my mind
You’re and idiot

6:17 pm
I’ll pick you up tmrw, tho
@ 7:10 so be ready

6:40 pm
I was in the shower sorry
Percy getting his car taken away as punishment was the funniest news she’d ever heard. She didn’t even know Queen Sarra punished Percy, nor she could be so harsh. It wasn’t anything like getting grounded, sure, but he’d probably been grounded at least once before. Or worse, been grounded to someone else’s home.

Until he’d get his car back in two weeks, she was his chauffeur to school and back. She didn’t get any specific instructions from Queen Sarra that he couldn’t go anywhere besides school, but rather from Percy’s royal advisor, Carmichael (who didn’t seem to like her very much).

It didn’t matter much that he wasn’t allowed to go anywhere besides school, since his planned not-date night was hanging out in the castle. With pizza and video games and old-timely records and tickle wars. It was ridiculously childlike and adorable, Percy whining and pouting whenever Annabeth beat him at anything and forcing her to dance to some pop American song on the records until they were too tired to laugh.

They ate their pizza in almost complete silence, save the puffs of laugh Annabeth let out at the faces Percy made while he ate. He was so weird and quirky all at once in the most adorable way.

Hours into the not-date, after the sun had sunk and the streetlights had come on, Annabeth finally asked him who was even visiting. She got the gist—the royal family from one of their territories was coming to the mainland and she thinks some were around their age so it made sense they’d wanna hang with Percy. But a lot of it wasn’t adding up, in the sense.

In simplest terms, Leerás—the closest and most popular territory—had triyearly visits for the Duke and Duchess to update the Queen and also getting ahead on the biyearly meetings with all the territories. Percy had said it was more of an excuse to have someone else entertain the royal children than anything, but he wasn’t complaint since Lady Sophia Angelica and Lord Mattius Bartholomew were some of his closest friends. “Even closer than Jason.”

“He scoffed. “No one is closer to me than Grover, Annabeth.”
She nodded along. “Naturally, of course.” She then asked, “So Sophia and Mattius are like, your crew?”

“I love them,” he deadpanned. “Not like in love, cause like Sophie is so gay and Mattius is so straight and I am very hooked on getting a pretty blonde to go on a date with me instead of a not-date —”

“I doubt she will.”

“But they’re super cool and awesome. Like having my own brother and sister.”

“Brothers suck.”

Percy rolled his eyes at her. “Your brothers seem awesome, though you never let me meet them.”

“They’re little fuckers, you don’t want to meet them.”

He stuck his tongue at her. “Where was I?”

“You were gushing about your polyamory.”

Percy swung his pillow at her, the down feathers flying out. Annabeth shrieked, swinging back at him.

“You’re disgusting,” Percy stated.

Annabeth laughed at him, letting her head fall against his shoulder. Not-dates, though she’d only been on two, were actually enjoyable. It made her wonder if actual dates would be this fun, this great.

“We need to commemorate this moment,” she decided.

Percy made a face her, dusting his hand over his hair to clear out the feathers. He was incredibly adorable. “What’d you say?”

“Let’s take a picture. To remember not-date number 2 always.”

Percy grinned, leaning over and grabbing his phone. Percy had sent her a lot of the pictures (which was more than fifty) and she knew that there was still a lot more. A lot of them were stupid and silly, unfocused, blurry, and off-centered.

So what if she picked from the handful of good ones as her phone background. They were cute and better than the standard phone background she’d had for two years. It didn’t mean anything. She didn’t love the one she’d chosen, with them making silly faces at the camera, with down feathers still floating around in the background. Percy still had some pizza sauce on his face. The next few pictures were of her licking his face (some might say it looked like she was kissing his cheek).

She didn’t mean anything by it. She was just… just definitely flirting with him without a doubt. Gods, Piper was gonna have a field day with this.
study tip: it helps to focus

Chapter Notes

This was going to be longer, but I wanted to update it now and couldn’t write anymore on this document.

So it’s been what…four months? Am I sorry? I don’t know, actually. I love this story, and I happened to hit a writing wall with it around the same time as Disney’s Zombies came out. Coincidence? Major coincidence. (You should watch it it was very good).

Anyway I got this done, and there’s like two chapters left now. Wow.

“Don’t forget to take a flyer on your way to your seat,” the librarian reminded them boredly as they filed in for study hall. Taking a flyer wasn’t mandatory and Mrs. Iqladamas surely wasn’t checking, but Percy didn’t want to risk it, sliding the half-paper from the stack.

"Homecoming,” Jason commented from next to him. “I didn’t realize that was coming up?”

“Is it?” Percy questioned.

"October 14. That’s in three weeks, dude.”

Percy shrugged. “I don’t plan on going either way.”

“You’re seriously gonna skip Homecoming again?”

“What’s the point?” Percy asked. The two of them sat at the end of a mostly empty table. Percy knew that there were a few people on the other end, though they didn’t seem concerning at all. “I can’t even be an option for king, pretty much everyone here kisses the ground I walk on, and I can’t dance.”

“But It’s Homecoming!” he exclaimed in a whisper. “It’s like, the best thing a junior can do! It’s the only dance we can go to without having to go with a senior—even though senior girls are so hot.”

Percy glanced at the clock just as the bell rang, waiting for the sound to end before continuing. The conversation was killing him—he as already tired from spending the entire night doing homework and preparations for the incoming visitors. He’d been planning on sleeping through Study Hall, but clearly Jason was set on continuing the conversation.

As the Fates would have it, the people at the end of the table were Annabeth and her friend, Piper. While Jason had been going on about Homecoming, the two girls had made their way to Percy’s end of the table. Jason glanced sideways at Piper beside him, while Annabeth sat down beside Percy.

“Hey Jason,” Piper greeted sweetly. Percy didn’t know her very well (or at all), but it definitely sounded fake. “Do you wanna work on the project? For Demi?”

Jason glanced at Percy before shrugging his shoulders. “You cool man?” Jason asked him, glancing between him and Annabeth. Annabeth glanced up from her textbook, her eyebrows raised.
“I think I can handle hanging out with Annabeth for eighty minute,” Percy stated.

Annabeth scoffed but didn’t say anything otherwise. Jason nodded once, sliding out of his chair and following Piper to one of the empty conference rooms.

“You think we should do that too?”

Annabeth looked at him boredly. “I’m trying to study, like you should be.”

Percy shrugged. “I studied last night. Plus, Mrs. Wetler drops our lowest test grade.”

Annabeth rolled her eyes, turning her attention back to the textbook and leaving Percy with nothing to do. For eighty minutes. ‘Maybe I should study,’ he thought. There were a few problems in that plan, starting with how utterly boring AP Bio was and how incredibly distracting Annabeth was.

He probably read three (boring) passages in his book before giving up, deciding that Annabeth was a better subject to study than biology. It wasn’t even like she was doing some major, overly cute thing. It was more so in the little things. How she was fingering the end of her braid and constantly brushing the loose pieces out of her face. Every few minutes she’d glance up an around the room before forcing her gaze back to her book (a product of her ADHD, probably). She was mouthing the words too, quietly enough that Percy could make out what she was saying but enough that she was making little facial expressions along with what she was reading.

He managed to watch her (creepily) for another ten minutes before Annabeth asked him, “Is there a problem?”

“No ma’am.”

Annabeth rolled her eyes, muttering, “You’re so polite it’s sickening.”

Percy chuckled lightly.

Another few minutes passed before she sighed, saying “Can you not, though? It’s kinda distracting.”

“You’re very distracting.” “It’s not like I’m actually doing anything.”

“Uh yes you are,” she argued quietly. “You should be studying anyway. You literally have an hour to kill before a big—may I add the first—test, and instead of studying you’re staring at me creepily.”

“I am studying,” he stated. It took a second for her to understand what he meant, and when she did her cheeks went red.

She didn’t say anything after that, slouching down in her chair and ducking her head down. Percy decided that, no matter how utterly cute and adorable Annabeth acted when she was embarrassed and flushed, he shouldn’t put her through that misery.

He leaned over her book, pointing at the chapter title (something about biomes and ecosystems). “Do you wanna study together?” he asked.

“Depends.”

“On?”

Annabeth looked up at him, a small smirk on her face. “If you’re gonna actually study or you’re gonna stare at me.”
Annabeth is a great tutor. She’s got all these analogies and scenarios that she uses to break down every concept they learned in the three weeks they’d been in school. Percy kinda understood the material, and he’d only asked to study with her because he wanted an excuse to have her (almost) undivided attention for the whole period. He wasn’t expected to get a full lecture about ecology and ecosystems and all that boring stuff, better than even Mrs. Wetler teaching.

Annabeth also had the tendency to stop in the middle of a sentence, something in the library catching her attention or to give an annoyed eye roll at some minuscule detail her ADHD picked up (like the buzzing from the Apple TV or the finger tapping of some kid two tables away). She went off on a random tangent every once in a while, to the point that she was ranting about some book she’d read in the fifth grade (“it was that good, Percy”) and Percy didn’t want to interrupt her. She was just so into it, even if he had no idea what she was talking about sometimes.

With a glance at the time he found that the period was almost over. Annabeth, having noticed he had looked away, looked over too. “Oh my gods, it’s almost time to go,” she laughed out.

“Yeah. Thanks for helping me, by the way.”

Annabeth scoffed. “Please you weren’t even listening to me.”

“I was!” he defended, earning a round of ssh ’s and a shut up.

“Whatever helps you sleep at night, Stalker.”

Percy made a face, before packing his bag back up.

“I have a proposal.”

Annabeth didn’t look up from her reading, saying, “We’ve been on two not dates, I think it’s a little too early for that.”

Percy let out a little snort at her sarcasm. “You think you’re funny, Chase?”

“Oh I know I’m funny,” she stated.

“Anyway, I have an opportunity for you to make some good money.”

She looked at him from the corner of her eyes. “I’m not moving drugs for you.”

This time he laughed, loud and long enough to draw the attention of the librarian. “Mr. Jackson, please keep your voice down,” she scolded from across the room.

“Yeah Mr. Jackson,” Annabeth mocked in a whispered.

“Sorry ma’am,” Percy called, not really helping his case. He dropped his voice, continuing his conversation with Annabeth. “So some friends of mine want to go on a hike or some weird shit. I didn’t know anyone better than you to lead said hike, because I’ve never been in the woods and I doubt any official agency would actually take me out there.”

Annabeth raised an eyebrow at him.

“Technically I’m not supposed to disappear in the woods for anything. I’m not even supposed to go places without the royal guard.”

“I’m not gonna help you with your illegal activities,” Annabeth stated. “I will however light up with you. I’ve got the hook up on that good good weed.”
Percy furrowed his brows, practically gaping at her. After a beat, Annabeth let out a quiet laugh. “I’m kidding, dummy. I do some reckless things but I do not smoke.”

Percy relaxed a little. It was one thing for her to talk about smoking, but another to bring in marijuana (which is, you know, illegal). She may be pretty and funny and smart and quirky and—but he wasn’t down for that stuff.

“You’d fall for anything,” she joked. “I could tell you that you got me pregnant and you’d believe me.”

He let out a breathy, slightly awkward laugh, joking along with her. “I think it’d be pretty hard for a virgin to get anyone pregnant.”

Her laughter stopped abruptly, the realization of what he’d said weighing. Percy turned away from her, his cheeks hot and red from embarrassment.

“You’re a virgin?” She didn’t sound like she was laughing or was going to mock him. It was more like genuine curiosity.

“Well you are the first girl I’ve ever liked,” he muttered, immediately cringing at his cheesiness. Of all the times he’d talked to her, all the awkwardness and weirdness he’d said and they’d been through, it had never been so weird and uncomfortable and embarrassing. From what he knew, being sixteen and a virgin was just… wrong.

"Me too."

He whipped his head up to look at her, raising his eyebrows. “What?”

Annabeth looked up at him, her expression casual. “It’s kinda hard to lose your virginity when everyone around you hates you.”

“Oh.”

“And besides, I’d hate to lose it to some loser from Potaris.” She glanced at him, adding, “Except you. You seem kinda cool, I guess.”

“Real date worthy?”

He was expecting her to laugh in his face, to shut him. Not to shrug innocently, turn back to her textbook and say ‘sure’.

He blinked twice. “For real?”

“Well yeah,” she said. She gave her book a little shove forward, shifting in her chair to face him completely. “You’re cute when you act all dumb, Stalker.”

“You’re mean when your flirting.”

The corner of her mouth turned up. “Stalker,” she muttered to herself, turning back to her books. “I’ll do it, by the way. The little hiking thing.”

“Cool,” he said, nodding along. “But, um, that’s not the date, is it?”

Annabeth snorted. “Gods no. That’s your job, Idiot.”

"Mind thinking of a much less offensive nickname?"
The bell rang loudly overhead. “You’re so needy, Jackson,” she stated, sliding out of her chair.

“Hey loser.”

Percy, ever the gentleman, gave Sophie the finger as he passed, dumping his backpack on the floor. He the dropped himself in his chair, letting out a blissful, over-dramatic sigh.

He had just gotten home from a particularly taxing day of school. He had a test in AP Bio, an essay (rough draft) due before the weekend in Government, and a one day project in Demiology (that Annabeth was coming over to finish in an hour). Add that he still had to finish both his Latin and Physics homework (that he’d been putting off since it was assigned).

Sophie and her younger siblings (that weren’t her twin because who knew where he was) followed him into his study, making themselves at home while he went to work setting up for all the work he’d have to do. They had gotten there that morning, probably messing around in other parts of his tower while he was at school.

Sophie moved closer to him, gesturing and explaining as if she were a tour guide. “And that, children, is what school with commoners does to you. Look at it, all exhausted and hunched over. He’s probably filled with a bunch of pent up energy from being confined to a classroom all day.”

Percy turned in his chair to face the three of them. “Don’t listen to her,” Percy said. “School is awesome, okay?”

“School sucks!” Sophie’s youngest sister, Maddie, exclaimed. Sophie and Lucas both cheered in approval, making Percy roll his eyes.

“Only in Leerás,” Percy mocked. “Everything sucks there, Maddie. I bet you guys don’t even have good ice cream.”

”Good point,” Lucas conceded. “Our ice cream sucks.”

“It’s the only reason I ever come here,” Maddie admitted. “But common folk are gross. They’re dirty and rude and say bad things.”

Percy frowned. “Well I guess you won’t want to meet my friend,” he stated. “She’s coming over soon to do some homework, and she’s a commoner. Like…bottom of the barrel commoner.”

“Queen Sarra lets you bring poor people here?” Lucas asked, his voice filled with complete shock.

Percy shrugged. “The whole point of going to school is to meet all kinds of people,” he explained. “What kind of king would I be if I was locked up in a castle my whole life?”

“A typical king,” Sophie muttered.

Maddie sat down closer to Percy, looking up at him curiously. “Is she nice though? Like, does she use bad language? Or is she like…like Cinderella or Rapunzel? Like, pretty and nice but on the wrong side of the road?”

“Oh Annabeth’s amazing,” Percy said. “I wouldn’t compare her to any Disney princess, though.”

“I feel like I’ve heard of her before,” Lucas muttered to himself.

Maddie ignored her brother, asking Percy, “What’s she like? Can I meet her?”
Percy pretended to think for a minute. If Annabeth was aware that Maddie would be there and that she was a little kid, she might refrain from cursing around her. Though he’d never been around her when she wasn’t cursing. She even cursed when her brothers were around, and he was pretty sure they weren’t much older than Maddie.

“Maybe,” he decided. “But we’re gonna be doing boring homework the whole time, so don’t distract us.”

Maddie nodded enthusiastically. Sophie just groaned, plucking his physics worksheet from the desk. “Look at this. It’s disgusting. You can’t tell me you wanna watch him and some peasant doing this nonsense?”

Percy took his work back, setting it off to the side. “We’re not doing physics, Sophie. I’m trying to finish my other assignments before she gets here.”

“Do you need any help?” Lucas asked.

“Can you conjugate Latin verbs in the past and present tense?”

Lucas paused to think about it for a minute. “I can try,” he decided, moving from the couch to the desk. Percy grinned, adjusting his workspace to make room for the tween.

“Annabeth Chase. I’m not surprised to see you back here.” Ted the security guard stated.

“Nice to see you too,” she muttered. She unstrapped both her sword and her dagger, passing them over easily.

“I’m gonna need to go through your bag as well.”

Annabeth raised an eyebrow. “Seriously?”

“Seriously.”

She groaned, pulling the bag off her bag and sliding it onto the table. “What would I even hide in here?”

Ted shrugged, rifling through it. He handed her her bag back, opening the gate to let her in. “You never have anything suspicious. Don’t know why you’re always deemed so suspicious.”

“Neither do I,” she muttered, riding through the opening.

Annabeth had only visited the castle thrice—once for the not-date in the woods and two times taking him to school the morning before and after—but already knew the route by heart to get from the main entrance to his tower-place. She wasn’t sure if there was a protocol for visiting him, so she sat out on the curb, waiting for him to answer her call.

Percy had snuck up behind her, attacking her in a hug and shouting in her ear: “I haven’t seen you forever!”

If Annabeth wasn’t so sure it was Percy being her she would’ve attacked him (because some person just ran up behind her). Instead she shrieked out a laugh, sticking her tongue at him. “I saw you an hour ago, dumbass.”

Percy turned her around, a cheeky grin on his face. “It feels like forever.”
Despite herself she smiled, ducking her head down to avoid his gaze. “Come on. We better get started now. My stepmother wants me home before it’s too dark and I don’t enjoy driving after nine.”

“About that,” Percy started. “Those friends I was telling you about, they kinda wanna meet you. Soph is kinda rude at first but she grows on you after an hour. Unless you guys have conflicting personalities, then it’s a no go. Her brother, Lucas, is really quiet, so you won’t have to worry about him. But Maddie is a kid. A little kid, so please don’t do anything that makes her parents want to arrest you.”

Annabeth stated at him blankly. “What’re all these names?”

“Leerás.” Percy said offhandedly. “They’re waiting anxiously to meet my beautiful friend/demi partner, and I’m anxiously waiting for you to meet them.”

Annabeth made a face at him. “I came to do a project. Not smoosh with some prissy princesses and prince.”


“I don’t fucking care!”

“Annabeth!” Percy exclaimed in exasperation. He pinched the bridge of his nose, clearly frustrated and annoyed. In a pleading tone, he said to her, “I swear they’ll leave us alone and we’ll work on our project and get it done. I swear on my life, okay? But just…just promise me you won’t, you know, curse and say things a seven year old shouldn’t hear.”

Annabeth frowned, pretending to run it over in her head. It was a no brainer that being ‘civil’ here would be an important part in the rest of their…their relationship. “I’m only doing this because it’s never a good idea to start the term with a bad grade.”

She hadn’t expected Percy to shout in delight, wrapping her in a hug and lifting her off the ground. She screamed in surprise, squeezing his bicep tightly while he held her in the air.

Annabeth had seen the royal children of Leerás before—mostly on tv, never in person. For starters, Lady Sophia Angelica radiated attitude. When Annabeth first came in, Lady Sophia was across the room, immediately sizing her up. Her eyes lingered on Annabeth’s bare arms, studying her exposed tattoos. Lord Lucas McArthur had been a little more subtle, glancing at her every once in a while but trying to keep his attention on the computer screen. Lastly, Lady Madeline Evangeline had practically come charging at her, stopping only feet away.

“Are you Annabeth?” she asked sweetly.

Annabeth nodded, her attention more focused on the room. She’d never been inside Percy’s tower (“we’re literally going to be in the boring study room. They is nothing interesting there”). The room was twice the size of a classroom, one whole wall covered from ceiling to floor in books. Another wall across the room had a large bay window overlooking some grassy, plant filled area (she couldn’t see that far). The wall on the right of entering had a large desk, covered in textbooks and notebooks and practically everything in his backpack, with another desk set up with two computer monitors beside it.

"I like your tattoos.” Oh right, she was still supposed to be conversing (civilly) with this little kid. “They’re really pretty.”
“Thanks,” Annabeth said. “You’re, um, braids are nice. It’s cool they’re still so neat, after they’ve been braided all day.”

“How would you know how her hair looked?” Lady Sophia asked from across the room.

Annabeth shrugged, stepping further into the room. “We had to watch you guys’ arrival today at school. It is literally the most boring thing ever.”

“That’s rude,” Lord Lucas pointed out.

“How would you feel if you had to sit in a smelly gym for an hour watching prissy rich kids get off a boat and stand they’re politely while they’re parents answered questions about politics?” Lord Lucas blushed at that, turning back to the monitor quickly.

Annabeth felt Percy pinch her side from behind as he came in. “What does ‘prissy’ mean?” Lady Madeline asked.

Annabeth opened her mouth to answer, but Percy was quicker, saying, “Don’t worry about it.”

He gave Annabeth a pointed look, leading her over to a set of couches near the center of the room. “We’re gonna do homework, so if you guys wanna leave or go do something fun you can.”

None of them move to leave (or even acknowledge what Percy said). Annabeth’s sits on the couch, dropping her bag by her feet and pulling out her laptop.

“Have you started brainstorming yet?” Annabeth asked.

Percy shook his head, taking a seat beside her. She didn’t notice that he was barely two inches away from her, practically knocking knees with her.

“I was thinking,” Annabeth started. “We could do a video, right? Like we could do a quick spar, if you’re up for it. Then we could go back and record over it, pointing out good tips or mistakes or something.”

Percy raised an eyebrow at her. “You think we can have that done before midnight?”

Annabeth nodded. “It’s like fourish now. We can spar which shouldn’t take too long. At most an hour maybe. We can watch it, making the script and record the voice over. I can edit it when I get home.”

Percy nodded along. “Do you need to borrow a sword?” Percy asked.

“Can you get your guard to give me back mine? I’d prefer it.”

Percy nodded, standing and moving to the door. “I’ll be back. Gotta change and get your sword.” He paused, looking her up and down. “You’re good to spar in jeans?”

Annabeth shrugged. “Do you have shorts or something I could borrow?”

“Yeah,” he said. “I’ll go grab those. I’ll be right back.”

Percy walked quickly out of the room, the door thudding closed behind him. Annabeth turned her
attention back to her laptop, logging onto her school website. She planned to check on her most recent test grade (or if they were even published). It was nerve wracking, waiting for teachers to post grades. Especially teachers who liked to wait until the day before grades were due to registrar to post them.

Annabeth heard someone clear their throat from beside her. It was clearly Lady Madeline because it was an adorable and high sound. “Yes Lady Madeline?” Annabeth asked, glancing at her briefly.

“You can just call me Maddie,” she said. “My daddy wants people to call me Lady Madeline, but it’s stupid. I like to be called Maddie.”

“Okay,” Annabeth said slowly. “Anything I can help you with, Maddie?”

“I have a question,” she stated. She picked at the end of her braid, asking curiously, “Do you have to put your tattoos on by yourself every morning? Or—or does your mommy help you put your tattoos on every morning?”

Annabeth didn’t mean to, but she laughed. Lady Madeline—Maddie—was adorable (almost in the same way Percy was). She had this cute sort of innocence too.

“Well first, my ‘mommy’ is a goddess, so I don’t really see her ever.”

Maddie’s eyes went wide in awe. “You’re a demigod? Like Percy is?”

Annabeth nodded. “Who’s your mom?” Lady Sophia asked from across the room.

“Athena.”

Lord Lucas started coughing violently, nearly falling out of his seat. “Athena? Athena Athena? Like the goddess of wisdom Athena?”

Annabeth nodded. She turned her attention back to Maddie, who was still watching he expectantly. “And I don’t have to put them on everyday. They don’t come off, they’re permanent.”

“They’re really pretty,” Maddie said, her finger tracing over a pattern on her arm. “Fo you draw them yourself?”

“Yeah I do,” Annabeth responded. “I draw the picture and my friend, Thalia, puts them on.”

“Do you think your friend Thalia would put some on for me?”

Annabeth was sure both of Maddie’s older siblings were glaring at her. “Well you’d have to ask your Mommy and Daddy first.”

“What…what if they say yes?”

“Well you have to be older than thirteen too. At least that’s when I got my first tattoo.”

Maddie nodded, her gaze cast down to where she was tracing. If Maddie wasn’t so adorable Annabeth wouldn’t have allowed her to be touching her. She probably wouldn’t have answered her ever either. And, maybe the fact that Percy had asked (read: begged) her to make a good impression was weighing in.
Story, Series, and Chapter Titles inspired by 'Love Story' by Taylor Swift.

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