**The Boy That Was Promised**

**by AzulDemon**

**Summary**

Patroclus is not the Chosen One; he is not even sure he belongs in this world half the time. He knows the Chosen One and he’s a boy just like himself—except he’s golden and perfect, he’s the star Quidditch player and he’s the most powerful and gifted wizard in history. He’s destined to save all of magic someday. Patroclus kind of wants to hate him but Achilles makes it impossible.

The Harry Potter and Song of Achilles mashup you never knew you wanted (hopefully).

**Notes**
So I've been wanting to write something in the Song of Achilles fandom since that book both filled my heart with joy and ripped it in half all at the same time. The idea of setting them in the world of Harry Potter came to mind and wouldn't let me go. This started as an "Achilles and Patroclus go to Hogwarts" fic and then transformed into a story set in the Greek Wizarding World within the Harry Potter universe...it just kinda happened...*shrugs*

I've written a bunch of this fic but would like to know if this is something people even want to read because I'm weak and need your comments and kudos to motivate and sustain me!

So let me know what you guys think of this first peek and if you want more.

Disclaimer: I don't any of these characters or the Harry Potter universe, I'm just playing in the sandbox for fun and practice.
Patroclus takes in a deep breath, air filling his thin chest before he releases it in a streaming gust from between his pursed lips. He moves his head side to side trying to extinguish all eleven of the candles stabbed into the chalky white frosting of the cake. He pushes the air out of his lungs as forcefully as he can, determined to blow them all out. He watches as each flame bends backward before snuffing out. There is only one left, a bit apart from the others. The flame sways and flickers but Patroclus can feel his lungs emptying and the little finger of fire stubbornly lingers.

There are a couple of “aww’s” from some of the children gathered around him and nothing but a disappointed glower from his father. Because Patroclus can’t even manage to blow out the candles on his own birthday cake.

“No wish for you,” Clysonymus taunts, his pudgy face twisted into a mocking sneer. Patroclus lowers his eyes and takes in another breath and blows out the final candle without looking. He is fairly sure Clysonymus came to his party with the sole wish of making him miserable.

Truth be told, Patroclus did not even want to have a birthday party. It had been his father’s insistence that this pitiful event was being held. Menoetius was a politician and a politician’s son was expected to host social events.

In this—and so many other ways—Patroclus is a grave disappointment.

Only a few of his classmates are in attendance. He suspects that this is only because their parents had insisted because they wished to garner favor with Menoetius. Patroclus does not have any friends. He has always felt different from his peers, he has always been apart from them. He doesn’t know what it is but they can all seem to sense it.

The crowd moves over to open presents at his father’s suggestion and Patroclus follows, feeling no excitement.

Patroclus unwraps the gifts doing his best to keep a smile upon his face and thank the givers. In this, he is at least not an embarrassment. Though, he does not feel that his father is even remotely impressed with him.

The children descend upon the open gifts upon Clysonymus’ suggestion. Patroclus does not even offer a token complaint. None of the others ask him to join them as they scamper off to play with his gifts or the activities that his father has provided for them.

Patroclus glances over to his father and sees the man’s lip curl in disgust before he turns and walks off to join the other adults.

Patroclus looks at the table where the gifts had been and takes the only one that remains. It is some dice game. He takes it behind the hedge of rose bushes his mother loves to sit by.

His mother…

He wishes that his mother was allowed to be here with him. She never really speaks but she’s
always kind to him and sometimes she sings to him. But if there is anyone who is more of a
disappointment to Menoetius it is Patroclus’ mother. Patroclus does not understand what happened
to her but he knows that whatever it was has left the woman somewhat…simple.

Patroclus does not mind. He likes sitting with her in this spot saying nothing with only the bees
and roses to keep them company.

Now it is only him as his mother is confined upstairs in her room.

Patroclus is pleasantly surprised to find the game is one that he can play alone. It involves rolling
the dice into the felt lined box trying to roll the appropriate combination of numbers so he can flip
down each of the numbered wooden pegs.

He’s actually getting close to winning, he just needs a seven and a one, when a shadow is cast over
the box. He glances up and sees Clysonymus looming over him, his arms crossed over his chest.

“Give me that game.” The boy commands. “I want to play it with Amita.”

Normally Patroclus would have just given in. He’s not entirely sure what gets into him. Maybe
it’s the fact that this is his birthday party; maybe it’s the fact that he’s tired of Clysonymus
constantly bullying him; maybe he’s fed up with this awful day; maybe he’s high on too much
birthday cake. Whatever the case, Patroclus pulls the box closer to himself and shakes his head.

The larger boy frowns down at him, his hands go down to his sides and ball into fleshy balls. “I’m
not asking.”

“I said, ‘no’.” Patroclus retorts. “It’s mine.”

Clysonymus’ face goes a splotchy red, “I gave it to you.”

“He’s my birthday.” Patroclus persists.

“No one cares! No one even wanted to come to your stupid birthday party because no one even
likes you!” He reaches down and grabs for the box.

Patroclus grabs for it on reflex and the two of them become locked in a tug of war.

“Give it!” Clysonymus snarls.

“No!”

They both pull until there is a sudden crackle as one edge of the box rips free and then Clysonymus
stumbles back.

“You broke it!” He yells.

“You broke it!” Patroclus retorts, angrier than he can ever remember being. He feels weird, he
feels warm all over, like something is roiling just underneath his skin. It feels like all of his hairs
are standing up on end. He feels stronger.

Clysonymus’ fist comes up and he aims it at Patroclus’ face.

That warm feeling inside of him explodes forward and out of him. It’s strange. It sloshes forward
like a wave, tilting him forward. He feels dizzy.

He hears a scream and sees Clysonymus fall backwards. Tears are streaming down his face and he
is clutching his leg. Patroclus blinks at him in confusion.

“My leg! He broke my leg!” The boy is screaming as the adults all rush over and bend over him.

Patroclus starts to push to his feet. His father’s dark eyes find him and Patroclus feels fear cramp sickeningly in his gut.

~ o ~ o ~

Patroclus is grounded. He is confined to his room. He is not even allowed to go downstairs for dinner, all his meals are brought up to his bedroom. Clyronymus was taken to the hospital after their fight and his leg was indeed broken, bent at an odd angle. Menoetius had said that parts of the bone seemed to be missing altogether somehow and that some kind of implant would be needed. It was as if part of the bone had disappeared.

When questioned, Patroclus had insisted that he did not know what happened but the adults concluded that he must have kicked the other boy.

Clyronymus continues to insist Patroclus hit him with his mind.

There is talk of some kind of disciplinary action outside of a grounding. Patroclus has heard his father on the phone talking to military boarding schools. He knows that this is the perfect excuse for his father to be rid of him.

Patroclus has never been wanted.

He takes a book from his shelf and goes to sit at the bench below his window and is looking outside when he sees a man appear suddenly in the middle of the street. He rubs at his eyes with the knuckles of his hands because the man actually just appeared out of thin air. But even after a vigorous rub, the man is still there. He is tall and broad in chest and shoulders, he walks with a stately gait that for some reason seems odd to Patroclus. He walks right up to their front yard and Patroclus startles when the man glances up and gives him a polite nod.

He hears the doorbell ring and then the mysterious man is admitted inside of his home.

Patroclus runs to his door and grips the knob. He bites his bottom lip as he turns it slowly trying to open the door silently. It creeks some on the hinges and his teeth dig so hard into his lip that it draws a line of pain and he fears he may have drawn blood. He hears his father’s voice booming but it does not sound like it is directed at him. He slinks through the hall and down the first few steps to peer over the ledge and spy upon his father and stranger in their lounge.

Menoetius is sputtering in anger at the strange man. “How dare you come into my home spouting such nonsense! I should call the police and have you removed.”

“I assure you, sir,” the stranger replies calmly in a deep voice that rolls throughout the house like distant thunder. “I am quite serious. I am here on behalf of the Pelion Academy of Magic to enroll your son Patroclus and explain the world of wizarding to him and his family.”

Patroclus barely surpasses a gasp, unwilling to believe what he is hearing. This has to be some kind of prank. This man has to be mad.

“Preposterous!” Menoetius booms.

The stranger sighs, the sound is exasperated and seems to come up all the way from his feet. He pulls out a long length of wood that Patroclus can only describe as a wand. Menoetius pulls back
as the big man sweeps the wand in a few flowing gestures. The air around him glimmers and suddenly the whole bottom half of the man elongates, transforming into the body and legs of a horse.

This time Patroclus is unable to suppress the squeak of surprise and terror that scurries up and out his throat. Thankfully, his father is in equal shock and does not hear as he takes a few quick steps backward.

“M—m—monster…” he gasps out.

“No,” the human-horse-hybrid replies slowly, as though speaking to someone who is particularly thick. “Centaur…but you may call me Chiron. Now that we have an understanding, shall we have a proper conversation?” His eyes glance up to Patroclus’ hiding place. “All of us,” he swishes and flicks with his wand and says: “Wingardium Leviosa.”

To Patroclus’ horror, he is lifted up into the air with a startled yelp. The centaur moves his wand like a conductor before an orchestra, guiding Patroclus down onto one of the sofas. Patroclus casts a horrified stare at his father who is no longer cowering but frowning up at the centaur fiercely.

~ o ~ o ~

Chiron magics some tea and little cucumber sandwiches over to them as he patiently explains the world of magic and the school that trains them. Patroclus is silent the whole time, shock numbing him and leaving his ears ringing. Suddenly things begin to make sense to him: Clysonymus’ leg and a dozen other strange events that dotted his life that he could never really explain; his perpetual sense of being different from his peers. It all finally makes sense.

“What will happen to Clysonymus?” Patroclus asks.

“The Accidental Magic Division has dispatched two agents to both deal with the loss of bone and alter the boy’s memory.” Chiron replies evenly.

“And he would need to leave?” Menoetius asks, clearly concerned with something wholly different. “He would go to live at this...school?”

Chiron, who has returned himself to his hulking human form sips politely at his tea before nodding.

“He would join this—” he sneers. “Wizarding community after—away from our world.”

Chiron’s eyes narrow as he places the teacup on its saucer but he nods. “If the boy so chooses,” Chiron turns his head to Patroclus, his expression questioning. “What do you say, Patroclus, would you like to come to Pelion?”

Patroclus looks at his father who’s frown is contemptuous as alway. He thinks of all the classmates ignore him and his lunches spent alone with no one to talk or play with; he thinks of the boarding schools his father has been looking into. He realizes this is his chance. This is his chance to go somewhere where he has the chance to truly belong. It may be a long shot but it’s a shot.

He nods.

“Take him.” Menoetius dismisses with a flippant wave of his hand

“There is the matter of the boy’s supplies and—”
“I will pay it all.” Menoetius continues. “I just want him gone.”

Chiron closes his eyes and places his teacup onto its saucer with a soft clink. “I see…very well.” Once more his depthless brown eyes are upon Patroclus. “Pack a trunk of clothes and anything else you might require and meet me at the front door in an hour.”

Patroclus looks to his father who points his finger up to his bedroom. “Do as this creature says.”

Chiron snorts an affronted breath but otherwise, his composure remains intact as he lifts his teacup for another delicate sip.

The look in his father’s eyes is what finally gets Patroclus to scurry up from the couch and up the stairs. He rushes into his room and quickly begins tugging clothes out his drawers and closet and tossing them into a traveling trunk. The reality of it all still whirls around him. He is going away, he is going to learn magic! He cannot remember ever being so excited.

He’s tugging the trunk out of his room when it hits him. There is one person he will miss.

He drops his trunk and turns and runs back down the hallway. He pulls up short in front of his mother’s bedroom door. He takes a deep breath and pulls it open and steps inside. His mother is sitting in her rocking chair swaying forward and back softly. She is doing nothing but staring out the window, her eyes far away.

Patroclus step in front of her and takes one of her hands in his own. Her eyes drift to him for a moment before going back out the window.

“I’m going away for a while, Mother,” Patroclus says. “I imagine I won’t be back till next summer. I’m going to school…to learn…to learn something amazing.”

She does not answer. She almost never does. She begins to hum softly to herself in the same rhythm as her steady rocking. It is a familiar tune, if not a known one, she has hummed it as long as Patroclus can remember.

Patroclus sighs and presses a kiss to the back of her hand and she continues to hum to herself. He places her hand back on the arm of the rocking chair and turns to leave when he catches sight of her violin mounted on the wall.

He remembers that she used to play. He remembers how alive her eyes had been when she did. She has not touched the instrument since she changed. Before he knows what he’s doing Patroclus snatches the instrument from the wall. His mother does not even glance his way. He casts one last look at her before leaving and shutting the door behind him.

He opens his trunk and places the violin inside, nestling it among his clothes. He does not play but perhaps he can learn. All he knows is that he wants to take something with him, some piece of his mother, and he knows that she will not miss it.

When he gets to the top of the stairs Chiron uses the same spell he used to levitate Patroclus to float the trunk down to the front door.

Patroclus hurries down after it.

“Let’s go.” Chiron says, opening the door.

“My father—”
“Will not be seeing us off.” Chiron’s tone is steady but he places a hand on his shoulder.

Despite his fear of the centaur earlier, the gesture is comforting.

He knows that he should not be surprised.

They walk down the drive and out past the lawn. Chiron carries the trunk as though it is but a tiny parcel. He places his hand on his shoulder once again.

“Stay close.” Once more the wand is out and moving. “And it might be best if you were to shut your eyes.”

Patroclus casts one last look at his house from over his shoulder. There is no one there to see him go. The world lurches around him and it all blurs and twists about. His stomach feels as though it is being wrung out and then everything goes black. He feels as though his chest is being constricted and there is a violent pressure in his head.

He feels like he is going to be pulled inside out.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Head First
Year 1: Head First

Chapter Summary

Chiron takes Patroclus to the Agora of Charis and Patroclus gets his first full dose of the Greek Wizarding World. Plus, some familiar faces show up!

Chapter Notes

Wishing you all a very happy New Year! Here's to 2019!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Patroclus and Chiron spiral into existence in the middle of a cobblestoned alleyway. The blackness blinks away instantly as the alley shudders into focus all around them. Patroclus feels his stomach lurch and doubles over in fear of throwing up. It contrasts starkly with the soft and soothing scent of lilacs that permeates the air.

Chiron pats his back and chuckles. “Apparition will do that to you the first time. You’ll get used to it.”

All around them people are bustling about. Many of them are children. None of them seem even the least bit surprised at their sudden magical appearance. The sunlight filters through the canopy of purple petals from the seemingly endless number of weeping lilacs that grew along the buildings, shading them in violet hues.

“Welcome to The Agora of Charis,” Chiron says, big hand gesturing to the rows of clay tile-roofed buildings. “It’s here that we’ll be getting everything you’ll be needing for school.” He produces as parchment and looks around humming to himself.

“I say first thing we do is get you a wand from Hephaestus’ Forge while it is looking mostly empty. Won’t be long till all the other first-year students are clamoring for wands.”

“A wand?” Patroclus asks dumbly.

Chiron nods, “all witches and wizards get a wand before they start their magical education…or perhaps it is more accurate to say that the wand chooses the witch or wizard. The wand is how we channel our magic.”

Patroclus feels like he’s dreaming. This really is all happening very quickly.

Chiron smiles and leads him toward the shop with a sign hanging in front in the shape of a hammer and forge. A bell rings when they walk inside. There are four people in the shop aside from them. One is a man with a greying head of hair and beard and leaning heavily on a cane. Two are a man and woman with proud smiles upon their faces as a young girl with dusky skin and a head of tight, bouncy, corkscrew curls takes a wand in hand.
Those smiles make Patroclus ache.

The bearded man whisks the wand away with a fierce shake of his head just a violent stream smoke blows from the wands tips. The parents laugh.

Chiron hands Patroclus a gold coin. “This will take some time. Pay with this. I’ll find you after I’ve run a few errands.”

Patroclus nods and turns back to watch as the man with the walking cane shuffles around the stacked columns of boxes humming to himself. He strokes his beard and then seems to come to some conclusion tapping the cane on the ground. One of the boxes pulls free of the others and flies over to the girl.

She holds her hands out to the box, totally unfazed by the show of magic.

“Beechwood, with a phoenix feather core,” the man with the cane notes. “Nine and three quarters in length; a stout and headstrong wand, but wise.”

The girl looks down at the wand in the box.

“Go ahead, Briseis,” the woman who looks like her mother encourages.

The girl nods and her curls bob with the motion. She plucks the wand up and immediately a soft whirl of air gusts upward around her and she smiles a pretty, dimpled smile.

The man with the cane smirks beneath his bushy beard. “It appears we have a match.”

She turns wand in hand and begins skipping out of the shop while her father pays. As she passes, she smiles at him and trills. “Good luck!”

Patroclus watches her as she goes and when he turns back the man is looking down at him.

“Hello, young man,” The shopkeeper greets.

“Uh, hello, sir.” Patroclus stammers.

“I’m Olenus,” When Patroclus says nothing and only blinks up at him he chuckles. “Muggle-born, I take it.”

Chiron had explained some of these basic terms while at his house. It still seems a strange word for…normal people.

Patroclus just nods.

“Here for your wand?”

Patroclus manages another nod.

The man lifts his cane and taps Patroclus in the shin lightly a few times then reaches out and takes hold of his chin as he turns his face from side-to-side. He’s muttering to himself, voice so low and words to close together that Patroclus cannot understand him. He pulls on Patroclus’ arm and stretches it out as he measures it against his cane.

Apparently satisfied he then begins summoning boxes to them and having Patroclus take hold of them and give them experimental flicks. The first wand wails loud and shrill and Patroclus drops the wand with a start and an attempt to cover his ears. Olenus catches the wand before it hits the
The second spits sputtering angry red sparks but this time Patroclus keeps hold of the wand. Olenus takes it from him and moves to the next without pause. All the while Patroclus stands in stiff awe, still unsure if he believes what is happening to him. The parade of wands goes on and on with some doing nothing at all and others having wild and nasty effects, none seeming to want to choose him.

Story of his life. Perhaps he does not truly belong here either.

Olenus hums and strokes his beard, eyes scanning his shop. “Ah!” He cheers and thumps his cane once again and another box floats over to Patroclus.

He’s a little hesitant to take another wand out. The last one heated in his hand and hissed at him like an angry viper. But he doesn’t know what else to do so he lifts the lid. The wand is a creamy brown and shaped to resemble a slender tree branch with little buds along its length. His fingers close around the smooth wood and he lifts the wand from the velvet-cushioned box.

Something flows through him, like a current purring warmth. His blood feels like it’s alive and singing in his veins. The tip of the wand sprouts a delicate vine that winds its way along the wand and then around his wrist before rising up and producing a blue-petaled flower.

Olenus taps his cane against the wood floor and gives a hearty laugh. “There we are!”

Patroclus looks up and the vine dissolves into a shower of silver sparks.

“Willow bark with a unicorn hair core,” Olenus informs. “Eleven and quarter inches, reasonably flexible, excellent for charm work…that particular hair came from a uniquely sage unicorn…” His eyes drift over Patroclus. “Perfect for one such as you, I think.”

Patroclus isn’t sure what that is supposed to mean but he rubs his thumb along the smooth surface of the wand and smiles. It does feel like a good match.

There’s a sudden chorus of shouts and Patroclus turns around to look out the window as people begin rushing by. He frowns and steps toward the windows at the front of the shop. As he glances out he can see a crowd milling around someone or something.

“Ah, he has arrived it seems.” Olenus humms beside him.

“Who, sir?” Patroclus asks as he lifts up on the tips of his toes in a vain attempt to see better what is causing the commotion.

The man looks down at him in surprise before nodding. “Yes, I suppose you wouldn’t know. He’s a bit of a legend and local celebrity mixed into one. He’ll be starting school this term as well. I made a wand especially for him.”

Patroclus frowns and is preparing to ask who exactly this boy is when Chiron appears through the door carrying a few boxes in one hand and cage that contains an owl who’s large, dark eyes are squinting at him. Chiron jerks his head instructing him to follow. Patroclus pays Olenus and thanks him before he rushes out to join the centaur.

“This is for you,” Chiron says, holding up the cage. “He’s a tawny owl. Owls are our main form of communication,” he explains. “They deliver our parcels and letters.”

Patroclus beams at the bird with his brown and white spotted feathers, the white feathers around
his eyes shaped in a way that looks like moth wings. Patroclus likes the way his eyes narrow into slits when he’s examining something, he seems a curious bird. To Patroclus’ delight, the owl lets him reach out and stroke his finger along the soft feathers of his chest and belly through the bars.

“He’s awesome, Chiron, thank you!”

Chiron smiles a warm smile down at him. “Seemed a good birthday present and you’ll be needing an owl.”

“It’s the best birthday present I’ve ever had,” Patroclus says, still petting his new friend.

And it is. It feels like the first time anyone has truly and thoughtfully gotten a gift.

Chron’s smile seems almost sad when he says, “I am pleased you like him.”

The clamor in the streets pulls his attention again and he looks up to Chiron. “Who’s this boy everyone is so excited about?”

Chiron’s eyes follow the crowd. “The Boy Who Was Promised…Achilles,” he informs. “He’s the son of a man and a Veela. It’s prophesied that he will save the wizarding world someday. It will be his first year at Pelion and everyone is very excited about it.”

Patroclus frowns. Magic wands, prophesies, and centaurs…what had he gotten himself into?

~ 0 ~ 0 ~

They wait for the crowd to move, watching the procession through the open shop door.

Once it seems to have moved on down the alley Chiron’s hand comes to Patroclus’ back and nudges him forward. “Come, we should get to The House of Midas now that the crowd has passed.”

They exit the shop and Chiron offers Olenus a final wave.

Patroclus scurries after Chiron since the centaur’s long strides outpace his own. He leads him up to a building constructed entirely of white marble that is veined in gold. It is a strange contrast to all the other quaint and homey buildings of the Agora, it is more opulent and austere. It is the only building that rises above the canopy of lilacs.

“The House of Midas,” Chiron stoops down to explain. “Is a subsidiary of Gringotts Wizarding Bank and is run entirely by goblins.”

“Goblins…” Patroclus gapes, mouth hanging open like a codfish.

Chiron nods as he straightens, “since 1474…well, mostly, there were a few hiccups along the way.”

Patroclus has no idea what that’s supposed to imply. He’s still stuck on goblins.

“We’ll be setting up an account for you that your father has agreed to maintain for the entirety of your education.”

Patroclus somehow manages to stumble over his own feet and looks up at Chiron. “He’s going to wire me money?”

Something passes over Chiron’s features, a dark cloud over clear skies, but it is gone so quickly
Patroclus isn’t sure he saw it in the first place. Chiron nods and moves up to the first available
teller who is seated atop a tall desk and behind thin golden bars. Chiron and produces a stack of
papers and places them onto the counter.

The goblin (the honest-to-god-goblin!) looks down its large hooked nose at each of the documents,
long-nailed fingers sliding over the words upon the pages. He pulls out a stamp and hammers a
few of the pages with a hollow thunk. Then there are several papers that Patroclus is presented
with for signature. Chiron explains each slowly and simply so that Patroclus can understand. Once
he has finished he is presented with a key with the number three hundred and thirty-seven etched
into it.

“That will be your vault,” the goblin states matter of factly.

Just like that, at the age of eleven, Patroclus is given a bank vault of gold.

~ 0 ~ 0 ~

Once Chiron has helped him visit his vault and obtain what he advises is an appropriate amount of
money for his supplies, he sends him to another store by called Papyrus to retrieve the sizable stack
of textbooks he will be needing for his classes while he goes on another errand. The store is
crowded, filled with children and their parents reading from lists and searching the shelves.

Patroclus bounces from aisle to aisle trying to locate each of the texts listed on the parchment. The
entire affair is driving him insane and only becomes worse when the crowd thickens and seems to
electrify. Excited whispers buzz around him like fat bodied bees zipping from flower to flower:
“it’s him!”; “I can’t believe it’s him!”; “The Boy Who Was Promised!; “Achilles!”

Patroclus is curious. He can’t help it. He’s never seen a boy who was prophesied, a child born of a
wizard and a mystical being. So he puts down the few books he’s managed to find and climbs one
of the ladders that hoovers along the shelves in hopes of catching a glimpse.

And he does, he spies the boy that all this fuss is about at last.

He is of a height with Patroclus but all similarities end there. His skin is a rich golden tan and his
hair is thick and blonde, falling just above his shoulders; it is so shiny and beautiful that it is as if
by some magic someone managed to capture sunbeams and weave them onto his head. His eyes
are the color of spring sprouted leaves, fresh and vibrant. His beauty is a thunderclap that vibrates
through Patroclus in a spasm.

People mill about the boy wanting to bask in the light that seems to emanate from him.

The boy only yawns in response to it all, perfect features heavy with boredom and disinterest.

The force of Patroclus’ dislike is sudden and bitter. He can almost taste it upon his tongue.

Here this boy is, the literal storybook prince brought to life, and he cannot even muster up a single
care. The whole of this magical world is handed to him upon a silver platter whereas Patroclus has
never been wanted, has never been seen as anything but a disappointment. This world is a gift, a
chance to escape and be something, and he will have to fight for it. This Achilles will never know
what that will feel like.

Patroclus decides then and there that he will have nothing to do with The Boy That Was Promised.
He doesn’t see the deep green eyes catch sight of him as he makes his way back down the ladder.
He’s so caught up in his dislike for Achilles that he doesn’t notice the girl walking by with a stack of books. He jostles her and causes half the stack to come tumbling down.

“Èla!” The girl cries out.

Patroclus immediately drops into a crouch to begin gathering up the wayward books. “I’m sorry! I didn’t see you there.”

“Obviously,” the girl grumbles.

When he stands up to re-stack some of the books into her arms he recognizes her as the girl from Hephaestus’.

Her deep brown eyes soften as she recognizes him in return. “You’re the muggle-born boy from the Forge.”

Patroclus nods dumbly.

“I bet this is all incredibly weird for you, huh.”

Patroclus returns to collecting the dropped books. “Yeah…it’s been…weird.”

She laughs and it is a light and pretty sound.

“Thanks,” she says when he’s returned the last of the books.

Patroclus shrugs, “It was my fault.”

The girls lip curls slightly at one corner and she is kind enough not to agree with him.

“You need some help?” She asks. “I’ve found most of the books on the list—well, my parents helped—but I can show you where we got these ones.”

“Uh, sure…”

“I’m Briseis, by the way.”

“Patroclus,”

“Good to meet you, Patroclus.”

Briseis takes him through the rows of books, retracing her footsteps and pointing out the books he’ll need for the school year.

“So…this Achilles, what kind of prophecy is he supposed to fulfill? What’s he supposed to save the world from? And what’s a v—veelia?” Patroclus finds himself asking despite his earlier vow to have nothing to do with the chosen one.

He decides that it’s because he wants to know more about this world he’s moving into.

“The Boy Who Was Promised,” Briseis intones dramatically, and then giggles. “He’s the son of a Veela. It is said that he will one day save all of magic from some kind of evil threat but no one seems to know what that threat is.”

“All of magic?”
Briseis shrugs under her stack of books. “That’s what the prophecy says. His father was a hero as well, he helped keep the Death Eaters out of Greece during the Second Wizarding War.”

“Wizarding war?”

“You’ll learn all about it in Magical History,” Briseis explains. “It was this battle starting out of Britain a long time ago. It was a big deal.”

“Oh,” Patroclus replies, reaching to grab a book that Briseis indicates with a nod of her chin.

“And Veela are magical-beings, they’re basically like sea nymphs from Greek Mythology and they just sort of…hypnotize humans—so he naturally draws people in on top of all the prophecy stuff.”

“That’s…a lot…” Patroclus breathes.

Briseis laughs, “yeah, I guess it probably is. Anyway, it’s his first year at the Academy so the entire Greek magical world is pretty excited about it.”

*What the hell have I gotten myself into?* Patroclus wonders.

Briseis’ parents find them and add the last two remaining books to her pile and are kind enough to take them to get a couple of copies for Patroclus.

From there Patroclus is invited to join Briseis and her family to obtain the rest of his supplies.

They go to a shop called Raiments by Arachne were he is fitted for three sets of black tunics, a pair of leather sandals, a pair of boots, a pair of dragon hide gloves, and a winter cape.

Next, they go to another shop by the name of Hecate’s Spagyrics and purchase a cauldron, crystal phials, and brass scales.

The shopping is rounded out with a telescope, scrolls of parchment, and a box of reed pens.

It is quite the haul and more than anything he’s ever had to bring to a normal school. Patroclus isn’t sure how he feels about having to wear a tunic.

Chiron finds him and Briseis and her parents seem a little starstruck. Chiron is cheerful and polite and makes a special point to speak specifically to Briseis who becomes far quieter than she had been until that point.

They bid Briseis and her family goodbye and Chiron places a large hand on Patroclus’ back and leads him off to an inn called Sisyphus’ Rest and books him a room.

“I will be here in the morning to collect you and take you to the docks to find Circe’s Loom, the ship that will bear you to the island of Aeaea where the Pelion Academy is located,” Chiron explains as he helps carry Patroclus’ supplies to his room. “In the meantime. I suggest you begin reading your magical history text. It will be instrumental in helping you gain some understanding of our world.”

He takes Patroclus down to the dining room where he orders Patroclus some pastitsio and fresh pita, his favorite, though he has no idea how the centaur knows that. The staff of the inn seem to know Chiron and greet him warmly and trade pleasantries with him but none linger and all treat him with an air of respect that even Patroclus notices.

Chiron has a glass of wine while Patroclus eats and reads. It’s quiet, companionable and oddly
nice and Patroclus is a bit sad when Chiron takes his leave with a reminder about what time to be ready the next day.

Patroclus goes up the stairs to his room and prepares himself for bed.

He’s getting ready to climb into bed after washing his face and brushing his teeth when he hears someone clear their throat loudly making him nearly jump right out of his skin.

“Might I suggest a few drops of oil in that curly mane of yours to prevent frizziness?”

“Who said that?” Patroclus demands, uncertain if he is going to dart for the door or the window.

“Me.” the voice says, and Patroclus can tell it is coming from inside his room but he can’t see anyone.

“Where are you?”

There is a dramatic sigh, “I’m the mirror.”

Patroclus feels like someone must be messing with him.

“The mirror?” He asks incredulously.

“Yes, the mirror.”

Patroclus walks slowly over to the mirror framed in a silver key design and peers timidly into it.

“Well, aren’t you a gangly thing…”

It is, in fact, the mirror talking. The voice hums out from it and Patroclus can practically feel it.

“Such large eyes…but you might yet grow into them and those knobby limbs. Good bone structure, nice bronze skin tone, and healthy shiny curls—if you manage the frizz as I suggested.”

“I—uh—thanks?”

He thinks the mirror snorts. “It’s my job to advise people on their looks and how to best address their…shortcomings.”

“Gotcha…”

He stares at himself in the talking mirror and begins picking out all the things that the mirror went on about. He can’t help thinking about how that boy Achilles was perfectly proportioned like he had been chiseled by artisan’s hands and breathed to life by the gods like some ancient Greek myth.

He turns from the mirror and grumbles, “I don’t have any oil.”

“See that you pick some up,” the mirror calls after him. “The Agora has many shops that could supply you with something suitable. Adonis’ Grooming Emporium has a particularly good selection of a wide range of products I am told.

“Thanks…”

“You are very welcome.” The Mirror replies, sounding very pleased with itself.

With one last glare at the mirror Patroclus opens, A History of Magic and gets to reading. He’s got
a lot to learn.

Chapter End Notes

Up next: Circe's Loom and off to the Pelion Academy of Magic!
Year 1: Circe's Loom

Chapter Summary

Patroclus continues his journey into the magical world and comes one step closer to the Pelion Academy of Magic. And a friendship is cemented.

Chapter Notes

So I hesitate to do this but I am going to go ahead and put it out there that I will be setting a personal goal to update with a chapter every Sunday. Bear in mind that that's a tentative goal but I will do my best to keep it...as the real world allows anyway.

Hope you all enjoy chapter 3! I can't wait for you all to read all the rest to come.

As always your comments and kudos are adored and fuel me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Patroclus is amazed that he manages to sleep given everything that has happened to him since his birthday. His nerves feel like they are on parade and he can’t quite get himself to believe that he will be embarking on a voyage to a magical school where he will learn how to cast spells and brew potions. But reading has always been soothing to him and despite how interesting the history of this world he never knew existed is, he falls asleep.

He wakes wondering if it has all been some sort of dream but one look at the magical history book lying splayed out next him reminds him that this had all been unbelievably real. The nerves from the night before come back to him in a stampede and he worries he might throw up.

He manages to keep the contents of last nights dinner where they belong and begins readying himself for whatever journey he will be taking.

He pointedly avoids the mirror.

That doesn’t stop it from offering an assortment of suggestions and some outright admonishments.

He’s down the stairs with his trunk and birdcage before most of the inn’s patrons seem to be up and moving. He orders some eggs, bacon, and toast while he waits for Chiron to arrive and collect him but struggles to get much of it down.

“Eager are we?” Chiron chuckles affectionately as he takes a seat with a plate loaded with eggs, bacon, and potatoes.

“A little,” Patroclus shrugs just before he offers a piece of his bacon to Skops (that is what he has decided to name his owl since Skops translates into “watcher” from Ancient Greek and it fits the bird’s personality).

Chiron smiles down at him, his eyes crinkling in the corners as he does. “I was too on my first trip
to Pelion—though that was quite some time ago.” He laughs out a breath, seeming to be enjoying a far-off memory.

Patroclus watches him, trying to reconcile the fact that this man is the headmaster of the Pelion Academy of Magic if his textbook is to be believed. He had skipped ahead to read more about the current history of the school and was shocked to learn that his chaperon is someone of such clear importance. It feels like a waste of a headmasters time.

They finish breakfast and Chiron takes him to the Port of Piraeus where they head down to the docks that are used for the fancy cruise ships. Chiron leads him right up to the edge of a dock and glances around as the muggles stream about. When there is a break he gently pushes Patroclus and his cart forward right over the edge of the dock.

Patroclus gasps and he loses hold of his grip on his cart, arms pinwheeling out in preparation for the fall and the crash into the ocean.

But there is no stomach-turning swoop in his gut and there is no rushing of air or splashing of water because he simply moves forward a few paces onto yet more deck. He glances around in shock feeling highly disoriented. An instant later Chiron appears next to him, stepping into existence chuckling softly.

“My apologies, Patroclus, I couldn’t help it.”

Patroclus just gawks.

“It’s an enchantment that hides this dock from muggles and where you will be boarding Circe’s Loom.”

Patroclus looks around and realizes that this is a bustling dock filled with other children, some his age, other’s older. Parents are hollering, hugging, and waving as the children board or prepare to board a ship.

The before mentioned ship is nothing like any ship that is docked around them or like any Patroclus has seen for that matter. It is made almost entirely of wood, that is rich amber in color and polished to a mirror shine. Its sails are gull-white and furled and oars peaking from all along the hull. It is long and sleek and beautiful.

“Welcome to Circe’s Loom,” Chiron informs. “She will bear you and the other students to the mystical isle of Aeaea and the Pelion Academy.”

Patroclus doesn’t know what to say. What do you say to a centaur who is leading you to an ancient looking ship that will bear you to a magical school?

They take his trunk and Skops to a few men who are loading the belongings of the other students onto the ship before Chiron urges Patroclus towards the walkway that leads up to the deck of the ship.

“I will be getting to Pelion a different way, I will see you when you arrive.” He tells him giving him a gentle nudge. “Don’t forget to change into your uniform before you arrive, you are required to be in uniform for the Culling and welcome banquet.”

Patroclus gulps hard feeling a little odd being separated from the giant of a man—or centaur. Chiron has been his orienting point throughout all of this insanity. He is suddenly unsure if he is ready to be alone with the other children.
“You’ll do fine,” Chiron assures, his hand ruffling Patroclus’ hair affectionately before he gives him one final nudge toward the ship.

Patroclus takes a deep breath and leaves dry land and his life in the muggle world behind.

Once on deck, he stares at all the children milling about, many waving at their families and loved ones from over the railing. He decides to do the same to see if Chiron is there but there is no sign of the centaur.

A whistle blows in warning as the ship prepares to depart. The oars extend and dip into the ocean, the sails flutter open with the grace and expanse of swan wings. And then they are moving, flowing out of the port and into the open ocean.

After several minutes the children are all instructed to go below deck to the compartments below where they will ride out the journey.

Once below deck Patroclus is shocked to see that the oars have no oarsmen behind them but are in fact moving by themselves. He’s so infatuated with watching the oars that he walks right into another student’s back.

“Sorry,” he exclaims but the other boy isn’t listening. He’s craning his neck and standing on the tips of his toes trying to see over the heads of all the other children clustered about.

Patroclus is already familiar with this kind of gaggle of awe and excitement.

Achilles must be onboard.

Everyone wants to see the Boy That Was Promised.

Again Patroclus feels something caustic and angry pinch inside his chest. He’s known plenty of other boys like this Achilles, boys who feel they are owed the world because someone decided they are special. Even after everything he’s seen he’s unsure if he believes in prophecies about boys who are destined to save the world.

No one so much as looks at him as he pushes through the clog of students toward the back of the ship.

As he passes he catches sight of sunshine-hair before it is lost in the throng of buzzing admirers.

He finally manages to wrest his way through and finds an empty compartment. He has just settled into his seat with his book when Briseis stumbles in already dressed in her school tunic and a light cape around her shoulders.

“Ya, Patroclus, do you mind if I sit in here?” She asks, already moving inside. “Everything else is full.”

“Of course,” Patroclus replies.

“Can you believe that crowd out there?” She asks, tucking her feet up onto the bench. “Do you think it’ll be like this all the time?”

Patroclus smiles. He had liked Briseis almost instantly. She was kind and witty, and he likes the warm, dark depths of her eyes. That she seems unaffected by Achilles is an obvious bonus.

“You’d know better than me.” He replies.
Briseis sits up straight and kicks him with the tip of her sandaled foot. “Why didn’t you tell me that Headmaster Chiron was your chaperone!”

Patroclus moves his leg and laughs. “I didn’t know!”

Briseis purses her lips. “Right…I suppose you wouldn’t have.”

“Geez,” Patroclus smiles at her as he rubs at her leg. “You’re violent.”

Briseis rolls her eyes before they tumble into laughter.

As in the Agora Briseis proves to be amazing company. She is funny and surprisingly fierce. She asks him questions about the muggle world and answers his own about the magical world. She laughs at some of his questions but it never stings like she is making fun of him.

There’s a knock at their compartment door and woman pushes a trolly outside. Briseis claps her hands in front of her chest in delight and urges him up to the cart and helps him choose a few snacks from the cart. He picks a licorice wand, a cauldron cake, and a chocolate frog. He opens the latter only to have the chocolate frog leap out at him and onto the round ship window. He’s staring at it in shock when Briseis snatches the squirming confection.

“Is everything alive here?” Patroclus breathes as she hands him back his frog. He stares at it with a frown unsure if he can eat it now. “I mean, even my mirror was talking to me this morning.”

She giggles at him as she takes a bite of her pumpkin pasty. “It’s not alive, it’s just enchanted.”

Patroclus is not certain what the distinction is but does finally manage to eat the chocolate frog. It’s delicious even if it is squirming.

He picks up the trading card that comes with the frog and shakes his head as he watches the picture on the card move about the frame. He holds it out for Briseis to see.

“See, everything is moving and alive!” He insists.

“Oh, you got Circe,” She points at the card, where a woman in white flowing robes and dark hair casually turns a man into a pig and then back again. “She’s the witch who started it all. It’s her island that the Academy’s on. She’s the one who started gathering magical children from all over the Ancient Greek world to begin training them.”

Patroclus turns the card back to look at it. “Cool…” he breathes.

The woman on the card quirks an eyebrow and cocks her hip as if to inform him that that is a monumental understatement.

Chapter End Notes

Up next: The Culling!

Also, this is also posting on tumblr so please share the love if you are so inclined.

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/181794574341/the-boy-that-was-promised-
chapter-1-azuldemon
Patroclus arrives at the Pelion Academy of Magic and takes one step closer to his magical education--and one step closer to a fateful collision.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!! To all of you who are commenting, sharing, and giving kudos to this story. It really does mean everything to me.

If this were a movie Patroclus and Briseis would become instant best friends and then be inseparable from then on. As it turns out, Briseis already has friends onboard Circe’s Loom who come and collect her before the ship arrives, citing wanting Briseis’ help with getting ready. This leaves Patroclus alone the rest of the voyage.

He doesn’t mind…much.

He changes into his tunic and sandals and spends the remainder of the trip alternating between reading and gazing out the window at the clear lapis waters of the Aegean as daylight ebbs from the sky.

It is fully dark when Circe’s Loom pulls into a moonlit cove, launching itself right up onto the beach with a lurch. Once it stills, the ship ignites into a flurry of motion and noise as the students all begin moving about, competing to disembark.

Patroclus waits, unwilling to enter the fray.

Once he manages to file off the ship he hears someone calling out: “First years this way! First years this way!”

He turns and there is a strong looking, dark-haired man in a long grey chiton, an orb of fire hovering over his head as he ushers the children Patroclus’ age into the warm light of the flickering flame.

Patroclus walks toward him, eyes searching for the Pelion Academy but seeing nothing more than the shadowed silhouettes of trees.

“My name is Jason,” the man under the fire announces to the group. “I am one of the instructors here. I teach flying and dueling. I will be taking you up to the academy grounds for the Culling. Do not worry about your belongings, they will be delivered to your dorms by the time the welcome banquet has concluded.” His eyes scan the children assembled before he nods and turns and begins to trek down the beach, motioning for them to follow.
As they near the treeline Patroclus notices the statues of different types of beasts, peaking out from the forest. He had seen these statues in his history book while he read about the Pelion Academy. The book claimed that these statues were enchanted and could be brought to life to protect the island and students by a spell known only to the headmaster and deputy headmaster of the academy.

Jason brings them to three rows of large chariots all of which are attached to various forms of winged beasts. Some Patroclus believes he can identify, such as winged horses and griffons, but the others he wholly unsure of.

They are instructed to board the chariots, packing in close and tight, much to Patroclus’ discomfort. Achilles is, of course, urged up to one of the frontmost chariots by the group of boys that surrounds him.

Jason mounts a broom with a glint in his eye and a crooked smile on his lips and shouts: “Up!”

There are a variety of sounds as all the winged animals call out and begin running and flapping and lifting the students up into the air.

Patroclus grips the edge of his chariot and squeezes his eyes shut over the rush of inertia that sweeps over him. The tepid night air rushes over him and pushes ethereal fingers through his hair. To his relief, he hears some of the other children cry out in surprise and fear. Still, others cheer and whoop and laugh. He is certain Achilles is among that latter group.

Jason’s voice booms, easily carrying over the rushing wind in their ears. “Below us is the freshwater lake. It is open for swimming on your free time. The majority of the island is open to students, even much of the forest.”

Patroclus peeps over the edge of his chariot, fighting fear and vertigo as they roil in his gut.

“Well upon that cliff is the mansion that houses the Pelion Academy of Magic,” Jason informs as he circles their flying procession, wand held to his throat as he speaks.

This sparks enough curiosity in Patroclus that he manages to lean his head out of the chariot to see better. He’s glad that he does because out of the forest juts a craggy pillar of rock, towering over the canopy. Outlined in the silver moonlight and dotted with torches Patroclus can make out the form of a sprawling mansion that covers the top of the cliff. Each corner is punctuated with a tower, the highest reaching points of the structure.

It truly is an inspiring sight and all his discomfort is forgotten.

Patroclus is mesmerized by the academy and can’t take his eyes off of it. He hears the other children, despite being accustomed to the wizarding world, murmuring in awe themselves.

“To the north of the mansion,” Jason continues with his tour of the island. “Is the Thule Wood. That part of the island is forbidden to students. Stay out under penalty of expulsion.”

Patroclus continues to crane his neck but cannot see much of these forbidden woodlands.

“To the east, we have the quidditch pitch.” He soars above their flying procession and points his wand at the green clearing with the two sets of circular posts and surrounded by colorful towers. “I’m hoping we’ve got a good batch of hungry recruits ready to try out for the teams this year.”

There are hoots and hollers of: “Achilles, Achilles, Achilles!” And “Aristos Achaion!”
Patroclus barely surpasses a groan. This was really getting a bit ridiculous.

They finish the areal tour of the island and land with surprising grace just outside the academy’s outer walls.

A woman is waiting for them, she is draped elegantly in billowing lavender robes tapping a rolled piece of parchment into her open palm. She is older than Jason, with grey hair that is swept up and back with golden pins.

“Must you always be late?” She demands of Jason as he slips off of his broom.

The younger man grins at her, all cocksure bravado. “Just being thorough.”

The woman’s eyes narrow into slits, deepening the lines around them but she says nothing more to Jason.

“I am Professor Pythia,” She greets with a formal air to her tone. Choosing instead to addresses the students. “I am deputy headmistress of the Pelion Academy of Magic and in charge of the Culling. We will be heading up to the Hall of Winds for the ceremony that will sort you into your respective towers.” Her eyes scan the crowd of students ensuring she has their full attention.

“Your towers will be your homes while you are at the academy. Your tower-mates, your family. Each tower is blessed by one of the four winds: Boreas, Zephyrus, Eurus, and Notus. And each tower is graced by a muse who will serve as your counselor, guide, and advisor during your time here.” Again she pauses to ensure understanding. Her voice is clear and true as a horn blow, she has no need of magic to amplify it. She speaks as one who is used to being listened to. “Once inside I shall call your names from the ledger. You are to walk up onto the dais and stand under the Culling Tree, from there the winds will tell me what tower you will belong to.”

They all remain silent, rapt in eagerness, anticipation, and nerves.

“Very good,” Professor Pythia nods. “This way.”

They follow like a gaggle of ducklings, many whispering excitedly about the towers their family is traditionally sorted into and what towers they wish to be accepted into.

“Go team Boreas!” Jason calls after them in a loud whisper and a fist to the air.

Professor Pythia casts a glare at him from over her shoulder. Jason only offers a shrug and a wink in return.

She leads them into the academy and through a marble colonnade with sheer white drapes fluttering between each pillar. At a gesture, twin doors of solid oak part with a groan and admit them into a large courtyard.

The Hall of Winds.

It is open to the sky but Patroclus knows from his reading that there is an enchantment in place that keeps the courtyard protected from the elements and the temperature pleasant. No matter the storm, no matter how many clouds, the sky directly above the Hall of Winds is eternally clear. Banners are strung overhead both large and small: orange, purple, grey, and black each one denoting the section where each towers students sit and take their meals.

The other students have already arrived and are chatting eagerly amongst themselves as the procession of first years marches in. Again, the excited chitters follow Achilles.
At the end of the hall there is a three-stepped dais in the center of which grows an olive tree, trunk fat and gnarled, leaves long and silver-green. Its branches spread upward and umbrella outward and the torchlight glitters on the metallic ornaments that hang among its boughs.

The Culling Tree.

On either side of the magical tree are two long tables where the professors of the academy sit, silent and alert. Only one of the professors stands. Patroclus recognizes him immediately. Chiron, who Patroclus still can't quite believe, the headmaster of the Pelion Academy of Magic.

The honor of the headmaster himself coming to collect him to attend the school is still something Patroclus struggles to reconcile.

The first-years cluster at the bottom of the dais and Professor Pythia climbs the steps to stand near the Culling tree and faces all gathered in the hall. Silence falls like a curtain. When she speaks her words are for the new students but all of the hall seems to hold its breath and lean in with rapt attention.

“The Culling is the most ancient and one of the most important ceremonies of the Pelion Academy of Magic. The Culling Tree and the four winds will look deep inside you and you will be judged. You will be sorted into the tower that most embodies your truest self. Boreas for those who are courageous at heart and filled with valor. Zephyrus for the just and loyal. Eurus for those who are clever of mind and quick of wit. And Notus for the ambitious and the cunning. All towers have produced some of the most powerful and respected witches and wizards from the Mediterranean, dating back to Circe’s very first class. It is an honor and a privilege.” Her voice hammers at them and the silence is like a harp string pulled taught and ready to sing. “Come forward and step under the Culling Tree when your name is called.”

The first-years shuffle together as that silent energy ruffles through them all.

“Automedon!” Professor Pythia calls from the parchment.

A boy with close-cropped hair startles before shuffling up the dais. His eyes glance up at the tree as he passes under its branches. He places his hand onto the trunk and a gust of wind whistles through the hall. The ornaments hung among the leaves chime and Professor Pythia cocks her head and listens with eyes closed.

“Zephyrus!” She proclaims loudly.

There is a sudden cheer that sounds from the Zephyrus section of the hall and the boy moves down to join his new cohort.

“Paris!” Professor Pythia continues onward from her list.

A boy steps forward with his head held high. His hair is styled into a perfect black sweep and his eyes slide back across the room, a smile light upon his lips. He moves with the garish saunter of someone who knows that he handsome. He places his hand upon the trunk and the wind is instantaneous and strong.

“Notus!” Professor Pythia declares just as quickly.

Cheers from the Notus section resound.

“Achilles!” Professor Pythia announces and his name is as a spell, setting the entirety of the hall into a paradoxical silence that still manages to buzz with a feverish excitement.
The hush is a heavy living thing as Achilles strides up toward the tree, graceful and strong despite his mere eleven years. Achilles takes a breath, shoulders rising, before lifting his hand to touch the tree. Again the wind is strong, rushing in with such force that items that are not sufficiently weighted down tumble off the tables and the banners flap. Some of the students gasp.

Achille’s golden hair flutters around him, his eyes go closed. The ornaments in the Culling tree ring out clarion-clear and true.

“Boreas!” Professor Pythia proclaims.

There is an immediate eruption from the Boreas section of the hall, a stampede of bulls in a china shop. The students take up a chant: “We got Achilles!” that they echo over and over. They bang their hands on the tables and stomp their feet. The roar is deafening.

Yet more glory for the Boy That Was Promised.

Was there any doubt?

Patroclus had read that Boreas was the tower of some of the Wizarding Worlds most famous heroes. Of course, that is where Achilles would be placed.

Achilles’ grin is sweet and earnest and it is the first time that Patroclus has seen something other than cool poise or polite disinterest on the other boys face. It makes his beauty glow. It is in that moment that Patroclus understands something of the allure that Achilles holds to all the others.

He is still watching Achilles stride confidently to be greeted by his tower-mates when he feels someone nudge him in the arm.

“Èla!” He complains turning to see that it was Briseis who elbowed him.

He frowns at her and she jerks her head toward the dais.

He had been so caught up in watching Achilles that he missed his own name being called.

“Patroclus,” Professor Pythia calls out again her eyes fixed on him.

Patroclus can’t move. He is suddenly terrified.

Briseis shoves him and he stumbles forward awkwardly. The Boreas section continues their cheering and chanting and it chases him up toward the olive tree. Like the other students, he looks up at the Culling Tree as he moves under its canopy. Up close he can see that the ornaments are all made of different metals, some are gold, some silver, some bronze, and others are copper. The bark of the tree is like the roots have grown out of the ground and twisted together to form the body of the tree.

He holds his breath as he reaches out a hand and rests it lightly on the coarse bark.

Nothing happens.

No wind sweeps in. The air is still. Professor Pythia tilts her head and her eyes drift closed. Then there are a few light gusts. The silver ornaments tinkle and abruptly stop. The copper ornaments follow but end just as quickly. Then silence once more.

Patroclus can feel sweat gathering on his skin. His heartbeat picks up as the seconds stretch on.

The gold ornaments rattle but then stop. The silver ornaments chime briefly again.
Patroclus has no idea how long it actually goes on for but it feels like an eternity. He begins to fear that he will not be sorted as the others were. He fears that this means that this was all some kind of mistake and he will be forced to return to Athens and his father in yet more shame.

And then the wind blows in steady and sure. The gold ornaments ring out and Professor Pythia’s eyes snap open.

“Boreas!”

Patroclus slumps in relief not really taking in the tower he has actually been culled into. He stumbles off the dais in a daze and over the Boreas section where none so much as glance at him, all still caught in the excitement of gaining Achilles—all except for one set of leaf-green eyes.

Patroclus finds an empty seat on one of the long benches and pours himself some pomegranate juice and takes a long swig and simply tries to regain his senses.

Minutes later Briseis plops down next to him, her cheeks flushed and her expression elated. Patroclus allows himself to mirror her and feel the rush of it all.

Who cares if his tower-mates ignored his admittance into their tower? He has been sorted into a tower at the Pelion Academy of Magic. He was going to learn to be a fucking wizard!

Chapter End Notes

Well, there you have it! I couldn't NOT sort them into something. I hope I distinguished it enough from the Hogwarts method and that you all enjoyed it.

Next up: Achilles!

Also, this is being posted on tumblr so please share the love and get the word out.

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/181997904106/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-4-azuldemon
Year 1: Achilles

Chapter Summary

Achilles wades through all the attention and excitement that is heaped upon him and finds that things are not quite what he had expected at the Pelion Academy of Magic...until he meets someone unexpected.

Chapter Notes

Welcome to the first of the Achilles POV chapters that will be sprinkled throughout this fic. While Patroclus' perspective will be dominant, I still wanted you guys to get a sense of what it is like to be Achilles and get inside his head a bit. Hope you enjoy it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hands clap at Achilles' back, others reach out to clasp his hands and shake them heartily. He smiles, wide and confident, cheeks stretching to ache. His eyes flow over his fellow Boreas tower-mates, his new companions. For some reason, his eyes are pulled back to the dais where another boy is ascending the tiled steps upon shaky legs.

He looks small and slight under the Culling Tree, the dark waves of his hair unruly and tumbling down over his forehead and around his ears.

Achilles watches as the boy reaches a trembling hand out to rest it against the tree.

Achilles waits for the wind to howl through as it had for himself and all the others.

Nothing happens.

Achilles frowns even as the cheers for him continue to drape him in a mantle of unearned admiration. It is taking the tree a particularly long time to make a decision on which tower this boy belongs to. No student has taken more than a few moments to be culled up until now.

Achilles continues to watch, not yet sitting.

Some of the older children are beckoning him over to sit with them. Still, he watches.

Small breezes waft into the Hall of Winds but none seem to rattle the ornaments in the Culling Tree enough to provide an answer for Professor Pythia.

The minutes stretch on like the gut-tense strings of a lyre.

The boy shifts from one foot to the next.

Finally, after three minutes of silent deliberation, the winds and the Culling Tree make a decision and Professor Pythia declares the boy for Boreas tower.
No one even notices. Boreas tower is still too focused on Achilles himself.

The boy begins making his way to the row of Boreas tables, his eyes are downcast and he seems like he might be somewhere else.

Without thinking, Achilles lifts his hands and begins to clap for the boy. A few of those around him seem to notice and look at the boy and begin to offer half-hearted claps as well.

Achilles eventually takes a seat with two brothers who are both inexplicably named Ajax. The younger, who is Achilles’ age, is referred to as Ajax the Lesser—or Al for short—while the other is sometimes referred to Ajax the Greater. It is a legitimate oddity. Though it is true that the older Ajax is massive in size for a boy who is only thirteen years old.

Boreas claims one more student: A girl named Briseis.

Notus gains a girl whose hair spills down all the way to her waist by the name of Deidameia.

Eurus tower gains a girl with her hair shaved close to the scalp on one side name Penthesilea. Achilles has heard that the last girl is set to be one hell of a quidditch player as her mothers are both on the Greek national quidditch team. He’s excited about meeting her since he hopes to have good competition on the pitch.

With the Culling completed, Headmaster Chiron steps up in front of the Culling Tree and addresses the gathered students.

“Welcome, students new and old, to another term!” Chiron calls out. “We are pleased to be bringing you all another year of magical education. “I am excited to welcome back our very dear Professor Daphne who has returned from her year-long sabbatical while she conducted her research on the magical fauna of Central America.” He claps and turns to a professor with dark auburn hair who nods in his direction and toasts him with her glass. The remainder of the hall joins him. “Now, without further delay, let the feast begin!” He sweeps his arms out and the torches blaze and food floats down from the sky and sets itself before them.

The air immediately fills with the smell of fresh pita, olives, herb-spiced lamb, and baklava. The students cheer in excitement and then the sound of plates and silverware clattering immediately follows as the students eagerly serve themselves begin to tuck in.

The food is rich and delicious and Achilles has been raised among delicacies since he was old enough to be fed solid food. He eats his fill doing his best to be polite to the excited ramblings of Al who is very clearly trying to impress him. His brother Ajax attempts mature interest with minimal success.

Try as he might, Achilles does not feel connected or particularly interested in the other children who cluster around him. He had thought that once he came to Pelion it would be different. He had imagined making friends as being something that would be effortless like all things had been for him up until this point in his life. It confuses him and he feels a knot of disappointment settle into his stomach like he has just swallowed an olive pit.

Achilles is finishing his meal with a perfectly ripe fig when a boy from Notus tower saunters up to him, all bravado and rakish smiles. He sticks out a hand and flips his artfully tousled hair out of his eyes.

“I’m Paris,” the boy greets, brash as freshly forged brass. “You no doubt have heard of my brother Hector, he’s a third year and the best in the school. My family has a bit of legacy here at Pelion.”
Achilles looks at the extended hand but does not move to take it. It is the first time he has felt completely put off by the eager advances of his peers.

Paris doesn’t pull his hand back and his smile never falters. “I just thought I’d give you the opportunity to start your education off right, with the right kind of people.”

Beside him, Achilles can practically feel Ajax and Al fuming but they wait to see what he will do.

Achilles cocks an eyebrow. “The right kind of people?”

Paris nods once confidently.

“And that’s you?”

The smile starts to finally dim, a waxing crescent.

“I think I’ll pass.” Achilles says, turning around in his seat and going back to his fig. The tender, wrinkled flesh gives way beneath the press of his teeth splashing his tongue in sweetness.

“You must think you are so special,” Paris hisses, the wound to his pride leaking along his words. “The Boy That Was Promised, you don’t seem all that special to me. Half-breed—”

“Take a hike, pretty-boy,” Ajax growls lowly. “Go touch up your eyeliner or something.”

Paris says nothing more he only narrows his deep sapphire eyes to glare before he stomps away.

Achilles glances over at Ajax who dips his head at him. Achilles takes another bite of his fig. He decides not to tell the older boy that he doesn’t need him to fight his battles and that he didn’t see much need to engage in any sort of argument with the likes of Paris.

~ o ~ o ~

The feast concludes and the first-year students are bustled up to Boreas Tower where they will spend much of their leisure time and find their dormitories. The entrance to the tower is guarded and blocked by a statue of a satyr sitting on a boulder while playing the pan flute. When their group approaches the satyr is whistling a tune that is high and bright from the set of pipes.

When the proctor clears her throat the satyr glares at her out of the corner of its eye. The proctor rolls her eyes in response and chants, “when the north wind blows, the wise take shelter, the foolish set sail, and the bold stand tall.”

The satyr stops mid-tune and makes a rude gesture before moving aside on cloven hooves to expose the staircase leading up into the tower. They climb the few flights of stairs and enter the Boreas Common Room. It is a circular room that is open to the air on account of this section of the tower having no walls and instead being ringed in marble pillars. Sheer orange curtains hang between each column, wafting lazily in the breeze. There is a fire pit in the center that is already burning and filling the air with the fresh scent of cedar. Rugs and squishy sitting pillows and low tables ripple out from around the firepit providing seating and space for studying. The cozy comfort of the room surprises Achilles and he isn’t sure what he had been expecting.

The first-years begin roaming around the area eager to stake out places to sit and chat.

“Welcome to Boreas Tower,” a feminine voice greets, the diction thunderous as the clashing of distant shields upon the field of battle.
They all look up and around, searching for the source of the voice.

The flames of the fire flicker and the hangings ruffle before a woman materializes, floating above them. She is translucent and shimmers faintly. It is as though she is made of stray wisps of rich silk, moonbeams, dew.

"Are you a ghost?" Someone gasps.

“‘I am your muse,’” the spirit corrects. “‘I am Calliope, the muse of epic poetry; councilor to great heroes and motivator of brave deeds.” Her form and features blur as she moves, gliding among them and leaving grey dust where she touches them like a nectar drunk butterfly leaves pollen with the pass of its wings. “I will come to know each of you well in your time here and it is my job to inspire you, call you to your truest potential, and provide guidance on who you might become.”

With his fellow students briefly distracted from him by this newest novelty, Achilles slips away from the crowd, hoping for a reprieve from the constant press of bodies with their hungry eyes, reaching limbs, and ceaseless flatteries. He quietly makes his way up the winding staircase that leads to the rooms that contain the boys’ dormitories in search of his belongings and the bed that will be his during the remainder of his time at Pelion.

He is thankful for the quiet. Nothing has been quiet since he took his first step toward the Pelion Academy of Magic. Even in all the ceaseless commotion he still feels rudderless, unmoored. He is a ship with a heading and sails full of wind but no anchor.

He thinks of his father and with his steady pride and his mother with her boundless expectations and the feeling deepens.

He suddenly wants nothing more than to be on his broom and riding the backs of the winds out into the sea of stars.

He locates his trunk and belongings in the topmost tower room set before the softly padded kline with orange bedding and golden mosquito netting draping down from above. He crouches and opens his trunk and begins unpacking a few things when he realizes that he’s not alone in the dorm.

He stands up and looks at the kline next to his own and realizes that the boy he had seen with the chestnut curls from the Culling is already seated on his own kline, legs crossed and book in his lap. He is staring at Achilles with only his eyes.

They are liquid-brown, brown is common, but when he really looks into the depths of those eyes he can see the splinters of amber that shine through them. Achilles holds that intense gaze for a long time. Neither of them says a word, the silence that had previously been heavy with Achilles’ thoughts now feels tight and charged.

This boy does not look at him like everyone else here. He is not fawning or clamoring to get close nor is he frantic to impress. In fact, he seems somewhat irritated with Achilles and his presence.

Achilles is not sure he’s ever had someone be irritated with him before. Paris doesn’t count.

Finally, Achilles speaks. “I guess we’re neighbors.”

The silence shatters like a flock of startled larks.

The boy nods, wavy locks bouncing across his forehead. Achilles finds that he likes those curls a lot.
“I’m Achilles,” he reaches out a hand in greeting. He cannot remember the last time he initiated a greeting.

The boy’s eyes watch his hand warily, as if afraid of a trick, but eventually takes the offered limb lightly.

“I’m Patroclus,” he murmurs.

*Pa-tro-clus…*

“Patroclus…” Achilles says the name slowly as if tasting it. He finds that he likes it. He enjoys the feel of it when his lips, tongue, and teeth move to form the individual syllables of it; he likes the way it plays in his ears.

The boy looks at him oddly and for a moment Achilles wonders if he has somehow mispronounced it. Achilles feels himself beginning to smile. He looks down and realizes that their hands are still clasped. Patroclus notices too and retrieves his hand quickly, his bronze colored skin darkening at his cheeks.

*He’s blushing.* Achilles realizes and wonders at what that means.

There’s a clamor as the other boys rush up the stairs and begin crowding into the dorm. Once more he finds himself the center of attention. It would be a lie to say that he does not enjoy the attention at times. His father says such things will ensure his legacy. His mother says it is his birthright. But oftentimes, despite being the object of everyone’s attention, it feels like he is still separate from them all—as if he were looking down upon them from a snowcapped mountain peak.

He peeks through the other boys and sees Patroclus cast one last glance at him before returning his eyes to the book he had been reading when Achilles entered and laying back against the headboard of his kline.

Achilles feels pretty pleased with his new sleeping arrangements.

Chapter End Notes

I know, I know! It is such a brief meeting but I promise the more substantial meeting between our boys is up next.

Next Chapter: Figs, Charms, and Lies

P.S. I know that Ajax the Great and Ajax the Lesser arent brothers in the Illiad (at least not in the translation I read) but I thought it'd be a fun little quirk.

Please continue to help this fic get out there by liking and reblogging on Tumblr!

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/182179146666/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-5-azuldemon
Year 1: Charms, Figs, and Lies

Chapter Summary

Patroclus and Achilles finally collide!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The term begins and Patroclus literally throws himself at his studies. His first day he leaves his breakfast and lunch early in order to map out and memorize just exactly where each of his classes is so as to ensure that he is able to navigate the sprawl of the mansion with its numerous courtyards, sprawling gardens, and endless colonnades.

He has dreams about being late and showing up in his tunic while everyone else is wearing jeans and t-shirts. In those dreams he is laughed out of the classroom by everyone, the teacher included.

But in reality, Patroclus makes it to his classes early each day and is seated near the front with his parchment, reed pens, and book at the ready. He reads ahead each night knowing that being muggle-born means that he is going to have to work twice as hard as everyone else.

He also shows up to his classes early in order to avoid sitting near Achilles and the swarm of their peers that surrounds him at all times. When he had made his silent vow to have nothing to do with the Boy Who Was Promised he had not realized what a Herculean effort it was going to be. He shares every single one of his classes with Achilles and tragically few with Briseis.

Patroclus is not sure who he must have murdered in a past life but it must have been someone important and saintly because his punishment is cruel.

Even his meals are spent closer to the half-Veela than he would prefer. Achilles reminds him of the politicians his father consorted with, the way they moved from group-to-group, person-to-person in an attempt to show their favor and attention. Achilles never sits with the same group twice in a row, casting his glow on all who will take him (which is everyone). He is a blazing bonfire in a world of moths.

“You’re staring at him again,” Briseis hums under her breath as she mixes honey into her yogurt. Patroclus startles and quickly serves himself more fruit. “Am not.”

Briseis grunts out a laugh as she takes a spoonful of her yogurt. Her disbelief broadcasting clearly in the single sound.

Patroclus feels his cheeks heat up. He has gotten into the strange habit of watching the Achilles, studying him and the charm he seems to place on others. He tells himself it is just curiosity—just wanting to know about this world and the special kind of magic the other boy possesses. Or perhaps to learn how to be more sociable.

“Did you finish your equations for Transfiguration?” He asks, taking an olive and plopping it into his mouth.
Briseis looks at him for a long moment clearly trying to decide whether to press the matter or allow for the change in subject. Finally, she nods around another spoonful of her yogurt. “Makes my head feel like I’ve turned my brain upside down and inside out inside my skull.”

“It actually gets pretty easy once you can wrap your mind around the equations for mass and energy distribution. It’s the turning it into actual spell work I don’t get. I only managed to turn my cotton swab pointy at the end last class.”

Briseis huffs a breath that sends some of her curls floating up and away from her eyes and she leans forward on her elbows. “That’s more than I managed. You might actually have to start tutoring me.”

There is a commotion further down the Boreas table and it pulls Patroclus’ eyes back to Achilles who has done something (likely only demonstrating that he can convert oxygen into carbon dioxide) that has the group of girls around him giggling and cooing in excitement. Through it all, Achilles smiles politely, all pearly white teeth and boyish charisma.

Patroclus watches as he tucks some of his blonde hair behind his ear to move it out of his face. He has become an expert at covertly watching Achilles while maintaining his public display of indifference, which is no small feat given that they share all their classes and their klines are right next to each other.

Except this time Achilles’ eyes turn for some reason and their eyes meet from across the hall. It hits Patroclus like the swat of white-capped waves. He blinks and then jerks his head down as if he has dropped something important.

“What?” Briseis asks. “What is it?”


Briseis frowns. “I thought that you were done getting to class so early.”

“It’s my worst class.” Patroclus defends as he begins gathering up his books and supplies.

“You can keep all those equations for Transfiguration in your head but you have a difficult time in Charms…that makes no sense to me.”

“None of this makes any sense to me,” Patroclus retorts, reaching out and taking his last piece of bread and holding it between his teeth. “See you at lunch,” he mumbles around the bread.

Briseis rolls her eyes affectionately and waves him off.

He arrives to the amphitheater-like classroom used by Professor Antigone for Charms. He assumes it is because the room’s acoustics lends itself to lectures and the high ceilings and space provides ample room to work with the beginner charms that the class focuses on.

Whereas Transfiguration was coming somewhat naturally to Patroclus, Charms was another matter entirely. Transfiguration altered form and dealt with the conversion of mass and energy while Charms was about precise wand movements, words, and willpower. While Patroclus could manage the former he had always struggled with the latter.

He’s practicing the swish and flick motion with his wand as it is outlined in the book when most of his classmates begin filing in to join him. Achilles is last of course, sauntering in casually and plopping down into his seat.
Patroclus’ eyes linger and he begins to worry that the half-Veela’s glamour has affected him when Achilles looks back at him again. Panic floods him in an instant and his throat feels like it has shortened somehow.

Thankfully, Professor Antigone arrives in a sweep of red robes dispensing broad oak leaves as she goes by with casual swishes of her wand. She stands on her podium and glances about the room.

“Today we will be practicing the levitation charm, an exceedingly practical and endlessly useful spell and one that will help to develop your wand control and test your patience.”

Patroclus picks up his wand again and gives it a few experimental swishes and flicks, following the motions that Professor Antigone demonstrates and starting to feel confident in his form. The entire class continues to repeat the motion as the Charms professor glides among them correcting and advising.

“Too much flourish, Al.”

“Too tight, Penthesilea.”

“Perfection, Achilles.”

She stops in front of Patroclus and watches his motions and she nods. “Very close, Patroclus, loosen your elbow a bit.”

Once Professor Antigone is satisfied she nods and returns to the podium.


The class echoes her.

She nods, “say the words while completing the motion.” She uses her wand to indicate the oak leaves that are in front of them all.

The room fills with the sound of his fellow students chanting the words and pointing their wands at their leaves.

Across from him, without uttering a single word, Achilles swishes and flicks his wand sending not only his own leaf but the leaves on either side of him wafting up into the air. It earns him the collective gasps and sounds of awe from everyone in the class.

No one notices that Patroclus manages to speak the words, execute the motion perfectly and send his leaf skyward as well. His first successful charm work and the most profound feat of magic that he’s managed since arriving at Pelion.

No one cares because Achilles always does everything ten times better than everyone else.

~ o ~ o ~

At lunch that day Briseis is furiously working on her equations for Transfiguration hunched over her parchment, tongue poking out from the corner of her mouth. Patroclus is doing his best to help her rather than watch as Achilles dazzles the group of students around him by levitating five figs and juggling them with lazy whirls of his wand. Praise is heaped upon Achilles for accomplishing feats of magic that are beyond the ability of even most of the third-year students.

“Are you listening?” Briseis demands.
Patroclus pulls his eyes away from the display and looks down at Briseis’ homework. He points to the equation. “You’re missing a variable.”

“What?” Briseis exclaims incredulously.

“Viscousness.”

Briseis grumbles and scratches out the equation and begins reworking it.

Patroclus uses the moment to go back to his observations of Achilles and rather than finding Achilles focused on his magical juggling he is met with the leaf-green eyes of the Boy Who Was Promised. It seems that Achilles has caught on to him, leaving Patroclus with the distinct feeling that he is now being watched back.

It’s humiliating.

His breath catches hard in his chest and before he can look away Achilles yells: “Catch!” And flicks his wand sending one of the figs arching towards him.

Patroclus holds out his hands and catches it in his cupped palms. A perfect throw.

He stares down at the brown and wrinkled flesh of the fruit for an instant. He looks up and there is a wisp of a smile on the perfect bow of Achilles’ lips. It is a small thing but is the closest to the smile that had ignited his entire face that Patroclus has seen him give since the night he was culled for Boreas Tower.

Patroclus is grinning back at him like a fool.

The other children glance between them, their faces perplexed.

Why would Achilles want anything to do with a mud-blood like Patroclus?

Their guess is as good as his.

“Oh, great,” Briseis groans looking up at him from her parchment. “Now you’re going to become a groupie too.”

“What?” Patroclus sputters. “No way!”

Briseis squints one eye at him before going back to her work.

Patroclus fights his mouths insistence on smiling and his eyes’ urge to look over at Achilles again. Instead, he takes a bite of the fig, the perfect ripeness of its sweetness sparkling on his tongue.

~ o ~ o ~

Patroclus is hiding out in the library a few weeks later, avoiding going to his Defense Against the Dark Arts class. He is proving even worse at jinxes, hexes, and curses than he is at charms. Thus far, he has been unable to manage the full body-bind curse or the knockback jinx. Curse of the Bogies is up today. Professor Hippolyta favors a very hands-on approach to the subject and Patroclus doesn’t much want to be struck with a magical cold on top of being unable to perform the curse himself or the counter-curse.

So, yeah, he is hiding. At least he is studying in the library. That has to count for something.

He is searching for an alternative book that can teach him the counter-curse, hoping that perhaps a
different explanation might help him better understand the spell. He is pulling down a book titled: *Updated Counter-Curse Handbook* when he hears, “there you are.”

He looks up and is startled to be standing face-to-face with Achilles. He nearly drops the book.

“What are you doing here?” He breathes out.

“Professor Hippolyta sent me to look for you when you didn’t arrive for class today.” Achilles explains. “Deidameia said she thought you were skipping class. I said I thought you might be sick.”

Patroclus doesn’t know what to do with any of that information.

“You are skipping class, aren’t you…” Achilles sounds almost shocked.

Shame and guilt writhe inside of Patroclus but anger is always quicker and easier. “And what if I am?”

Achilles blinks at him in surprise like he is not used to people expressing anger at him. “Then Professor Hippolyta said she would assign you detention and extra homework.”

Patroclus groans, the last thing he needs is detention or more homework.

Achilles glances at the book in Patroclus’ hands, eyes scanning the title. “What were you doing?”

Patroclus pulls the book to his chest. “Studying…”

“You skipped class…to study for class?”

Patroclus hates the ease with which his face blushes and frowns fiercely. “So what? Are you going to tell Professor Hippolyta?”

Achilles considers him for a moment. “Well, I can’t tell her you’re sick.”

Patroclus arches an eyebrow. “Why not? You can tell her whatever you want.”

“That would be a lie.” Achilles says it as though it is ridiculous that Patroclus would even suggest something like that.

“So,” Patroclus grouses.

“I don’t like lies.”

“So you’ll tell her I was skipping class?”

Achilles frowns harder. “No…”

Patroclus feels like he’s missing something.

Then Achilles snaps his fingers suddenly and pulls out his wand. It is made from ash wood that is bright and creamy in color and shaped to resemble a spear. Without a word he whirls it and foggy, teal light bursts from the tip and flashes through Patroclus. Patroclus feels a rush of vertigo, his nose begins to run, his eyes itch, and he seized with a violent sneeze.

“**Malaka!**” He curses.
“We will tell Healer Chryses that we were practicing the Curse of the Bogies and we can’t reverse it.” He points to the book in Patroclus’ arms. “This is not a lie. Then you will have a note for class saying you were sick and had to be treated. This will also not be a lie.” Achilles nods, clearly pleased with himself.

Patroclus thinks that is some kind of weird mental math that he’s not really following but if it will keep him from detention he will go along with it.

Patroclus replaces the *Updated Counter-Curse Handbook* and they make their way to the healing wing of the academy. They are halfway there when Patroclus feels a wave of dizziness from the curse and his legs start to feel a bit like jelly. He stumbles and Achilles immediately slides in next to him, arm coiling around his waist and keeping him upright. Patroclus wants to protest but he feels sick and miserable and isn’t actually sure if he can make it on his own.

When they arrive in the healing wing Healer Chryses takes one look at him and already has his wand out, only seeming to half pay attention to Achilles’ explanation.

The counter-curse washes over Patroclus in a burst of green light, sloshing off the effects as it passes. Healer Chryses hands him some tissue to blow his nose, suggests some hot tea and seems prepared to leave when Achilles stops him.

“Excuse me, sir, my friend needs a note for class.”

Healer Chryses waves over one of his six or seven-year students to handle the task. Neither Achilles or Patroclus mentions what class the note is for as that would likely cause more questioning than they can comfortably answer.

“Thanks,” Patroclus murmurs, note in hand and feeling suddenly shy.

Weird logic aside, Achilles went out of his way to keep Patroclus out of trouble.

The smile Achilles gives him is neither board or distantly polite. “You’re welcome.”

Patroclus tries to forget that Achilles called him his friend a few moments ago. It had all been for show. He doesn’t even really know Achilles. He can perhaps admit he had been too harsh in his judgment of Achilles. Perhaps Achilles really is just a nice guy. That almost makes Patroclus want to hate him again. Patroclus doesn’t understand himself.

When they arrive to class Professor Hippolyta looks at the note and then between the two of them, her expression suspicious.

“We are practicing the curse and the counter curse now,” she jerks her chiseled chin toward the other students who are pointing their wands at the practice dummies in the courtyard. “You two pair up, don’t practice on one another. Only aim at the dummy.”

Achilles nods and heads toward the last remaining practice dummy while Patroclus blinks his shock away. Professor Hippolyta frowns at him and he hurries after the other boy.

“Let’s start with the curse,” Achilles suggests. He whirls his wand just as he had in the library and the orb of light flies and hits the practice dummy.

The ease with which he can cast still makes Patroclus angry. He feels so inept.

“Why don’t you say the incantation?” He demands.
Achilles turns to look at him, one brow quirked. “Nonverbal spells are less powerful.” He says it like it’s the most obvious thing in the world.

“So?” Patroclus crosses his arms.

“If I use the incantation for spells, they…they sometimes come out too strong.” Achilles explains.

Patroclus thinks about Achilles levitating three leaves instead of just one in Charms a few weeks back. It has never occurred to him that Achilles might have the opposite problem from the rest of them. It doesn’t completely take the sting out of how effortless magic is for Achilles but it does give Patroclus some perspective. He starts to think that things might not be quite as easy for Achilles as he has been thinking.

“I never thought about that,” he admits.

Achilles shrugs and motions for him to take a turn.

Patroclus tries to push past his dread and steps up to face the practice dummy. He holds out his wand and swirls it. “Mucus ad Nauseam.”

Nothing happens.

He drops his wand hand to his side in resignation.

“You’re a little off on the wand movement.” Achilles muses.

He steps up beside Patroclus and takes his hand by the wrist and lifts it up again and points it at the target. He guides the wand in a flick and a whirl. His hand is soft and warm against Patroclus’ skin and Patroclus swallows thickly. He feels like every eye in the class is set upon them.

“That’s the motion,” Achilles informs. “Try again.”

Patroclus feels himself bristle a bit at the command but follows along anyway. Still, nothing happens.

Achilles scratches the side of his head in confusion. “That was perfect…”

“You always make it look easy,” Patroclus grumbles, hating that he’s admitting that to Achilles out loud.

Achilles seems to consider this for a moment before answering. “I suppose I just trust my magic is all.”

Patroclus has no idea what that’s supposed to mean.

He tries three more times to no avail. He’s about to give up when he considers what Achilles said. He has focused so much on wand motion and annunciation that he has left out the third variable, his magic.

He closes his eyes and tries to feel that feeling he felt when he levitated his oak leaf; when he was paired with his wand for the first time; when he broke Clysonymus’ leg. He feels it inside of him, it’s like veins of ore running through him deep and hidden. He takes a breath. He flicks and whirls his wand.

“Mucus ad Nauseam,” he chants.
An orb of green light rushes from his wand and into the practice dummy.

“Telios!” Achilles cheers, bouncing on his feet and clapping him on the shoulder.

Patroclus beams at him and Achilles beams right back.

When class ends Achilles remains by his side and they walk to the Hall of Winds together for lunch.

Achilles asks him questions about their other classes and about how Patroclus is adjusting to life at the academy, chatting with him as if they’ve known one another longer than the span of a little more than an hour. When they arrive at the Boreas table and Achilles sits down next to him Briseis cocks an eyebrow at him while Achilles is loading up his plate with food.

Patroclus only offers her a somewhat frantic shrug in response.

Chapter End Notes

Next up: Sitting in Trees and Sipping on Waterfalls

Also, if you're loving this fic please consider sharing or reblogging this on tumblr:

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/182363650061/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-6-azuldemon
Year 1: Sitting in Trees and Sipping on Waterfalls

Chapter Summary

Patroclus and Achilles spend some quality time together.

Chapter Notes

This was one of my absolute favorite chapters to write. I hope you all enjoy it as well.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Achilles ceases his hummingbird’s circuit of the other students in favor of eating with Patroclus—and by extension Briseis—for all his meals. He also takes to walking with Patroclus to their class and sitting with him in those classes. If there are not two seats open when they arrive at a class, Achilles politely asks someone to move so that they are not separated. Everyone, of course, complies without so much as a grumbled complaint.

The shift in their relationship is falcon swift and leaves Patroclus feeling like he is perpetually missing the last step on a staircase.

Achilles takes to it as naturally as a stallion to gallop. He is chatty, asking Patroclus questions about muggles and the world they live and operate in.

“What is a television?”

“What is a bike?”

At first, Patroclus startles when Achilles speaks to him expecting a barb or unsure if it is him Achilles is actually speaking to. He is stiff in his confusion, offering brief answers and asking no questions in return. But that soon melts under the honey-sweet glow of Achilles’ presence and he finds himself quickly loosening up and asking questions of his own.

“How does a broom work?”

“Where did you grow up?”

He learns that Achilles is not, in fact, perfect at all of his lessons. Achilles struggles more in his transfiguration equations than Briseis, but he somehow still manages to accomplish the spells and even conjure a few simple things. It doesn’t confuse him as much as it confuses Patroclus. Achilles also struggles greatly in potions, showing frustration and impatience in the subject. These struggles humanize the Boy Who Was Promised and Patroclus feels his anger and disdain begin to rapidly drain from him like he is a pitcher set to pouring. Out and out it spills from him and in its absence something lingers…something he cannot name and only just begins to sense.

In just the span of a couple of days, Patroclus finds himself seeking Achilles out if the other boy has not found him first. He waits for Achilles at the door of their classes to walk with him to their
next one. Any seat beside him remains free until occupied by Achilles.

Achilles seeps into his life, filling every nook like warm spring water.

“So…are you guys, like, friends now?” Briseis asks in a rare moment when Achilles is not with him.

Achilles had said he needed to practice for quidditch and that this was something he did alone. The statement had irked Patroclus despite his vow at the start of the term to have nothing to do him.

“I guess so,” he shrugs letting his feet dangle into the fountain they are sitting at.

The statued women that reside at the center of the fountain comb fingers through their hair, wholly unconcerned with the talk of the human children who lounge at their feet.

“You guess so?”

“I don’t know…”

Briseis shakes her head and mutters in exasperation, “boys…”

~ o ~ o ~

“Do you want to come exploring with me today?” Achilles asks one Saturday morning.

Patroclus freezes, toothbrush in hand and feeling like he might still be dreaming. “Huh?” He asks stupidly.

“Do you want to come with me to explore the island today?” Achilles repeats, stretching his arms up over his head and yawning so wide Patroclus can see his molars.

Even upon waking he is perfection, with his disheveled hair and golden skin sleep-warmed to burnish.

That thing that Patroclus has been feeling stirs inside him, twisting like braided rope and pulling taught. He still doesn’t understand this feeling but it is growing, nourished by these strange moments that sprinkle over him like gentle vernal showers.

Patroclus isn’t quite sure what to make of the all the time Achilles has been spending with him the past few of days. A part of him is still darkly suspicious of the other boy, afraid that this is some grand setup to a prank. But if he has learned one thing about Achilles thus far it is that he is shockingly earnest, almost naively so.

So he trusts him.

“Uh, sure…” Patroclus manages. Finding that he truly wants to do nothing more than to spend his day with Achilles.

Achilles smiles and it is bright and young and full of excitement. “Awesome, let me get ready and then we can have breakfast and head out.”

Patroclus only nods.

When they head down for breakfast Briseis is walking out of the Hall of Winds with her friends Esma and Chryseis.
“Ti leei,” Briseis greets with her pretty smile. “We’re going to go watch some of the quidditch players practice. Want to come?”

“Ummm,” Patroclus scratches at the back of his head. “I’ve kinda got plans…” he nudges his head in Achilles’ direction who had simply given the girls a polite, if disinterested, wave as he walked past.

“Are you serious!?” Esma asks in clear disbelief.

The girl barely speaks to Patroclus on most occasions despite his friendship with Briseis.

“Yeah,”

Briseis looks about to ask something but Achilles is looking at him expectantly.

“I’ll see you at lunch, have fun!” His words run together in his haste to move past them to join Achilles.

He is startled by the force of his own eagerness.

He doesn’t see Briseis frown after him.

~ o ~ o ~

“So, what are we exploring?” Patroclus asks as they make their way out of the mansion.

Achilles shrugs as he bends to take off his sandals, flexing his feet into the packed dirt of the path they set out upon. “I dunno, but this island is ancient and full of magic. Who knows what’s out here.” He turns to Patroclus, his hair fanning over his shoulder, and smiles his sunrise smile. It pierces Patroclus as deftly as any spear.

Exploring the island turns out to involve lots of tree climbing, splashing through streams, drinking from waterfalls, and racing across fields. These are things that Patroclus never got to do back in the normal world. He spent all of his time cloistered and alone in his father’s home. He is surprised to also learn that these are things that Achilles has always done alone. He had assumed someone like Achilles had always been surrounded by friends but the childhood he describes is anything but.

As they pick their way through the shady paths looking for hidden trails long forgotten, they hear a lilting song coming from the treetops above them, nectarous notes floating down to them like fluffy spores. Achilles freezes, mouth moving into a startled “O”. Patroclus looks up and thinks he sees movement above them.

“Dryads,” Achilles smirks, moving immediately to climb the nearest tree.

Patroclus stalls, suddenly timid.

“Patroclus,” Achilles calls down after him.

Pat-ro-clus

He shivers at the sound.

“C’mon!”

And Patroclus follows without another thought.
As they climb the singing draws nearer and he can make out creatures, no bigger than squirrels, skittering gracefully from branch to branch. They have large eyes and shimmery skin that is brown dappled in brilliant emerald. They are fairy-like and yet something else entirely, wholly unworldly.

They scurry around Patroclus and Achilles when they each find a comfortable branch to sit, legs swaying over the ground below. The dryad song drifts around them like an amber mist. Patroclus cannot understand the words but it is beautiful.

It is green.

It is warm.

It is strong roots curling into dirt.

It is green, green, green.

Achilles closes his eyes and tilts his head up and begins to hum, his voice is different from the dryads but no less sweet, it rises in a crescendo of waves breaking against Aeaea’s shores. The little creatures exchange excited glances and cluster around him joining their voices with his in a burbling minuet.

As Patroclus watches that twisting rope of a feeling winds tightly at the center of his being drawing him in upon himself.

They spend the entire day together, missing lunch and not returning until the sky is darkening and it is time for dinner. The next day Patroclus wakes to the same invitation as the morning before. He realizes that there had been a strain to Achilles’ voice yesterday that is absent now. He had thought it impossible for Achilles to be tentative and nervous but as it turns out there was much he had not known about the other boy.

Achilles is more than the sunbeam glamour, perfect poise, and polite disinterest. None seem able to see past the glittering surf to the ocean beneath. He is boyish and silly. He hates shoes and seeks any opportunity to discard footwear flexing and relaxing his toes into earth, grass, or water. He loves to play, inventing all manner of games and contests.

Their bond comes in a rush, sudden and powerful as the summer thunderstorms that sweep through the island. Patroclus feels like the sky must feel after those storms have rolled through: boundless, clean, and shimmering with cobalt ozone.

Patroclus plays. He races and he jumps. He is a version of himself that he has never known, carefree and easy to laugh and smile. He loses to Achilles at every game and every competition but he does not care because Achilles never gloats and his face is always flushed with the glow of his smile.

They become instantly galvanized, together upon waking all the way until they whisper jokes to one another before sleep claims them. Achilles tries to explain how magic works for him without success, it is part of him and works in the way that organs work or hair grows…it just does. Patroclus, in turn, tries to explain their Transfiguration homework and potions formulas with similar success.

On their free time, they continue their explorations of the island finding secret caves, and secluded groves. They lie on their backs in fields and guess that names of the birds calling or what the other sees in the shapes of the clouds above them:
“A golden ornament from the Culling Tree.”

“The candle I melted when I tried to lite it in Charms.”

“The leg of lamb served at last nights dinner.”

The other students are no less perplexed at how strongly and rapidly their friendship forms and how strongly it binds them. They whisper with furrowed brows when they think he and Achilles are not looking and cannot hear:

“Why him?”

“Why the mudblood?”

“It makes no sense.”

Patroclus doesn’t disagree with them.

“You’re kidding, right?” Paris, the haughty and handsome Notus boy demands one day at dinner, walking up to them with an airy saunter of someone has known nothing but privilege.

He interrupts Achilles’ enthusiastic tutoring about quidditch using their silverware and several food items to model the mechanics of the game. Achilles does not even seem to notice Paris until Patroclus turns at the question.

Achilles frowns, clearly irritated at the interruption.

“What?” He asks impatiently.

Paris does not falter. He is a boy who has never wanted for anything, never doubted he would inherit the earth.

“This is who you decide to associate yourself with,” he flicks his hand toward Patroclus in a crass gesture. “This muggle-born nobody?”

Achilles stands so quickly that Patroclus sucks in a breath and blinks in surprise.


Paris opens his mouth to retort but before he can speak Achilles has his wand pressed against the other boy’s cheek.

“Now.” Achilles growls out.

Paris stumbles back, face pale. “Big mistake, Achilles.” He shouts as he walks away. “Big mistake.”

Achilles’ grip on his wand flexes before he turns and sits back down. He takes a long drink of his pomegranate juice and then resumes his instruction as though they had never been interrupted.

Patroclus is not so easily distracted.

Paris’ words are like mealy tapeworms that slither under his skin and he cannot rid himself of. That night as they stare at one another from across the span between their klines he puts voice to the question that has been born of those insidious worms.
“Why did you start hanging out with me?” He asks, voice quiet.

Achilles seems confused by the question and he is silent for a long time causing the air that has been so comfortable between them to become suddenly charged. “You were…different…surprising…” he considers a bit before speaking again. “And now…you see me.”

He offers nothing else, turning away from Patroclus and falling into sleep.

~ o ~ o ~

Patroclus is rummaging in his trunk for clean clothes when he hears Achilles call for his attention.

“What is that?” Achilles asks from where he sits upon his own trunk rubbing oil onto his feet.

Patroclus likes the way those oils smell, like pomegranate seed and freshly pressed olives. He likes watching Achilles’ feet, bottoms calloused from all the time he spends going around barefoot, the pads of his toes plump as vine-ripe grapes.

“What’s what?” Patroclus asks.

Achilles stands and comes to kneel beside him. “This,” he says, finger pointing at the stringed instrument tucked among the clothing.

“It’s a violin,” Patroclus explains, pulling it out and cradling it for Achilles to see. “It belongs to my mother.”

Achilles cocks his head. “You don’t talk much about your parents.”

“It’s not something we really talk about.” Patroclus replies, and Achilles reads him like he always seems to be able to do.

He nods, “I suppose we don’t.”

“It’s a musical instrument that muggles use,” Patroclus explains, shifting the subject.

“It is a bit like a cretan lyra,” Achilles says. “I learned to play it when I was young.”

Without thinking Patroclus extends the violin to him. He surprises himself with the act, it is the only piece of home he keeps, it is the only thing that he can link to joy in his childhood.

Achilles accepts it gingerly, fingers gliding over the polished wood and metal strings. “It’s beautiful he says.” His eyes roam over it and his expression is one of wonder. “Do you think…” and there is that tight tone that Patroclus now knows means nervousness. “Could I maybe try to play it some time?”

It is a bold question.

“Yes,” Patroclus whispers in response.

They are both surprised by that answer.

They take the violin out into the island wilderness to a small pond that they favor. It is tucked snugly into a forest glade. The water is so clear that the smooth dark stones beneath are clearly visible, sprawling out before giving way to soft grass or reaching clusters of reeds. There is a large boulder at its edge and that is where they like to sit and speak of a thousand small things while the water gently laps against the stone.
It is there they sit now as Achilles brings the violin up to his chin and the bow to the strings. The sound he caresses from the instrument is not music, nor is it the harsh cat-cry sound that Patroclus pried from it the one time he attempted to play it. It is a softer sound, not quite a melody but more than simply noise.

Achilles’ eyes go closed and he does not stop. The sounds from the strings shift and lighten as he slowly begins to coax music from them. It is like nothing Patroclus has heard before. He plays and it is the sound of the wind swooping over reeds. It is owls in flight over a silver moon. It is water gliding swiftly over mountain rocks.

It spirits the breath from Patroclus’ lungs.

When Achilles stops they stare at one another, neither speaks.

“Play it again,” Patroclus practically pleads.

Achilles smiles and indulges him.

It is birdsong among the summer leaves.

It is the warm lick flames from the Boreas Common Room’s fire pit.

It is sunbeams dancing in stained glass.

It is perfect.

~ o ~ o ~

Later, when Achilles rests his neck and arms from playing, they dip their feet into the cool water. The silence settled around them long since having grown comfortable with their familiarity.

“My mother…” Patroclus starts, the words hanging between them.

Achilles turns to him, he waits, green eyes soft.

“Something happened to her,” Patroclus manages. “It affected her mind. It’s—it’s like she isn’t there—like she’s far away.”

Achilles shifts on the boulder, clothes rasping against the rough stone. It puts his side against Patroclus’. It is another thing about Achilles that Patroclus had not known what to make of, that liberal tactile affection: a casual arm around Patroclus’ shoulders; a knee pressed into his under the table; his head bent close to murmur hushed whispers; a hand resting on his back. At first, these touches had made Patroclus tense and skittish but he has rapidly grown to relish them.

That touch gives him comfort now.

“I don’t know who my father hates more, her…or me…”

It’s the first time Patroclus has said that out loud to anyone. But it is easier to speak of such things sitting on a sun-warmed rock in their glade under a sky speckled with fluffy white clouds. It is easier with Achilles’ steady presence beside him. It somehow frees the words from where they have been trapped inside of him for what feels like his entire life.

“I don’t understand how anyone could hate you,” Achilles says as simply and earnestly as one might comment on the sky being blue.
It is a balm over a picked scab.

After another stretch of silence Achilles speaks, eyes looking out at the trees that ring the glade. “You know, I don’t know what the prophecy about me says.”

That startles Patroclus, shocks him. It is his turn to turn and stare and try and offer his own silent support. It seems a cruel thing to tell a child that there is a prophecy about them but not share that prophecy with them.

“My father says it speaks of my glory,” Achilles continues, eyes still on the horizon. “My mother says it speaks of my power.” He shrugs, and it is still grace and perfection but there is also something uncertain in it. “But I’ve never been told exactly what it says or what it is I’m supposedly destined to do.”

“But everyone says you’re going to save all of magic one day.” Patroclus blurts.

Another shrug, “that’s what they say, but I don’t really know.”

It is yet one more thing he misjudged about Achilles. He hordes the truths that Achilles shares, seeing them for the precious things that they are.

“Shall I play again?” Achilles asks.

“Please.”

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: The Unwritten Rules of Friendship

Also, the obligatory Tumblr link ;D

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/182542185591/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-7-azuldemon
Year 1: The Unwritten Rules of Friendship

Chapter Summary

Patroclus learns what it means to be a friend.

Chapter Notes

We've hit over 100 kudos! Thank you all so much for the love, it truly keeps me going.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“He hogs you,” Briseis complains one day after they have finished their lunch and are making their way to the library.

They are alone for once. Achilles has been chosen for a chaser position on the Boreas quidditch team. He would have been the youngest player recruited to a team in a century if it wasn’t for the Potter boy at Hogwarts a couple of decades before. It is a high honor nonetheless.

But it means that he and Achilles have less time together than they had before. Patroclus maybe mopes about it a bit more than is appropriate. He decides it is because he had never really had a friend before and to have a friend so suddenly and one who is as scorchingly intense as Achilles has left him reeling and out of sorts.

“What?” He asks, puzzled.

“Don’t play dumb,” Briseis retorts, tersely.

Suddenly her distant mood at lunch makes sense to Patroclus.

“He does not see fit to give anyone the time of day except for you,” she continues, eyes ahead, every feature on her face pointed and tense. “Which is fine but he keeps you to himself like he is your only friend.”

Her words land like a hammer upon a forge because of his guilt over mistreating Briseis; for not realizing that he had been doing it but also because of the realization that he has two friends now. And…if he is being honest…there is something warm and pleasing about being the only one Achilles wishes to be around.

“I’m sorry,” he manages through the maelstrom of emotions. “I didn’t realize—”

“No,” Briseis huffs. “You didn’t. You go off with him to do whatever it is the two of you do out in the island; you chitter together like monkeys at every meal and then he whisks you up to your dorm every night. You only want to spend time with me when he’s off somewhere else.”

More blows of the hammer.
His feet quicken their pace and he rushes in front of her. “Briseis,” he pants. “I’m sorry—I should’ve realized—you deserve a better friend than that.”

Briseis crosses her arms and turns her head up and away from him. Even her curls seem angry with him.

“I’ve never had friends before,” he says earnestly and Briseis finally looks at him, confusion written clear upon her face. “I don’t always know how to be a friend. But you’re right. I’ll do better. I promise.”

“Well…I suppose there’s a bit of a learning curve to the whole friend thing.” She grins at him. “I suppose I’ll give you a pass, just this once.”

Relief gushes through Patroclus and he smiles at her.

They continue on their way to the library, the strain leeches from between them and it feels just like it did that first day he met her at the Agora of Charis, right at the start of this crazy journey into the world of magic.

They are laughing when Achilles finds them, his hair still damp and heavy from the shower he must have taken after his practice. He smells like fresh grass and almonds. Achilles nods at Briseis before his attention promptly moves to Patroclus. Despite his promise to Briseis, Patroclus feels his lips stretch wide in a smile as Achilles glimmers down on him before sitting on the desk beside him, ignoring the rules of the library. It is an effort not to get lost in him as he has become accustomed to doing. He looks to Briseis who’s rolling her eyes from the two of them and back to her book.

“Briseis was just telling me about how Automedon transfigured his pincushion into a dome of gelatin rather than a hedgehog in their Transfiguration class today.” Patroclus informs in an attempt to pull his two friends into a joint conversation.

Achilles chuckles politely and his eyes only flicker once to Briseis before returning to Patroclus. For the first time in months, Patroclus feels the full weight of that attention. It is startling to realize just how accustomed he has become to it in such a short period of time.

“You should’ve seen this maneuver I pulled in practice today,” Achilles recounts eagerly as if Briseis isn’t there. “Ajax knocked a bludger at me but I barrel-rolled right over it and still managed get passed Sarpedon and score. Hey! You should come to watch us practice,” he is ardent with the idea. “You’ll really get a feel for the game if you watch us go through the fundamentals.”

Patroclus’ head is nodding before he can gain control of it. He squeezes his eyes shut to try and slow himself down.

“Sounds like fun,” he turns his gaze from Achilles to Briseis. “Would you be up for coming to watch the Boreas team practice sometime, Briseis?”

Briseis’ head jerks up from her book and looks over at them in shock. She gives him a hesitant nod, her eyes darting over to Achilles. When Patroclus turns back, Achilles is frowning in bewilderment before he shifts it into his polite mask with the smile that doesn’t ignite his eyes.

“Yeah, you should…both come…”

They head to dinner then, the three of them. Briseis recovers quickly and talks with Patroclus as she normally does. Achilles is more stilted, almost awkward—if Achilles were even capable of awkwardness. When they seat themselves to eat Patroclus continues to make a concerted effort to
include Briseis in their conversations but at every turn Achilles competes to maintain sole possession of his attention like he is the quaffle and this is some kind of quidditch match.

Briseis asks a question about the Potions homework—

“—Let me tell you about this other move I pulled off in practice.” Achilles cuts in.

Briseis offers a piece of her baklava—

—Achilles tugs on Patroclus’ arm.

Briseis tries to tell Patroclus the rumors about Jason and their Potions professor—

“—Watch this!” Achilles closes his eyes and tosses an olive high into the air and catches it in his open mouth.

Patroclus begins to turn towards Briseis—

—A hand on his shoulder. “Did you hear about the student who managed to turn themselves green in Transfiguration?”

On and on it goes and all the while Briseis gives him a meaningful look from under the shade of her dark blinking lashes basically singing out: “I told you so.”

~ o ~ o ~

“What do you think of Briseis?” Patroclus asks the following day as they hover on the academy issued brooms that are used to teach them the basics of flying.

Jason is distracted, chasing down two students who have begun to float off with panicked cries and wide eyes.

Achilles pulls to a hard stop from the idle orbit he’d been circling around Patroclus. “Who?”

The retort startles Patroclus. “Briseis, the girl who eats with us every meal—my friend.”

Achilles frowns. “I know who she is.” His words are not harsh or angry but they are clipped.

“Oh,” Patroclus replies, starting to feel his nerve ebb away from him.

He kicks his broom higher, rising above Achilles and then whipping himself into a few lazy, whirling, spirals floating back towards Achilles like a falling autumn leaf. Flying, surprisingly, was something that came rather naturally to Patroclus once he overcame the initial terror of being so high up with nothing holding him aloft but a haft of magical wood. He enjoys flying, he likes the rush of wind and the sense of boundless freedom that comes with it. He tries to focus on that feeling now.

“What about Briseis?” Achilles asks when they are level with one another again.

“What do you think of her?” He asks, not knowing what it was he had expected from this conversation and forgetting the speech he had planned.

“What do I think of her?” Achilles sounds incredulous.

“Yeah,” Patroclus shrugs, looking down at the ground.
Achilles floats closer and his voice is a little lower and he almost grudgingly replies. “She’s…nice—I suppose.”

Patroclus looks up and the confusion is heavy and strange on Achilles’ perfectly symmetrical features.


“She’s my friend…” Patroclus continues dumbly. “She was kind to me when no one else would even look at me—”

“—I was looking.” Achilles cuts in quickly. “From the first day, at the Culling.”

Patroclus tries to will the pleased flush from coming to his face as it so often does around his new friend. Achilles had told him about watching him during the Culling and clapping for him when most had not even noticed.

“I know, but I didn’t know that then.” Patroclus soothes. “Briseis helped me find my textbooks, she sat with me on the ship. I would’ve been alone if it weren’t for her.”

Achilles is silent for several breaths that feel like the plodding stretch of eternity. “Okay…” Achilles concedes reluctantly. “I am glad she has been a good friend to you.” It is an honest reply but Patroclus can still feel the strain in those words like they are being forcibly yanked from Achilles.

Patroclus pushes forward before he loses his nerve or he loses Achilles’ complaisance. “The point is…you sort of…ignore her when we’re together.”

The confusion returns. “When do we ever hang out with her?”

“That’s kind of my point,” Patroclus alludes. “But when the three of us are eating or if we’re in the library you act like she isn’t even there.”

Achilles purses and quirks his lips to one side and looks away from him. “I…I suppose I haven’t really paid attention.” He concedes.

They are spinning around one another in a slow revolution, facing one another, the tips of their brooms almost touching.

“You’re my friend and she’s my friend too,” Patroclus says. “It’d mean a lot to me if you both got along.”

“You want me to be friends with her too.”

“That would be awesome but you don’t have to be friends with anyone you don’t want to be friends with.” Patroclus assures. “I’d just like it if you didn’t ignore her.”

“I’m not ignoring her.” Achilles retorts sheepishly. “I just—didn’t really notice.”

Patroclus smiles at him and feels so incredibly lucky to have Achilles who is so devoted in his friendship Patroclus and Briseis who valued her friendship with him enough to care that he had become so absorbed in Achilles.

“Can you just notice a little more,” he asks softly. “Please?”

Achilles looks up and nods, his smile still somewhat sheepish but a smile nonetheless.
“Thanks,”

“Hey!” Jason hollers up at them as he returns with the wayward students he had been rustling up. “I said to stay below the towers, you two!”

Patroclus startles and looks down and realizes that they had been drifting upwards as they spoke.

“Just because you’re on the quidditch team doesn’t mean you get to blow off the rules of this class, Achilles! And, Patroclus, I thought you’d have more sense! Ten points from Boreas!” Their flying instructor glares around the entire class. “Back to the ground, the lot of you, I swear some of you are going to make me go grey!”

Achilles smirks, all signs of their tense conversation washed from his face. “Race you to the bottom?”

Patroclus answers his smirk with one of his own and nods.

Without another word, Achilles swan dives backward on his broom and zooms toward the grassy field below. Feeling strangely brave, Patroclus follows. He doesn’t copy the move, he’s nowhere near good enough for that. But he tips the nose of his broom down, tightens his grip on the haft, squeezes his thighs together, pushes his feet into the stirrups, and dives after his friend in a rush. Achilles beats him, as always, but the exhilaration is still intoxicating.

“What the hell!” Jason shouts, darting down to them. He pulls up right in front of Patroclus. “I thought you’d never flown before?” He demands.

Patroclus doesn’t know what to do with his flying instructor’s sudden scrutiny. “I hadn’t seen a broom until I got to Pelion, sir.” He answers.

“And you can just pull off a dive like that!?” Jason continues.

Patroclus can only stare.

“Why didn’t you try out for quidditch?”

“I’ve never played.”

Jason looks like he doesn’t believe him.

“He’s telling the truth.” Achilles assures.

Jason throws his hands up and slips off of his own broom grousing. “I better see you out there next term.”

Patroclus feels at a loss and looks to Achilles who only snickers and tosses an arm around his shoulder. “Guess you’re gonna need a broom.”

~ o ~ o ~

“Good morning, Briseis,” Achilles says, pleasantly the next day as they are seating themselves at the Boreas table. “How are you?”

Briseis’ head snaps around and she gapes just a bit. “Uh, fine…Achilles. How are you?”

“I am well,” he grabs a slice of bread and begins spreading butter on it. “How are you liking your classes?”
Patroclus watches with open interest and barely contained laughter. A couple of months ago he would have seen Achilles’ behavior as perfectly affable and even charming. Now that he has seen the perfect features of his face crack open and shine like gold being liberated from stone when he smiles and laughs, he sees it for just how formal and distant it is. It is the way he looks at everyone—except for Patroclus.

When they are walking to their next class Patroclus bumps his shoulder into Achilles’. “Thanks,” he whispers.

Achilles says nothing, he just nudges him back.

Things between Briseis and Achilles thaws a bit after that. They don’t become friends, not even close, but they can exist in the same space without the oil and water separation that they had held before. Achilles still jostles for Patroclus’ attention more often than not and Briseis takes to treating Achilles with a sort of indulgent exasperation.

It feels like a victory.

Patroclus still spends the majority of his time with Achilles and Briseis still has Esma and Chryseis who she has known since childhood. But when they sit together for meals or study in the library there is something close to a companionable conversation between them all. Close if not quite there.

It is enough for Patroclus. He had never thought to have more.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Forsaken but Not Forgotten

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/182720023206/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-8-azuldemon
Year 1: Forsaken but Not Forgotten

Chapter Summary

The Christmas Holiday is not the joyous occasion for Patroclus that it is for so many others.

Chapter Notes

So...it happened. I'm late for my posting deadline. I'm honestly a little surprised I kept my streak going as long as I did. But better late than never, eh? Sorry for the deal but I hope you enjoy the latest chapter.

When the Christmas holiday arrives, it is a sudden thing. Patroclus hadn’t thought much about it, caught up in his studies and his newfound friendship with Achilles. He had given no thought to the approaching holiday that would grant them leave to return to their homes and families.

It strikes him while Achilles is packing a bag.

“What are you packing for?” Patroclus asks, the connection still not made.

Achilles removes his Potions text from the bag before glaring at it and setting it on his bed. “The Christmas holiday,” he answers easily, taking his Transfiguration text out to join the Potions book.

The realization settles into Patroclus, a bitter tonic that is thick and slimy. It pools in his belly and solidifies into stone. He says nothing to Achilles, leaving him to his packing.

His feet carry him over to the Rookery where he calls for Skops. The tawny hoots from up among the weave of rafters and his fellow owls and flaps down to land on Patroclus’ outstretched arm tilting his head to the side and waiting for a scratch that Patroclus provides absently. Patroclus bites his lip and slips a letter into the carrying case on the bird’s leg.

He walks to one of the tall arching windows.

“To my father,” he whispers, hefting his arm and launching Skops to flight. He watches his owl go until he vanishes on the horizon.

~ o ~ o ~

“Circe and her siblings were among the most powerful magic users of their era.” Professor Nestor, lectures. “At the time, the Olympians were the elite of the magical world and believed in only pureblood witches and wizards being trained.”

“Where did you go?” Achilles asks in a soft whisper and leaning in close.

Patroclus doesn’t look at him. He keeps his eyes on his parchment and the black scrawl of his
notes. “The Rookery,”

“At that time, magical training was done only by apprenticeship. Magical families vied for favor and power by exchanging their children to be mentored by other powerful families. Circe was the first to train witches and wizards from none magical families or those born from the mixed unions between magic users and muggles. She was persecuted for this practice and was exiled to this very island. But her students followed and she established the Pelion Academy of Magic.”

“Why didn’t you tell me you were going?” Achilles continues, completely disengaged from the lesson. “I would’ve gone with you.”

Patroclus knows that he would have. That was exactly why he hadn’t said anything to him. He only shrugs in response.

“What’s wrong?” Achilles presses, observant as always. It is strange, in the span of a couple of months, it feels as though Achilles knows him better than anyone ever has.

“Nothing.”

“This was the first time students had been trained in class and lecture formate. This angered the Olympians who attempted to put an end to the Pelion Academy of Magic. This led to Circe casting a series of incredibly powerful enchantments to protect Aeaea from any who would seek to do the island, the academy, or its students harm. Those spells remain intact to this day, passed down and preserved from each headmaster to the next.”


Patroclus stabs his reed pen into the grainy parchment, the nib bleeds black and soaks the paper in shadow. “I don’t think I’ll be going home for the holiday.” He manages to croak out.

“What? Why?”

“My father wouldn’t want me to return home.” Patroclus hates saying it out loud.

Achilles’ dismay is palpable. “You wrote to him?”

Patroclus nods. “He won’t write back.”

“He might,” Achilles ventures.

“He hasn’t replied to a single letter I’ve sent all year.”

Achilles’ fists clench atop the table. “He will write back.”

Patroclus bites his lower lip.

“And if he doesn’t write back he’s an idiot.”

Patroclus smiles at him, trying to feel as sure as Achilles and failing miserably.

~ 0 ~ 0 ~

His father never writes back.

It doesn’t surprise Patroclus but it still stings.
Many emotions whirl across the landscape of Achilles’ face that day as he is set to board *Circe’s Loom* and return to the Port of Piraeus.

He looks angry.

He looks sad.

He looks lost.

He hitches his backpack higher on his shoulder and looks down at his feet. “I’d invite you over to my place but I’ve got Christmas with my mother this year and…it just wouldn’t be a good idea.”

It is strange how their parents loom over them like silent, glaring giants.

“It’s okay,” Patroclus is quick to assure. “Think of all the reading I’ll be able to get done. Maybe Jason will let me use a broom to practice my flying.”

Achilles’ eyes narrow, seeing the words for the feint they are.

“I wish you’d told us sooner,” Briseis chimes in. “I could’ve asked my family if you could come with us on our trip to Turkey for the holiday.”

That his friends are so concerned for him and even entertained the thought of inviting him into their homes and families feels like a gift. Patroclus still isn’t quite sure how to handle being wanted by others. He tells himself to be thankful and to be content with what he has.

“I’ll be fine, you guys.” He drudges up the warm feelings that Achilles and Briseis inspire within him and puts it into his next smile. This one seems to do a better job than the last. “Go, before they leave you behind.”

He can see the idea blooming bud-bright in Achilles’ eyes.

“Don’t even think about it.” He scolds the other boy with a playful shove to his shoulder.

Achilles grumbles something inaudible under his breath.

Briseis giggles.

She throws her arms around him in a brief hug. It is the first time in a very long time that Patroclus can remember anyone hugging him. He squeezes her a bit tight but she doesn’t complain. She steps away with an unflappable smile and a promise to write.

Achilles waves and the two of them march down to join the swarm of other students. It is strange, seeing them leave together, he isn’t used to seeing them together without him. Achilles is halfway down the steps when he freezes and spins on his heel and sprints back up the stairs. His teeth are clenched, the muscles bulging along the marble cut of his jaw.

“Achilles, what—”

The other boy slams into him in a bearhug that knocks a grunt out of Patroclus. Patroclus remains frozen for an instant before clinging back.

They say nothing.

They breathe together once…
Twice…

Three times…

When Achilles pulls away Patroclus thinks he sees a hint of red on his cheeks but can’t be sure. Achilles doesn’t look back and rushes back down the stairs.

Patroclus can only stare at the retreating backs of his friends, his limbs stiffened to rust. He can feel the lingering warmth of Achilles as it dwindles from his body like steam from a neglected cup of tea.

~ o ~ o ~

Patroclus haunts the mansion grounds like a ghost cursed to aimlessly roam.

He tries to go out into the nature of Aeaea but it feels different without Achilles. The island’s weather does not help. The temperature cools but does not become truly cold. The change in temperature brings with it the relentless rains that pour from above in hissing curtains of water. Storm clouds brew out over the sea and then tumble in to crackle and boom above the island. It is because of these winter storms that Jason forbids Patroclus the use of the academy brooms.

There are other students who have remained at the academy but Patroclus does not speak with them nor they to him. He feels rich with the two friends he managed to make and does not believe that he can realistically balance more than that. Patroclus is also unsure if Achilles could tolerate more competition for his attention.

In the first week of his solitude, Patroclus only manages to read but even that begins to lose its appeal after a couple of days. He practices spells and the allure of magic, the way it hums in his veins when he successfully casts, helps some. But the spells also frustrate him because every one of them feels like it must be rived from his bones.

He is wandering the gardens when he almost walks right into Professor Daphne who is carrying two large pots of flowers. He pulls up short and stammers an apology.

“Patroclus,” Professor Daphne calls before he walks away from her. “Would you be so kind as to help me with transplanting these pots of moly?”

Patroclus nods and retrieves two pots of the black-stemmed flowers himself and follows after her.

“Thank you,” she says once they have hauled the lot of flowers to the patch of tilled earth she has prepared. “There is a break in the weather and I’d like to get them planted before the rains return.”

“No problem, Professor,” Patroclus assures and follows her as she kneels to begin digging places for the flowers in the soft, dark soil.

“Moly loves the cool winter rains,” Professor Daphne explains. “I had hoped to transplant this batch before the holiday but it seems I’ve forgotten how the term flows while I was away.”

“It snuck up on me too,” Patroclus confesses, working one of the plants free of its pot. “This island is like a whole other world.”

The professor looks up from the hole she is digging and smiles. “Yes, I suppose it is.”

As they work Professor Daphne lectures him on the properties of moly and how to properly care for it. Patroclus soaks it up like the earth of Aeaea soaks up the winter rains.
“Aeaea is one of the places in the world where moly grows best. Truth be told, it grows in the wild very nicely here but there is always room for optimization.”

Moly, Patroclus learns, is a powerful herb that can undo many curses simply by being eaten. It is a key ingredient in many healing potions as well. Patroclus enjoys the steady work with the plants, enjoys the feel of dirt between his fingers. It feels good to help something grow.

He joins Professor Daphne daily after that to assist her with the care of the plants in her charge but she too leaves the academy the day before Christmas Eve returning Patroclus to his reading and mindless amblings.

~ o ~ o ~

The morning of Christmas Eve, when Patroclus is seated in the Hall of Winds for his breakfast, a great eagle owl swoops in dropping a long package right in front of him with a clatter of plates and silverware. Patroclus stares at the parcel wrapped in crisp brown paper in confusion. It is the first package he has ever received by owl and he is highly certain that there has been some mistake. He peers at it as if it is a snake that might come to life and strike him. But there is a card attached to it and writ along the envelope in large black letters is his name.

He opens the card and to reveal a message written in Achilles’ sweeping, elegant script.

Merry Christmas, Patroclus!

Now you can keep up.

I miss you.

Your Best Friend,

Achilles

Nothing more.

His eyes prick and well up.

I miss you.

Your Best Friend.

Those six words are as powerful as any spell, enchanting him. They scorch him to his core.

When he has recovered, he tears at the paper slowly and is shocked to see the smooth wooden shaft of a broom beneath it all. Starsweeper XXI is inlaid in silver near the tip. It is the same broom that Achilles rides. It is the single most expensive, thoughtful, and amazing gift Patroclus has ever received. He is almost sick with the fluxes and swells of emotion.

Before he can recover, another owl flies in and drops yet another packaged in front of Patroclus. It is much smaller but no less surprising. Again, there is a card that addresses the package to him.

Happy Yuletide, Patroclus!

I hope you enjoy the gift and that it will give you something to read that isn’t a textbook over the holiday.

See you in a few weeks!
Always,

Briseis

Something grows and knots in Patroclus’ throat.

He peels back the bright paper that is decorated with stars and crescent moons. Beneath is a book, the cover is etched with the face of a woman with golden eyes and aquiline features. It is titled, *Circe: The Life and History of Greece’s Most Influential Witch*.

Patroclus cannot swallow past the knot in his throat. He cannot breathe around it. His ears ring.

“You look as though you’ve eaten an urchin flavored Bertie Bott’s Every Flavored Bean.” A mahogany-rich voice pours down upon him.

Patroclus remembers he can, in fact, breathe and rubs his eyes fiercely.

“Headmaster Chiron,” he squeaks.

The Centaur chuckles, his body transfigured into human form. “No need for such formalities on holiday, Patroclus.”

“Not sure I can do that, Professor,” Patroclus replies honestly.

Chiron continues to find Patroclus a great source of humor and takes a seat beside him on the bench. “What has you troubled?”

Patroclus decides he must be supremely obvious with his feelings, everyone seems to be able to read him. He gestures to the gifts from Achilles and Briseis.

Chiron whistles. “A Starsweep, that is a kingly gift. Achilles?”

Patroclus nods. “I’ve never gotten a gift before—a real gift I mean. I’ve gotten mandatory gifts for parties or from people trying to impress my father but I’ve never gotten a gift because someone wanted to do something nice for me.”

The lines around Chiron’s eyes crinkle like parchment set to burning as he casts a fatherly smile down on him. “And now you have received not one but two.”

Patroclus nods once more.

“And it is overwhelming.”

“I didn’t even think…” Patroclus does not finish and Chiron holds the silence. “I didn’t get them anything.” He whispers it, afraid the guilt will consume him. “And now I don’t think I can.”

Chiron maintains his patient silence.

It is not a matter of money. It is a matter of access. He has no idea how to get a gift or where to get it from, not while he is stuck at the academy.

“Professor, is there something like Amazon in the magical world?” Patroclus asks, hopeful with the idea.

Chiron frowns. “That Amazons?”
Patroclus shakes his head. “It’s a website—on the internet.”

Chiron’s frown twists, etching confusion onto his face.

“Erm…” Patroclus labors to think of a way to explain the muggle website without getting bogged down in trying to define the internet. “It is a way to buy things like gifts and they deliver them to you—or your friends.”

Chiron finally nods and hums in understanding. “I am sorry, Patroclus, but we do not have such a…service. The best way to get gifts is to go to the Agora and purchase one. Most stores can send your parcel by owl to whomever you desire.”

Patroclus slumps, deflating with the loss of the only idea he’d had.

“But there are many ways to give a gift,” Chiron adds, his smile warm and fatherly in a way that Patroclus’ own father’s has never been.

~ o ~ o ~

Patroclus is waiting at the top of the marble steps when Achilles and Briseis return. Achilles is the first to reach him, rushing up to him after landing outside the main courtyard, his face is split with a smile and his eyes are fixed upon him. For some strange reason, Patroclus is a bit terrified that Achilles is going to hug him again. He holds out a box wrapped in what was left of the brown parchment his broom was wrapped in, hoping it will stop Achilles and preoccupy him.

Achilles pulls to a halt right in front of him, eyes going to the gift.

“What’s this?” He asks.

Patroclus feels excited and anxious all at once, it skitters along his skin like a million busy ants. “Open it.”

Achilles doesn’t wait. He rips the paper off and opens up the lid of the box beneath. He pulls out the wooden carving, notched and bumpy. It now looks clumsy and misshapen to Patroclus’ self-conscious gaze. “It’s you…on a broom…”

Achilles looks up and grins, eyes bright with pleasure. “I know.”

“I figured…since you’re gonna be the star quidditch player…”

“It’s amazing. Thank you, Patroclus.”

The shiver that always follows Achilles saying his name blows through him.

Chiron had been kind enough to teach him how to carve, which turns out to be a favored pastime of the headmaster’s. He had been steady and patient with Patroclus in his efforts, demonstrating the masterful teacher that the centaur was. The carving had given Patroclus something to do with the idle hours that made up the holiday as well as provide a solution for a last minute gift.

He had nicked his fingers with the blade more than once and Chiron had been forced to give him a phial of Essence of Dittany so he could quickly mend the frequent cuts. He had bled onto the carving at one point, the olive wood soaking up the blood and darkening into a deep blotch. He can see that spot now and cringes, his hate of this idea a bile that boils inside of him.

“Thanks for the broom…” Patroclus manages to get out. “You really didn’t have to.”
“I wanted to,” Achilles assures quickly and enthusiastically.

“Patroclus,” Briseis greets, coming up beside Achilles. “How was your holiday?”

“Oh,” Patroclus turns and scoops up the bouquet of flowers from the floor. “For you. Merry Christmas, and thank you for my book.”

Achilles frowns between them, his expression confuses Patroclus.

“Aw,” she dips her nose to the petals and inhales. “They’re beautiful. Thank you.”

“Professor Daphne taught me a charm that will make them last longer,” Patroclus mutters.

“You picked those?” Achilles asks, inclining his head towards the flowers.

“Yeah…”

“You carved this yourself? No magic?” He holds up the carving.

Again, Patroclus nods, confused as to what Achilles is getting at.

“It must’ve taken you a long time.” Achilles murmurs as he turns it about and traces the marks left by the blade, his thumb rubbing into the stain left by Patroclus’ blood. In a pointed whisper, he adds: “Longer than it takes to pick some flowers.” His eyes slip over toward Briseis.

Briseis hears. It is not a very low whisper. She turns her head and screws her face up in both confusion and indignation.

“They’re lovely gifts, Patroclus,” she says, rather than engaging with Achilles.

Patroclus takes a breath. “I’ve never really had friends…no ones ever sent me presents before…I wasn’t sure—I mean they’re—”

“Perfect,” Achilles assures, his features soft once more.

“Truly,” Briseis adds.

Achilles’ face opens into an expression of distilled excitement. “Get your broom!”

Patroclus nods and makes to follow before stalling and looking to Briseis. The girl only shakes her head fondly. “Go on,” she smiles down into her flowers and walks off towards Boreas Tower.

Achilles is looking at him eagerly when he turns back. “C’mon, let’s fly!”

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: The Cyclops

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/182902093781/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-9-azuldemon
Year 1: The Cyclops

Chapter Summary

Quidditch, exams, and a cyclops. Patroclus' first year at the Pelion Academy of Magic goes out with a bang!

Chapter Notes

Agh! So sorry for the long delay! But it's an extra long chapter so hopefully, that makes up for it!

IMPORTANT NOTE: This fic will be taking a brief break while I take some time to write out several of the following chapters to get ahead and ensure that I can get back onto a regular posting schedule. Give me about four weeks and we will be back to our regularly scheduled programming. Thanks for your patience, kudos, comments, and support! I seriously cannot thank you all enough.

“ARISTOS ACHAION!!!” The crowd roars in a sudden, crashing boom when Achilles scores yet another goal.

As one, all those gathered in the stands rise up. Hands lift into the air, cheers, shouts, and whistles follow. It is deafening and Patroclus can feel it drumming through him with the force of a volcanic eruption.

Across the field, Achilles zooms past, lifting his hand in a cocksure two-fingered salute at his adoring fans. Irrationally, Patroclus thinks that those leaf-green eyes find him among the throng, that their eyes meet among the pulsing masses.

It is a silly thought that he shakes back.

Upon the pitch Achilles is swift as a swooping sparrow; deadly as a coiled asp; fierce as a lion at hunt and thrice the player of anyone else. He weaves through the chaos of the game with such effortless grace and ease that none seem able to even come close to matching.

Odysseus, the Eurus keeper and captain, darts among the rings hollering at his teammates angrily. Eurus is the defending champion from last year, and it is all due to the strategic brilliance of their captain.

At Odysseus’ instruction, the Eurus beaters move into a pincer formation, savagely ping-ponging both of the bludgers between them and zipping towards Achilles as he flies straight for the Eurus goal posts.

Patroclus’ fingernails rake anxious streaks against his thighs as he watches.
The destructive enchanted spheres of iron are batted one after the other at Achilles who seems to be coming at them head on either uncaring or unwittingly.

“Uh, oh,” Helen, the student quidditch commentator, echoes from her place in the stands. “Looks like those bludgers have got Achilles in their sights. This is the same maneuver that helped remove Boreas’ first string of chasers from last years final.”

The crowd gasps collectively, sharp and bated.

“Where are team Boreas’ beaters?” Helen wonders aloud, giving voice to the crowds worries. “Does this guy have a death wish!”

At the last possible instant Achilles banks to his left missing the first bludger. He continues onward like a spear thrust toward the goal posts. The second bludger is curving towards Achilles as though it had anticipated that he would dodge its companion.

“Agitating the two bludgers to the point of rage and then launching them at a target so that they hone in on that target like blood flies is a dirty—but clever tactic.” The Notus student notes, her own voice always pitched just right, tuned somehow to mimic the mood of the crowd.

Achilles doesn’t even look at the bludger, he corkscrews tightly, narrowly dodging the second attack before kicking up even more speed.

“Malaka!” Odysseus curses loud enough to be heard as Achilles continues onward. The third-year bobs nimbly side to side trying to anticipate Achilles’ trajectory.

Achilles grins and it is a knife-edged, raptorial thing. He is the hawk and Odysseus is the mouse and the keeper knows it. Achilles skids to the right and Odysseus follows. But Achilles does not toss it at the goal he is driving towards, he tosses it straight up instead.

“What the—” Helen breathes.

Achilles pulls hard on the shaft of his broom flipping backward and hitting the quaffle with the tail of his broom and shooting it into the center goal, clean and easy as a needle through silk.

“That’s two hundred points for Boreas!” Helen shouts.

The crowd goes absolutely insane.

“ARISTOS ACHAION!!!”

Feet stomp at the wooden floor of the stands and the entire structure rumbles as tough Atlas were shaking the world from his shoulders.

“All right, folks,” Helen cuts in. “It looks like it’s all up to Eurus’ rookie seeker, Penelope, to bail out her team. Does she got what it takes to take on the seasoned Icarus from team Boreas?” Helen draws the crowd along with her like they are the cat and she the holder of the trailing length of yarn. “Of course she does! She’s my cousin, after all, and she is lovely, graceful, and cunning!”

This bit of well-placed bias extracts laughter from the crowd like water from a spile.

Patroclus’ eyes crawl up above the fray of players where the two seekers are each hoping to catch sight of the golden snitch. Penelope is stone-still upon her broom, her ash-brown hair braided
tightly behind her back, and her eyes moving steadily over the expanse of the pitch. If she is affected or pressured by her team’s predicament she does not show it.

In comparison, the Boreas seeker, Icarus, looks jittery. His head and eyes seem to be darting in all directions at once with the erratic cadence of a frenzied bee. His fingers drum against the wood of his broom, his wild energy only barely contained.

“And another ten points by Achilles!” Helen announces. “It looks like all Odysseus’ planning is no match for the Boy Who Was Promised, this guy is unstoppable!”

Up above Penelope’s head jerks and all at once she is falling, a star plunging to earth, braid whipping out behind her.

“Penelope’s caught sight of the snitch!” Helen crows. “Look at this rookie go! Go get it cuz!”

“ÉLA!” Some of the students from Boreas Tower cry out at the announcer’s favoritism.

Helen continues on as though she does not hear the complaint. “Icarus seems to have caught sight too and—wow that guy is either brave or an idiot.”

Icarus has begun to dive after Penelope and to make up for his lost time he has gone into a completely vertical dive, feet hooking behind his stirrups to try and keep him on his broom. Patroclus can see that his butt is lifting up and up and he is in serious danger of tumbling ass over head off of his broom.

“Achilles has possession of the quaffle again!” Helen informs excitedly, somehow able to follow everything that is happening all at once, and stoking the anticipation to blaze.

Penelope does not look behind her, she only has eyes for the zipping line of gold fleeing from her. The snitch is flying dangerously close to the ground and Penelope times her flight perfectly, coming up just above the grass.

“Eww! Icarus is down and that had to hurt!”

Icarus’ feet lose their hold and he tumbles off of his broom and flops hard onto his back onto the grass below. Healer Chryses is already jogging onto the pitch to attend to him but the game does not so much as pause.

Penelope goads her broom, zipping even faster, her arm extending.

“Achilles is at the goal!”

Penelope’s fingers flex.

“Score for Boreas!”

Her fingers close around the snitch and she thrusts her fist into the air to show it.

“And Penelope’s caught the golden snitch!” Helen booms. “That’s it. Boreas wins the Pelion Quidditch cup by ten points! It’s all thanks to their newest chaser. What a close match! Better luck next year, Eurus!”

“ARISTOS ACAION!!!”
The crowd of spectating students and faculty rushes down to the field as the teams land and goes through the customary handshakes between the opposing teams. Patroclus trundles along with the flow of bodies as it pulls him down the wooden steps and spills him out onto the pitch. The crowd of surges like a herd of buffalo frenzied to charge when they catch sight of Achilles.

Cheers of: “BOREAS!” And “ACHILLES!” Break out as even many of the opposing towers take up the chant.

They seize Achilles, greedy as goblins for the sunshine-glow of him, and hoist him up onto shoulders.

Their fervor unnerves Patroclus.

That smile that blooms all the way up into Achilles’ eyes breaks out and it is the first time that that smile has not been directed at Patroclus in a long while. Achilles is ruddy-cheeked with the bite of the wind and a few hanks of his hair have escaped the knot he had tied it into and stick to his face with a fine sheen of sweat. He is radiant. He looks like he is wholly in his element. A beloved king among his subjects.

Patroclus stands back and watches. There is a pain in it, watching him be so elated and free among their peers, but there is also something amazing about it—something wild and beautiful.

Achilles turns and their eyes connect across the expanse. His beaming smile spreads wider. Patroclus’ own smile answers of its own accord.

Achilles’ mouth moves and Patroclus cannot hear the word over the din but he knows the shape of Achilles’ mouth as it forms around each syllable.

Pat-ro-clus.

He jerks his head in an invitation to follow before he is tossed clumsily up into the air laughing by the crowd and then carried off back towards the academy, likely for a celebration in the Boreas Common room. Patroclus follows without truly following. He doesn’t feel like he belongs in that world so he lets his feet carry him out into the forest. They lead him to their glade without him even thinking about it.

He makes his way to the large stone overlooking the pond and climbs atop of it. He crosses his legs and feet beneath him and stares into the crystal clear waters. He realizes just how much he is going to miss this place—miss Aeaea and Pelion. The summer is fast approaching and with it, he will be returning home.

He will be returning home to a place where he is not wanted. He will leave this island with all its wonders. He will leave Achilles and Briseis, the only friends that he has ever had.

An emptiness aches inside of him, an emptiness that has lived at the center of him since his mother became as she is now. It had been filled with Achilles’ nectarous laugh and easy touches; filled with Briseis’ teasing wit and soulful eyes. That hole had shrunk and its ache had dulled but he feels it now as a cramping, straining thing. He finds himself wishing he could drown it into those crystal waters or purge it like bile.

He had worked up the courage to ask Chiron if there was any way for him to remain at Pelion over the summer but the headmaster had only looked at him mournfully and informed him that this wasn’t possible. He told him that they had to respect Patroclus’ father’s parental rights. It had something to do with maintaining balance with the muggle world. Patroclus had known that would
be the answer but he had had to try anyway. He had hoped despite himself.

He doesn’t know what awaits him when he returns to his father’s home. It scares him.

“There you are,” a familiar voice drifts over to him. “I knew I’d find you here.”

Patroclus turns and sees Achilles strolling out of the thicket. He is still in his quidditch tunic looking disheveled and pleased. He climbs up onto the boulder next to Patroclus.

“I looked for you,” he says, voice quiet.

“Sorry,” Patroclus replies, eyes back on the water. “I just sort of—” he gestures to their glade inarticulately. Guilt rises in Patroclus in a sloshing geyser. “I didn’t mean to take you from your party.”

“Not much of a party without you,” Achilles answers and the easy honesty of it prickles. His eyes go to the water as well. “I had my fill.”

They are silent, long since comfortable in the quiet together. When they are not playing some game, racing, climbing, or swimming they are sitting here. Sometimes Achilles plays Patroclus’ mother’s violin while Patroclus carves at a piece of wood. Patroclus finds himself wishing for Achilles’ music now and his own fingers itching for wood and knife.

Somehow Achilles reads his mind like always.

He starts to sing.

“If our voices could reach the edge of the world and time

Rather than fading into the air like dust

We could make a promise that would never die.

We could say it together on the count of three—”

The sublime sound of his voice is lacerated by a heavy rumble and a sharp crack. Birds explode into the afternoon sky with shrill shrieks. Both of their heads jerk up, the song unraveling and dying upon the wind.

Achilles stands, every part of him taut and tense like a bowstring.

Patroclus crawls into a crouch at his feet, unsure of what to do.

Achilles’ eyes narrow into slits. He slips his wand from the pocket of his trousers.

Patroclus thinks about his own wand but his hand doesn’t move. He feels stiff as brittle wood.

Nothing happens.

Then another crack.

More bird cries.

Achilles’ fingers tighten and then loosen on the smooth ash of his wand.

A hulking shadow emerges from the tree line, its steps elephantine and shambling in its gait. Its
skin is a pasty gray, warded, and knotted hide that is stretched over bulging, bumpy muscles. Its size and shape are horrifying but what is truly startling about the monster is the single massive eye embedded in the center of its forehead.

That eye is swirling around, taking in the glade. Almost immediately it halts and zones in on them. Wide nostrils flare before huffing out a spray of snot. The creature growls from deep within its chest, a grinding of great stones.

“Is that a cyclops?” Patroclus breathes.

“I think so,” Achilles answers.

“What’s it doing here?” Patroclus asks. “Are they…are they, uh, native?”

“I don’t think so…” Achilles brings his wand up.

Patroclus has never seen him brandish it like this before. Achilles slides one foot backward his free hand floating palm-down behind him while the spearpoint of his wand takes aim at the cyclops.

Patroclus holds his breath.

The cyclops rolls out another growling grumble. It stomps a foot into the turf like a meaty mallet before yelling out up at the sky and charging towards them.

Patroclus scrambles to his feet, stumbling backward with frantic desperation.

“Flipendo!” Achilles cries out as his wand swoops and waves.

A blue bolt flies from his wand and into the monster. It’s a knockback jink, it’s a simple spell and by all rights shouldn’t even affect something of this size, but to Patroclus’ astonishment the cyclops jerks to a halt and shakes its head.

“Run!” Achilles shouts, grabbing Patroclus by the hand and tugging him off of the boulder as he leaps from it.

Patroclus is clumsy in his flight but all the time he’s spent running around the island with Achilles seems to have paid off because he stays a pace behind the other boy.

Achilles doesn’t let go of Patroclus’ hand.

The ground rumbles as the cyclops rushes after them, barely deterred by Achilles’ spell. If anything, the monster seems more determined.

Fear claws at the inside of Patroclus’ chest like a wild animal, caged and frenzied.

A forest root reaches up catches Patroclus’ foot and drags him down. One of his hands shoots forward to break his fall while Achilles holds tight to the other, stumbling backward himself but managing to keep his feet.

Achilles pulls, Patroclus pushes and then they are running again.

Achilles ushers them both behind the trunk of a tree, Patroclus’ back to the trunk and Achilles’ chest to Patroclus’. Patroclus is panting but Achilles’ breathes, while deep, are steady.

Patroclus tries to match those breaths.
Frustrated growls rebound off the trees, hefty fists pound at trunks as the cyclops searches for its prey.

Achilles brings a finger to his lips, commanding silence, his eyes fixed on Patroclus’. He leans his head out to the side to peer around their flimsy hiding place. Patroclus realizes that his hands are clutching Achilles’ side so hard it must hurt the other boy but he doesn’t so much as flinch.

Achilles darts back to face him and inclines his head in so close that his mouth is right against Patroclus’ ear.

“It’s hunting for us,” he informs in little more than a breath. “I have an idea. I’m going to leave you here—”

Patroclus’ fingers spasm hard into Achilles’ skin.

“I’m not going far. But I need you to blind it, Patroclus. Use *Lumos Maxima.*”

Patroclus starts to shake his head violently, the bark of the tree scratches at his scalp.

“You can do it,” Achilles hisses. “You have to.”

Panic shudders through him. He can perform the standard wand lighting charm and he has been practicing the more advanced form of the spell with Achilles but he has yet to master it. How is he supposed to perform it now, while facing down an actual monster?

“I have a plan but I need time. You have to give me that time.” He peeks around the tree once more and pulls away from Patroclus, prying Patroclus’ fingers from the fabric of his quidditch tunic. He doesn’t release Patroclus’ hands just yet. “Count to one hundred and then aim for its eye. It’s a big target.” He squeezes Patroclus’ fingers. “I believe in you.”

He lets go. Then he is gone. Flitting from tree to tree like a shadow while the cyclops continues its angry rampage. Patroclus presses himself back harder against the tree as if to push himself inside of it. He counts without remembering deciding to do so. His eyes squeeze shut. He bites the inside of his cheek so hard he tastes the sharp tang of his own blood on his tongue.

A roar splits the air.

Involuntarily, Patroclus brings his palms to his ears. He losses the count and for a moment all that screams through his head is the absolute certainty that he is about to die.

*If I die, Achilles dies.*

He grinds his teeth so hard together he is afraid they are going to shatter under the pressure. He forces his hands down and away from his ears and with shaky hands, he reaches for his wand. His heart is pounding so heavily in his chest he is worried he might pass out. He calls to mind the incantation and the motion. He scrabbles for the magic inside of him.

Before he can talk himself out of it he tumbles out from behind the tree. He tugs his wand back in an arc before flicking it forward.

“*Lumos Maxima!***” He shouts.

Too late he realizes that the cyclops isn’t even facing him.

It doesn’t matter. The spell fizzes out and his wand barely twinkles.
The cyclops whirls at the sound of his voice, lips pulled back in a snarl over sallow teeth. That single eye fixed and glaring.

Patroclus gasps, his scream caught within his chest. He stumbles back a few paces as the cyclops charges.

Without thinking he is moving his wand in the motion again, a fisherman casting a line. “Lumos Maxima!”

This time his magic rushes up to meet him and it almost topples him forward. The tip of his wand ignites in brilliant white light and as he flicks the orb arches forward and flings right into the monsters eye.

The cyclops rears back and cries out at the canopy, knobby hands pressing into the eye as it wheels about wildly.

Patroclus is shocked at being able to cast the spell as well as utterly terrified and continues to walk backward, tripping on something and falling hard onto his back. It saves him from one of the cyclops’ hands swiping out over where he had been standing just a moment before.

The monster’s eye waters in steady rivulets that stream down its face as it blinks compulsively. It snarls and both arms begin searching out blindly for its prey.

“Hey!”

The cyclops whirs around to follow the sound.

Achilles!

“Bombardal!” Something slams into the cyclops and it growls out in anger and pain. “This way! Follow me!”

What the hell is Achilles doing? Patroclus wonders in panic.

The cyclops homes in on Achilles’ voice and charges blindly through the forest in pursuit. Patroclus pushes up onto his elbows and watches as trees, bushes, and shrubs are leveled as the monster barrels ahead.

Part of Patroclus demands that he get to his feet and run back toward the academy to get help. While the more rational part of himself, it is also the weakest. Instead, he gives in to the larger part that urges him on to follow and make sure that Achilles is all right.

He rushes along the cyclops’ trail of destruction until he comes to a meadow. Achilles stands on one side of the field and the cyclops on the other. Above them, huge rocks hover in the air above them.

“Come on!” Achilles taunts. “I’m right here!”

The cyclops howls in something that sounds like victory to Patroclus’ frightened ears.

“Achilles,” he pants.

“Here!” Achilles screams.

The cyclops rushes forward like a bull.
Achilles’ wand slashes through the air and the boulders begin to rain down. The first rock misses the cyclops landing behind it as it runs but the next falls in front of the monster and smashes its toe. It cries out in pain but is quickly silenced by yet another boulder crashing right down upon its head. It falls forward onto its belly only to be hit between the shoulder blades with yet another.

Patroclus’ mouth hangs open and he blinks like an idiot.

“Whoo!” Achilles whoops, jumping into the air and jabbing his wand into the sky. “Did you see that?”

When Patroclus does not answer Achilles’ face morphs into one of concern and he sprints across the field to him.

“Are you hurt,” he demands, hands examining Patroclus.

Patroclus shakes his head. “No…”

Achilles still looks worried and points his wand upwards. “Vermillious.” Red sparks jet upwards from the tip, illuminating the twilight sky.

“I’m fine,” Patroclus insists, putting a hand unconsciously to Achilles’ shoulder.

Achilles nods, “did you see that?”

“Yeah…that was…something.”

“I know!” Achilles’ eyes are burning with his excitement. “It was roaring and then the rocks were just all, ‘boom!’ We did it, Patroclus, we took down a cyclops!”

Patroclus whips his head side to side in an attempt to clear it. “We took down a cyclops?”

“Yeah, I wouldn’t have had time to set up the boulders without you and you blinded it. It was perfect!”

“I did?” Patroclus asks.

Achilles nods enthusiastically.

“I did.” He says more confidently and feels his chest lift a bit.

There are duel cracks and claps as Chiron and Professor Pythia spiral into existence in the field. Both have their wands out and look ready to hex something into the next century.

When the headmaster sees the cyclops he gasps out, “that can’t…”

Professor Pythia sees them and calls to Chiron and the two rush over to them.

“Patroclus, Achilles, are you both all right?” Chiron asks, his voice is hard but Patroclus can see the worry in his dark eyes.

“Yes, Headmaster,” they say in unison.

“Pythia, bind that cyclops before it wakes up.” Chiron commands.

Professor Pythia doesn’t waste a beat and turns, her wand flittering over the ground calling up thick roots to wind up and around the slumbering monster.
“What happened here?” Chiron demands. It is the closest to anger he has ever seen the headmaster and it is a bit frightening.

“We don’t know,” Achilles answers. “It came out of nowhere and attacked. We blinded it and then used the boulders to knock it out.”

Chiron nearly sputters. “You blinded it and knocked it out?”

Achilles nods, totally at ease with speaking to their headmaster like this isn’t the insane event that it is. “Well, Patroclus blinded it. I knocked it out with the boulders.”

Chiron’s head swivels from one boy to the next and Patroclus kind of wants to crawl into a hole and disappear.

There is the sound of feet slapping along the ground and someone shouts: “They’re here!”

Jason bursts from the tree line followed shortly by their Potions professor, Medea.

Chiron looks up. “Jason, Medea, excellent.”

“Jason, stand guard with Pythia over the cyclops.”

“Cyclops?” Jason blurts.

Professor Medea rolls her black pearl eyes at him.

“Yes, a cyclops.” Chiron replies, with a crispness that feels almost militant. “Medea, escort these young men up to my office for their own safety and questioning. Then send word to Professors Atlanta and Hippolyta to meet us here. The rest of the teachers are to gather the remaining students in the Hall of Winds until further notice. Keep it quiet.”

“Of course, Headmaster,” Professor Medea dips her head. She casts her cool gaze upon Patroclus and Achilles and gestures sharply. “You heard the headmaster.”

They file after the Professor Medea and her swishing red robes, both of them silent and Achilles looking decidedly less enthusiastic than he had been only moments before.

Professor Medea marches onward through the forest with her back ramrod straight and her strides severe. The Potions professor had never been the warmest of their instructors and, truth be told, she kind of terrified Patroclus. She was beautiful in a cutting way, her dark eyes always seeming to shine from within their kohl-shadowed depths. There were also a fair number of rumors that followed the Potions professor, linking her to a dramatic history with Jason, and others suggesting something much darker.

“So you managed to take on a cyclops,” Professor Medea hums, not looking back at them as her long strides carry her onward.

“Yeah,” Achilles brightens, with the prospect of repeating his heroics. “Patroclus blinded it and I levitated the boulders to drop them on it.”

“And you sent up the red flares…after you knocked it out?” Medea continues, her tone is still difficult to read but Patroclus feels nervous all of a sudden.

“Yeah,”

“Did you forget that spell?”
Achilles’ face twists in confusion. “Huh?”

“Well, I assumed you must have forgotten that spell since you did not use it immediately.”

“I…uh…no?” It is the first time Patroclus has seen Achilles at a loss for words.

Medea taps a red painted nail to her lips. “So you chose not to call for help and instead chose to fight a full-grown cyclops.”

Patroclus’ face tingles as he sees the snare that has been set and triggered.

“Yes, but—”

“The Boy Who was Promised decided to play at being hero.” Medea concludes.

Patroclus can see the fire of Achilles’ anger ignite. “I did it didn’t I?”

Medea’s head tilts back slightly as she barks a laugh. “Well, of course you did, you have a prophecy to fulfill.”

Patroclus has been watching closely enough that he thinks he can now see how their professor weaves her words to bait.

“But what of Patroclus?” She asks, startling them both.

“What of Patroclus?” Achilles demands.

“Does he have a prophecy about him?”

“No…” Achilles replies warily.

“So you decided risking his life was worth adding to your own glory.” Again, it isn’t a question but the hook sinking in and yanking tight.

This one hits Achilles and he stops in his tracks. “Patroclus…”

Professor Medea stops and turns. “You never stopped to consider what might happen to your friend?”

“I just thought…”

“No,” Medea cuts him off. “You didn’t think you acted on an impulse for glory and fame. You didn’t stop to think about the safety of your friend. It is one thing to put yourself in danger, Achilles, it is quite another to risk the lives of others.”

Achilles turns and looks at Patroclus, his expression stricken. “Patroclus, I’m sorry.”

“Hey,” Patroclus soothes, coming up beside him. “Halara, I didn’t send up sparks either. Your plan was amazing. It worked.”

“It seems you are both fools then.” Professor Medea sighs. “Forty points from Boreas. For each of you.”

~ o ~ o ~

All of Pelion is alight with fear and excitement with word of the cyclops. The rumors spread like
wildfire, quick and ravenous. Those rumors carry with them tales of Achilles’ victory over the monster and even a few include Patroclus’ role in the battle. With each whisper, the story takes on a new shade, a new cast, a different meter. It develops a life of its own and grows and grows until it is something wholly foreign to the events that transpired.

“Is it true that you faced down three bloodthirsty cyclops’ by calling lighting down on top of them?” Helen asks one evening while they are eating dinner having invited herself to sit beside Achilles.

Her eyes are a deep, watery blue and her hair is the color of ripened wheat. She is only a year older than them but already she has much of the school wrapped around her finger. People fawn over her about as much as they do Achilles and she has no prophecy preceding her.

Achilles only spares her a brief glance before returning to pick listlessly at his lamb and potato stew. “No, I didn’t call down lightning.”

Helen is not deterred by his mood or his crisp response. If anything, she seems emboldened, leaning in on her elbows. She gazes at him with her chin in her hands.

“Well, Penthesilea told me—that Andromache told her—that Automedon told her—that he had heard that you shrunk the cyclops and Patroclus squished it by stomping on it.”

Achilles frowns fiercely and simply shakes his head at his bowl.

Helen purrs and taps her sandaled feet against the floor. “Well, Ajax told Menelaus that he had heard Jason say that Patroclus had been abducted by the cyclops and that you rode out on your broom to rescue him.”

That is what finally gets to Patroclus. Laughter bursts forth like water from a damn.

“What am I? Some damsel in distress?”

Achilles looks over and his smile is small but it is genuine. “I suppose that makes me your knight in shining armor.”

They laugh and Helen laughs with them. It is a light and tinkling sound, like wind chimes made of crystal and colored glass.

“So what happened then?” She asks, her eyelashes flutter at them like butterfly wings at rest.

Achilles shrugs. It is so unlike him not to relive a tale of his deeds and prowess. He has always liked to brag but it has never been an unpleasant thing.

“It came out of nowhere,” Patroclus starts. “Achilles and I ran and hid but it was definitely hunting.”

Helen’s gaze turns to him.

“Achilles came up with a plan to blind the cyclops and then lure it into a clearing to drop boulders on it.”

Helen clasps her hands together before her mouth and breathes, “how terrifying.”

Achilles sits up, his back going upright. “Patroclus’ is the one who blinded it. He used the Lumos Maxima charm to do it.”
“That’s a third-year spell,” Helen all but swoons, the perfect audience.

“Achilles is the one who taught it to me—and it was his plan.”

“But if Patroclus hadn’t bought me time my plan would’ve never worked.” With each word Achilles comes more and more into himself, like he is waking from a long slumber, morning sun breaking over the horizon.

Helen is gracious and enamored with their tale and allows Achilles to retell the entire thing in dramatic detail as he becomes more animated and engaged. When she leaves she thanks them and touches her hand to both their shoulders in farewell.

“You know she’s going to basically tell the whole school, right?” Briseis informs, with her eyebrows arched.

Achilles shrugs and begins to actually eat his meal.

Patroclus smiles at him in relief. “Well, at least it’ll be closer to the truth now.”

~ o ~ o ~

“It shouldn’t have happened,” Briseis whispers in the library as they study for their end of year exams. Achilles has gone off the to restroom and they are alone. “A cyclops can’t get in.”

“Well it did, Briseis,” Patroclus replies in exasperation.

“The enchantments don’t allow it. Dark creatures or those that seek to harm the students cannot even see Aeaea much less set foot on the beach. You’ve read the histories.”

“I don’t know what to tell you,” Patroclus all but groans. “It was just there all of a sudden.”

Briseis casts her eyes about the library as if worried someone might be listening or Achilles might return. “What if it was sent.”

Patroclus frowns. “What?”

“Think about it, Patroclus,” she leans in closer. “Achilles is the chosen one, he is meant to save the magical world someday, but from what?”

“I don’t know from what. Does anyone?”

“What if that something he’s supposed to save us from is trying to make sure that that prophecy doesn’t come true.”

Patroclus knows he must imagine the cold wind that seems to gust through him and he tenses his whole body to prevent a shiver. It is a dark and scary thought. Before he can answer Achilles returns and flops into the chair next to him, head collapsing onto the Transfiguration book he has been attempting to read.

He looks at Patroclus with pitiful eyes veiled by the curtain of his golden hair. Patroclus is struck with the strange thought of brushing those strands back and away from his eyes. It is an odd mix of emotions given Briseis terrifying theory.

“Can we please go exploring?” Achilles whines shamelessly up at Patroclus.

Patroclus gives him a baleful smile and allows himself to touch his shoulder lightly. “You know
we’ve all be confined to the mansion grounds for the rest of the term. The professors are working to make sure the island is safe.”

Achilles groans and smooshes his face into the book.

Patroclus unsuccessfully suppresses a laugh and shoves Achilles’ head back onto its side. “Stop that. You’re going to ruin that book.”

Achilles pulls a face at him. Before sitting up and looking excited. “Let’s just sneak down for a little while, an hour tops.”

Briseis draws in a horrified breath.

“You know we can’t,” Patroclus says before Briseis can start scolding them. “What if there are more?”

Achilles deflates instantly and his cheeks color. “I know—stupid idea. Forget I said anything.”

“How about we go for a walk?” Patroclus suggests. “And then we can play a game of Exploding Snap before we get back to studying.”

One corner of Achilles’ mouth curls up and he nods. “Okay.”

“What do you say, Briseis?” Patroclus asks. “You wanna join us?”

“Sure, I could go for a stretch.” She replies, closing her book.

Patroclus is fairly certain she only agrees because she means to keep an eye on them and ensure that they don’t, in fact, go sneaking off into the island.

Patroclus decides then to let go of Briseis’ theories and leave it to the adults. Chiron and the other professors will get to the bottom of the cyclops and whatever is or isn’t going on.

~ o ~ o ~

The end of the term comes swiftly in the wake of the cyclops’ attack and their end of year exams. It all serves as a wonderful distraction up until the exams have finished and all that is left is the end of the year feast. Thanks to a combination of wins in quidditch that term and their foolish heroics, Boreas wins the Golden Fleece that year, wresting it from Notus Tower.

Patroclus tires his best to be excited about it all but all he can think about is that he will be going home for the summer. All he can think of is that he is going to be forced to pretend that he is normal again and that he will be forbidden to do magic. All he can think about is that he is going to be leaving Achilles.

He and Achilles share a cabin on Circe’s Loom on the journey home. Thankfully, no one disturbs them. They try to guess the flavors of each one of the Bertie Bott’s Every Flavored Beans they bought from the trolley before tossing them at the one another’s open mouth for testing. They are assaulted with a number of unpleasant flavors that have them each spluttering to spitting while also laughing. They even manage to come across some strangely delightful ones such as French lavender and glacial ice.

The voyage ends too soon and both boys linger in the cabin longer than necessary under the pretense of wanting to wait out the rush. Neither of them says a word.
“There you are,” Briseis huffs as she slides the cabin door open. When Patroclus startles a bit she quirks one corner of her lip up. “Didn’t think I’d leave before saying goodbye, did you?”

She hugs him then and it’s warm, tight, and amazing.

“I’ll write you,” she promises when she steps away.

“Me too,” Patroclus promises.

Briseis’ eyes glance over his shoulder to Achilles who is standing rigid and formal as he watches the exchange.

“Have a good summer, Achilles,” Briseis waves easily, long since used to Achilles’ polite stiffness around her and seemingly delighting in pretending she doesn’t notice.

“You as well, Briseis,” Achilles calls after her.

When they are alone again the silence creeps back in like an insistent fog.

“So,” they both say at once.

They giggle a bit.

Then Achilles pulls him into a hug that Patroclus had been both dying for and dreading.

“Write me?” Patroclus hates how needy he sounds.

“Every day,” Achilles promises.

They shuffle off of the ship and onto the docks. Achilles is quickly collected by a man with dark hair and a full beard who has an easy smile and begins asking him a million questions. Achilles answers but looks back over his shoulder at Patroclus.

“Well,” a warm voice inquires, spooking Patroclus from his staring. “Shall we?”

Chiron grins down at him.

“Headmaster Chiron?”

He had been told that one of the academy’s faculty would escort him home to ensure he arrived and to speak with his father. He had not been expecting Chiron to be the one to do this despite the centaur being the one who came for him and starting this journey.

“I’m the one who collected you. It seems only fitting that I be the one to escort you home.”

He offers his arm and Patroclus smiles and reaches up and lays his hand upon it.

It really does feel fitting.

As he and Chiron spiral out of existence right there on the docks of the Port of Piraeus, Patroclus thinks he must be getting used to magic. Apparating almost doesn’t make him want to throw up anymore…almost.

Chapter End Notes
That concludes the first year! One down, six to go.

Up Next: Year 2

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/183233643751/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-10-azuldemon
Year 2: Silver-Footed

Chapter Summary

Patroclus prepares for his second year at the Pelion Academy of Magic. But summer did not go as planned and it leaves Patroclus with some doubts...

Chapter Notes

I'm back! And apparently decided I want to compete with the premiere of Game of Thrones *slaps palm to face*

Anyways, welcome to year 2! Thanks for your patience during the break, I hated to do it but the time gave me lots of ideas and I can't wait for you all to read them. I am not certain if I will be keeping to my previous weekly Sunday posting goal from before, April is a crazy month (for nerdy and RL reasons) so I'm not gonna make promises I might not be able to keep. But I didn't to wait for May to start posting again so, here we are.

Hope you all enjoy. Thank you all again so much for the kudos (almost 200!) and comments!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sun is only just beginning its rosy ascent into the hazy grey sky when Patroclus leaves his father’s house. He is wearing a backpack and pulls his wheeled trunk behind him as he takes his first steps of toward absolution.

Skops hoots indignantly at him when he opens the owl’s cage out on the driveway. Skops wastes no time hopping to the wire door before launching skyward without so much as a look back.

Patroclus cannot blame him.

The poor bird had spent the vast majority of the summer cooped up in his cage. His father had forbidden the owl to be let free. Patroclus was a bit terrified his owl might fly off and never return to him. That’s what Patroclus would do in Skops’ situation. He’d felt much the same, trapped inside of the house all summer with nothing to do and no one for company except for the silent shade of his mother and their housekeeper and caregiver Vera.

Patroclus had never really had friends but what few acquaintances he had once had were further alienated by his abrupt absence from school.

When Patroclus had returned from Pelion the Menoetius had forbidden any and all mention of the magical world and Patroclus’ schooling. That was why he had not allowed Skops to be allowed outside. He was up for election and he would not tolerate anything that might make him seem odd or their family appear anything other than the picture of perfection. To the world, Menoetius was nothing less than the very image of a caring husband left to raise a son on his own when his wife
took ill.

Patroclus being a young wizard in training does not align with that image. Menoetius had crafted an entire tale explaining Patroclus’ absence during the school year that consisted of Patroclus having been accepted to a very prestigious and exclusive boarding school. That was why his father wanted Patroclus to essentially be invisible over the summer; he didn’t trust him to convincingly keep the meticulously crafted tiles of the facade in place.

Patroclus takes in a breath and watches Skops fly until the tawny is nothing more than vanishing spec upon the horizon. He thinks about getting onto his broom soaring into that infinite sky, knowing that it is almost within reach.

Just two more days.

In that moment he knows that he’s made the right choice.

It is strange to think that he had been crazy enough to consider not going back to the Pelion Academy of Magic. When he had left Aeaea it had felt like leaving home more than leaving this house or his father ever had. He would have given anything to have stayed. But after months without a single letter from Achilles or Briseis Patroclus began to fear that he had imagined the whole experience, that he never really made any friends, that what his mother had was perhaps contagious or hereditary.

But when the owl came with his school supply list and his instructions for getting to the Agora of Charis, he knew that he had at least not dreamed up Pelion.

If he had dreamt up having friends or completely misjudged Achilles and Briseis had still been a matter that had been up for debate. He found himself pouring over every one of his memories with his two friends like a soothsayer over a splay of descent bones, searching for truth and meaning that might help him make sense of his contradictory reality.

That was when the doubts about returning for his second year took root, slithering deep within him and drinking from a dark well of doubt and insecurity that had been steadily filling all of his life.

How was he supposed to face the academy without Achilles and Briseis? It seemed an impossible feat.

But the thought of remaining in Athens and living in his father’s house had been worse than any alternative he could manage to imagine on Aeaea. Even if he was alone and ridiculed at Pelion, he would still have magic, and feasts, and the island wilds. Nothing could be as hollow as his father’s glowering discontent and the yawning silence of this place. So he had chosen to pack his trunk and leave. Even if everything he thought he had had with Achilles and Briseis had been a lie or a misunderstanding he could bear it better than this loveless place.

He looks down at the map that was delivered to him. He is to follow the map to a place in Kifissia park where he will find a discarded water bottle. He is then supposed to take hold of the bottle and it will teleport him to the Agora of Charis.

As he enters the park it is wrapped in thinning shadow and empty with the exception of a few people out for an early morning jog or walking their dogs. A few of them cast speculative glances at him and he knows he must look odd being so young and hauling an old looking trunk and empty birdcage. He does his best to look like he belongs there and that there is nothing odd about this at all. He tries to be a little like Achilles or Briseis, even if that hurts. He’s not sure if he actually sells it or people are just unwilling to get involved.
He makes his way to a little hill ringed by oaks and sure enough, there is a discarded metal water bottle that is dented and bent.

He lugs his trunk and Skops’ cage up the hill and glances around. The instructions had clearly stated that he is to make sure he is alone and not being watched.

He is alone as far as he can tell.

He casts one last glance up into the sky trying his best to trust what he knows of owls and believe that Skops will find him either at the Agora or at Pelion once the bird has exercised his irritation. He grips his belongings tight, takes a deep breath, and then bends at the knees to reach for the bottle.

His fingers close over the dew-cool metal and there is an immediate pull. It is as tough someone reaches into him and grips a fist full of his intestines and jerks him inward upon himself. The sensation is so much worse than apparating. He feels like he is coiling in upon himself over and over again while pinwheeling wildly about.

He is struck with the sudden fear that he might reappear somewhere inside out or with bits of his trunk fused to him.

It is mercifully short, depositing he and his belongings unceremoniously onto a grassy lawn in a small park located in the Agora of Charis. He feels his teeth rattling inside of his mouth and every single joint aches. He scrambles to his hands and knees and unlike his first apparation, he pukes.

It’s embarrassing but it is still early and there are only a few people out to see him deposit his meager breakfast onto the grass.

One is an old woman who shuffles by and smiles at him kindly. “Portkey’s,” she tisks. “Don’t miss those. Never have to suffer that again, Healer’s orders.”

Patroclus wipes at his mouth with the back of his wrist and nods as politely as he can while trying to keep a handle on the remaining contents of his stomach.

The woman only chuckles and floats something wrapped in thin paper over to him with a gesture of her spindly fingers.

“Always settles my stomach,” she says and continues on her way.

Patroclus reaches for the packet and slowly pulls back the paper revealing three jagged-edged leaves wrapped inside.

Peppermint.

He can tell just by the sharp, fresh smell that floats up to him.

He takes one and puts it under his tongue and hopes it really does help with nausea. He manages to sit up, a hand going to his churning belly. The peppermint is sharp in his mouth but he can feel it seeping into him and he focuses on that.

Once he’s certain he isn’t going to vomit again he gets to his feet and makes his way to Sisyphus’ Rest where innkeeper agrees to keep his things and take them up to his room once it is ready.

With his hands free, Patroclus then goes to make a withdrawal at the House of Midas so that he can purchase the supplies he needs and have some spending money for the term. He knows that he
will also likely need new tunics since his limbs seem to be stretching out at an alarming rate. He hates the changes his body is making. He feels like he has become all sprawling hands and clumsy feet.

He is walking out of the bank, money in hand, when he hears it.

It is birdsong at dawn.

It is sun-warmed grass.

“Patroclus!”

Pat-ro-clus.

That sound, the simple utterance of his name. It has never sounded so sweet. Each syllable touched lightly but not rushed over; it is almost as if it is being sung.

He turns, eyes falling upon olive-brown skin and gleaming golden hair. Achilles is rushing toward him, weaving through the growing crowd and nearly running. He has grown taller over the summer as well but where Patroclus is gangly and awkward, Achilles has grown gracefully into the length of his limbs.

Patroclus wants to scowl. He wants to growl out all of the hurt, anger, and sadness that had writhed within him all summer.

Instead, Patroclus feels something warm unfurl just beneath his skin like white, dove-soft wings. All his vitriol and doubts slough from him in a sudden heavy deluge. All he can feel is joy and relief and, and, and…

Achilles crashes into him, arms going around Patroclus tightly for an embrace not unlike the others that Patroclus had thought he had imagined. When his arms do not come up and return the gesture Achilles pulls back, hands still firm upon Patroclus’ shoulders.

“Patroclus,” he repeats, and his voice is breathy as though he has run a great distance. He says his name like he is unsure like he is trying to convince himself of something.

Patroclus does not know what to say. The sight of him, the excitement glittering in his forest-hued eyes unsettles him.

“Achilles,” he breathes out. He realizes he is smiling, lips pulled back and all of his teeth on display, a mirror of Achilles’ own grin.

No one has ever been this happy to see him. He’s not sure if anyone has ever actually been happy to see him.

“You’re here,” Achilles says, his voice twined with wonder.

Again there is that sense that Achilles is reassuring himself of something.

Patroclus frowns. “Yes?”

Achilles’ hands fall away, and Patroclus can still feel the warmth of them as it slowly fades from his skin.

“You didn’t respond to any of my owls…”
Patroclus feels his heartbeat pick up. “You wrote me?”

Achilles frowns, blonde brows curling down to dim the brightness of his eyes. “Of course I did. I promised. Every day. Well…at least for a month…but when I never got a reply…”

Realization slinks down the back of Patroclus’ neck and slides through his spine. His father. His father wanted as little to do with magic and the wizarding world as possible. He had barely tolerated Patroclus being home. He had gone so far as to ask if there was some form of summer school that Patroclus could attend rather than return home for the holiday. He must have kept the letters from him. It was exactly the sort of cruel punishment his father would inflict.

Patroclus is sick with the shame that he had not thought of this sooner.

“I didn’t get them…” Patroclus replies softly, disappointment heavy in the pit of his stomach. “My father—he must’ve kept them from me—I’m so sorry.”

Achilles’ face ripples like the still surface of a millpond as different emotions plat across its surface. At first, there is a clear relief that seems to pass over him but then he glares in a deep furrowing of his brows. “That’s so—he’s just—” he shakes his head and the frown breaks and gives way to his smile once more. “That’s all right. I’m just glad you’re here. I was afraid you weren’t coming back. I can just tell you what I wrote instead. Did you get your supply list at least?”

Patroclus nods, and he hates himself for ever doubting Achilles, Achilles who is sure and steady as the sun.

“Have you bought anything yet?” Achilles inquires.

Patroclus tries to move past everything as Achilles seems to be trying to do. “No.”

Achilles shifts to come up beside him and slides an arm around his shoulders, sealing their sides together.

Oh, how Patroclus has missed that easy affection. He feels starved to breaking and presses against his friend.

“C’mon, let’s head to Papyrus and get our books.” Achilles suggests and steers him toward the already crowded book store.

When they enter, Achilles’ arm still firmly draped over Patroclus’ shoulders, all eyes are on them. Achilles remains a spectacle for all the wizarding world it seems. Patroclus swallows against the pressure of all those gazing eyes. Achilles doesn’t even seem to notice, his attention fixated elsewhere.

“Let’s play a game!” The other boy suggests, releasing his hold on Patroclus to come in front of him. “We take our lists and the one to find the most books in thirty minutes wins. Then we can help each other find whatever we’re missing.”

Patroclus has missed him so much it is twisting pang at the center of his being, that winding rope of feeling braiding more and more strands of Patroclus’ being into that woven cord. The relief that he had not been wrong about their friendship is sweeter than any confection.

He smiles and nods. “You’re on!”

They split from one another and scurry down separate aisles of books, heedless of the grunts and
complaints of some of the other patrons. They intersect a few times and each time Achilles grapples with him, playfully pulling at Patroclus’ arms as he reaches for one book or another; ruffling his hair; coltishly jabbing at his sides and belly.

Patroclus laughs and his throat aches with the forgotten sensation of it.

In the end, Achilles wins of course. He always wins. But he does not gloat and they help one another find the books that the other missed and the one neither of them located.

They exit the shop smiling and giggling and their textbooks in hand. A group whispers as they pass, and Patroclus hears “cyclops” uttered as they do.

“Let’s get some ice cream,” Achilles suggests.

Patroclus nods eagerly in agreement, feeling as though he has just been brought back to life. It is as if Achilles is the summer and Patroclus is some dormant plant that has been waiting for that sun and warmth to wake him.

“Achilles!” A sharp voice lacerates the air, sharp and harsh as shattered glass.

Both boys look up with a start and Achilles instantly goes stiff, his back straight and shoulders tugged back, and chin angling up. His entire demeanor resounds with a military measure he’s never seen in his friend before.

A woman, beautiful as cold winters dawn strides toward them. Her hair is shimmering silk the same color as Achilles’ but it does not shine like captured sunbeams the way her son’s do. It is like the pale reflection of sunlight upon ice. Her lips are a vibrant crimson sharply contrasting with the porcelain pale of her skin. The blue velvet dress she wears clings to the graceful, willowy curves of her body like a waterfall gliding over smoothest river stones. Peeking beneath the rippling flow of her dress, silver shoes glitter like the scales of some exotic Aegean fish.

She is like something out of a fairytale.

All who see her are immediately enchanted, their eyes following her and their expressions a mix of awe and desire.

This is a Veela.

This is Achilles’ mother.

She towers over them both, her eyes such a depthless blue that they almost appear black as the ocean in storm.

“You have purchased all your books.” It is a statement, not a question, it is almost an accusation.

“Yes.” Achilles replies simply and respectfully.

Her eyes slide over to Patroclus and he can feel that gaze washing over him like a surge of icy water. He feels himself shudder and cannot look away. He does not feel enthralled, he only feels the clear stark crawl of terror.

Achilles tracks her gaze. “Mother, this is Patroclus. My best friend.”

Despite everything he is feeling in the face of the Veela, Patroclus jerks his head to look over at Achilles. His breath stalls in his chest, a pocket of air whirling beneath flesh and bone. Achilles’
answering smile fills him with syrupy warmth.

It is the first time he has heard Achilles say that aloud. He had only seen it written on the card he had been sent for Christmas. Something about Achilles speaking it—something about him saying it to his mother—makes it feel real.

There is a crackle in the air, a glacier splitting in two. Patroclus starts and Achilles’ mother’s features begin to somehow sharpen, her cheeks hollowing, her nose seeming to elongate into something like an eagles beak. Her mouth moves, contorting into a feral snarl.

Patroclus recoils, he would flee were it not for Achilles’ hand coming between his shoulder blades. It is firm and it grounds him better than the roots of the oldest oak. With Achilles, Patroclus can weather any storm.

“Patroclus, this is my mother, Thetis.” Achilles introduces.

Thetis seems to catch herself and her form shimmers and she is once more the picture of beauty but her eyes hold no warmth as they regard Patroclus.

“Pleasure to meet you, ma’am.” Patroclus musters in a shaky tone, his arm quivering as he extends it.

Thetis’ eyes flick down to the limb and her top lip coils in disgust. Her eyes return to her son.

“Let’s go. We need to get your potions supplies from Hecate’s Spagyrics. You’ll need the absolute best if your marks are to improve. Then we can stop at Styx.”

Achilles’ lips press together and he looks to Patroclus.

Thetis says nothing more. She turns in a swish of blue velvet making her way back down the cobbled street, all eyes go with her.

Achilles moves to face him. He smiles, though Patroclus can tell it is forced.

“Sorry about her…” He shrugs, looking down at his feet. “She’s a Veela…they’re not always so good with humans.”

Patroclus tries to speak but his voice will not respond. He swallows hard and it seems to free something up. “It’s fine.”

Achilles looks like he wants to say more but instead widens his smile, his grips Patroclus’ arm. “I’ll see you on the ship. We’ll share a cabin, just you and me, and we’ll try everything from the trolley.”

That takes the bite out of the encounter with Thetis and Patroclus finds he’s able to smile some. “Telios,”

“Telios,” Achilles echos before darting a look back over his shoulder, hair fanning across his shoulders with the motion. “I better go.” His look is apologetic.

“See you soon.” Patroclus says.

Achilles nods, walking backward as he goes before finally turning to follow his mother.

As he goes Patroclus feels an itch to follow. Instead, he looks back to his list but an idea that had been born before he had left Pelion last term reemerges. It had been buried in his summer grief and
piled over with his fears and doubts about his relationship with his friends.

He decides that the remainder of his school supplies can wait. There is a mistake he made last year that he will not be making again. He rushes to Styx while Achilles and his mother are shopping for potions supplies to ensure there isn’t a chance encounter. The man in the shop is helpful and Patroclus’ plan is easier to execute than he had expected. This Christmas he will not be caught without gifts for his two friends again.

With that task completed, he leaves the shop not wanting to be faced with Thetis’ cold disapproval again. He goes to Raiments by Arachne for the new tunics and sandals he cannot avoid purchasing, hating every moment of the fitting process.

When he goes next to Hecate’s Spagyrics to get his potions supplies he catches sight of a familiar mane of bouncy curls.

“Briseis!” He calls rushing over.

He isn’t prepared for the girl’s reaction. She whirls on him with a searing scowl and her hands planted upon her hips.

Patroclus pulls up short and swallows hard.

“Don’t you ‘Briseis’ me after you ignored all my letters,” she snaps, her pretty face pinched tight in anger.

Patroclus panics and shakes his head. “No—it’s not what you think!”

“If you tell me that you were too busy hanging out with Achilles all summer—”

“—My father was keeping my letters from me.” Patroclus cuts in. “I didn’t get any of yours or Achilles’ letters. I’m so sorry.” He takes in a deep breath having pushed all that out without pausing.

Briseis deflates, the billowing sails of her anger losing their wind. “Oh, Patroclus,” her eyes shimmer. “I’m an idiot. After Christmas—I should’ve known.”

“It’s okay,” Patroclus replies quickly. “I thought you and Achilles had forgotten about me,” he shrugs. “So I guess I’m an idiot too and that makes us even.”

Briseis presses her lips together. “Your father…”

Patroclus waves a hand at her. “I don’t have to think about him for a year.”

Briseis looks like she wants to argue with him so Patroclus doesn’t give her a chance.

“Have you purchased your potions supplies?”

She shakes her head slowly.

“Well,” Patroclus smiles at her. “Shall we?”

Briseis gives him a look that lets him know she’s on to him and is choosing to allow the diversion and they make their way through the Agora to Hecate’s

~ 0 ~ 0 ~
The next morning Patroclus practically leaps off the dock and through the magical barrier at the Port of Piraeus his excitement is so great. It feels like he is filled with soda water that has been shaken, fizzing and nearly bursting.

The wide dock washes into his vision, milling with students and their families. Circe’s Loom sits proud and glowing with the morning sunlight. The fizzing excitement in Patroclus’ veins feels like it must be purring so loud others can hear it. In his brooding sadness, he had nearly convinced himself that this had all been some mad dream he had concocted to ease the loneliness of his house and the brooding disapproval of his father.

Now, standing here having just stepped through a magical barrier and preparing to board a ship that looks like it has sailed out of an Ancient Greek myth, he marvels at how he could ever have doubted.

His imagination is not that good.

Wondering if Achilles has already arrived he hands his trunk and other belongings off to one of the men who load up the ship.

When he turns around he is face to face with Achilles and his beaming smile. Before Patroclus can so much as say “hello” Achilles takes hold of him and begins pulling him toward the ship and up the walkway and onto Circe’s Loom. Patroclus laughs as Achilles herds him through the clog of students toward an empty cabin in the back. He would be lying if he were to say that he did not take satisfaction in the way Achilles’ eyes slip by the other fawning students along the way; that Achilles ignores all other bids for his attention or invitations to share their cabins; he would be lying if he said he didn’t kind of enjoy knowing those eyes were on him as well.

They settle into an empty cabin, sitting across from one another, Achilles kicking playfully at Patroclus’ feet while Patroclus tries to evade him. There is a blow of a whistle signaling that all passengers are to go below deck and find a seat as the ship prepares to pull out from the dock.

Patroclus leans forward to peer out the porthole window as the land and people begin to move by and away. The whipping of blue fabric grips at his eye and he sees her there, standing apart from all the other families.

Thetis.

The wind lashes at her, her hair and dress pulling tight about her while her body remains steady and rigid, a spire of dark ice among a storming sea. Her eyes unerringly find Patroclus’ somehow and it is as if all the blood in his body has frozen over in that instant. There is nothing kind or warm in her gaze. It is a warning—a renouncement. The Veela inspires more fear in Patroclus than the cyclops ever managed.

“Hey,” Achilles nudges him in the knee with his toe.

Patroclus jerks his head from the window and the angry fay. Just the sight of Achilles is enough to banish all the coldness in the world.

There will be no parents for a year. Neither Menoetius of Thetis can reach him at Pelion.

Achilles is true to his word and buys everything the trolly has to offer when it comes around. Patroclus knows that it is something of an apology that Achilles is making for his mother as well as for the confiscated letters.

It is a good—if unnecessary—apology.
Patroclus is walking back from the bathroom when he catches sight of Briseis chatting in the hall with Automedon. When her eyes find him she lights up and excuses herself from a disappointed looking Automedon and skips over to him.

“Let me guess,” she smirks. “Achilles has you tucked away all to himself.”

Patroclus scratches at the back of his head and smiles at his feet. “Something like that.”

“Mind if I crash the party for a bit?”

“Of course not.”

“You say that…” she intones playfully and tilting her head to the side but doesn’t finish.

He shakes his head and Briseis giggles and follows him to the cabin he and Achilles have occupied.

“Hey, let’s play a game of Snitch Sna—” his smile literally wilts a bit when he catches sight of Briseis following him. “Oh…nice to see you, Briseis.” He manages, though it sounds like his words are being chewed up before they exit his mouth.

“Hi there, Achilles,” Briseis wiggles her fingers.

“Can Briseis join us?” Patroclus asks.

Patroclus can practically see Achilles swallowing his refusal before he nods slowly. Briseis smiles at Patroclus and shakes her head before entering the cabin.

Patroclus hopes that Achilles is just rusty at playing nicely with Briseis and that Briseis will soon get tired of torturing Achilles. But…if it’s like this the entire year Patroclus will take it and be thankful.

Chapter End Notes

Up next: Achilles

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/184194079836/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-11-azuldemon
Year 2: Achilles

Chapter Summary

Achilles has lots of feelings and tries to process them all. Life as the Boy That Was Promised isn't exactly all it's cracked up to be.

Chapter Notes

*crawls out of the pit that is Avengers: Endgame and Game of Thrones bloodied, battered, and bruised to click post*

Welcome to another Achilles chapter! There will be at least one chapter from Achilles' POV each school year. So much love for every single one of you who reads this! I hope you all enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Briseis leaves to go and change into her school uniform and Achilles feels himself settle—a full body exhalation. It is like every muscle in his body had been vigilant and on guard. It isn’t as though he doesn’t like Briseis. She is the person he feels most familiar with outside of Patroclus at Pelion. She is pleasant enough…and always willing to help him with his History of Magic homework and most importantly, she is kind and good to Patroclus.

That is also part of the problem.

He has come to know the boiling sour feeling in his gut as jealousy. It is an ugly feeling and he knows it is something he shouldn’t feel—it is nothing he has ever felt before. He knows that he should feel happy that someone else sees how amazing Patroclus is, that there is someone else who treats him well—and he does feel happy—but he also feels so rotteningly jealous it’s painful.

He doesn’t need anyone other than Patroclus. Why isn’t he enough for Patroclus?

That brings with it yet another unfamiliar but no less cramping and caustic emotion, shame.

He combs his fingers through his hair a couple of times before reaching for his backpack and pulling out the black tunic that serves as the Pelion Academy uniform. It gives him something to do. It buys him time to let the conflicting emotions run their course and relax once again.

Patroclus follows his lead and begins changing as well, visibly self-conscious with the process. From the corner of his eye, Achilles sees the other boy angling his body in an attempt to hide his stretching limbs.

Achilles wishes that there was a way for Patroclus to see himself the way he sees him: kind and brilliant and epic and awesome. He knows that Patroclus sees himself through the eyes of his father.

Achilles hates that.
Broiling, claret anger stirs into the cauldron of emotions that had just been starting to quell within him. There are a few choice words that Achilles would like to impart upon Patroclus’ father…and more than a few hexes he’d like to cast.

The whistle trills out, signaling that the Loom has arrived in Aeaea and Achilles tries to stomp down the boiling bitterness within the cauldron. He reminds himself that he is happy to have his best friend back. He reminds himself that he and Patroclus will have an entire year together. He will have an entire year to show Patroclus just how epic and awesome he is. He will make it his mission.

He smiles.

Being with Patroclus is like opening a window on a stifling summer day. It is like he can finally breathe comfortably again. So much of his holiday had been spent alone as he split the time between both his parents’ homes. His father always had some new kid to introduce him to in order to try and encourage a friendship; so determined to foster for him the same kind of merry band of comrades that he had had in his own youth. Some of the other kids had been nice enough while others had only been interested in getting close to The Boy That was Promised in order for the chance to wade in eddies of his fame.

It was even worse when he visited his mother. Veela are as different from witches and wizards as wizards and witches are from muggles, so aloof and distant in their unearthly manner from the rest of the world. In the human wizarding world Achilles’ Veela heritage makes him exotic and alluring but among the Veela his human blood makes him brash and unrefined. The Veela children always want little to do with him, regardless of some human prophecy. It hadn’t been much of a problem, his mother had wanted him to focus on his studies rather than attempting to play with the Veela children.

It had been an achingly lonely summer.

It had been made worse by none of his letters to Patroclus being returned. Each letter he had sent that went unanswered had been like a physical blow. He hadn’t understood. Thoughts that Patroclus was communicating with Briseis and not him, that perhaps the first and only true friend he had ever made didn’t want to be his friend anymore, had shaken him to his core. He had never felt anything like that before, he had been uncertain of himself as a fawn upon spindly trembling limbs.

He had wanted to be angry with Patroclus and had even managed to convince himself that he was. But when he had seen Patroclus there in the Agora of Charis, looking taller and his hair so long that the wavy strands kept falling over his eyes and forcing him to brush them aside….he had been so relieved that Patroclus hadn’t decided to stay in the muggle world that any semblance of anger had been extinguished from him. He had been pulled to him like iron to lodestone. When Patroclus had smiled at him and then explained that it was his father that had prevented him from writing or receiving Achilles’ letters, his relief was finally complete only to then be quickly replaced with a renewed—if different—anger. It was an anger that Achilles did not know what to do with. It had no clear outlet and he knew that such anger had the potential to do Patroclus more harm than good. So instead he had vowed to channel all that energy into his friendship with Patroclus, hoping to counteract a lifetime of poison.

He knows that it isn’t really enough.

They are the last to disembark the ship and follow the herd of other students. Achilles retrieves his wand and ignites its tip with a lighting charm. He does it under the pretense of lighting their way along the dark path despite it being dotted sporadically with floating torches.
In truth, Achilles does this because he has been aching to let his magic free. All summer it has sung inside of him, the tune becoming more and more discordant in its insistence with each passing day.

It is a shivering relief to cast even the simplest spell after being under the restriction. It was yet another ache he had been forced to endure over the past few months.

They make their way through the crowd of their peers; Achilles smiling, nodding, and waving at all those who try to get his attention. It has been instilled into him that he must maintain appearances, always polite and gracious and never outright dismissive no matter how he is feeling. Both his parents seem to believe that his perception and reputation are of the utmost importance. Achilles assumes that it must have something to do with the prophecy. He doesn’t know what the oracular verses say about him but he assumes that glory is somehow tied to it and whatever it is he’s destined to do.

He tries not to think too hard about it.

“I do not approve of that boy.” His mother’s voice snaps through his mind. The words she had spoken the instant he had caught up to her after she had met Patroclus. “Find yourself a more suitable friend, one from a distinguished wizarding family. That little mud-blood will tarnish your name.”

Achilles does not defy his mother.

He has every intention of defying her on this.

They climb into a chariot with Esma, from Notus tower and Chryseis from Zephyrus tower at Briseis’ urging. Both of the girls openly gape at him. It may be part of the glory and fame he is destined to acquire, but it is also at the center of the loneliness that has colored his life in murky shades of blue. How is he supposed to be friends with anyone when people are falling over themselves with him—when people see him as something larger than life? That is what had initially drawn him to Patroclus. He is an outsider too. Patroclus is a boy that isn’t like everyone else. He has never once looked at Achilles like everyone else does—even when he was scowling at him. They are two sides of a very strange coin.

This is also why he begrudgingly accepts Briseis, she treats him like he’s just about anyone else, even if it’s mostly exasperation that she sends his way.

The enchanted chariots lurch as they carry them up the forest path to the mansion, where it glows up upon the jutting cliff. It feels so different from last year, partly because they aren’t flying this time but also because he doesn’t feel so alone this time.

They enter the Hall of Winds and split into their respective tables chatting as they wait for the first-years to arrive and go through their Culling. When the younger students arrive it diverts that attention from Achilles as everyone is eager to see who is culled into which tower and signals the beginning of the goodnatured banter between the towers.

When Headmaster Chiron steps in front of the Culling Tree to give his opening speech and begin the feast the room immediately falls silent for the centaur. No one commands a room like Professor Chiron.

“Good evening, and welcome students new and old,” Chiron greets, arms going wide to gesture to those gathered in the hall. “It is our greatest joy to bring you another term of high-quality education. Those of you returning after the last term will be happy to hear that the ban on students
exploring the island has been lifted.”

Achilles swears that the headmaster looks right at him for that statement. Cheers go up with the news, the memory of the cloistered end of their last term is a bitter memory that no one is keen on reliving.

“The island has been thoroughly swept and the protective enchantments inspected. The island is safe.”

Achilles and Patroclus share a look, both of them catching what Chiron didn’t say. He sees Briseis crane her neck from behind Patroclus to add her own look, clearly picking up on the same thing.

“There’s been no word on where the cyclops came from or how it got in.” She whispers to them.

“The Thule Wood remains forbidden to all, under penalty of expulsion.” Chiron continues on.

“They don’t know why or how?” Patroclus asks, head swiveling between Achilles and Briseis.

“No,” Achilles replies.

He almost wants to forget all about the cyclops attack last year and his daring attempt at being a hero. On the one hand, it feels good to have bested a rabid magical beast. It feels right like he really is the Boy That Was Promised. On the other hand, the words that Professor Medea had basically slapped him with still linger inside of him like a grimy film. He had risked Patroclus’ life in the process of proving himself and seeking his own glory. That feels gross and devastating.

“There’s been nothing in the Hermes Herald all summer,” Briseis adds. “At least nothing other than people saying it was random or perhaps the creature had been living in the caves below the island until it found its way to the surface.”

“That’s possible, right?” Patroclus asks, the splinters of amber in his eyes shining in the torchlight. The echo of that fear Achilles had seen in those eyes last year breaking through.

Achilles nods, it seems a reasonable answer to the mystery. He doesn’t see any reason to speculate and make his friend worry.

Briseis, apparently, doesn’t see it that way.

“Seems like a long shot to me,” she muses, catching Patroclus’ attention. “Are they trying to say a cyclops has been living under this island for hundreds of years, unknown to Circe herself and only just now appears?”

Achilles watches Patroclus’ shoulders bow as he curls inward upon himself and stares into the wooden table as if there is something interesting in the polished grain.


Briseis rolls her eyes at him. He is getting very used to being on the receiving end of those eye rolls. But the girl thankfully doesn’t press the subject and Achilles focuses the rest of the feast on making Patroclus laugh.

He wonders if that is in a prophecy anywhere.
Achilles was born to make Patroclus laugh.

Not a bad prophecy if you ask Achilles.

~ o ~ o ~

The next morning there are sealed envelops waiting on the top of every kid’s trunk—their schedules for the year.

Patroclus crawls eagerly across his kline to retrieve his.

“Wait,” Achilles says, halting his friend before he can open his envelop.

Patroclus looks over at him with eyebrows askew, wavy locks matted down on one side and wildly ruffled on the other.

“Let’s take’em down to the glade and open’em there.”

Patroclus’ features settle and he face warms into a smile. “Telios.”

They rush through getting ready and race among the colonnades, dodging the other students as they go. Patroclus is always a pace behind, barely within arms reach but never quite catching up. The other boy has gotten much faster since last year with the lengthening of his limbs.

Achilles turns and playfully jabs Patroclus in the gut, startling a laugh out of his friend who picks up his pace in an attempt to retaliate. They are still laughing when Patroclus accidentally collides with another student, tumbling with him to the floor in a tangle of limbs.

“Ela!” The student yells.

“S—sorry!” Patroclus, squeals.

Achilles pulls to a stop and turns and jogs back to help his friend up.

“Watch what you’re doing,” Hector, the fourth-year captain of the Zephyrus quidditch team groused.

“Yeah, watch where you’re going,” Hector’s friend Polydamos postures, grabbing Patroclus by the back of his tunic and yanking him back and away from Hector.

Anger ignites inside of Achilles, quick as lightning, and fierce as a feral lion. He lunges forward, breaking Polydamos’ grip on Patroclus and shoving the older boy hard in the center of his chest and sending him stumbling backwards in surprise.

Achilles can feel his lip coiling upward in a snarl. Polydamos’ face contorts into one of affronted rage. Achilles’ fists ball, and his awareness shifts to where his wand is tucked at the small of his back. He is ready for whatever comes next.

Before more can happen Hector slides between them his hands going to both Achilles’ and Polydamos’ chests, pushing them further apart.

“Halara,” the older boy cautions. “It was an accident.” He says to his friend. “They’re just a couple of silly kids.” He smiles at Achilles when he says this and Achilles cannot decide if that is an insult or not. Whatever Hector means Achilles doesn’t like it.

“Yeah, we were just playing around and not paying attention.” Patroclus cuts in, and
uncharacteristically moves his arm around Achilles’ shoulder—it is usually Achilles who initiates the majority of their physical contact. He lets Patroclus turn him away and walk him back toward the Hall of Winds for breakfast.

“Let it go, Pol,” he hears Hector continue. “Do you really want to beat up on some kids?”

Achilles feels his hackles rise up and starts to turn but Patroclus’ arm tightens around him keeping him moving forward. Achilles takes a deep breath and again allows Patroclus to direct him. If it were anyone else he would have shoved them aside by now and jinxed them. Instead, he permits Patroclus’ presence to calm him and throws his arm over Patroclus’ shoulder in turn.

“I could’ve taken him,” Achilles mutters.

“I know,” Patroclus replies.

Achilles looks over at him, curious if his friend is simply placating him but all he sees on those dark features is sincerity. Achilles smiles and looks down at his bare feet.

“Patroclus,” Briseis calls when she sees them enter and waves a sheet of parchment at them.

Achilles is mostly able to suppress his groan, managing to keep it to a muted sound at the back of his throat that makes him sound a bit like a stubborn old goat.

Patroclus snickers and bumps their sides together before releasing his arm from around his shoulder. “Be nice. The years just started.”

“Morning, you two,” Briseis greets brightly. “What are your schedules this term?” She flattens her own schedule out on the table.

Patroclus clears his throat uneasily. “Er—we haven’t opened ours yet.”

“What? Why?” Briseis pulls back from him as if something smells bad.

“Just haven’t,” Patroclus replies, reaching for the pitcher of pomegranate juice.

“We’re gonna open them after we eat at our secret spot.” Achilles supplies helpfully.

The frown Patroclus shoots him tells him that it is actually not helpful.

Briseis blows out a breath and shakes her head. “You guys really are weird.”

“We’ll bring them in for lunch and see what classes we all share.” Patroclus promises quickly.

“Sure,” Briseis sighs in exasperation, raising her eyebrow and dropping them.

~ o ~ o ~

“It looks the same,” Patroclus murmurs when they get to their glade, his head turning this way and that.

Achilles laughs. “Did you think it was going to move or something?”

Patroclus ducks his head and glances at him bashfully. “It’s just…after the cyclops…I thought maybe…”

Achilles nods in understanding. “All easily fixed with a few spells from Professor Daphne I’m
“Right,” Patroclus lifts his head and smiles. “Magic.”

Achilles gives him a lopsided grin. “Magic.”

They hop up onto their stone and it is warm and perfect as always. Achilles tilts his head up to the sky and takes a second to take it all in. He loves this place; he loves that it is a place that feels like it belongs to the two of them. He isn’t sure what he would have done if the damage done by the cyclops hadn’t been repaired.

“Let’s do this!” Patroclus nearly vibrates with anticipation.

Achilles happily obliges, pulling his envelope out onto his lap. “On the count of three?”

Patroclus licks his dry lips and nods.

“One,” Achilles says.

“Two,” Patroclus follows.

“Three!” They finish together and immediately begin to tear into the sealed paper.

They unfold the crips paper within and hold out their schedules.

“First class: Transfiguration.” Patroclus reads off.

Achilles frowns. “Charms…second class: Transfiguration…”

Patroclus’ face falls. “Herbology…”

The disappointment continues to roll out as they read on. In the end, they only turn out to have three classes together: Potions, Dueling, and Astronomy. It is a far cry from their last term where they had shared every single one of their classes. It was nearly impossible that this term would be a repeat of last term, Achilles isn’t sure why he expected that it would be. He suddenly wishes that he hadn’t suggested this stupid reveal. It just feels like that much more of a disappointment now.

He feels bitter and a bit like blowing something up. After spending an entire summer away from Patroclus and being denied communication with him he had assured himself that this term would be just like the last. Now they will only see each other for the brief periods when they’re not in class and on the weekends. Even that will be limited because of quidditch—

A thought occurs suddenly to Achilles. He looks over at Patroclus and worries at his bottom lip a bit. There is more than one way to make sure that they get to spend as much time together as possible.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Seeking Favor

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/184565685491/the-boy-that-was-promised-
chapter-12-azul demon
Year 2: Seeking Favor

Chapter Summary

Achilles has a plan. Patroclus is just along for the ride. But perhaps Patroclus is cut out for more than he ever thought possible.

Chapter Notes

Ummm...Hi!

Sorry for the delay in posting. April and May were super busy but I am hopeful that June will be better!

Happy Pride Month, y'all! Here's to our boys!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Water speckles sharply against the skin of Patroclus' face with a stinging hiss as he tails Achilles’ broom as it skims along the rippling surface of the ocean. Achilles’ tunic and hair flap harshly in the rush of the wind and he kicks his broom even faster. Patroclus grits his teeth and pushes harder, determined to keep up.

Achilles glances back over his shoulder and smirks at him before throwing his head back and crowing up at the sun like a young rooster at the first blush of day.

Patroclus surprises himself by answering that cry with one of his own, wild and free.

He flies even faster, coming up just alongside the bristles of Achilles’ broom. Feeling bold, he reaches out and slaps at the brittle strands.

Achilles looks back and his expression cracks open in delight. “Oh, is that how it is?” He calls back.

Patroclus only smiles slyly and nods.

“Okay!” He veers off to the left then banks sharply, charging right toward Patroclus. “Then I guess I’m it then!”

Patroclus frowns before he catches on to what Achilles is playing at. He pulls up on his broom sharply and only just manages to evade him. He glances back but he already knows that Achilles is closing in on him.

No one is faster than Achilles.

Still, Patroclus decides he’s not going to make it easy for him. He manages to pull off a roll on his broom, narrowly dodging Achilles’ outstretched hand, and jets back towards the island.
He zips into the trees, hoping vainly that the terrain will slow Achilles down. Leaves whip by him, sometimes slapping against him as he goes. He is being more reckless than usual, risking maneuvers and entering terrain he normally wouldn’t. But something about it excites him, it ignites something impetuous within him and he is surprised to find himself relishing it. He whirs around a large oak in an attempt to come around behind Achilles and maybe lose him.

It is Achilles who surprises him, however, having gone upward above the treetops, tracking him from above like a great eagle. Patroclus glances up but he cannot afford to scan through the trees since he has to navigate the thick weave of trunks and branches. He changes his course several times hoping that it will confuse his friend and that he will lose him.

He is kidding himself.

He is just entering a clearing when Achilles swoops down in front of him, hand extended and tapping Patroclus on his shoulder as they pass one another. Patroclus laughs and hears Achilles’ own laugh echo back in answer. He flips his broom around.

“You’re it!” Achilles taunts.

They continue on like this, chasing each other back and forth through and above the forest and all along the coast of Aeaea, venturing out as far as the barrier spell will allow. Achilles is always much harder to catch, sometimes evading Patroclus for long stretches of minutes at a time but Patroclus grows more and more bold and nimble in his flying the longer they play. He uses his head to try and outwit Achilles when he is the one being chased and it serves him well even if Achilles is always able to outmaneuver and overtake him.

Eventually, they land in a meadow and Patroclus collapses in exhaustion onto his back. Achilles cheers as he leaps off of his broom and onto Patroclus. Patroclus lets out a startled “oomf” before exploding into a startled flock of giggles as Achilles pulls him by the shoulders and rolls them about on the grass.

“What was that!” Achilles demands, his tone twinkling with delight.

“Flying?” Patroclus replies, arms flopping out to halt their tumble. “A game of tag?”

“That flying!” Achilles gasps out beaming. His hair is falling around Patroclus smelling of sweat and ocean spray. “It was amazing!”

Patroclus feels the braided threads of emotion that are tied up in everything that is Achilles twist tighter, making his stomach seem to pinch in on itself in a strangely pleasant way.

“Did you practice this summer?” Achilles asks.

Patroclus shakes his head. He’s still smiling but he’s not sure if he can speak.

Achilles rolls off of him and onto his back, one arm still flopped heavily across Patroclus’ chest.

“You caught me,” Achilles says in hushed wonder up to the darkening sky.

“Not as quickly or as often as you caught me.” Patroclus points out.

Achilles shakes his head his face full of soft awe that has Patroclus’ breath sticking in his chest. “Yeah…but you caught me…” he turns his head and their eyes meet. “No one on the team can even come close to catching me.”
Patroclus swallows.

The significance of that statement is not lost on him. Part of him wonders if Achilles is just saying this to make him feel good or if he had been holding back, but he has never known Achilles to lie.

Achilles turns onto his side suddenly, his eyes intent and burning. “You have to try out for the team this year!”

“What?”

“You have to try out for the quidditch team.”

“You’re crazy.”

“No,” Achilles insists. “You’d make the team for sure.” His hand pats excitedly upon Patroclus’ chest. “You could be our new seeker!”

Patroclus blinks at him. “The teams already got a seeker.”

Achilles shakes his head. “Icarus is off of the team. His father told him that if he had another fall he couldn’t play this year and he fell during the final match last term—remember?”

Patroclus does remember. Oddly, he feels a stab of pity for the older boy. This would be his last year at Pelion and he wouldn’t be able to play. It was a harsh punishment.

“You really think I could be seeker?” He murmurs, looking up rather than continue to face the excitement on Achilles’ face, afraid to speak it any louder—afraid to hope.

“If you can catch me, you can catch a snitch.”

It is so insanely cocky but it was also very true.

~ o ~ o ~

Achilles takes training Patroclus very seriously.

He is determined to get Patroclus into tip-top shape before the team tryouts. He demands more running in their time spent exploring and playing out in the island. He begins incorporating more games of catch into their time on brooms and off. More than once Patroclus finds himself having to dodge or catch some random object while getting dressed or walking between classes.

Patroclus feels his initial belief that he could possibly make the tower team slipping away from him with quicksilver ease with each game and each race. No matter how hard he tries he can never manage to even get close to matching Achilles, much less besting him.

While first-year students almost never make the tower teams, second-years are not far off either. Most students don't manage to make a tower team until their fourth-year.

But Achilles’ faith never so much as dims. He is convinced that Patroclus will make the team without any trouble.

Patroclus doesn’t doubt that his friend believes this but he is also certain that Achilles is blinded by affection and the prospect of them being able to spend more time together in order to make up for them having fewer classes together this term.

When Patroclus falls onto his kline each night, it is as if his whole body groans in protesting anger
at him. He falls into sleep so quickly that he no longer engages in telling jokes or stories with Achilles before drifting off to sleep. He doesn’t care if this upsets his best friend, this is all his fault after all.

When the team tryouts arrive Patroclus throws up on his way to the quidditch pitch, his anxiety boiling over until it comes geysering up his throat in a burning rush and spilling out of his mouth.

Achilles rubs slow, firm circles into his back as Patroclus is hunched and sputtering.

“It’s okay to be nervous,” Achilles assures.

“Were you your first tryout?” Patroclus asks, wiping at his mouth and trying to gauge if he is ready to stand upright.

“No.” Achilles answers simply and unapologetically.

“Of course not,” Patroclus grumbles.

Achilles smiles at him as he offers him his bottle of water. Patroclus takes it and swishes his mouth with the water before spitting and taking another mouth full that he actually swallows. He winces but forces himself to take another drink.

When they arrive at the pitch all eyes are instantly on them. Patroclus gets a front row seat to the reaction everyone has. Their expressions are beaming and eager when they catch sight of Achilles but fall into blatant shock when they realize that Patroclus is with him.

Patroclus must have begun to move to retreat because Achilles’ hand catches him above the elbow and tugs him onward.

“Ya, Achilles!” Al greets with an exuberant wave and bounding over with all the excitement of a labrador puppy.

“Ti leei,” Achilles answers, his smile and gaze moving over all who are assembled for tryouts.

Worse still, the stands of the pitch seem almost as crowded as a match day with many of the other students present to watch the Boreas students compete for a coveted spot on the tower team. Patroclus knows that much of the draw is likely Achilles. He can’t imagine tryouts are exciting for anyone but friends or the most passionate of quidditch fans.

He catches sight of a familiar mane of curls and groans wishing he hadn’t told Briseis about this. Menelaus, the captain of the team, walks up to the crowd that has gathered around them and nods at Achilles and openly frowns at Patroclus.

“All right!” The redhead booms. “Quiet down. We’re the returning champs from last term—”

He is interrupted by shouts of: “Achilles!”

“Shut it!” He demands. “Yes, Achilles was key to our wins last term but I don’t want any of you resting on your laurels or relying on Achilles to carry us through this season.”

There are a few scattered grumbles but most nod.

Seemingly satisfied, Menelaus continues. “Right, now, just because you made the team last term doesn’t guarantee you a spot on the team this year. So work your asses off.” His eyes land on Achilles. “All of you.”
Achilles just smirks as he begins to stretch.

“As you all know, we are in dire need of a seeker this year since Icarus couldn’t manage to stay on his damn broom last season. So, who are my prospects?”

Al raises his hand eagerly along with several other older students.

Achilles’ elbow knocks into Patroclus’ rib and he starts and raises his own hand.

Menelaus’ mouth actually drops open a bit and there are a few snorted laughs. The older students literally snicker.

Al, at least, seems excited to not be the only second-year with big dreams and sidles over.

“You too, eh?” He says.

“Uh, yeah…” Patroclus manages.

“Nice,” he bobs his head. “I’ve been training with Ajax all summer. How about you?”

“I—uh—couldn’t this summer…” Patroclus replies.

“Oh, yeah, cause of the muggle world and all that.” Al continues to nod incessantly.

“Yeah,”

“But we’ve been training since the term began,” Achilles interjects.

“Well, you’re a shoe-in,” Al flatters.

Achilles shrugs, not in modesty but in acknowledgment.

From there, Al basically falls over himself trying to engage Achilles and seems completely oblivious to Achilles’ special brand of cordial disinterest.

When Menelaus orders them to begin running laps Al finally ceases his motorized chatter. He claps Patroclus on the back before eagerly dashing forward.

He turns to jog backwards. “Us second-years need to stick together but I’m not gonna go easy on you!”

As always, Achilles takes off like a snap of thunder. The other boys and girls all bolt after him fervent to keep pace with their star player which results in something of an awkward herd of jostling bodies. Patroclus lags for a beat, but running with Achilles has become something normal as breathing. His legs know what to do even if his mind does not. He runs, his body setting itself to the pace that it has become accustomed to on their runs through the island. He finds the pace comfortable and easier on the even turf when compared to that of Aeaea’s root and stone covered earth.

Their thirst to keep up with Achilles is the downfall of the other prospective players. No one can keep pace with Achilles. They begin to lose steam, not having settled into a rhythm and burning out early. One by one Patroclus passes them. Heads swivel as he goes past and he can feel their dismay beaming towards him. He ignores it, his eyes fixed on the bottoms of Achilles’ bare feet as he speeds ahead of them all.

It is a familiar sight.
It is almost like meditating.

Patroclus never beats Achilles. As it turns out, second best to Achilles is better than just about everyone else. He’s been training for this far longer than he realized.

Round and around they go around the pitch while Menelaus barks at them and watches. When he finally calls for them to stop and return to the center Patroclus’ tunic is soaked at the chest and back with sweat. Achilles trots up next to him, his teeth peeking from behind his lips as he bumps his shoulder into Patroclus’.

With their physical stamina tested they are permitted to get onto their brooms and begin the flying drills. Each of them split off into the groups for the positions they are trying out for, performing aerial feats while Menelaus critiques them, seemingly never satisfied with any of them.

Even Achilles seems to consistently dissatisfy him—which is undeniably ridiculous.

Patroclus wonders if this is just a trait of a team captain or if this is a uniquely Menelaus condition. Either way, it makes Patroclus fidgety.

The perspective seekers and chasers all line up while the perspective beaters all try and knock them off their brooms with bludgers while the chasers and seekers attempt to get to the other side of the pitch.

As always, Achilles utterly dazzles, flying with sparrow grace and the ferocity of a hawk.

The others…not so much. Several are hit and sent plummeting to the ground. None of the hits are full on, usually a graze or just enough to destabilize the flyer and send them falling to the grass below. Only a handful manage to keep their brooms beneath them and reach the other side. None do so unscathed.

When it comes time for Patroclus to try and make his way from one set of goals to the next he is thankful for the gloves on his hands because his palms are a sweaty mess and he is certain that that alone will be the cause of him slipping from his broom.

The whistle blows from Menelaus and before he knows what he’s doing Patroclus is zooming across the pitch. The first bludger misses him purely by chance or poor aim, either way, it is enough to wake him from his knee jerk flight.

His head darts from right to left as he begins to track the activity around him, boys and girls with stubby metal bats zipping around him, all of them working to lob the angry metal bludgers at him. When the next one is batted at him he’s ready. He veers out of its path, overcorrecting his trajectory and bouncing into one of the perspective beaters. The girl curses at him and Patroclus stutters out an apology before hurrying back on his way. By the time the next bludger is sent careening at him he is more focused, less driven by pure impulse. This time he dips just low enough to avoid the attack without slowing. The fourth time he even gets a little bold—a little fancy—and leans over along the side of his broom to let the bludger sail past him.

When he reaches the three hoops on the other side of the pitch it is a shock, to him possibly more than anyone else. Achilles cheers loudly and the others gape and some outright gasp since he is the only other student to make it without being hit besides Achilles. It is far less refined but he somehow still manages it.

The look on Menelaus’ face remains motionless with the exception of the wrinkle that forms in his brow before he glances down and begins scribbling onto his tablet. There is no praise, excitement
or encouragement in that face but he has only but to look over at Achilles to get all the
encouragement he could ever need. The other boy is essentially glowing with it.

He looks over into the stands where the other students have gathered to watch and cheer
throughout. He sees Briseis there, her tight ringlets bouncing in the breeze. She smiles and him
and enthusiastically claps her hands together in a show of support. Patroclus smiles to himself as
he flies upwards and back to Achilles’ side to wait whatever trials come next.

The final drill is focused solely on the seekers and the four of them are sent out onto the pitch and
the golden snitch is released, buzzing up and in front of each of them in a taunting flight before
whizzing away and out of sight.

The one that catches it is going to earn some serious points in the captain’s assessment.

Everyone scrambles about the area, eager to make up for lost ground. Al goes higher than the rest
of them and shields his eyes from the lowering sun with his flattened palm poised above his brow.

Patroclus tries to think back to everything Achilles told him about being a seeker, about what it
was that had set Penelope apart from Icarus last year.

“Calm and focus,” Achilles had said when reflecting back on his winning match where the younger
Eurus seeker beat out the older and more experienced Icarus. “For Penelope, there is nothing but
she and the snitch.”

Patroclus thinks back to how she had appeared so cool and collected while Icarus had seemed more
frenetic and jittery. He tries to embody that. He tries to be still rather than giving in to the
gnawing impulse to roam about like the others. He tries to ignore the fear that he is doing
something wrong by not doing what the others are.

You’ve been doing it. You can do this.

He holds steady and scans the pitch from where he floats waiting to catch a telling glimpse of
glittering gold.

Nothing.

He floats and looks.

Floats and looks.

Floats…and looks…

Nothing.

The other hopeful seekers grow restless, their flights quickening. Patroclus begins to chew at the
inside of his cheek trying to hold his position, tasting blood. His head swivels and his eyes drift
back and forth. The wind chills his skin and all along his scalp where sweat has gathered in a
shimmering sheen as well as thoroughly soak his tunic under his arms. He stinks with the sour
smell of his own anxiety.

He knows that matches can go for hours and in extreme cases even days.

He wonders at how long Menelaus will allow this to continue.

He pushes his gloved fingers through his dampened hair wishing he had cut it so that it kept out of
his eyes. It is just as his hand has passed across his vision that he catches it, the glimmer of gold slashing across green.

He is falling toward the pitch like an arrow aimed and loosed before he knows what it is he’s doing. The wind hisses in his ears as he goes. He wonders if any of the others caught sight of it. He wonders if he’s just imagined it—but no, he sees it streaking along the border of the pitch and shifts his course to tail it.

It’s as if once he’s caught sight of it his vision narrows and there is only the snitch. He imagines that the gold is the gold of Achilles’ hair as he flies ahead of him. He imagines that is who he is chasing, rather than the fluttering snitch. The air slaps against his face, pushing at his cheeks and eyelids. His heartbeat is a stampede of wild horses. His breath heaves driving his chest to ache.

None of it registers.

There is only the comments tail of gold and nothing else.

Without thinking Patroclus reaches out, his hands grasping and desperate.

Around him, there are shouts and cheers. Loudest among them Achilles who has cupped his hands around his mouth and Briseis who has jumped to her feet in the stands and hops about wildly.

When Patroclus’ hands close around something spherical and solid he doesn’t realize what he’s done. He continues to fly without slowing his mind crashing back into his body in a sudden rush that has him skidding his broom to a halt before stumbling off.

Too late he hears the triumphant hooting as Achilles zooms towards him and nearly collides with him. He springs off of his broom, hands on Patroclus as he shakes him and laughs.

“You did it, Patroclus!” He cries, “I knew you would!”

Still, Patroclus cannot speak. He can only make excited sounds that have no meaning.

Achilles is wild with his own excitement, his hands going to either side of Patroclus’ head and bringing their foreheads together.

The others join them and Patroclus is surprised to hear their cheers mingled with Achilles’. No one has ever heaped praise upon him other than Achilles and Briseis (his professors do not count). Hands pat at his back and jostle him jovially. He doesn’t know what to make of it. He smiles and nods at the others with Achilles’ arm draped over his shoulders like a mantle.

There is a trill of a whistle and everyone quiets when Menelaus marches up to them his expression stern and his brows set in their perpetual glower. The crowd of perspective players parts of him and he comes up right in front of Patroclus and Achilles.

Patroclus swallows and watches as Menelaus’ tongue moves across his teeth and he continues to regard him without the barest hint of being impressed. The silence stretches and suddenly Patroclus begins to feel doubt slink over him. He holds out the fist that he is suddenly worried no longer contains the snitch—that never contained the snitch in the first place.

When he uncoils his fingers the winged orb beats its wings indignantly but remains in his palm.

Patroclus nearly collapses in relief.

Menelaus’ eyes drift to the snitch. “Well, looks like we’ve got our new seeker.” He says with all
the impassivity of a sunning lion.

“Woohoo!” Achilles’ fist rockets into the sky.

The others take up the cheer.

The corner of Menelaus’ mouth twists up ever so slightly. “Welcome to the team.”

Patroclus feels his knees knock together.

He has never once even dreamed that he’d play a sport much less play one of the most important positions on any kind of sports team. He seriously doesn’t know who he is anymore.

He kinda likes it.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Dream Lanterns

Thanks so much for reading and for all the kudos and the amazing comments! I cherish every single one of you!

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/185331410726/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-13-azuldemon
Year 2: Dream Lanterns

Chapter Summary

Patroclus and Achilles aren’t so good at paying attention in class. Team Boreas plays in the first match of the season. Achilles tells tales.

Chapter Notes

We’ve crossed the 300 kudos mark!!! Holy shit!!! I am in awe of you all! I am insanely flattered and can’t even begin to say how much I appreciate all the kudos and comments. This fic is on track to become my most kudo’d fic. Thank you all so much! Ok, enough gushing, but seriously thank you all so, so freaking much!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You need to gently heat it,” Patroclus laughs, leaning into Achilles’ workspace as the other boy begins plucking roughly at his Valerian sprigs.

“I am,” Achilles protests, lobbing the sprigs into his cauldron.

“It’s too hot,” Patroclus singsongs.

“Is not,” Achilles counters tartly.

“Is too.”

Their eyes meet.

The laughter is quick, welling up within them both, clear and bright like a burbling spring. It spills over like a steady column of crystal water that flows over upon itself over and over. Laughing with Achilles is always this way, fresh and sweet and never wrong.

“Gentlemen,” Professor Medea interrupts, coming up to stand behind them, arms folded within the voluminous sleeves of her nightshade robes. “Is there a problem?”

Her black pearl eyes shine bird-bright from within their kohl shadowed depths.

They both straighten and Patroclus swallows his laughter and it flutters in his throat like a butterfly trapped in glass. Achilles clears his throat and sets to stirring his cauldron. He stirs it four times, not three as the instructions state. Patroclus holds his tongue, not yet sure if the butterfly-laughter will escape if his mouth opens.

“No, ma’am,” Achilles manages, stirring it a fifth time.

Professor Medea frowns and leans over Achilles’ cauldron, the knife edge of her nose hovering over the rise of steam that coils steadily upward. She sniffs and it is a dainty thing before it rumples in on itself like a decaying flower.
Achilles grumbles something and abruptly ceases his stirring.

She moves over to examine Patroclus’ work with the same cool scrutiny. She gives a single curt nod before moving away to survey the work of the other students.

Patroclus feels his gaze being pulled inedibly back to Achilles only to find his friends eyes already on him twinkling with his own contained laughter. The butterfly breaks free, bursting from Patroclus’ chest and multiplying into a flittering swarm. He doubles over trying to contain it but to no avail. Achilles’ laughter mingles with his own in a honey-rich cantata that echoes through the classroom.

“Five points from Boreas,” Professor Medea informs without looking back at them as she examines Deidameia’s work.

Achilles snorts and clamps a hand over his mouth and Patroclus squeezes his eyes shut and takes in a deep shaky breath.

They both shift their focus back to their stations, working to try and keep their eyes focused on their work. Patroclus adds his Valerian sprigs and stirs clockwise three times slowly. Achilles waves his wand with airy casualness over his cauldron. There is a menacing belch that echoes from within Achilles’ cauldron after the wand makes its pass.

Patroclus frowns. That doesn’t seem right.

From there they move to their mortars and pestles to crush the rest of their ingredients while the potions brew. It takes them longer than it should, mostly because Achilles insists on flicking the mistletoe berries at him.

Patroclus swats them away with a grin. “If you keep that up I’ll be forced to kiss you.”

Achilles puckers his lips dramatically and smacks his them together as he leans toward Patroclus. Patroclus flushes, his face prickling with the heat of it, and tosses his own berries at Achilles’ stupidly symmetrical face in retaliation.

“You’re gonna cost our tower more points,” Patroclus warns tough his tone carries no threat or severity.

Achilles shrugs flippantly but turns to add the two pinches of the powder he’d managed to grind out into his mixture.

When it comes time to complete their potions they both wave their wands over the concoctions one final time. Where Patroclus’ potion releases a single plume of bluebell smoke, Achilles’ begins to grumble and groan. Achilles’ face wrinkles in confusion as he moves to look inside. Whatever he sees causes him to take a cautious step backward. Suddenly, the cauldron begins to warble upon its stubby legs. Almost immediately it begins losing its shape, going the consistency of heat-softened clay.

Patroclus steps back as well, eyes wide and staring.

The cast iron bubbles outward and Patroclus fears it might explode. Achilles steps in front of him, arm pushing him back. And then the cauldron just…melts, collapsing in on itself in a pitiful heap with a long hiss. They both continue to stare at it, unbelieving and worried something more might happen.

“Congratulations, Achilles,” Professor Medea comments dry as autumn leaves from behind them.
“You are the first student to cause such a volatile reaction with such a basic potion.”

Achilles turns, his perfect smile blinding. “Do I get points for originality?”

“Yes,” Professor Medea replies. “You get another five points from Boreas for such a colossal failure.”

The confusion that blots Achilles face is almost enough to get Patroclus giggling again. He somehow manages to contain it as Professor Medea shifts over to examine his own potion. She hums giving it a single swirl.

“Fine work, Patroclus, best I’ve seen in years. Five points to Boreas.”

Once she has walked off to pass her judgment on the others Achilles slings an arm over his shoulder. “See,” he snickers. “We balance each other out.”

Patroclus’ chest constricts, shudderingly pleased that Achilles thinks that they complement one another.

Professor Medea forces them to stay late and clean up the ruin that is Achilles’ cauldron.

“If you insist on associating with reckless, arrogant, riffraff the consequences spill onto you.” Professor Medea scolds Patroclus as she doles out her punishment.

It doesn’t matter much to Patroclus. He had had every intention of staying to help Achilles with the mess.

Once they finish, they hurry to the Hall of Winds in an attempt to make up for the lost time in their lunch hour. As they enter they have the misfortune of coming face to face with Paris and his crew.

“Well, look who it is,” Paris sneers, his depthless blue eyes bouncing between the two of them. “The Chump That was Promised and his personal lapdog.”

Patroclus can basically feel Achilles tensing and readying for a fight where he stands beside him.

“Leave him,” Patroclus says, surprised at the casually cool tone that comes from him. “He isn’t worth the energy.”

Achilles continues to glower at the other boy but nods.

Paris’ hands ball into fists. “Oh, look at the mudblood feeling cocky now that he’s made the Boreas quidditch team.” He dares to step closer to them despite the threat of the Achilles’ anger. “You’re nothing special. Everyone knows you’re only on the team because of Achilles.” His words are well aimed and it is as though they slice between Patroclus’ ribs. “Everyone knows you’re gonna choke this weekend for your first real game.”

“Enough!” Achilles snaps, stepping between them his chest bumping into Paris’.

Professor Antigone yells at them from across the crowded hall having caught sight of the exchange.

Paris’ sapphire eyes narrow before the corner of his mouth curls up and he steps back a pace.

“Don’t worry,” he says casually. “You guys are up against my brother this weekend and he and his team are going to wipe the pitch with you.”
Paris’ lackey’s all laugh with him as they stalk away.

Patroclus’ ears are ringing and he feels like the room might be spinning.

He had been so excited about making the team that he had somehow forgotten that he was now going to have to play in an actual match—against other players who were all older and more experienced than he was. He feels sick with it.

How flimsy his newfound confidence was, all it had taken was Paris’ petty spite to tear it all down as though it were only made of frost-frail straw.

“Oh, hey,” Achilles says, coming around to face him. “Don’t listen to that prick.”

Patroclus just swallows.

“What’s wrong with him?” Briseis demands, having jogged over.

“He’s fine.” Achilles clips.

“Did Paris hex him?”

“No.” Achilles replies. “It’s nothing. It’s just Paris being a shit.”

“He doesn’t look fine.” Briseis insists, one of only a few people not cowed by Achilles. “Maybe we should take him to the Healing Wing.”

“He’s fine.” Achilles insists angrily. “He just gets this way when he’s thinking too much.”

Patroclus frowns, angry that they are talking about him like he isn’t standing right there but still unable to think past the thought of the impending game.

“Patroclus…”

Pat-ro-clus

He blinks and brown eyes meet green.

“You’re gonna be great,” Achilles assures. “The hardest part was making the team. You got this.”

Briseis steps into view as well and offers him her dimple sweetened smile. “He’s right. Paris is just a jealous jerk.”

Patroclus manages a nod. “Yeah…”

“C’mon,” Briseis takes his arm and links it with her own and steers him toward their spot at the Boreas table with a glowering Achilles in toe.

~ o ~ o ~

Patroclus wipes at the lenses of the goggles he has been given to protect his eyes from the pelting sheets of rain that hammer down upon the Boreas and Zephyrus tower teams as they battle it out in the opening match of the season. The goggles don’t fit right, they are hand-me-downs and keep slipping down Patroclus’ nose no matter how much he tightens them. The wind keeps shoving at him, forcing him to correct his course and threatening to knock him right off of his broom.

Patroclus is having a difficult enough time remaining on his broom, he isn’t sure how he is
supposed to find the golden snitch in these kinds of conditions. It is far worse than looking for a needle in the proverbial haystack.

He glances over to catch sight of his competition, Andromache who is circling the pitch in a slow rotation that gives her the appearance of a shark circling its prey. She is calm, but it is a different sort of calm than that Penelope’s grace and poise. Andromache is all tight lines and rigid alertness, right down to the cliff-cut of her bobbed hair. It all culminates into something that is distinctly militaristic.

Below, the battle for the quaffle rages as the two teams fight to outscore one another. Despite his better judgment, Patroclus’ eyes drift downward just to chance a glimpse of Achilles’ golden hair as it streaks by. He and Hector have been locked in brutal competition since the opening whistle blew. While Eurus was a challenging team due to their tactful plays and tricks, Zephyrus is the team that matches Boreas’ pure athletic talent. Hector is the point of that spear, their star player and the only quidditch player in the school that can even dream of holding a candle to Achilles.

Even still, Achilles dominates.

“Achilles has the quaffle!” Helen announces excitedly. “Hector is on his bristles!”

There are gasps, cheers, and jeers.

“Ten points to Boreas!”

The crowd screams wildly. The familiar chant of Achilles’ name sounds different from up above it all, muffled in the relentless hiss of the rain and vicious whoosh of the wind.

Patroclus forces his attention to return to his task feeling lost and completely out of his depth. This is nothing like practice or the scrimmage that he has been through. The anxiety that he felt during tryouts pales in comparison to the expectations and tension of an actual match. Despite all the fast-paced action below, ultimately the match relies upon the seekers and Patroclus hadn’t been ready for that kind of pressure. He has never felt relied upon for anything, much less something of this magnitude.

“Ten points by Hector!” Helen’s voice echoes up to startle Patroclus out of the dingy cesspool of his emotions and whirling thoughts sending an electrifying crawl along his skin.

He can’t just float around here! His team is depending on him. He can’t let them down. He can’t be the failure that everyone expects him to be. He shoves his hair back, the dark locks slicking back easily with the damp. He takes deep breaths in through his nose and pushes them out hard through pursed lips.

“Another ten for Boreas!” Helen shouts, her excitement rebounding through the crowd. “This is shaping up to be a high scoring game for the record books, ladies and gents! These two titans are not letting up.”

“Malaka,” Patroclus curses, dragging his forearm across his goggles once more and leaving wet streaks across the lenses and muddling his vision.

The sky ignites and thunder follows in a rumbling boom that chatter’s Patroclus’ bones. He tries to assume that there is some kind of spell that protects them all from the more deadly elements but not for the first time he realizes just how little he actually knows about the wizarding world.

Now is not the time for that kind of thinking. He scolds himself.
There is another flash of lightning and the flash illuminates the pitch in a burst of brilliant white. That light was just what Patroclus had needed because reflecting off of that light gold glistens and Patroclus catches sight of the snitch as it zips low around the stands.

He dives madly without thinking, slipping into that anomalous space where only he and the snitch exist.

The snitch seems to sense him because its pace picks up and it begins to spiral up and around one of the spectator towers. Patroclus follows with unyielding relentlessness, a wolf on the heels of its quarry.

“Patroclus and Andromache have both caught sight of the snitch and are in pursuit!”

Helen’s commentary is the only thing that cues Patroclus into the fact that he is not alone in his chase. He glances over to see the Zephyrus seeker right beside him, her short hair pulled back from her face with a headband. Her goggles, Patroclus notes with annoyance, seem firmly in place and not the least bit fogged.

“It’s another rookie versus veteran standoff!” Helen booms. “This is Patroclus’ first match and this is most definitely not Andromache’s. Boreas has certainly had some luck with its new recruits the last couple of years, can Pat here live up to the hype.”

If Patroclus weren’t so absorbed in his pursuit of the snitch he would wince in annoyance at the shortening of his name.

The snitch darts over the heads of the cheering fans and Patroclus and Andromache zoom after it as it shoots skyward. Students and faculty alike gasp and duck as they brush overhead. Patroclus is faster than his Zephyrus counterpart but she clearly has more experience maneuvering in the wind and rain as she remains steadfast in her course.

Even so, Patroclus thinks he can best her as he continues to edge out in front of her. He gains on the snitch as it beats its ethereal wings and continues upwards.

“Patroclus is closing in!” Helen shouts.

Patroclus’ goggles streak with rain and continue to fog with the heat of his body. He reaches out, his teeth gritted. The tips of his fingers are close, just grazing the gilded surface of the fleeing orb.

A sudden gust of wind slams into Patroclus along with a battering of rain. The force of it nearly sends him off of his broom and he is forced to bring both hands back down to the haft to keep from tumbling off. Frantically, he tries to correct himself and get back behind the snitch only to see Andromache has replaced him, her own hand outstretched.

No! He screams at himself as he speeds his broom up to try and catch her.

He’s flying faster than he can ever remember flying before.

He’s up beside her.

It’s too late.

Andromache’s hand closes and Patroclus feels his heart bellyflop into the pit of his stomach. The inertia of it drags him forward.

“What a turn, folks! Andromache pulls it off! Zephyrus wins by a mere ten points, beating
our returning champs.”

There is a mix of cheers and boos from the assembled crowd.

“What an opening match,” Helen continues. “Achilles and the Boreas chasers beat out Hector and the Zephyrus chasers and just when victory seemed assured in the hand of their new seeker it was snatched away and Andromache wins her team the match. Welcome to the season! It’s going to be an unpredictable one.”

Patroclus floats back down to the pitch in a disappointed daze to join his team in the customary exchange of handshakes and high fives. Boreas is subdued in their congratulations to the wildly excited Zephyrus team.

The walk back to their tent is silent as they plod along soaked and defeated. Patroclus barely registers the hand on his shoulder as Achilles shares in his gloom.

“What kind of sorry ass display was that!?” Menelaus rages once they are inside their tent, which is eerily silent and still given the storm raging outside.

“A match,” Sarpedon offers sarcastically.

That provides Menelaus his first outlet for his anger. “Could’ve fooled me, Sarpedon! What the hell were you doing out there? They scored two hundred points on you!”

Sarpedon’s heavy brow lowers into a glower. “Did you see who I was up against out there? Hector is just about as good as Achilles.”

Achilles crosses his arms and snorts.

“And you,” Menelaus whirls on Achilles at the sound. “What?” Achilles asks, his eyes and tone cold as winter mornings frost. It is the first time Patroclus has seen anything of Thetis in him. “I scored us two hundred and ninety points.”

The muscles in their captains face shift and rumple under his skin and he streaks his hands into his hair to pull at the rain-soaked crimson strands before turning his anger on Patroclus.

“Well, what do you have to say for yourself?” He demands.

Patroclus swallows and can only stare, voice lost somewhere below his chest.

“You had it!” Menelaus booms. “It was right there!”

Patroclus swallows again and this time manages to find his voice. “The wind…”

“The wind?” Menelaus gawks. “The fucking wind!? Are you kidding me?”

“Give the kid a break, Menelaus,” Ajax rolls his eyes. “It’s his first match and that is one hell of a storm out there.”

Menelaus glares at his friend and deputy captain where he sits on a bench, elbows on his knees.

“I took a chance on you,” the captain says, turning his attention back on Patroclus. “I took a chance on a second-year, muggle-born, with no experience because I thought maybe—just maybe—something of Achilles had rubbed off on you with all that time you spend dogging his footsteps.”
Unbidden, tears spur within Patroclus’ eyes and he blinks hard a few times to keep them at bay. He cannot cry here. He cannot cry in front of his team. He will lose everything if he does. He will disgrace Achilles if he does.

“Leave him alone,” Achilles gnaars beside Patroclus.

Menelaus remains unfazed. “Give it a rest, Achilles. The whole school is fucking sick of you always sticking up for him.”

The tent went silent as the team waited to see if Achilles might retaliate but nothing more was said. Beside him, Achilles seethes like incandescent magma churning below shifting tectonics.

Menelaus rubs his forehead. “Get out of my sight, the lot of you.”

Without another word, they all shuffle out of the tent and back to the mansion to shower off their shame.

~ o ~ o ~

Patroclus’ mood is dark as oozing tar for the next few days. Both Achilles and Briseis fret over him, attempting to lift him from the dark depths he has sunk to but to no avail. He remains quiet and withdrawn certain and sickeningly comfortable in his own tacky misery.

He sits with his back to the stone wall of the Tower of Urania only half-listening as Professor Chiron lectures about the location of constellations and their correlation with the seasons in Greece. Normally he enjoys his weekly Astronomy lesson. He likes being out so late at night and Professor Chiron is always engaging in his lessons but tonight he might as well be a million miles away.

“We’ve got a good view of Andromeda,” Achilles informs from the telescope they share during these lessons. “Come and see.”

Patroclus shakes his head at him, the back of his scalp rolling against the wind-cooled stone of the tower behind him.

Achilles looks over at Chiron who seems to be primarily focused on teaching, using his wand as a pointer. He moves from the telescope and comes to sit beside Patroclus against the wall, their shoulders bumping slightly.

“It wasn’t your fault we lost.” Achilles assures for what might be the thousandth time.

Patroclus keeps his head against the wall as he swivels it over to look at him. “Did I get the snitch?”

Achilles frowns like he doesn’t understand the question. “No,”

“Then it’s my fault.”

Achilles shakes his head. “I could’ve scored more, I was too busy having fun goading Hector; Sarpedon could’ve done a better job protecting the goals, and Ajax and Menelaus could’ve kept the bludgers more focused on Hector. There’s plenty of blame to go around.”

“If I’d caught the snitch--”

“You’ve never once flown in that kind of weather,” Achilles interrupts. “How were you supposed
to know how to fly in that, much less catch a snitch?"

It is all true. Somewhere deep inside Patroclus knows this. But that voice is small and it doesn’t make him feel any better.

“Do you know how the stars came to be in the sky?” Achilles asks suddenly, voice hushed and almost conspiratorial.

Patroclus frowns at the abrupt change in subject. It catches him off guard, he feels like he’s just stubbed his toe into an unforeseen rock and lost his balance.

“They’re balls of gas burning light years away.” He replies dryly.

“Nope,” Achilles refutes, undeterred. “They’re dreams.”

“What?”

“They’re the dreams of muggles, witches, and wizards alike.” Achilles leans in close, his warm breath billowing across the shell of Patroclus’ ear.

His toes curl involuntarily with the feel of it.

“Long ago, there was a wizard named Morpheus and he invented a spell that extracted the dreams from people while they slept. He was fascinated by these dreams and would spend hours watching the dreams of his parents and siblings. But the dreams would float away once separated from his wand. This saddened Morpheus so he began to experiment with ways to trap the dreams so he could keep them always. He eventually forged lanterns to house the dreams extracted from where he could then return and watch them whenever he chose. As his collection grew, so did his desire for different dreams. He decided that he wanted to travel the world taking the dreams of all sorts of people as they slept.”

Despite himself, Patroclus feels himself enraptured by the tale, his skin prickling up all over his body as Achilles continues to whisper the tale into his ear.

“But sneaking into people’s homes while they sleep is creepy business,” Achilles continues. “So he enlisted the help of his father and siblings who helped him create a helm that allowed him to go invisible while his father invented a spell that would put people to sleep. So he wandered the known world, sneaking into people’s homes and collecting every manner of dream to put into his lanterns. Eventually, his brothers joined him in his quest and the three of them become known as the Oneiroi—the Dreams.”

“One night, while he was out collecting dreams, Morpheus encountered a beautiful witch whose dreams were unlike any he had ever seen before. She dreamed in colors so vibrant it was almost painful to behold. She dreamed in colors he had never known before. He became enamored of her, coming back night after night to take her dreams and watch them.”

Their sides are sealed from shoulder to knee and in this moment there is only Achilles and the story he weaves.

“But eventually the dreams were not enough,” Achilles continues with his mesmerizing voice. “Morpheus needed to know this woman—truly know her. So, he devised a way to meet her in the waking world and the reality of her was even more captivating. Her name was Iris and she was powerful and wise and he fell in love with her and in time she came to love him in return. As they grew closer, Morpheus made the decision to show Isis more of his world. He showed her his
Mausoleum of Dreams. At first, Iris was enchanted with it, with the way the dream lanterns glowed and the visions they held within. But as time went on she discovered her own dreams among the shining lanterns and she was horrified and revolted by the knowledge Morpheus had been sneaking into her home, that he had stolen her dreams. Iris saw this for the violation this truly was and her anger was fierce. She loosed her magic upon the mausoleum destroying the dream lanterns and freeing the captive dreams within."

Achilles tilts toward Patroclus and points a finger to the sky. “But the dreams did not return to their dreamers, instead they floated up into the sky where they remain to this day, shining down upon us.”

Patroclus stares up at the night sky where the stars shine like glittering diamonds strewn across jewelers velvet, his doubts and troubles temporarily forgotten. “I kinda like that explanation better than the burning balls of gas one.” He murmurs.

Achilles smiles. “Me too.”

“What happened to Morpheus and Iris?” Patroclus asks.

Achilles shrugs, his arm stroking along Patroclus’ as he does. “That’s where the story ends.”

“Hmm,” Patroclus hums. “I hope Iris ditched him after that. The guy was a creeper.”

Achilles snorts a laugh. “Yeah, I’m sure she ditched him. But I like to think that Morpheus learned his lesson, that he and his brothers learned from those mistakes and did something good with their power from then on. Like, maybe that’s how we got the memory extraction spell or something.”

Patroclus nods, feeling better for the first time since the match.

“As long as we learn from our mistakes they aren’t really mistakes.”

“Even for creepy dream stalkers?”

Achilles laughs. “I guess there needs to be some kind of limit.”

They drift into silence, the lecture forgotten, just staring up at the stars—at all those dreams hanging over them.

“Thanks, Achilles,” Patroclus whispers.

“I just told a story.”

Patroclus smiles and shakes his head fondly.

“That’s enough for this week,” Chiron’s deep voice rolls over them. “Back to the dorms and off to bed.”

They both sigh in unison as they rise up to stand.

“I wish we could stay out longer,” Patroclus laments. “If we had one of those invisibility helmets that Morpheus had we’d be able to stay out as late as we wanted, whenever we wanted.”

Something passes along Achilles’ golden features and Patroclus knows him well enough to recognize that an idea is skimming under the surface.
“What?” Patroclus asks.

“Nothing,” Achilles replies, easily moving to follow the flow of students down into the stairwell.

Patroclus doesn’t believe him for a second but he decides he’s sleepy and in a better mood than he has been in days.

He’ll pester him about it later.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Away For the Holidays

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/185807922346/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-14-azuldemon
Year 2: Away For the Holidays

Chapter Summary

The kids are growing up and with it comes all kinds of confusion awkwardness. Patroclus gets to have a Christmas but at what cost? Achilles tries to be sneaky.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You know,” Patroclus says as he bends and points his wand at slimy looking slug that is slithering its way along a stalk of fluxweed. “If you would’ve told me a year ago that using magic to rid plants of bugs would get old I would’ve called you a liar.”

Briseis giggles her butterscotch giggle from where she is using the severing charm to trim dead leaves off of the shriveling fig with careful swipes of her wand.

“Incendio,” Patroclus says, controlling the intensity of the flame with his concentration and focusing his aim so as not to hurt the plant.

“It really is amazing what you can become used to,” Briseis replies.

He catches sight of two slugs at one of the stalks tucked farther back and drops and crawls on all fours under the plants to get at them and repeat the spell. At first, he’d felt bad about incinerating the little bugs and had been fairly lax about this chore when it was his turn in herbology class, but after he’d seen what they did to a crop of life-saving moly at the start of the term he’d quickly changed his tune.

With his job done, he crawls back out of the brush and brushes the dirt off his knees and the front of his tunic. Briseis snorts a laugh when she sees him, her cheeks dimpling and her liquid-brown eyes twinkling.

“You’re a mess,” she says and steps into his space.

Her fingers come up and card into his hair, combing out the leaves that had become trapped in the dark waves. Her eyes drift up to meet his from behind the long veil of her lashes. Something tightens in Patroclus’ chest while she blinks long slow blinks at him.

He clears his throat awkwardly and shuffles from foot to foot feeling the blood kindle in his cheeks.

Briseis seems to think something and draws her hand back to rest against her chest before she suddenly spins away to begin sweeping up the clippings that have collected around her feet.

Patroclus feels suddenly awkward, which is something he has never felt around Briseis before. He knows something just happened but isn’t exactly sure what that something is.

“So,” Briseis starts, and her voice sounds a little different and she seems to determined not to face him. “I was thinking…since you were stuck here last Christmas…why don’t you come home with me for the holiday—with me and my family.”
“Oh,” Patroclus stammers, caught off guard by the abrupt invitation and that strange exchange between them.

She turns then, her whole face open and bright with the idea. “You’d love Turkey!” She claps her hands together. “And my family would love to have you.”

Patroclus’ awkwardness and dread grows within him like a foaming tide. He cannot bring himself to hold her gaze. His eyes shift down to his feet and he scuffs at the greenhouse floor with the toe of his sandal.

Briseis misunderstands this reaction and steps forward again and he can smell the spicy scent of cloves that always clings to her. “Really, my mother is always asking about you and she and my father were so sad to hear about last year. There’s this lovely loquat grove near our home and my mom makes this turkey stuffing with rice and chestnuts…”

“Um,” Patroclus starts. “I’d love to go—and I am so happy you’d invite me into your home and family.” He begins to rub at the back of his head.

Briseis’ excited features begin to slowly melt into a frown.

“But it’s just…”

The frown deepens into a scowl. “I should’ve known.” She essentially curses.

“It’s just that I already accepted Achilles’ offer to spend the holiday with him and his father.” Patroclus finishes, unable to stop his blurring.

Briseis scoffs out a breath and shakes her head. There is something glossy to her eyes.

“It’s true,” Patroclus pleads. “He asked a few weeks ago and I just forgot to tell—”

“It’s fine, Patroclus,” Briseis snaps.

Patroclus isn’t exactly sure what he did but he feels terrible.

“Briseis, I’m sorry—”

“I said it’s fine,” Briseis almost yells. She closes her eyes and takes a breath. “I’ll see you at dinner.” She informs before stomping out of the greenhouse.

Patroclus can only stare after her feeling helpless.

~ o ~ o ~

The weeks drip steadily onward, sweeping them closer to Christmas. As they tick forward the perpetual shroud of clouds and the near-constant drizzle of the winter showers creep into the skies over Aeaea. Boughs of holly wind around the pillars of the academy lit from within by glimmering orbs. It all results in the teachers struggling to get their students to concentrate on their studies as their minds drift ahead into the holiday season and the break from classes.

That very mood has hit a fever pitch buzzing among them as they gather in the Hall of Winds for their final dueling class before they depart for the mainland on Circe’s Loom. Achilles and Patroclus are pressed close together near the catwalk that has been conjured into the center of the hall.

Jason and Professor Hippolyta stand at the center of the catwalk speaking to one another and
“Alright,” Professor Hippolyta announces as she steps away from Jason. “Tonight we will be practicing the disarming charm which we have been covering in our Defense Against the Dark Arts class.”

“But now you’ll be practicing on each other rather than a practice dummy.” Jason cuts in with his rakish smile.

There are giggles from some of the girls and excited murmurs from others.

Professor Hippolyta’s eyes slide towards Jason, narrowed and sharp as cloven daggers. “This will be your chance to work on your reflexes and speed.”

“All things that are essential when you’re up against an opponent,” Jason adds.

“Only the disarming spell,” Hippolyta insists flintily.

The Pelion Academy takes dueling very seriously. While many schools boast dueling clubs, Pelion makes it a required course from second through fourth year. The Greek wizarding world likes to boast that dueling was essentially invented in this part of the world. Jason is fond of saying that greek witches and wizards are descended from a warlike people and that this is where the tradition comes from.

“Briseis,” Jason calls out over the crowd. “Why don’t you start us off.”

Patroclus feels something inside of him pinch uncomfortably as he watches his friend separate from Esma and a few other girls their age and make her way up to the dueling catwalk.

At least…he hopes they’re still friends.

In the weeks that followed Briseis’ invitation for Patroclus to spend the holiday with her family, there has been a strain between them like a violin cord strung too taut and ready to snap. They speak and she still sits with him and Achilles at meals but it feels like they are dancing around something now.

“Is everything okay between you two?” Achilles whispers, his eyes watching Briseis.


Achilles shrugs, accepting Patroclus’ answer with obvious reluctance. “Just a feeling.”

Patroclus hasn’t told Achilles of the exchange he and Briseis had in the greenhouse, not because he is hiding it, but because he is not sure how to describe it or what to say about it. He doesn’t understand it himself.

Professor Hippolyta nods at Jason’s choice and her steel-blue eyes scan the crowd of students.

“Paris,” she announces.

Patroclus feels that pinch pull further down into his gut as fear for Briseis is added to the mixture. He knows that this is all practice and that their instructors are here to ensure things do not get out of hand but he does not trust Paris. Everything he has seen of Paris has proven that he is a careless, cruel, and spiteful boy.

As if to prove Patroclus’ point Paris groans loudly from among his lackeys. “Are you kidding
me? You’re putting me up against a girl?"

Professor Hippolyta visibly bristles and looks to be composing herself before she says something un-professor-like.

It is Jason who responds.

“If you underestimate an opponent on something as flimsy and inconsequential as gender then you have already lost.”

It is a surprisingly professor-like response.

Paris remains silent but doesn’t look the least bit cowed or convinced as he steps up to the opposite end of the catwalk.

For her part, Briseis seems wholly unconcerned with Paris and his remarks, pulling free her wand and giving it a few swishes to loosen up her wrist.

Paris just yawns dramatically and stretches.

“Students to the center,” Professor Hippolyta instructs.

Both Briseis and Paris march towards the center. Briseis’ steps steady and even while Paris struts like a peacock on display, smiling and winking at girls as he walks past.

“Bow,” Hippolyta clips when they reach the center.

Briseis offers a formal bow, hinging at her waist.

Paris scoffs and only tips his head.

“Ewwww’s” echo throughout the hall.

A person’s bow is a demonstration of their respect (or lack thereof) for their opponent’s abilities. Paris’ nod basically says he sees Briseis as a trifle—nothing to be worried about.

“Wands up,” Hippolyta’s voice booms over the din student chatter.

Both Briseis and Paris snap their wands up vertically in front of their faces. Before he lowers his Paris puckers his lips and makes a loud smooching sound at Briseis.

Patroclus wants to hex him from where he watches.

Still, Briseis keeps her cool. Acting as though nothing happened.

“Turn and walk ten paces on my count.” Professor Hippolyta continues.

Patroclus rakes a hand through his hair.

“She’ll be fine,” Achilles assures with a hand on his shoulder.

Patroclus wishes her were that certain.

“Three…two…” Hippolyta counts down as Paris and Briseis march away from one another.

Patroclus gulps past a lump in his throat.
“One!” Hippolyta shouts, signaling the start of the duel.

Briseis whirls upon her toe like a dancer her wand already flipping up. She’s so quick she startles Patroclus to gasping.

Paris isn’t slow. He just isn’t as quick as Briseis.

“Expelliarmus!” She shouts, her wand corkscrewing.

Her aim is true and it hits Paris arm as he is halfway through his own incantation. The force of it slaps his wand hand back flinging the wand high up into the air pinwheeling away.

There is a collection of claps and cheers from the Boreas students and Briseis’ friends.

Paris glowers.

“Well done,” Jason congratulates Briseis.

“Yes, excellent form and wand control,” Hippolyta adds.

“See,” Achilles smirks beside Patroclus. “Briseis is agile and precise. You had nothing to worry about.”

Patroclus’ head jerks and he frowns at his friend.

Achilles rolls his eyes. “She may not be my friend but I have eyes and I’ve seen her spell work and Paris’. Paris is all flourish and emotion, there was little question about the outcome.”

Patroclus shakes his head fondly at his friend, always in awe of Achilles’ wholly earnest nature.

He watches as Briseis is surrounded by the girls from their class. She smiles and accepts the compliments graciously. Patroclus wants to go and offer his own compliments but hangs back with uncertainty. He isn’t sure anything from him is welcome.

Paris snatches up his wand with a growl, his eyes on Briseis.

“That’s enough for today, Paris,” Professor Hippolyta instructs.

Paris’ back goes stiff and he meets their professor’s eyes before sniffing haughtily and shoving his wand back into the sheath at the belt of his tunic.

Patroclus is so busy watching the exchange that he doesn’t see Briseis eyes find him through the crowd.

~ o ~ o ~

“I can’t believe you’ve never been to a wizarding home.” Achilles marvels as they walk down the plank from _Circe’s Loom_.

“I can’t believe you’ve never been to a muggle home.” Patroclus counters.

Achilles’ nose crinkles with thought before he nods his head. “Good point.”

Patroclus feels like his insides are at war. On the one hand he is excited to be going away with Achilles for the holiday but on the other, he’s also nervous about meeting Achilles’ father. On top of that, he’s really beginning to worry that there is something very wrong going on between him
and Briseis. They went the whole voyage without her stopping by their cabin, something she’s never done. Patroclus is beginning to fear that their friendship might be over and he isn’t exactly sure what he did.

“Patroclus!”

He turns and Briseis is weaving her way through the crowd of students and families.


When she reaches him she is out of breath and neither of them speaks for what feels like the tedious stretch of forever.

“I just—” Briseis closes her eyes and takes a deep breath, her slender shoulders rising with it. “I just wanted to say I hope you have a happy Christmas.”

“Yeah,” Patroclus exhales the breath he hadn’t realized he was holding. “Yeah, you too.”

They return to staring at one another, the silence a heaving weight.

“Briseis, I’m sorry for what—”

He doesn’t finish because Briseis throws her arms around him and hugs him hard. He squeezes back.

“I’ll see you back here in a couple weeks.” She says before detaching from him.

Patroclus feels awkward and confused. “Right…okay.”

Briseis gives him her dimpled smile and just like that things seem to be back to normal.

“Have a nice break, Achilles,” Briseis singsongs as she turns on her heel and waves at them.

“You as well, Briseis,” Achilles responds in the plank-stiff tone that he often directs at Briseis. “I knew something was weird between you two.” He grumbles quietly after Briseis is out of earshot.

There is an accusation layered within his words.

“I—I honestly don’t know what’s been going on,” Patroclus confesses.

Achilles quirks his eyebrow at him before smiling and shaking his head. “C’mon, let’s find my father.”

Achilles’ father is nothing like Thetis. Where Thetis is crystal frost, Peleus is a summer oak.

Achilles goes to him and the bearded man pulls him into his arms with an easy, fatherly affection that makes something within Patroclus ache like the lonely cry of a missing limb.

“You’ve grown!” Peleus’ gravely voice booms as he holds Achilles out before him. “Looking strong.”

Achilles steps back from his father raking fingers through his hair and smiling a small smile that Patroclus realizes is something like embarrassment.

“Papa,” Achilles angles himself away and gestures towards Patroclus, becoming him over. “Meet Patroclus.”
Patroclus swallows and follows his cue stepping up to join them, nervous and feeling out of place. Peleus beams from behind his dark, close-cropped beard that time has seasoned with silver. “So, this is that famous Patroclus.”

Patroclus freezes at that, certain it is a joke or some other cruelty in the manner of his own father. What else could it be?

“All I ever hear from this one is: ‘Patroclus said this’ and ‘Patroclus did this’ and ‘Patroclus is so this’.” He ruffles the hair at the top of Achilles’ head affectionately for emphasis.

“Papa,” Achilles grumbles, fingers combing his hair back into place. His cheeks bronze with blush.

Patroclus feels his heart flutter. He knows he should not be surprised to hear Achilles speaks of him but to hear it laid out this way makes it feel all the more impossible.

“It’s nice to meet you, sir,” Patroclus says when he is finally able to muster up words again. He extends an unsteady hand.

Peleus seems to find something funny in this but accepts the offered hand in his own large and calloused one.

“I am pleased that my Achilles has finally made a friend,” He says. “And I’m excited to have you with us for the holidays.”

“T—thank you, sir.”

Peleus snorts. “Please, call me Peleus.”

“Yes sir—Mister Peleus, sir.”

Peleus seems to find that really funny because he throws his head back and laughs up at the sky.

“You’ve chosen well, son,” Peleus says once he’s finished laughing. “I like this little fäks.”

Little Fox.

It is the first time Patroclus has ever been given a nickname out of affection. Peleus, he learns, is good at this sort of effortless charm. He would have had to be something to woo a woman such as Thetis. Although, it is no surprise that the two are no longer together.

They take the floo network from the Agora to the villa that Achilles and his father call home, each of them appearing in a whirl of emerald fire and snowy ash in a firepit in the villa’s central courtyard. Peleus magics their things to be unpacked and settled and Achilles immediately grabs Patroclus by the wrist and leads him about showing him the entire villa excitedly.

It is a wondrous place, with whirling mosaic floors, whitewashed walls, sunken baths, and a small practice pitch for quidditch. The patio of Achilles’ room opens out onto the beach, the ocean only a few strides away. There is a bed set up in Achilles’ room for Patroclus along with his trunk and Skops’ cage.

With the tour complete Achilles immediately strips down encouraging Patroclus to do the same.
and races right out into the surf where they swim out past the breakers and Achilles shows him a cove where brightly colored fish dart spittfire quick within the shallow tide pools.

Later, they walk among the olive grove that surrounds the villa, the rich buttery scent of the fruit mingling with moss, to cloak them along with the shadows of winding branches. They sit there in the shade eating olives and spitting the pits at one another, laughing historically when Patroclus manages to land one in Achilles’ ear.

“When did you first do magic?” Patroclus asks when they have eaten their fill and fallen into their easy silence.

Achilles frowns at the question and looks up at the dimming sunlight as it filters through the silver-green leaves.

“I don’t know…” he answers. “I’ve just—always done magic.”

Of course he has.

“Not on purpose. Things would just…” he shrugs, “happen. My parents had to go the ministry to explain since underage wizards aren’t supposed to do magic outside of a school. It got easier to control the older I got. It’s usually when my emotions are strong that the magic just…gets out.”

Something about that strikes Patroclus. Achilles and his cool demeanor. It is more than being distant; it is something he had to learn to do to keep his magic in check.

Patroclus closes his eyes and tries to imagine it, magic always just flowing from you, growing up in a world where you only know magic. He can’t fathom it.

“When did you first start using magic?” Achilles follows up.

“I guess I was maybe seven…” Patroclus replies. “When I can first remember odd things happening to me or around me. A broken dish mending before my father could see; things moving on their own. Little things like that.”

He takes a breath and looks down at his hands. All at once he is telling Achilles of his eleventh birthday. He hasn’t spoken of that day since Chiron came to collect him and bring him into the magical world. He still feels the dull sting of guilt. He worries that Achilles will be disappointed or disgusted with Patroclus’ use of magic to hurt someone else.

When he finishes Achilles is quiet like he is chewing over something.

“He was cruel to you—that boy,” he finally says. “He sounds like he was a real jerk.”

“I shouldn’t have hurt him. It could’ve been worse.”

Achilles shrugs. “You didn’t know you could even do what you did. When you give cruelty you shouldn’t be surprised when bad things happen to you. It catches up eventually. It was an accident, Patroclus, but maybe it was also the universe telling this guy to stop being such an ass.”

A laugh startles out of Patroclus, it’s not that he finds it funny…it’s more that he’s amazed that Achilles still surprises him. He should’ve known Achilles wouldn’t blame him. He shouldn’t have been surprised by Achilles’ sense of cosmic universal justice.

They eat dinner with Peleus around the fire pit in the main courtyard, the meals prepared by the three house-elves: Solon, Kleitos, and Elpida all of whom wore fine garments and spoke openly
and warmly to Peleus and Achilles.

Achilles’ father asks them both questions about Pelion and their studies but he seems most interested in quidditch. He asks about their season so far and Patroclus is relieved that he at least managed to find and capture the snitch in their match against Notus Tower before the break. He can’t compare with Achilles but at least it’s not a string of failures.

“Well,” Peleus says as he puts his plate aside and letting it be magicked over to the kitchen by the elves to be cleaned. “Let’s see what you boys are made of.”

They make their way out onto the mini-pitch that Peleus has outside of his villa and they mount their brooms. There is only one set of rings to try and score on and Peleus flies up and hoovers between the posts.

They spend almost an hour just trying to score on him since Peleus was Boreas’ keeper when he was at Pelion. Achilles dominates, of course, but Patroclus is surprised at his ability to handle the quaffle and keep up even though it’s not his position.

Then Peleus has the two of them engage in a one-on-one match causing them to chase one another across the field and compete over the leather ball. By the end of it, Patroclus is windswept but his throat aches from laughing and his cheeks are sore from smiling.

Peleus too is smiling when they finally land as the sun slowly sinks into the horizon. He heaps praise and easy affection onto Achilles and it seems the most natural thing in the world. It is when he comes over and places a hand on Patroclus’ shoulder that things suddenly shift.

“You are quite the player,” Peleus praises, and it sounds just as warm and genuine as it had with Achilles. “It is no small feat keeping up with, Achilles. You are going grow into one hell of a seeker.”

It is the first time Patroclus has ever been praised by a parent. Something in him throbs like a tender wound that has been jostled and the tears sting his eyes.

He clears his throat and coughs to buy himself time. “Thank you, sir—Peleus.”

Peleus only chuckles and makes his way back to the villa.

~ o ~ o ~

Christmas morning arrives and Patroclus is woken by Achilles bounding onto the bed that has been set up in Achilles’ room for him. Patroclus startles with the sudden weight upon him, and his eyes open to a curtain of golden hair spilling around him. Achilles’ nose just barely grazes his own; his scent surrounds him—the spray of the ocean mixed with sun-warmed amber and something melon-sweet.

Patroclus’ vision goes crossed and blurs as they try to focus on those emerald eyes. The braided cord of emotions that encompass his relationship with Achilles seems to wind Patroclus’ lungs up within it making it hard to breathe.

“It’s Christmas!” Achilles declares cheerfully before pushing himself up and off leaving Patroclus to catch his breath and try and fathom what all these feelings are and what they actually mean.

~ o ~ o ~
Patroclus has gifts.

Patroclus has more gifts than he has ever had for Christmas. He doesn’t have as many as Achilles but it is a near thing.

Peleus has several packages wrapped in soft brown parchment under the tree for Patroclus even though this is the first time they have met. He even gets a gift from Chiron and Skops returns with a gift from Briseis after delivering the gift he had purchased for her at the start of the term. She even sends a card for Achilles which Patroclus suspects is more for him than Achilles. He smiles at the bewildered surprise on Achilles’ face when he sees it.

It feels like the final balm of forgiveness over whatever weirdness that had been going on between them.

Achilles’ great eagle owl, Belius, carries several gifts for Achilles from Thetis: a purple cloak the color of ripened plum; a new cauldron to replace the one he had melted in Potions class; a book on potion brewing techniques; a set of oils for his hair and for his feet.

Achilles’ smile is golden and beautiful when he opens his gift from Patroclus, a signed quaffle by Matthaios Floros, captain and chaser on the Greek national quidditch team. That smile is all the gift Patroclus needs for Christmas but the gift of perfectly fitted enchanted goggles for when they play in turbulent weather is also a pretty awesome gift.

There is singing from Peleus.

There are games.

There is a small feast.

Most of all there is warmth and laughter as the rain comes down.

It is the first real Christmas Patroclus has ever had and it is fucking epic.

~ o ~ o ~

It is the day before they’ll be leaving for Pelion and for the first time Achilles is not by Patroclus’ side. Patroclus had spent the greater part of the morning occupying himself by taking a long bath in one of the villa’s sunken tubs. He had then packed as many of his things as he was able and then played with Skops and Belius for a bit, throwing bits of food into the air for the birds to chase.

Eventually, the absence of Achilles becomes something he cannot tolerate. It nags at him like a missing tooth.

So, he sets out and wanders the villa searching for Achilles. It is an odd occurrence, the first time it has happened in the two years he has known the other boy. Truth be told, it has often been the other way around in their relationship.

“I think he was in the library,” Peleus notes, looking over his copy of the Hermes Herald. His dark bushy brows push down over his deep mahogany eyes in a thoughtfully amused expression. “I’m not sure I’ve ever said that about my son.”

Patroclus thanks him and hurries off to the library.

When Patroclus enters, the air is heavy with the smell of parchment and leather. It is the only room
in the villa that cannot be opened up to nature, relying on the glass roof above to provide light during the day.

He finds Achilles amid a stack of books at the large oak table in the middle of the rows of bookshelves.

He finds Achilles amid a stack of books…

This is also a first.

Achilles is more of a…physical being. His mind is as quick as his feet and for that reason, he rarely has the patience to read much of anything, much less as many books as Patroclus sees stacked around him now.

“What are you doing?” Patroclus asks, his voice loud in the hush of the library.

Achilles looks up and his smile tells Patroclus that he hadn’t been avoiding him.

It is only then that Patroclus realizes that he had been fearing that very thing.

“Did you know that there are parts of Aeaea that have been lost or hidden?” Achilles asks.

Patroclus takes a seat across from him and picks up one of the books: *The Twelve Most Magical Places in the World*, it reads.

“Uh, no,” Patroclus replies.

“There’s this one place called the Sunken Sanctum,” Achilles notes, pressing his finger to the pages of the book in front of him. “It’s a place where Circe used to keep her most powerful magical artifacts. Some say it doesn’t exist but others disagree. Since the Academic Reformation of the Pelion Academy of Magic outside scholars haven’t been allowed to search the island.”

It is an interesting bit of history but Patroclus is still confused as to why Achilles is suddenly so interested in this to the point he took the entire morning to sit and read.

“It is…why the sudden interest?”

Achilles shrugs and his eyes immediately go back to the book. “Just interesting…maybe something for us to keep an eye out for when are out and exploring the island.”

That almost makes sense.

“Sure, but it sounds dangerous.”

Another shrug.

“Besides, if that place exists it would probably be somewhere in the Thule Wood.”

Achilles looks up and there is something in his eyes that Patroclus doesn’t quite understand.

“Right,” he almost whispers and returns to his book, tongue poking out the corner of his mouth in silent concentration.

Patroclus sighs and rolls his lips together before picking up the copy of *The Twelve Most Magical Places in the World* and opening it up to read about Hogwarts Castle. He trusts Achilles enough to give him the space and time to open up to him about whatever it is that he up to.
Chapter End Notes

Up Next: The Song of The Manticore

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/186971156711/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-15-azuldemon
Year 2: Song of The Manticore

Chapter Summary

Patroclus gets interrogated. Achilles is reckless. And Briseis is having no more of these idiot boys' shit! Year two comes to a roaring close.

Chapter Notes

Look at me posting on a Thursday! I just couldn't not post this now that it is finished. Is it me or are these chapters just getting longer and longer? I hope you enjoy!

Also, so many kudos! Thank you to everyone who is leaving kudos and to those of you who comment, you all keep me insanely motivated.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Professor Medea is terrifying.

Granted, Patroclus is not all that difficult to intimidate. He is the first to admit it.

But in a school full of imposing instructors who stride through the mansion with an air of power and authority, Professor Medea is in a league of her own—with her dagger-blade beauty, blazing black eyes, and severe demeanor. Even when she is complimenting Patroclus on his work she leaves him shaking his sandals.

It does not help that whispers and rumors shroud the potions master like a trailing shadow. They are almost as numerous and widespread as those that flutter about Achilles and his prophecy.

*She is the product of a dark ritual between two powerful families.*

*She is a dark witch who sacrifices animals—and sometimes children—for her potions.*

*She and Jason were once lovers but he discovered that she grows horns, scaly wings, and a pointed tail on nights when there is no moon.*

It is all nonsense, Patroclus feels reasonably certain of that, but it does nothing to make the woman less intimidating—especially when he is currently being confined to her office for questioning.

Professor Medea’s office is a strange mix of austere organization and plush comforts. It is a circular room lined in curving shelves that hold all manner of vials, bottles, and canisters all of which contain various potions and all manner of ingredients. Every single item on the shelves is smartly placed giving Patroclus the distinct sense the Potions Professor would be able to find whatever she is looking for even if she were blindfolded.

Above them hangs various herbs that are drying or being stored, they season the room with a sharp and earthy scent that makes the inside of Patroclus’ nose twitch. The stone floor beneath them is covered in a plush, crimson rug that your feet slowly sink into when you walk on it.
The round table that serves as both workstation and desk is set with neat stacks of paper as well as a mortar and pestle along with just about every sort of potioneering equipment imaginable.

It would honestly be fascinating and homey if it weren’t for Professor Medea prowling back and forth in front him with all the menace of an angry dragon.

Silence hangs heavy in the air like a comforter of rain-soaked velvet, broken occasionally by the crackling wood in the fireplace and the swish of Medea’s robes as she stalks back and forth in front of him.

“For the love of magic, Medea!” Jason groans, crossing his arms and reeling his eyes up to toward the ceiling. “The kid says he doesn’t know anything. Give him a break already.”

Patroclus has never been so happy to have the hyper-verbal—and honestly exasperating—Jason around.

Medea stops and pivots to glare at Jason. “Goblin boils!” Shedismisses heatedly. “Those two are seamed at the hip.” She points a sharp, manicured nail at Patroclus.

Patroclus gulps and he knows everyone can hear it in the quiet of the room.

“One of them does not scratch if the other does not itch.” She rails on.

Jason snorts. “They can’t be together all the time.”

Medea arches a slender brow at him.

Jason looks at Patroclus and then uncrosses his arms to shrug dramatically at him as if in apology.

“Again,” Professor Medea demands. “When did you last see him?”

Patroclus finds himself transfixed as he always is upon the way the potions master’s eyes seem to be alight from within their black-pearl depths by fire. It is a bit of a tragedy that Professor Medea is so frightening. Potions is one of Patroclus’ favorite classes and one the ones he performs best at.

“We separated at breakfast,” Patroclus croaks past the constriction in his throat. “He goes to Transfiguration on Thursday’s and I go to Charms.”

Professor Medea gestures impatiently with a roll of her hand for him to hurry up.

“He usually manages to meet me in the east colonnade and we walk part of the way together and then I go to Herbology and then he goes to History of Magic.”

Medea turns and something in her face causes Jason to lift his hands up in surrender.

“So maybe they can be together at all times.” He concedes. “Mostly…”

Medea turns back around and nods for Patroclus to continue.

“Then we meet in the fountain courtyard and go to your class—Potions, I mean—but he didn’t meet me and he wasn’t in class.”

“And he told you nothing?” She probes.
Patroclus shakes his head frantically.

“And he wasn’t at lunch and that’s when I went looking for him and told Professor Antigone.”

Patroclus worries at the inside of his cheek. It has already been almost an entire day. The sun is setting out in the sky and only recently have the school’s instructors begun searching since it has been confirmed that Achilles has not been seen since Charms class early this morning. Patroclus is sick with worry and frustrated that time is being wasted when everyone should be out looking for Achilles.

He could’ve been taken.

He could be fighting for his life.

He could be hurt!

“I’d tell you, I swear!” He insists, his emotions boiling over and sloshing into his tone. “He could be in danger, like with the cyclops!”

Something about what he says or how he says it seems to give Professor Medea pause. The knuckles of her right hand curl up and rest at the swell of her apple-red lips. She hums and then nods.

“Allright,” she says with a finality that seems to let the oxygen back into the room.

“Finally,” Jason groans.

Professor Medea closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. “You may go back to your tower, Patroclus.” She says, ignoring Jason (who Patroclus is now certain is her former lover). “But if you hear anything from him or he returns, tell one of the professors immediately.”

“Of course!” Patroclus agrees earnestly.

With that, she waves him off.

Patroclus cannot wait to escape that office and practically jumps off the chair he has been occupying for almost an hour and rushes past the two adults and out of the room.

He begins racing through the mansion on his way back to Boreas Tower. His mind is occupied with alternating thoughts of horrible fates that have befallen Achilles as well as possible places his best friend could be. He is so deep in these frenzied musings that he does not see Briseis until he almost collides with her.

It is only her hands coming out to grip his shoulders that stops him. He startles and looks up and realizes that he is already back in the Boreas Common Room.

“Halara,” Briseis cautions.

“Sorry,” Patroclus breathes.

“What’s happened?” She demands. “The whole school is practically buzzing about Achilles being abducted or something.”

“They don’t know,” he informs her. “He’s been missing since after his first class.”

Briseis frowns. “And he didn’t tell you anything?”
“No!” Patroclus growls.

“Sorry,” Briseis defends, hands going up as if to ward off a foul wind.

“No, it’s my fault,” Patroclus replies, rubbing at his forehead.

He knows that it is a fair question, even if he’s been asked it a million times today.

He runs his fingers through his hair as he racks his brain trying to figure out where it is that Achilles could have gone or if he might have noticed something that could give the professors any clues about who or what might have taken him.

“Greetings, Patroclus,” Calliope greets as the muse materializes from between the billowing curtains. “Briseis.”

“Hi, Calliope,” Briseis replies.

Patroclus says nothing, still lost in furious thought.

“What troubles young Patroclus?” Calliope asks, drifting in closer.

“He’s worried about Achilles,” Briseis explains.

“Achilles?”

“He’s missing—say, have you seen him today?”

Calliope fades from sight for a moment only to reappear next to Briseis, her expression thoughtful. “I saw him this morning.” She notes.

Patroclus shakes his head in frustration. Of course she had, they had all been here this morning.

“Was that before breakfast?” Briseis clarifies.

“After,” Calliope’s voice practically sings. “He came here and was talking about a book and some note.” Again she vanishes from sight.

Patroclus’ head darts up with the sudden interest at this new detail.

“He asked about being a hero and wanted to know if heroes broke the rules sometimes.” Calliope continues as she mists back into vision.

“What did you tell him?” Patroclus asks his voice high and nearly squeaking.

Calliope smiles benevolently. “Why, that all great heroes in history have broken the rules at times. There isn’t a hero who lived that played by all the rules. To be a hero one must act. One must be bold.” Her voice beats with the cadence and force of a drum.

It’s supposed to be inspirational.

It serves only to pound into Patroclus’ eardrums.

“No, no, no, no, no, no!” Patroclus mutters as he rushes right through the muse, ignoring the shiver that gusts over him as he does and uncaring of the fine dust that coats him like he is a powdered pastry.
He rushes up to the dorms, taking the spiral steps of the tower two at a time as he goes. He remembers Achilles’ continued fascination with Aeaea and the possible secrets it holds. He remembers Achilles reading last night before bed.

He goes right to the Achilles’ kline and reaches beneath the pillow. Just as he’d known he would, he finds the book Achilles has been reading.

*Mysteries of the Mystic Isle.*

Dread sinks into the pit of Patroclus’ stomach.

“What is that?” Briseis asks breathlessly.

Patroclus hadn’t known she had followed.

“Ella!” Someone cries. “Girls aren’t allowed in the boys’ dormitory!”

Patroclus turns and sees Al staring with wide eyes at Briseis like she is something both alluring and terrifying.

“Quiet, Al,” Briseis snaps. “This is important.”

“I could’ve been naked!”

“Shut up!” Patroclus nearly roars.

Al goes silent and just gapes at Briseis like a carp just pulled out of water.

“What is it?” Briseis repeats, her attention back on Patroclus.

“The book Achilles has been reading,” Patroclus replies, flipping it open. “Achilles has been kind of obsessed with the island and any lost or hidden places that might be here.”

He opens it to the bookmarked page, the chapter on the Thule Wood.

“Malaka,”

“What?” Briseis demands, clearly losing patience with Patroclus not sharing his line of thinking.

He doesn’t answer.

Tucked into the crease of the book there is a handwritten note.

*Sunken Sanctum, Westside of the Cebren. Just past the lightning blasted tears of Chios.*

There is nothing more.

The handwriting is sharp and severe, nothing like Achilles’ flowing script.

“What’s the Sunken Sanctum?” Briseis asks from over his shoulder, having given up on waiting for Patroclus to tell her what he’s reading.

“Some place that Achilles has been trying to find on the island.”

“He thinks it’s in the Thule Wood?” She ventures.

“Seems like it.”
She says: “We need to tell the professors.”

At the same instant, Patroclus says: “I need to find him.”

They both stop and stare at one another. Briseis’ face is incredulous.

“You’ve got to be kidding me!” Briseis demands.

“I need to find him,” he exclaims. “He could be hurt—he could be in danger!”

“That’s why you tell the professors what we just learned.”

“What if they don’t believe me or don’t think it means anything?”

“They will.”

“I don’t have time to wait and see.”

“You don’t even know where to look. It just says the Thule Wood and some other cryptic directions.”

Patroclus looks at her and his eyes are pleading.

“Oh, no, nope,”

“Briseis,” Patroclus implores. “I need your help. Two heads and pairs of eyes looking are better than one.”

His friend stares at him, her dark eyebrows pinching together.

“I have to find him.” He explains.

Briseis immediately shakes her head. “Patroclus, don’t. Leave it to the professors. They’ll find him and take care of whatever is going on.

“It’s all my fault,” Patroclus begins to ramble.

“What are you talking about?” Briseis demands. “Of course it’s not. He’s the one trying to play at being adventurer.”

“He’s trying to protect me. He’s trying to keep me out of all this after last year and the cyclops.”

“Good!” Briseis retorts.

“He’s all alone, Briseis, I should be with him.”

“No, you shouldn’t,” Briseis insists hotly. “You could be walking into danger. You could get yourself killed!”

“I don’t care,” he snaps. “He’s my best friend and he could die.”

“I’ll go,” Al chimes in, raising his hand.

They both turn to look at him in shock, clearly having forgotten that he was even there.

Briseis growls and looks up at the ceiling. “Magic, save me from you idiotic boys!”
“What if the professors don’t find him in time?” Patroclus continues to argue.

“Fine!” Briseis concedes. “But what makes you think you can do better than the grownups?”

“I know him.” Is all that Patroclus can supply in response.

Briseis shakes her head and groans. “Give me that.”

She snatches the book from him.

“The west of the Cebren…” she mutters.

“The river that runs through the island.” Patroclus supplies. His time roaming the island with Achilles giving him a strong knowledge of Aeaea.

Briseis nods.

“Obviously,” Al’s head bobs up and down like a floating balloon.

Briseis glances at him with only narrowed eyes.

“Just past the lightning blasted tears of Chios…”

Patroclus grinds his teeth. “What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

“How does lightning blast tears?” Al asks.

“It isn’t actual tears,” Briseis says in exasperation. “It’s a tree.”

“A mastic tree!” Patroclus practically cheers.

“What?” Al demands.

“The resin,” Briseis replies.

“It seeps from the bark.” Patroclus finishes.

“Don’t you listen in Herbology?” Briseis demands.

“Erm…mostly?” Al replies sheepishly.

“Let’s go,” Patroclus urges, not caring who the hell decides to tag along. “There’s still daylight. If we take brooms we can follow the river and look for this lightning struck mastic tree.”

He doesn’t wait for an answer and rushes from the boys’ dorm room. He’s out of Boreas Tower and running down the hall when he hears his name. He reflexively comes to a halt and turns nearly causing Al to collide with him.

Patroclus frowns.

Briseis stands, edging towards a branching colonnade.

“This is crazy,” she says and her doe-eyes are hard and resolute. “You want to go flying off into the Thule Wood and maybe into some ancient ruin? Do you hear how that sounds?”

“Briseis, we don’t have time!”
“No,” she retorts. “We need to tell the professors. We’ve got plenty for them to go on.”

“I’m not waiting.” Patroclus swears. “You said you were helping.”

Briseis’ fingers crimp into tight fists. “I am helping.” She declares before she darts down the opposite colonnade and away from them.

Patroclus stares after her in a bit of shock and a tiny part of him wants to run after her. The rest of him howls to go after Achilles.

“I’m still game,” Al informs brightly.

Patroclus closes his eyes and fights down a groan but he nods and returns to his run to get their brooms. He’ll take whatever help he can get. Al was trying out for seeker too so Patroclus hopes that means he’s got a keen set of eyes.

~ o ~ o ~

The mastic tree turns out to be quite the eyesore and therefore easy for Patroclus and Al to spot from the backs of their brooms, even in the fading evening light. Patroclus dives for the blackened and split tree and Al follows. Not once does Patroclus think about the potential dangers of this forbidden place.

“Okay,” Patroclus pants. “The entrance is just past this tree.”

Al looks in front of them and behind. “Just past in what direction exactly?”

“I don’t know,” Patroclus moans, staring anxiously up at the fading light of the sky.


“Yeah, good idea—but don’t go far. The note said ‘just past the tree’.”

They split up and it is only when he is alone the muggy darkness of this forest that the baneful nature of it becomes clear. The trees crowd together in a jumble that is so unlike the enchanting woodlands throughout the rest of Aeaea. Gossamer clumps of moss drape from the branches, lilting back and forth making the trees seem to move like enraptured parishioners at sermon.

Patroclus tries not to focus on just how sinister and alive this forest feels and instead keep his focus upon his search for some kind of entrance or sign that will tell him where Achilles has gone.

There is a swish of something big moving through the trees and underbrush. His ears perk and he swears that he hears something hiss loudly. It sounds as if something bloated and leg-less is slithering around out there. His heartbeat thumps wildly and he freezes, every bit the startled rabbit.

“Patroclus!” Al’s cry cuts in. “I’ve found something!”

In relief, Patroclus turns and follows the other boy’s voice at a sprint and grateful to be going farther from whatever is making that sound.

He prays it does not follow.

He finds Al standing in front of a very familiar broom. It’s Achilles’ own Starsweep XXI.

The solace that washes over Patroclus is sweet and nearly knee buckling.
With a little more searching they discover a white marble doorway set down within a group of boulders.

They stand before the arch and the steep set of stairs that lead down into the murky unknown below.

This has to be the Sunken Sanctum.

There is another hiss and the cry of a murder of crows taking flight.

“There’s…uh…things out in these woods,” Al, mutters. “Not that I’m scared or anything.”

“Right,” Patroclus replies.

He gulps a deep breath and then steps through the doorway and marches down the sloping narrow steps.

It becomes noticeably colder as they descend, the chill seeping through their thin tunics and into their blood. It is as if the sanctum breathes, air wafting up to them and carrying with it the scent of something dank and just shy of rot. The tinkling drip, drip, drip of water onto stone is a constant patter that surrounds them. The walls and floors are overgrown with mosses and lichens, some of which offering up a spectral glow that somehow only serves to make the darkness feel more prevalent.

Both Patroclus and Al light the tips of their wands, the silvery light casting dancing shadows in the oppressive gloom as they go. It offers only a mild relief.

“Do you, uh…do you think we should split up or something?” Al asks, even as his eyes dart around the sanctum.

There is no way that Patroclus is voluntarily walking around this creepy place alone.

“Yes, together,” he whispers, unsure why precisely he’s whispering. It just seems a prudent thing to do given their present circumstances.

“Right,” Al replies in obvious relief. “Good call.”

The Sunken Sanctum is a series of zigzagging staircases with each long flight ending in a room or chamber. Most of the rooms seem empty except for the occasional broken piece of decaying furniture. Some rooms have floors that have collapsed and Patroclus fears that their weight might cause another at any moment.

Eventually, they reach a connecting landing between two sets of stairs and offers tall arches. This gives them the opportunity to peer down to a shimmering pool below in the center of which there seems that there might be an altar of some kind.

“Should we, like, call for him or something?” Al asks in a whisper that still feels far too loud for the hush of the sanctum.

For some reason, Patroclus can’t seem to shake the feeling that that is a very bad idea. Something tells him that they don’t want to announce their presence. He’s about to say so when he hears something. He turns as it glides up to them from somewhere below. It is more than mere words. There is a melody to it that resonates along the stone walls, echoing tunefully in the darkness.

“What’s that?” Al asks.
“I don’t know.”

“Do you think it’s him? Do you think it’s Achilles?”

Patroclus closes his eyes and listens. He knows Achilles’ voice, he knows the winsome magnetism of it. This is not that. This is something taunting, something just shy of madness. It fills Patroclus with a slithering fear that he tries to shove down and ignore.

“That’s not him.”

He turns and makes his way slowly down the next set of stairs, not waiting to see if Al follows. He dims the light of his wand some out of fear of whoever or whatever is making that sound. He also brandishes his wand out in front of him trying to be prepared and utilize all he can remember from Dueling class.

Down and down then continue. As they go, the rooms become larger, many with locked doors and heavy chests. Items begin to make an appearance: a statue that cries, silent crimson tears; a trunk that actually seems to be snoring; a bearskin rug with glowing eyes.

More than once Al tries to stop and get into one of these areas or to interact with these things only to be stopped by a sharp word or glower from Patroclus.

They are nearing the bottom, where the rooms begin to branch into corridors and the chill is the sharp stab of needles driving into the skin, when that indistinct crooning begins to creep so close that Patroclus can’t ignore the fear that is wailing to be heard within him. He stops just in time to see a shadow, slinking up the hallway.

His entrails go to ice.

He hears Al take in a sharp breath and hold it.

The first thing that he sees is a red-gold paw, tipped with sharp black claws. What follows is something that cages a scream inside of Patroclus’ chest. A feline body stalks into view but protruding from the bushy main is the head of a feral looking man with salivating fangs for teeth. But that is not the most terrifying part, what truly unsettles him is the scorpions tail that curves up and over its back with something thick seeping from its tip.

Patroclus recognizes this beast from his copy of Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them.

“Manticore,” Patroclus breathes.

“Shit,” Al exclaims.

The unsettling singing stops only to be replaced with a low growl as the creature lowers its large body closer to the ground and creeps towards them, tail high and bowing forward menacingly.

Patroclus takes one slow step back and then another, trying to wrack his brain for what it is the book said about these beasts. Only one thing echoes within his skull and it is that it takes only one sting from that tail to kill instantly.

He is still walking backwards when he realizes that Al hasn’t moved and is instead wielding his wand before him.

“Elá, what are you doing?” Patroclus demands in horror.
The manticore hisses and Patroclus knows that it is going to pounce.

Al is going to die.

The manticore charges, tail pulling back.

“Ventus!” Al cries as he spins his wand in a wild gesture.

A whirling vortex of wind spirals out from his wand and buffets against the manticore. It serves only to slow it but it’s enough to keep that stinger from striking. It does little to stop the beast itself who’s claws rake across Al’s chest and shoulder, spraying blood and causing the boy to scream out in pain before slumping down against a wall.

The manticore snarls and turns its back to Patroclus to face Al. The tail is back up and already poised to strike.

Thinking quickly, Patroclus casts the knockback jinx, aiming for the beast’s tail. The spell predictably rebounds but it is enough to halt the attack and turn the attention upon himself and away from Al. The manticore whirls and the lips of that human face stretch back in an unnatural grimace over the salivating fangs.

Patroclus feels his fingers convulse along his wand.

“Fumos!” He shouts, swirling his wand and shrouding the room in a thick cloud of black smoke.

Quickly he dives away, the tail of the manticore striking where he had just been, chipping the wall. Patroclus feels like his heart is in his throat, thumping and trying to escape out of his mouth. He scrambles on all fours rushing to Al. He gets to the other boy who is thankfully both alive and conscious.

Al cries out in pain as his wounds are jostled when Patroclus yanks his arm around his shoulders and hoists him up to move. He has no idea how long the smokescreen spell will last or how long it will delay the manticore. He only knows they need to get as far away from this beast as they can.

They are only halfway down the hall when Patroclus hears the manticore roar. He turns and sees that his spell has already thinned and that the beast has caught sight of them again. It charges, claws tearing up the ground as it goes. Patroclus fumbles for his wand but it is awkward with Al leaning on him for support.

He knows he is going too slow.

He doesn’t hear the sound of frantic sandaled feet, clapping against the ground.

All he knows is that one moment the manticore is rushing at him and then the next Achilles is right in front of him, sunbeam-hair spilling out the back of a bronze helm. He faces the manticore with shoulders back and wand raised.

“Expecto patronum!” Achilles cries, and it is a hoarse sound, strained as though he is shouting at the very top of his lungs and forcing every bit of his magic into it.

Brilliant light ignites from his wand, quicksilver slick and blinding.

The light grows and spirals, weaving itself into a living shape and form.

There is the sharp cry of a predatory bird.
Wings beat.
Talons extend.
Patroclus blinks in awe.
It’s a falcon.

It soars right up to the manticore, talons aimed at the creature’s face. The manticore snarls and recoils, snapping and grinding to a sudden halt and backing away.

In front of him Achilles holds his wand out in front of him, his brow wrinkled in concentration and sweat collecting on his golden skin.

It is the first time Patroclus has ever seen his best friend strain under the power of a spell.

“Achilles,” Patroclus breathes.

“Patroclus,” Achilles sighs back.

Pat-ro-clus

The falcon shines suddenly brighter—a star come to earth—and the manticore retreats further back but does not give up and retreat.

Achilles’ shoulders tremble and his wand arm droops.

The falcon’s light starts to dim and it begins to become more and more translucent.

The manticore gains ground on them once more, pressing back into the hallway.

All at once the spirit animal vanishes into silver mist and Achilles rounds on Patroclus and Al shoving them back against the wall.

Al cries out in pain.

The manticore leaps across the distance between them.

To Patroclus’ shock, the beast continues on right past them as though chasing after them. It doesn’t make any sense. The manticore had had them. It is only then that Patroclus notes the faint glimmer from the helm Achilles wears and the watery shimmer it casts to the air around them.

*The helm of invisibility!* Patroclus realizes, remembering Achilles’ tale about Morpheus and the dream lanterns.

“Achilles,” he starts in awe.

A hand comes over Patroclus’ mouth and Achilles presses close, his lips against Patroclus’ ear as he whispers.

“Quiet, it can’t see us but it can still hear us.”

Patroclus immediately clamps his mouth shut and nods against Achilles’ hand.

Next to them, Al lets out a miserable moan that splits the air in the precious silence. Achilles releases Patroclus’ mouth and clamps it down on Al’s instead, whispering the same warning.
There is the rumble of a snarl and the click of claws against rock as the manticore stalks back into the hall. The beast lifts its head and begins to sniff at the air.

_Malaka!_

Achilles keeps one hand over Al’s mouth while his other shoots out and comes across Patroclus’ chest and presses him back against the wall as if he could will Patroclus through the wall.

Patroclus can feel the scream shaking through him. He can feel it trying to rattle its way out of him. He clamps his teeth down and seals it behind the chattering wall of his teeth. Still, the manticore sniffs and comes closer. Patroclus feels more than sees Achilles flex his grip on his wand.

The manticore’s nose leads it towards them and it considers the wall that it must be seeing instead of them. Warm breath flows over them and the manticore growls low, predatory and full of teeth. The tail lifts up high, ready to strike.

Al whimper.

Patroclus turns his head towards Achilles.

Achilles brings his wand up.

_“Orbis!”_

The manticore turns its head and tail and roars but the ground beneath it has already begun to rise up encasing its limbs. That dangerous tail whips in the direction of the new arrival.

Professor Hippolyta!

More of the rock and floor molds upward, grasping the tail and dragging it down to the ground along with the beast. The manticore roars out in rage, its teeth gnashing at the professor who keeps her eyes and wand trained on it.

She takes a few slow strides into the corridor. She is dressed in some kind of leather armor, inlaid in gold. She wears a cape, lined in white fur and clasped with a golden broach. Her blond hair is pulled back and pleated in a rope braid that drapes down her back. She looks like something out of their Magical History books.

She looks utterly badass.

The polished reddish hue of her wand seems to shine in the phantom light of the lichens on the wall. The hilt is like fire, golden metal more like something for a sword than a wand.

Again, the manticore roars.

Professor Hippolyta’s wand flicks, snaps, and swipes as she casts spell after spell at the beast as she walks further and further into the hall. All of the spells seem to bounce off of the manticore with varying effects, some seeming to simply poke or prod the beast and others glancing off of it altogether.

Their professor’s hazel eyes seem to be sizing up the manticore and to be puzzling something out. Then she takes in a deep breath.

_“Expecto patronum,”_ she chants firmly as she swirls her wand.
It is the same spell that Achilles had cast to save him and Al. But instead of a falcon conjuring from the wand a great lioness bounds from it. The silvery spirit animal stalks towards the manticore its own teeth bared. The manticore seems to try and sink down into the floor in the face of it, teeth still on display in a silent, angry hiss.

But every time the manticore attempts to rise or resist the stony bonds that the Defense Against the Dark Arts professor has trapped the beast within the lioness lashes out with a clawed paw and the manticore slumps back down.

Hippolyta nods and one corner of her mouth rises ever so slightly.

The glow of Achilles’ helm dims and the shimmering field around them drones away.

“Professor,” Achilles calls.

Their professor’s blond eyebrows shoot up when she catches sight of them.

“Achilles,” she shakes her head. “How—where did you?”

The manticore sees them too and strains to rise and turn. The silvery lioness swipes and it is subdued once more.

Before more can be said there is the sound of galloping hoofs across stone, echoing out through the sanctum. Before long Professor Chiron is there, in his centaur form, his long wand extended before him as tough expecting a fight.

He looks absolutely fierce.

“Hippolyta,” his voice turns up at the end making her name a question.

“I’ve found them, Headmaster,” she gestures with her wand at the beast encased in stone and her lioness swipes again. “Along with a manticore, it seems.”

Chiron frowns. “Again you two…”

And Patroclus knows he means himself and Achilles. Patroclus wants Achilles to make them invisible so he doesn’t have to endure this glaring disappointment from one of the only people who has ever been proud of him.

“It’s my fault—” Achilles starts.

“Enough,” Chiron cuts him off and Achilles actually goes silent. “Hippolyta, can you manage?”

“Yes, I believe I’ve got the way of it. Send Atlanta, she might know more. We are going to need physical means of subduing this beast. Turns out Scamander is right, most spells seem to have no effect but the Patronus Charm seems to be a passable deterrent.”

“Very well,”

“We could cart it out in a cage perhaps,” Hippolyta muses aloud. “Or we could just seal off this place and let it rot.”

“I’ll leave that to you and Atlanta,” Chiron says. “I’ll deal with our capricious, wayward students.”

“Al’s been injured,” Patroclus informs as he and Achilles help the boy up who seems to be losing
consciousness, his face going waxy and pale.”

“The stinger didn’t touch him did it?” Hippolyta demands.

“No,” Patroclus adds quickly. “Just the claws.”

They lead Al around the manticore cautiously while Hippolyta’s patronus defends them.

Chiron kneels down on all four horse legs. “Bring him here.”

They bring Al before the Headmaster who holds out his wand and chants in his booming baritone: “vulnera sanentur,” three times.

Al draws in a breath through his teeth but to Patroclus’ amazement the wounds cease their seeping, and the wounds begin to slowly stitch closed. It is perhaps the most incredible feat of magic that Patroclus has ever seen and he feels drawn to it despite his fear for Al, his brush with death, and his worries over their headmaster’s ire.

“Help him up onto my back.” Chiron orders. “Hold him between the both of you so he doesn’t fall.”

They do what they are told silently with a fair amount of help from Hippolyta, all the while Al groans each time his freshly knit cuts are jostled.

“We will need to get him to the Healing Wing and Healer Chryses.” Chiron states as he rises up with the three of them upon his back. “Hold tight.”

Patroclus grips Chiron’s waist as he had been instructed. Achilles reaches from the back, arms bracketing Al as he grips Patroclus’ shoulders firmly. With that, Chiron gallops off and through the halls and rooms of the Sunken Sanctum. Within no time they break through the entrance and are then galloping through the darkness shrouded Thule Wood and back to the academy.

~ o ~ o ~

They deliver Al to Chryses, who begins to administer both spells and potions in quick and efficient succession. Once Al begins to doze and it is clear he is going to make a full recovery and that both Achilles and Patroclus are also uninjured, Chiron marches Patroclus and Achilles to his personal office.

The Headmaster's Office is located in a courtyard in the northernmost edge of the academy mansion. It is a courtyard that is not manicured like the rest of the mansion’s grounds, with cypress growing thickly and a freshwater spring bubbling up into a clear stone pool. Tucked into the back and growing out of the natural rock wall is a cave, but it is so much more than a cave. It is not made of gray stone but from pale rose quartz, the crystal milky and smooth. The entrance of the cave is obscured by a swirling mist that seems more than a little foreboding.

“Follow me,” Chiron instructs and that coiling mist parts for him.

Patroclus and Achilles glance at one another before they obey. The mist closes behind then with an audible sigh.

The cave isn’t dark, the crystal walls glow with the soft light of a simmering sunset. The walls are decorated with portraits of the former Pelion headmasters and adorned with wooden shelves that contain clay jars and gleaming bronze instruments. In one corner there is a marble statue of a Minotaur that shifts before going still once more. Hovering just below the ceiling is a magical
projection of the night sky, the stars blinking brightly down at them.

It is a stunning sight to behold.

The headmaster’s desk is tucked toward the back with a cozy stuffed chair. At the end of the desk is a framed license from the Apollo School of Medicine and Healing. Patroclus hadn’t realized that Chiron was a licensed healer. Patroclus finds something about that very intriguing.

“What exactly did you think you were doing!?” Chiron demands, he doesn’t exactly yell but his voice still manages to boom along the crystal walls.

“It’s my fault, headmaster,” Achilles steps forward before Patroclus can even form a thought in his head. "I had read about the Helm of Invisibility and I began researching it and—”

“—And you just found an ancient ruin that has been lost for over a hundred years?” Patroclus watches as Achilles swallows hard. This is the closest to anxious that he has ever seen his friend. “Well, there was a—a, uh, note.”

Chiron frowns, “a note?”

“You see, sir, I reasoned that the Sunken Sanctum would be in the Thule Wood and started looking into books on it. One of the books had a note tucked into the crease that hinted at where the sanctum might be.” Achilles shrugs but does not meet their headmaster’s eyes. “So I went to investigate.”

Patroclus thinks of the note he had seen in the book left on Achilles’ bed. The note written in that severe script.

“I want that book and the note.” Chiron says.

“Yes, headmaster,” Achilles replies without hesitation.

“And what do you have to say for yourself, Patroclus?” Chiron demands, turning his glower onto Patroclus.

“It wasn’t his—”

“—silence, Achilles.” Chiron snaps.

Achilles’ back goes rigid and straight and his mouth clamps shut.

Patroclus gulps.

“I—I was looking for Achilles…after he went missing…” Patroclus begins. “I found the book and the note and I went to find him.”

“You went to find him…” Chiron says and Patroclus is unsure if it’s a question.

“Yes, sir?”

“And you didn’t think to inform myself or one of the other faculty?”

Patroclus feels his face prickling with shame and his throat goes dry and threatens to close on him. “I was worried he might be hurt or in danger.”
Chiron shakes his head. “Unbelievable.”

Achilles turns to look at him and there is something that Patroclus for once cannot read in those green eyes.

“You two are lucky Briseis had sense enough to inform us of this utter foolishness. If Professor Hippolyta hadn’t been there Al could have bled to death and the two of you could have been killed as well.”

Patroclus cannot hold the centaur’s gaze and drops his eyes to the floor.

“Detention for the remainder of the term for the both of you—and Al when he has recovered—and two hundred points from Boreas for the three of you for reckless endangerment of yourselves and others.” Chiron walks around his desk and drops into the chair with a heavy sigh and messages his brow with his fingers. “Consider yourselves fortunate that you are not being expelled.”

“Yes, sir,” they say as one. “Thank you, sir.”

“I’d confiscate the Helm of Invisibility from you,” Chiron points to the helm tucked under Achilles’ arm. “But it is bound to whoever claims it—but you had better believe that I will know if you are using it on academy grounds.”

Achilles nods once moving to clutch the helm with both hands in front of him.

“Go,” Chiron waves with his other hand as if in defeat.

It is all Patroclus can do not to turn and run.

“And Achilles,” Chiron calls before they’ve made it more than a pace or two. “Do not forget to get me that book and that note.”

~ o ~ o ~

“Why did you do that!?” Achilles demands.

Patroclus freezes in shock. “What?”

“Why did you come after me?”

“I—I was worried about you,” Patroclus replies dumbly.

Achilles shakes his head and then runs his fingers through his hair.

Patroclus bristles as his best friend’s apparent annoyance at him. “You were the one who has been keeping secrets. You’re the one who hid all this and made me worry in the first place.”

“Because I wanted to protect you,” Achilles shoots back. “I was trying to keep you from all of this.”

“I know,” Patroclus replies. “But what was I supposed to do? Just let you risk your life? Just leave you alone in some dark cavern?”

“Yes,” Achilles shoots.

“No,” Patroclus rebuffs.
Achilles sighs but his sunny smile blossoms on his lips.

Patroclus’ own smile answers automatically and suddenly they are laughing.

“You’re impossible,” Achilles says fondly.

“I’m impossible?” Patroclus replies aghast. “You’re the one who went searching for some magical helmet in some sunken ruins in the Thule Wood.”

“For you,” Achilles informs, voice earnest.

“What?”

“I went looking for the helm for you.”

When Patroclus’ confusion shines through on his face Achilles explains.

“The night I told you the myth of the dream lanterns you’d said you wished we had a helm like the one Morpheus had.”

Patroclus’ mouth drops open in shock.

Achilles blushes and combs his hair behind his ears.

Patroclus should be angry or—or—something. But all he feels is that ever-present rope of confusing emotions within him twist and braid over and over again until he feels like he might be sick or sing.

“You’re unbelievable,” Patroclus whispers but his smile is back.

Achilles lifts his head and smiles tentatively. “Yeah?”

“Yes,” Patroclus shakes his head. “Don’t do anything like that for me again…or at least talk to me about it next time before you go running off.”


~ o ~ o ~

When they return to Boreas Tower the entirety of the tower is awake and gathered in the common room.

When they lay eyes on Achilles they surge forward like a ravenous tide. Achilles is swallowed up like the shore and Patroclus is pushed aside like driftwood.

There are excited questions as they grill Achilles about his latest adventure. Someone catches sight of the bronze helmet in his arms and the questions only intensify along with demands for demonstrations of the helmet’s power.

Patroclus drifts back to lean against one of the marble pillars and watches. It never ceases to amaze him how hungry people are for Achilles, how enthralled and fascinated they are by him.

He didn’t used to understand—he still doesn’t.

He sees the allure, the glamour. But that is honestly the least interesting thing about Achilles to Patroclus. He is so much more than Vela blood and prophecy.
Movement to his right catches his eye and he turns to see Briseis edging towards him, one hand gripping her opposite elbow.

“Patroclus, I’m sorry but—”

He shakes his head. “What are you sorry for? I’m the idiot. If it wasn’t for you the three of us would’ve been killed down in the Sunken Sanctum.”

Relief flows visibly through Briseis and she releases her elbow.

“You are.”

Patroclus cocks an eyebrow.

“You are an idiot.” She teases.

They chuckle and Briseis slips up beside him to watch the spectacle that is Achilles. They are silent for a long while.

“You know this isn’t the end of it.” She murmurs.

It is so loud in the common room that Patroclus thinks he has misheard her.

“What?”

“All of this—with Achilles,” she answers.

Patroclus shrugs. “It’s just his nature. He can’t help the effect he has on people.”

Briseis shakes her head and her curls dance with the motion. “You don’t get it.” She’s silent for a moment her features going somber. “The cyclops last year. The note in the book and the manticore this year. It isn’t just coincidence. Achilles is the Boy That Was Promised.”

Understanding creeps in upon Patroclus like icy, scratching fingers.

Briseis nods, her expression still grave. “Someone or something is sending these things after Achilles. Whatever or whoever that is doesn’t want him to live long enough to fulfill whatever prophecy he’s supposed to fulfill.”

“Malaka...” Patroclus breathes and looks to Achilles who is still being passed around like some kind of party favor.

“You’re still not getting it,” Briseis grabs his arm and yanks his attention back to her. “You’re his best friend.”

“I know that,” Patroclus retorts in irritation.

“Everyone knows that.” Briseis replies as if he’s just proved her point. When he says nothing more she continues. “Whoever is doing this obviously knows that too.”

Those icy fingers curl around his heart with slow, creaking menace. It feels like someone is standing on his chest.

Briseis’ gaze remains fixed upon him, pinning him to the spot. “Whoever is doing this might try to use you to get to him.”
Patroclus sometimes hates just how brilliant Briseis is.

Ignorance really can be bliss.

She clears her throat and wrings her hands together nervously. “Maybe you should…”

Patroclus whips about to fully face her and frowns. “Maybe I should what?”

Briseis looks away.

“He’s my best friend, Briseis.”

“It could mean your life.”

Patroclus steps away from the pillar and away from Briseis. He keeps his eyes on the crowd of his fellow students. Fear for his own safety as well as Achilles’ tumbles wildly with anger at Briseis for bringing this to his awareness and suggesting he stay away from Achilles.

The crowd moves and, like always, Achilles somehow knows and they lock eyes from across the crowd. Achilles smiles and it is like the free fall of flying. A diamond-certainty hardens in that molten churning of emotion.

“I won’t do it.” He says it like it’s a vow.

Briseis lets out a heavy disappointed breath. “He’d want to protect you.”

“Would you want me to avoid you if it was the other way around?” He demands, part of him bitterly suspicious this is about his two feuding friends.

Briseis meets his eyes with steely confidence. “Yes.”

Patroclus holds her gaze. “Well, I wouldn’t abandon you either.”

They continue to stare in a stubborn deadlock, though Briseis seems at a loss for what to do with him.

“Sorry,” Achilles pants as he jaunts up to join them, pressing in next to Patroclus, close enough that their sides are touching. “You know how people get.” He is flushed with the glow of all the praise and glory that has been heaped upon him like holy wine across an alter.

Patroclus knows then that he will stay with him through whatever comes.

“Yeah, wouldn’t want to disappoint the adoring fans.” Briseis grouses.

“Of course not,” Achilles grins at her widely.

~ o ~ o ~

Thankfully, the remainder of the term slips away without further incident. There are no other dangerous beasts or shenanigans from Achilles. The points they lost their tower for their exploits in the Sunken Sanctum losses Boreas Tower the Golden Fleece this year. But Achilles manages to lead Boreas to win the Quidditch Cup for the second year in a row which seems to offset the sting of the loss of the fleece. Patroclus likes to think he helped with that.

Detention turns out to be he, Achilles, and Al being sent to help the various professors of Pelion with whatever tasks they need taken care of and can entrust to students. They are not allowed to
serve their sentences together.

The worst professor is Medea (of course) who seems to delight in giving them the most menial of tasks with a fair amount of dark glee. Patroclus once spent over an hour scrubbing the inside of a giant cauldron.

Patroclus would choose to have detention every day of every year with Professor Medea if it meant he didn't have to go back home.

But go back home he does.

Leaving Pelion.

Leaving Achilles and Briseis…

It hurts every bit as much as last year…maybe a little more.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next: Year 3 and the Boys of Summer

You guys, we're heading into year three! I am so excited to share what I've got in store for year three. it is literally one of my favorite years in both Harry Potter and in this fic.

Also, there is a small chance that there might not be updates for a bit since I will be traveling. I'm hoping to eek one more chapter out before I go but I can't say for sure. So, trust and believe that I have not forsaken this fic if there is a bit of a lag in posting.

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/187524894901/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-15-azuldemon
Achilles has a little adventure and Patroclus learns the meaning of pinning. Welcome to year three!

Chapter Notes

Eeking this one out right before I leave! I didn't think I'd be able to do it but I hammered it out! This fic will likely be on break for the remainder of October while I travel and write up the rest of year 3, there is so much plot and teenage angst and pining coming your way I can't wait.

Once again, thank you all for your comments and kudos it is all so amazing and loved!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Patroclus walks down the concrete steps into the subterranean depths of the Athens metro, making his way for the M1 green line. Music bumps through the eggshell-white earbuds cradled just outside of his ear canals. The piercing metallic shriek of the subway cars zooming past mixes with the thumping beat of the music. If there is one thing that he thinks the muggle world does better than the magical world, it’s music. Music performed with magic is just so…perfect. It also doesn’t help that Patroclus has not been able to find a satisfying equivalent to headphones or earbuds in the Wizarding World.

He’s not sure how witches and wizards survive without them.

Patroclus hoists the insulated bag he’s carrying his groceries in higher up onto his shoulder as he waits for his train to arrive.

He likes taking the subway further into the city to buy groceries because that new fancy Thanopoulos Supermarket in his neighborhood feels more like some sort of fancy modern art museum than an actual place to purchase food. It also gives him something to do other than lay around his massive house all day.

Since getting back this summer he has kept up a consistent exercise routine prescribed by Menelaus as a means of keeping in shape for quidditch. The weirdest one entail hanging from doorways and ledges by his fingers, apparently to develop grip strength in order to remain on his broom. Patroclus had assumed he’d hate the exercise but it has proven to be the best part of his lonely days. He finds that he can lose himself in the music as he runs and even enjoys making his muscles work to soreness. It makes him feel like he has accomplished something in the monotonous void of his summer days.

He skips the next song that begins to play—some k-pop song with way too many synthetic sounds—and gets into the line of other commuters, all lost in their own electronic worlds located neatly within their cell phones. It took him a full two days to figure out how to operate his phone
begrudgingly given to him by his father. The little square is so different from anything in the
magical world despite not being too unlike his wand in utility if not form and function.

Not for the first time, he wonders what else kids his age know how to do that he does not. With
each passing year at Pelion, he can feel the steady waterfall-slip of his connection with the muggle
world and his peers within it as he drifts away like a kite without a string. He is moving farther
and farther away from the muggle world and it is becoming more and more foreign.

It worries him a little bit.

Just a little bit.

He wonders what learning he is giving up in exchange for his magical education. Every school
year he becomes increasingly invested in the Wizarding World and less and less able to make a life
for himself in the muggle world someday. Soon he will drift so far from the world he was born
into that he will never be able to get a job and build some kind of life in it. He will have no skills
or relevant education.

He doesn’t regret the choice he made at the tender age of eleven. He has every intention of
continuing to make that choice year after year. He has never really fit in here. It is why Menoetius
has always seemed to smell something foul when he is near Patroclus. He has never really
belonged here.

All this introspection about the differences between the muggle world and the magical world
makes Patroclus think about his wand, tucked snuggly against his lower back. He can’t seem to
help but carry it with him at all times even though he is not allowed to use any magic while on
break from school. His experiences over the last two years at Pelion have left him feeling naked
and vulnerable without the magical piece of wood’s reassuring presence.

He smiles to himself. The people around him have the internet and smartphones but Patroclus has
magic. He wouldn’t trade it for anything.

There is also the small fact that the magical world has Achilles. Patroclus isn’t willing to think too
long or hard on just how much Achilles influences his decision.

There is a sharp screech as his train pulls in yanking him out of his head and back into the metro
station. He shuffles onto the carriage and finds a seat next to a window where he rests his head and
watches world flow past. His mind is mostly focused on Achilles, however. He thinks about
Achilles a lot lately. He has always thought about his best friend a lot—even when he had tried to
hate him and was determined to have nothing to do with him—but something about it has changed
this summer. He imagines the glow of the other boy’s hair in firelight; the rosebud-swell of his
lower lip; the sunbeams of glimmering gold among the green of his eyes.

He dreams of slender hands, reaching out to touch him; of his own hands skimming along olive-gold
skin.

He doesn’t like these changes and the things they are doing to his body. He also can’t stop them…
and maybe some part of him really does like them. He likes the itching pyre that it stokes inside of
him making his toes curl. He also, maybe, likes the exploratory touching he’s been doing to
himself when these feelings hit a fever pitch. What he doesn’t like is the root-rotting shame and
guilt that burbles up within him after he’s reached the crescendo of these delicious experimental
moments.

He worries that there is something wrong with him.
He worries that this is disrespectful of Achilles and their friendship.

He is terrified someone will find out somehow.

He also wishes there was someone he could talk to and ask questions. He has a lot of questions about all these damn changes. Like, is he supposed to be growing hair in so many places now!?

He’s tried using the internet to answer these questions. That proved to be both an informative and terrifying endeavor and he now has more questions than answers.

He exits the train when it arrives in Kifissia and starts the trek up to the old, giant house that his father calls home.

He’s been on his own for the past few days. His father never bothered to tell him that he was leaving or when he’d return. It doesn’t bother Patroclus anymore; he has long since grown used to his father’s absence. At first, he had been worried that something had happened to the man when he hadn’t seen him in over a day. It hadn’t been until Phaedra, the woman who cleans their house and helps care for Patroclus’ mother, had told him his father had gone away on business that Patroclus knew not to inform the police.

As messed up as it is, he prefers it this way. It is far more uncomfortable with his father’s angry presence looming over him like a simmering thunder cloud.

He walks up the long driveway up to the house and frowns. He feels strange. The small hairs all over his body feel like they are rising up in rigid unison, like prairie dogs sensing a threat. He-freezes and looks around but nothing seems out of the ordinary.

He stops the music playback and immediately hears footsteps but can’t pinpoint who they belong to or where they are coming from.

“Phaedra,” he calls, even though he knows she left and won’t be back until this evening to make dinner and help his mother prepare for bed.

The footsteps sound closer but still, he can’t see anyone or anything.

“Mom,” he ventures, even though he knows his mother has never left her bedroom unless someone has guided her out.

He thinks about the cyclops that was sent to the school their first year or the manticore just last year. Someone or something has been sending all manner of magical monsters after Achilles. Briseis had said she was afraid his close relationship with the Boy That was Promised would bring him unwanted attention and now Patroclus worries she may have been right.

He puts his shopping bag down and reaches behind his back to pull free his wand. He hopes that the Ministry will forgive any magic he may be forced to use in self-defense.

Footsteps patter around him, close on his right.

He widens his stance, wand coming out in front of him, wrist relaxed and ready. He is feeling more than a little grateful for all dueling Achilles made him do for “fun” all last year.

When he hears the steps again they are right behind him and before he can turn something hits him on his back, bearing him to the ground. He falls forward but whoever or whatever hit him keeps him from busting his face on the concrete by gripping his shoulders. There is a weight on his back, knees pinning him to the ground.
He curses himself and waits for the feeling of a wand pressed to his neck—or claws—or fangs! Nothing comes.

He realizes that the weight of whoever pins him is not particularly heavy and that the knees are placed so as not to hurt him.

“Patroclus!”

Pat-ro-clus.

He freezes, his heart stuttering in his chest. 

_It can’t be._ He thinks

The knees lift from him and he rolls onto his back to see a grinning Achilles looking down on him through the slots of the Helm of Invisibility.

“Surprise!” the other boy greets, smile growing wider.

“Achilles,” Patroclus breathes in wonder, taking the hand that is offered to him.

The hand is warm and smooth in his own. His stomach is an ocean of roiling nerves. He drinks in the sight of him, his joy cutting through everything needle-sharp and crystal-clear. It leaves him without words and he simply stares.

Achilles frowns at him and all Patroclus can think is: _No, no he should never frown. This boy should never have to frown._

“Did I hurt you,” Achilles asks, voice soft and full of worry. “I didn’t mean to. It was just a bit of fun.”

Patroclus shakes his head. “I’m fine.”

Achilles’ expression does not change.

“You’re here,” Patroclus breathes in wonder.

Achilles’ smile returns, the sun peeking out from behind a wisp of cloud. “I wanted to see you.”

Patroclus’ ears begin to ring. “You did?”

“Of course,” Achilles replies as though it were the most obvious thing in the world.

“Telia...”

Achilles’ smile bursts forward in a laugh as he envelops Patroclus in one of those hugs that has them pressed chest-to-chest and their arms wound around one another. Patroclus closes his eyes and shamefully takes in the scent of him. He feels those dreaded feelings stirring low in his belly and tries to will them out of existence.

There has to be a spell for this kind of thing.

Still, when they pull apart it is too soon and Patroclus aches for the loss.

“How?” He manages to ask.
“My broom, of course,” Achilles answers as though the answer were obvious.

For the first time, Patroclus remembers that they are in his driveway in the middle of the evening and glances around in concern. “But the muggles—”

“I used my Helm of Invisibility,” Achilles assures, tapping at the bronze helm with a finger.

_Duh_, Patroclus thinks.

Achilles flings an arm around Patroclus’ shoulder and turns him so that they can finish the walk up the drive. Patroclus feels numb with the shock and the giddiness of it all and he allows Achilles to walk him up to the front door where Achilles’ Starsweeper XXI is propped against the column at the front door with his travel trunk.

This all feels unreal like something out of a dream.

“You found me…” Patroclus stammers, fumbling for his keys.

“Course I did,” Achilles replies easily.

“How?”

“My dad’s scrying sextant,” he explains. “Led me right to you.”

That he has gone through all of this, that he has taken so many steps just to find him and see him leaves Patroclus feeling dazed. He feels flushed and warm all over and he’s just so freaking pleased. He had never had friends before going to Pelion and here is this boy who flew across a sea and city to reach him. And he has packed his trunk like he is prepared to head off to school from here.

Patroclus realizes that he is just standing there, Achilles’ head tilted as he regards him humorously, arm still hooked around Patroclus’ neck. He gives his head a little shake and finally puts his key to the door and allows them both inside.

He sees the flinch as Achilles goes to use his wand to magic his things inside but then stops. In that moment, Patroclus realizes just how difficult summers must be for Achilles with the prohibition on underage magic outside of the Academy. Magic is just an extension of Achilles, a limb, his voice. The loss must be terrible.

Achilles unloops his arm from around Patroclus’ neck and goes and retrieves the trunk and broom and carries them inside. Once over the threshold he stops and looks up and around.

“So this is your home.”

“My father’s house,” Patroclus corrects softly. This isn’t his home. It hasn’t been since he left for the Pelion Academy. That is his home now.

“Right,” Achilles nods with a slight wince.

Patroclus leads him upstairs to his room where Achilles deposits his trunk, broom, and helm. Skops hoots when he sees him and Achilles goes over to coo at the owl and stroke a knuckle along his feathered chest. Skops closes his eyes and makes pleased little chortles.

When he moves away from the bird he begins circling the room, eyes going everywhere, fingers grazing and touching everything within reach. Patroclus can only stare at him, unsure of how to
He understands how he and Achilles fit when they are at school, but this is uncharted territory, everything feels out of place somehow.

Achilles has grown even more since they parted before the summer, but unlike Patroclus, he fits gracefully into his stretching limbs. He has none of the gangly awkwardness that Patroclus sees when he looks in the mirror. Achilles is lean, where Patroclus is scrawny. He is growing muscle where Patroclus has the bulbous knobs of his joint.

“I like your room,” Achilles says, turning to face him.

Patroclus swallows and looks away worried he has been caught starting, “T—thanks…”

“Halara,” Achilles assures, hand gripping Patroclus’ shoulder.

Patroclus is terrified that he has just read his mind.

*Can Vela do that?*

“Right—yeah,” Patroclus stammers.

“So, where are your parents?”

“My father’s on a business trip, don’t know when he’ll be back. Probably not until after I leave for school. My mom’s in her room.”

The talk about parents reminds Patroclus. Icy dread skitters along his skin like tendrils of morning frost. He thinks of Thetis, her face morphing before his eyes into something vengeful and raptor-like.

“Do your parents know you’re here?”

Achilles brushes hair from his eyes and back behind his ears. His smile is impish but also shy. “Not exactly…”

“Achilles—”

“—My mom’s off doing…” he shrugs in what looks like confusion, “Veela stuff so I’m with my dad until school starts. My dad thinks I should be having adventures, just like he was at my age. Visiting my best friend in the muggle world seems like a pretty great adventure to me!”

Patroclus cocks an eyebrow.

“I left him a note,” Achilles defends, voice going high. “I told him I was coming here.”

It wasn’t Peleus that was giving Patroclus that deep sense of foreboding fear. He could not imagine that Thetis would want her son among mortals, or around Patroclus for that matter.

“Can I meet your mother?” Achilles asks brightly.

“Uh,” Patroclus stammers, hating the worry and embarrassment he feels.

Worry that Achilles will judge his mother. Embarrassed because his own mother is so very different from the powerful, regal and frightening Vela mother of Achilles.

“Sure,” he finally concedes. “But she might be resting.”
Achilles nods and allows Patroclus to lead him out of the room and down the long hall to the room that Patroclus’ mother spends almost all of her time. He pokes his head in and she is sitting in her rocking chair, drifting back and forth lightly, eyes out the window. It is as if she hasn’t moved all day.

Patroclus swallows and pushes the door farther open and steps inside. Achilles follows him in, his footsteps quiet. Patroclus realizes that he isn’t wearing any shoes. When had he taken those off?

“Hey, Mom,” Patroclus greets, in that gentle tone he uses when he speaks to her. “I’ve brought a friend for you to meet…from school…” he walks over in front of her, her eyes dart to him and she gives him that faint smile she always does. “This is Achilles, my best friend.”

Achilles is next to him and then he is kneeling down and taking her hand in both his own.

“Achilles, this is my mother, Philomela.” Patroclus manages automatically tough he is staring at the scene before him in thunderstruck awe.

“Hello, Miss Philomela,” Achilles almost whispers. “I’m Achilles, and I think your son is the greatest thing in the world.”

Patroclus swears that his heart has just stopped in his chest. He feels like he might explode on the spot hearing those words come from Achilles.

His mother hummus something, lilting and sweet and nonsense. But it sounds happy.

Achilles looks at him from over his shoulder and his smile is wide with an idea.

“Be right back.” He informs as he releases her hand and runs out of the room leaving Patroclus to reel in the shock of everything this moment is.

When Achilles returns, it is with Philomela’s violin in hand. The one Patroclus took with him to Pelion his first year.

Again, Patroclus feels his heartbeat stop.

Achilles steps in front of Patroclus’ mother and shows her the instrument. “Patroclus says this is yours. It’s a lovely instrument and I’ve been practicing and I can play it without any magic. Let me show you.”

He brings the violin up and under his chin and he begins to play. It something slow and sweet like warm honey spreading over freshly baked bread. Achilles weaves the music around them like a soft warm scarf and Patroclus sees his mother’s smile grow, ever so slightly as she begins to rock to the tune.

Nothing feels real to Patroclus, nothing about this moment feels like it could possibly exist in the world. It’s so piercingly beautiful.

Achilles stops and it’s like the world has stopped holding its breath and taken in an air-starved gasp. Because even though Achilles hadn’t cast a spell there had been magic in that music. Because Achilles is magic.

“Anyways,” Achilles says, violin coming out from under his chin. “Thanks for letting me borrow this. And thanks for letting Patroclus come to Pelion so I could meet him.”

~ 0 ~ 0 ~
The rest of the evening passes in a bit of a haze for Patroclus. He isn’t quite sure how to make sense of his life and he isn’t quite sure how to make sense of everything he is feeling. He makes Achilles change from his tunic into one of the t-shirts and pairs of shorts he’s packed. Again, Patroclus cannot help but notice the difference between them; Achilles fits just as nicely into the muggle clothes as he does in tunics and cloaks. Patroclus has to force himself not to stare at the way Achilles’ widening shoulders pull the fabric of the t-shirt across his chest.

Patroclus makes dinner while Achilles hoovers around him. It’s nothing fancy, just greek chicken with lemon rice but Achilles acts as though he is performing some kind of complex enchantment.

“It’s just cooking,” Patroclus grumbles, feeling warm under Achilles’ attention.

“But you’re doing it.” Achilles informs. “In my house either my parents just spell the dinner into cooking or the elves do.”

“That sounds cooler than this,” Patroclus counters.

“Nope,” Achilles corrects. “This is cooler. Trust me. I know these things.”

Patroclus shoves him with one shoulder and Achilles laughs.

When Phaedra arrives she literally stops in her tracks in some kind of shock. Not because Patroclus has cooked dinner but because there is another kid in the house—a friend. In all the time Phaedra has known him, Patroclus has never once had a friend over that hadn’t been coerced by Menoetius.

It is also very obvious that Achilles’ glamour works just as well on muggles as it does on the entirety of the magical world. She is utterly enchanted with him instantly.

Patroclus tells her that he is a friend from his very exclusive boarding school who happens to be in town and came by to visit until the term begins. She believes this without so much as an inquiry—probably, because of the before mentioned glamour—and goes upstairs to get Philomela for dinner.

Achilles insists on serving Patroclus’ mother her plate once she has been helped to her seat at the table. Patroclus and Achilles sit next to one another and Phaedra sits beside Philomela to help her eat. It is strange to sit around the table so formally. When his father is home Patroclus usually just eats in front of the television while Philomela is fed up in her room. Sometimes he’ll eat his meal upstairs with her but even with Phaedra there it still feels strangely lonely with the ghost of his mother going through the motions of eating. It’s nice to sit like this, like something close to a family. Achilles adds something that has been missing, he fills the monotonous, dreary gloom of their lives with much needed light. Everything about this moment is surreal, from Phaedra’s laugh to Achilles foot which keeps knocking against his own as he tries to catch Patroclus up on the latest quidditch news without giving anything specific away to Phaedra.

It’s nice.

After dinner, Patroclus introduces Achilles to the television which confuses his friend to no end. When he notices Achilles begin to nod off he suggests they head to bed for the night. Achilles agrees and they shuffle up the stairs. Phaedra has left for the night and it is only them and Patroclus’ mother in the house.

“There’s plenty of spare rooms,” Patroclus informs as they get to the top of the stairs. “You can pick whichever one you want.”

Achilles stops in his tracks and Patroclus turns to stare at him. He looks oddly reluctant and he’s...
chewing on his bottom lip.

“What is it?” Patroclus asks.

“It’s just…” Achilles starts and then stops. “It’s just that I’ve never been in the muggle world and everything is so strange. And what if your father comes back and sees me and you’re not there and —”

“You can just stay in my room,” Patroclus blurts without thinking.

Achilles brightens and nods, the tension and uncertainty exhaling from him and he begins walking again.

Patroclus cannot believe himself.

Once inside, they begin to change into their pajamas. Even though they’ve changed in front of each other hundreds of times at school, this feels different. Patroclus turns from Achilles both to hide himself and to keep himself from the temptation to stare.

“You can have the bed,” Patroclus offers, pulling his head through his t-shirt. “I can make myself a bed on the floor.”

Achilles’ nose scrunches up, he is wearing a tank top and his boxers. “It’s your bed.”

Patroclus tries really hard not to think about those boxers being Achilles’ underwear.

“You’re the guest.”

Achilles looks at the bed and then back at Patroclus. “It’s a big bed…”

Patroclus swallows hard. He watches Achilles watch the movement of his throat.

“We could just share.” Achilles shrugs like it’s the simplest and most obvious solution to this polite standoff.

Patroclus both wants that option and is terrified of it. It takes everything he has to not spaz out. He tries to tell himself to remain calm. To think cool, breezy thoughts that have nothing to do with the secret thoughts he’s been starting to have about his best friend.

Finally, he manages a nod. “Sure…Telia…”

Achilles nods back in satisfaction.

So when Patroclus shuts off the light and climbs into bed Achilles follows and to his shock the other boy faces him, their knees knocking together lightly.

Patroclus holds his breath.

He is thankful for the darkness and hopes it hides whatever his traitorous face might be giving away. Across the very small distance between them, he can make out Achilles’ eyes, grey in the lack of light, and the silhouette of his nose.

“Have you heard the tale of Perseus?” Achilles whispers into the darkness.

“The guy who killed Medusa?” Patroclus whispers back.
He swears that Achilles must be able to hear his heart hammering away inside of his chest.

“Yeah, but not the story muggles tell. He was a wizard.”

Patroclus is thankful for the story. It gives him something to focus on other than how the scent of amber and sea salt is invading his nostrils and making something in him stir. He closes his eyes and focuses on Achilles’ voice as he tells him of Perseus and his magical deeds.

~ o ~ o ~

He wakes the next morning with Achilles pressed in close behind him, his nose right up into the back of his neck, right in the hairline. One of Achilles’ arms is draped lazily across Patroclus’ waist. It’s warm, it’s comfortable and it leaves Patroclus feeling like magic is sizzling along the top of his skin. His morning wood—as the internet calls this embarrassing daybreak phenomenon—feels both painful and good, straining against the shorts he wore to bed. He wants to press it into the mattress and push down with his hips and rub. He wants to turn over and press it against Achilles and—

He bites his lip to keep his treacherous mind from going any further.

He also needs to go to the bathroom and he doesn’t want to move. He wants to stay nestled in this spot forever—shameful and embarrassing physiological reactions be damned.

Patroclus isn’t sure he’s felt pulled in so many directions all at once before.

The decision is made for him when Achilles grumbles and nuzzles his nose further into Patroclus’ neck, taking in a long breath.

Patroclus shivers and thinks he might burst violently apart at the seams in a firework display of teenage hormones and emotions.

Achilles rolls groggily onto his back, his arm slipping away from Patroclus’ waist in the process and Patroclus immediately feels cooler and disappointed. Achilles is scrubbing his hands over his face as he yawns and Patroclus uses the moment to escape to the bathroom so that his body cannot betray him to his best friend. He is terrified that if Achilles knew the kinds of feelings he was starting to have for him that it would ruin everything. Everyone fawns over Achilles, everyone is attracted to him. Achilles has always said Patroclus was different, that he looked at him differently than others who are glamoured by him. Patroclus doesn’t want to change that. He can’t risk losing Achilles. He will have him in any way he can. He can manage these feelings and urges. He has to.

They will go away eventually…right?

Once he has calmed himself and willed certain parts of himself away he allows himself to leave the bathroom and return to his room. Inside, Achilles is seated, sheets haplessly strewn over his crisscrossed legs as he yawns widely and loudly. His golden hair is ruffled up on one side and matted down on the other, his cheeks ruddy as sunrise.

He smiles sleepily at Patroclus.

Patroclus gulps and tries not to panic.

“Sleep good?” He asks.

Patroclus manages to nod. “Yeah, you?”
“Great,” Achilles beams.

And to Patroclus’ abject horror he drops his head onto Patroclus’ pillow and nuzzles into it, breathing in deeply.

*Does he know what he’s doing to me!?!*

“I’ll go get breakfast started,” Patroclus forces out in something close to a moan and retreats hastily from the room and down to the kitchen.

He gets no reprieve, however, since Achilles immediately follows him down and again watches him with that sharp intensity as he cooks.

It causes Patroclus to bust two fried eggs.

“So what are we gonna do today?” Achilles asks as they sit at the kitchen island eating.

Patroclus shrugs, still feeling off balance since waking up with him that morning.

Achilles shovels another mouthful of toast and egg into his mouth. “What do you usually do on break?”

*Wait to get back to you.* Achilles’ mind supplies unhelpfully.

“Nothing really,” he says instead.

He leaves out that one usually needs friends to do things.

Achilles chews and considers him thoughtfully. “Well, I’ve got a whole list of things I want to see and try.”

Despite himself, Patroclus smiles.

Achilles smiles back.

“You’re going to have to stop all this cooking, Patroclus, or I’m going to be out of a job.” Phaedra proclaims as she walks into the kitchen and breaks their grinning staring contest.

Patroclus feels himself blushing and looks back down at his plate to hide in his food.

“Will you boys be back for lunch?” She asks.

“Uh,” Patroclus stammers.

“Probably not, ma’am,” Achilles interjects. “Patroclus is going to show me the city today.”

“Is he now?” Phaedra intones. “Well, I know your father trusts you to take care of yourself but don’t be out too late.”

Patroclus nods.

Not for the first time, Patroclus wonders how much Phaedra knows about his life here and his father’s disdain. He thinks she at least suspects. He can sense it in the periodic sweets she brings him and her dedication to learning what his favorite meals are.

They dress and go to Kifissia park. Achilles gawks at just about everything along the way,
standing close and whispering questions into Patroclus’ ear. His voice is low and it seems to travel into Patroclus’ ear and trickle down his spine like cool sparkling water, he can feel the warm air against his ear and makes him bite his bottom lip. For his part, Achilles seems completely unaware of the effect he is having on him.

They mostly wander around the park aimlessly, that is until Achilles catches sight of a group of kids about their age playing football. The way he beams at Patroclus and reaches for his wrist and pulls him after him onto the pitch is so earnest and excited that Patroclus doesn’t even attempt to resist.

Achilles marches right up to the group, self-assured and easy as always. “Can we join you?”

The other kids gawk for a moment, the Vela-enchantment of Achilles’ presence snaring the lot of them immediately.

Moths to a flame.

One girl, pretty with her dark hair pulled back in a tight ponytail, finally speaks. “Yeah—sure, you know how to play?”

The corner of Achilles’ lip hikes up, “I’m a fast learner.”

And he is.

Achilles picks up the game rapidly, mastering moves that some of the other kids had likely been working on for most of their young lives. He’s quickly everyone’s favorite, all eyes and attention on him.

Patroclus, for his part, doesn’t do too poorly. It is odd given his history of not playing with others and having no stamina. But his years chasing Achilles across Aeaea and his time playing quidditch seem to have resulted in a little more aptitude in the realm of the physical. Somehow, against all odds, Patroclus has become an athlete. But he’s lost in the radiance that Achilles exudes, he might as well be a candle next to the sun.

But it’s all right, he can live with that, because Achilles only has eyes for him the entire time. Calling to Patroclus before he pulls off a move; passing to him and setting him up for a shot; jumping onto his back when he scores and cheering.

Patroclus only needs Achilles’ attention and approval.

When they are finished with the game the girl with the ponytail—Zoe she informs them—walks up to them.

“You want to go to a cafe with us?” She asks, her question clearly intended solely for Achilles.

Patroclus bristles a bit but holds his tongue.

Achilles’ eyes seem to gloss over her, sliding over her and back to Patroclus. “What do you think?”

Zoe seems to notice Patroclus for the first time and almost startles.

“Uh—” he actually feels a bit guilty. “Sure, that sounds good.”

Achilles nods to Zoe then and Patroclus feels shamefully smug.
Patroclus confuses himself with his tug of war emotions.

They join the group of muggle kids down a few blocks at one of those fancy coffee shops that the muggles seem obsessed with. Patroclus has to admit that the drinks are pretty damn delicious. Once there, Achilles considers the menu and the assortment of coffee flavors and styles, confusion gathering between his blond eyebrows.

Achilles leans into Patroclus and tortures Patroclus with another of his warm whispers. “I’ve got no idea what any of this is.” Patroclus can hear the smile in his voice, feel it tickling along the shell of his ear. “You’ve got to order for me.”

Patroclus chuckles, in part to hide his shiver. His eyes flit up just in time to catch sight of Zoe eyeing the two of them with a frown.

Patroclus orders Achilles an iced mocha with whipped cream and himself an iced java, that tastes like melted ice cream. They sit with the others who all attempt to draw Achilles into conversation, seeking his attention and approval. Achilles is always polite and mostly responds but he is often more interested in shooting the paper off of straws at Patroclus or hooking his ankles around Patroclus’ leg in an attempt to yank him off of his chair.

It is when Achilles offers him a lick of the whipped cream from the top of his mocha that the other kids decide that they’ve had enough despite the allure of Achilles’ aura and leave them at the table with nothing more than sideways looks and unkind words.

Achilles barely notices.

Patroclus takes Achilles out into the city from there and Achilles gawks openly at the tall buildings and the hustle and bustle of the city. He flits in and out of every store and shop curious and delighted about everything he sees. It all is a little more remarkable when Patroclus sees it through Achilles’ eyes.

“This must be how the magical world is to you,” Achilles notes, apparently reading Patroclus’ mind.

“A bit,” Patroclus admits, extending the cone of roasted chestnuts for Achilles to grab a handful. “I guess when you’re born into a place you kind of forget how extraordinary it can be.”

“Yeah,” Achilles agrees before tossing the chestnuts into his mouth and chewing thoughtfully.

They eventually make it all the way to Syntagma Square where the alleys and streets are clotted with vacationing tourists.

“What’s that?” Achilles asks as he watches a group of girls exit a Photo Booth giggling.

“It’s a Photo Booth, a place where you take pictures,” Patroclus explains.

That immediately seems to excite Achilles who tugs Patroclus through the red curtain and into the booth.

“How does this work?” Achilles asks, eyebrow askew as he leans in and stares at the touch screen.

Patroclus laughs and pushes a few icons on the screen and feeds it a few euros. The screen begins to flash a countdown.

“It’ll take our picture when it gets to zero. Strike a pose.”
Just like that, Achilles throws his arm around Patroclus and leans their heads together. Patroclus’ breath hitches and he can’t help the shy smile that spreads across his face just before the flash washes the booth in white.

“There are three more pictures to take,” he manages to explain.

Feeling bold, Patroclus pulls his mouth open wide by hooking his index fingers into the corners of his lips. Achilles laughs and puffs his cheeks out like a balloon and crosses his eyes. They are laughing hysterically by the end of it.

When the two photo strips slip from the dispenser outside the booth Achilles frowns down at the black and white photos.

“Why aren’t they moving?”

“Muggle photos don’t move.” Patroclus explains.

“Weird,” Achilles murmurs but he’s still smiling down at their faces.

It eventually gets dark and they find a spot to sit that gives them a view of the Parthenon all lit up like a giant piece of burning ivory. They are seated on a marble bench, legs straddling the stone, leaning against one another back-to-back. Patroclus’ right earbud in his own ear while his left is in Achilles’.

They both eat gyros, Achilles delighted at the fries that are wrapped up in the pita along with the lamb and tzatziki. They are silent as they eat, listen to music, and watch the city. Achilles’ foot taps along to the music, Patroclus thinks earbuds and music might be the other boy’s favorite thing about the muggle world.

Patroclus realizes that this is the very first time that he’s ever actually gone out and experienced Athens. He turns slightly to try and spy on Achilles, to take in the way the moonlight makes his face glow. He wants to thank him but how do you thank someone for helping you wake up and live?

Achilles sighs and his lips curl up. His head tips back onto Patroclus’ shoulder as he looks up at the stars. “Today was a great day.”

“Yeah,” is all Patroclus can say.

He thinks he might be able to live in the muggle world if Achilles were in it. He’s beginning to think he could live anywhere that Achilles is. That kind of thinking is really starting to scare him.

They grab some loukoumades before the vendor’s cart closes on their way back down to the metro to begin the long ride home (at least when compared to magical standards). The honey sticks to their fingers and they have to lick them clean. At some point, Patroclus leans his head against the window of the car while Achilles slouch down in his seat and tilt his head back and closes his eyes.

When they arrive back at the house they change and Achilles climbs sleepily into Patroclus’ bed like this is normal, like this is just something they do. To make matters worse Achilles immediately curls up against Patroclus, his front to Patroclus’ back, arm going right back around Patroclus’ waist where it had been that morning. Achilles drifts off immediately, clearly content and unconcerned with how this all seems to Patroclus.

Despite the furnace of chaotic thoughts emotions raging within him, Patroclus doesn’t take long to follow him into the realm of dreams lulled by the steady warmth of Achilles body against his and
the even rhythm of his breathing.

~ o ~ o ~

“I would like to learn to ride a bicycle,” Achilles announces over breakfast.

Patroclus pauses with his spoon full of the lavish oatmeal that Phaedra made for them partway to his mouth. “Bicycle?”

“Yeah,” Achilles replies eagerly. “That’s the piece of metal with the two wheels, right?”


“Because it’s kind of like flying a broom,” Achilles explains. “But for muggles.”

Patroclus laughs. “It’s nothing like a broom.”

Achilles isn’t affronted by Patroclus’ laughter. They know one another so well by now that they know they never mean offense.

“You straddle a piece of metal on a bike. You straddle a piece of wood on a broom.”

“A broom flies,” Patroclus counters.

“With magic, yeah,” Achilles agrees. “But a bicycle needs your legs—your muscles.”

Just like that, Patroclus understands. Achilles likes to be challenged in any way possible, be it his magic or his body. Riding a bike, mastering some kind of physical challenge is exactly the kind of thing that Achilles lives for.

Oddly enough, Patroclus owns a bike. It was the last attempt Menoetius made to make something acceptable out of Patroclus. He had brought home the bike and had refused to allow Patroclus to use training wheels. They had spent hours out in the front of their home, Patroclus falling over and over again. He had been bruised, scrapped, and bloodied by the end of it and he had been a disappointment to his father yet again.

Menoetius had looked at him in disgust before he had finally walked away and that look had drilled deep into Patroclus’ soul.

It had left him so determined to fix it that he had spent an entire weekend trying to master his balance and coordination in order to remain on top of the bike. When he had finally succeeded, his father had merely snorted and walked away. Judgment had already been laid and Patroclus had been found wanting.

It didn’t matter to Menoetius that the bike had been too big for a boy of nine. Patroclus was never the boy that he had wanted. It was also when Patroclus realized that nothing he did would ever please his father.

But once they manage to excavate the bike from where it has been collecting dust in the garage, after Achilles’ delight over Patroclus managing to ride the thing, it is almost enough to make him forget what Menoetius’ face had looked like four years ago.

Almost.

“Hop on the back,” Patroclus instructs as he rolls up next to Achilles.
Achilles excitedly steps up onto the bars that protrude from the back wheel. His hands go to Patroclus’ shoulders, fingers curling firmly into the muscle to hold himself steady. Patroclus forgets to breathe for a moment before kicking off and pedaling down the street.

“Faster!” Achilles crows.

Patroclus pushes harder.

“Faster!”

Patroclus puts everything he has into the pedal strokes, his legs burning with the effort.

Achilles throws his head back and cheers up to the sky.

When they get to Kifissia park Patroclus’ legs are aching in protest from the journey and their combined weight on the bike.

Achilles jumps off, his excitement shining like fire. “Let me try!”

Patroclus slips off of his old bike and hands it off to Achilles who immediately flings his legs over the frame and hops onto the bike. It’s a bit too small for him and his arms warble like wet noodles on the handlebars as he starts to try and pedal his way down the bike path. To Patroclus’ dismay, he actually tips over sideways and tumbles over into the grass. He hadn’t thought that it was possible for Achilles to fall or look anything so ungraceful.

Achilles springs up his face set in determination but there isn’t even a hint of anger or pain on his face. His arms still shake some and he still struggles with his balance but this time he catches himself before he falls. By his third attempt, he has—of course—maintained his balance and begun cruising down the path. He turns the bike around and pedals back to Patroclus, his grin wide and spectacular.

Until his nose scrunches up.

“How do I stop?” He asks as he continues past Patroclus.

As the sun just disappears below the horizon, they ride back to the house, the burning orb sunk below the horizon but its light lingering in dusty hues. This time it is Achilles who pedals them and Patroclus who is riding on the back. The wind flows past his face and he can feel the muscles in Achilles’ shoulders and back as his torso naturally sways side to side with his efforts. He likes the way those muscles move below his fingers, how strong Achilles feels. He likes that Achilles’ hair is billowing back at him carrying with it his sea-sweet scent laced with the warm spicy smells of Athens summer nights, rosemary and marjoram. He closes his eyes and lets himself savor the moment. He even lets himself imagine leaning forward and wrapping his arms around Achilles’ shoulders and pressing his face into the soft skin of his neck.

Patroclus’ eyes snap open wide.

Malaka.

He really is in trouble.

Chapter End Notes
Next up: Howler

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/188057757461/the-boy-that-was-promised-chapter-17-azuldemon
Chapter Summary

Patroclus and Achilles prepare to return to Pelion but there is something terrible happening in the Wizarding world and to top it all off Achilles gets an upsetting message.

Chapter Notes

Oh, man, so sorry for such a long delay. Life got in the way and it took much longer to edit this and get it posted than I had planned. But I'm back and hope to be posting more consistently again.

Also, survey time! This is your chance to influence the future of this fic. Just comment below with either the United States or Japan. That's it. Just say which you would prefer. I can't say more about what either country means or how they will factor into the fic (because spoilers) but I thought I'd try something new. Hope you like the update and I look forward to seeing what you all choose!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When the time to return to Pelion draws near they decide to fly to the Agora Charis.

This makes Patroclus very happy. While he has grown used to magical travel over the past few years, he’s unsure if he will ever get used to travel by Portkey. If he can avoid that particular means of magical transit he intends to do so at every opportunity.

Achilles’ letter and supplies list from Pelion is delivered to Menoetius’ house along with Patroclus’ own letter and list. The magical world seems to be very big on constant surveillance but somehow very comfortable with children being placed in highly dangerous situations (how is quidditch an approved extracurricular activity!?). It’s a bit of a contradiction but he supposes that most governments are like this.

Government surveillance and paradoxes aside, Patroclus is excited to get his letter and supplies list for the upcoming term. This year marks a change in their time at the Pelion Academy of Magic. This year they are allowed to choose electives so that they can begin to tailor their magical education in preparation for what future they want to have in the magical world. Patroclus chose Care of Magical Creatures and Achilles chose Divination. They hope this will tip the odds in their favor when it comes to sharing classes this term. At the very least it will guarantee they will share at least two.

It also marks the year where they will be granted the privilege of going to the island Doliche. The island is home to a small wizarding community where the older students of the Pelion Academy of Magic are allowed to shop, drink butterbeer, and generally blow off steam. Patroclus is trying very hard not to think about Doliche. In order to travel to the island, students are required to get a signed waiver from their parent or guardian. Patroclus hadn’t even bothered to ask his father.
Menoetius’ would never have signed something that would lead to Patroclus feeling happy. Patroclus didn’t want to rock the boat. Every summer he was terrified that this would be the one his father would choose to pull the plug on his time in the magical world. So, despite how much Patroclus hates the thought of missing out on trips to another magical island with Achilles and Briseis, he keeps permission form blank and tries not to think about Doliche.

The day before they are due to depart upon Circe’s Loom they pack their trunks for the year and secure them to the backs of their brooms. Patroclus releases Skops out his bedroom window who gleefully takes flight and will join them whenever the owl sees fit. They both bid Patroclus’ mother farewell and then go out into the backyard where Patroclus hopes they are less likely to be observed by the neighbors. Achilles slips his bronze helm atop his golden head and takes a breath. The air around them shimmers like sun-scorched air upon the horizon. They straddle their brooms and lift off into the sky, a bubble of invisibility protecting them from muggle eyes.

Achilles fixes the scrying sextant he borrowed from his father to the front of his broom and simply says: “The Agora of Charis”. The metal device begins to shift and move, little circular lenses lowering and lifting and clicking into place before rotating along the triangular frame and projecting a beam of light out in the direction of their destination.

Patroclus really loves magic.

They follow the beam of magical light flying fast, but with their trunks, they can’t afford to overdo it or get particularly fancy with their maneuvers. It’s still amazing. It feels like an eternity since Patroclus has been on his broom. Being back on his Starsweep is like fizzy bubbles of ecstasy swimming in his veins.

The journey is far shorter than Patroclus would have preferred and it’s a bit strange to realize how close the Agora of Charis is to Athens. They slow in their dissent landing in one of the many fountain courtyards of the Agora. Immediately, the comforting scent of wisteria and bougainvillea sweeps over him.

Achilles releases his concentration and breaks the field of invisibility around them and the people milling around them actually startle. One man literally cries out, his palm going to his chest. A woman shoves her young child behind her and brandishes her wand like she means to curse them inside-out.

Patroclus and Achilles both freeze in startled shock at the response to their arrival and sudden appearance. People in the Wizarding World never react to displays of magic like this. It is not even that dramatic when compared to some of the other ways Patroclus has suddenly managed to disappear and reappear in his short time in this community. People are always popping into existence randomly—especially places as crowded as the Agora of Charis right before the start of a term.

But startle the people around them do.

Someone else joins the woman in pulling out their wand.

Achilles and Patroclus turn and look at one another, both at a loss for what is going on. Patroclus itches to pull his own wand out but he is afraid that that will only make the situation worse and result in either or both of them being hexed. He prays Achilles realizes the same thing.

All at once, there are men and women in midnight-black tunics and cloaks surrounding them, their wands out before them like swords.
Patroclus freezes in terror and Achilles lifts his hands up casually in a show of surrender. He still seems confused but he is also wholly unafraid. Patroclus has no idea what fear would look like on Achilles’ handsome face.

“Who are you,” a woman demands, stepping closer, her wand darting from Patroclus to Achilles in quick smooth slashes.

Patroclus’ mouth just opens and closes in futility like he’s some pathetic carp out of water.

“I’m Achilles. This is Patroclus.” Achilles answers, voice steady and low like he’s speaking to a frightened animal. “We’re getting ready to go to school and we just came for our supplies.”

Recognition and understanding grow on the woman’s face. “There is no flying in or out of the Agora of Charis at this time.” She essentially barks. She is all business this woman. “Only approved floo networks and portkeys. No apparition either. Didn’t you hear?”

Both boys look at one another and shrug.

The woman sighs in irritated exasperation. “Where are your parents?”

“We were in the muggle world for part of the summer,” Achilles explains.

The woman shakes her head and lowers her wand and the people with her do the same. “You can’t be here alone. It isn’t safe.”

“They’re with me,” a voice cuts in.

Peleus saunters over, looking confident and cheery. Achilles has his mother’s alluring aura but his effortless swagger is all Peleus’.

The woman seems to recognize him. Patroclus forgets that Peleus is famous in his own right, not just because he is the father of the Boy That Was Promised. He is a war hero, one of the warriors responsible for keeping the Death Eaters out of Greece during the Second Wizarding War.

“Did you know they were flying here?” The woman demands.

“No,” Peleus answers easily. “I went to collect them but they had already flown the coop, as it were.”

The woman doesn’t seem to think Peleus is as charming as he thinks himself to be but she doesn’t argue or press with more questions.

“Just keep an eye on them,” she says, holstering her wand and walking past him. “We still don’t know what’s going on or what’s causing this. This is no time for childish antics.”

Peleus smiles and gives her an easy salute. “Yes, ma’am, madam Auror ma’am.”

The woman—the Auror—snorts but continues on her way, taking her fellows with her.

“She’s an Auror?” Patroclus asks, in a bit of awe. “A dark wizard hunter?”

“One of their captains,” Peleus answers.

He walks up and tugs Achilles into an affectionate side hug.

“What are they doing here?” Achilles asks, returning the hug.
“There’s been a bit of an...incident.” He walks over and ruffles Patroclus’ hair. “Hello there, little faks.”

Patroclus gulps. “Hello, sir—Peleus.”

“Papa, what’s going on?” Achilles presses, looking around and obviously noting the strangely thin avenue.

Normally this close to the start of the term the Agora is packed to all ends with parents and children hurrying to get their supplies before the students are set to depart.

“Let’s get something to eat and I’ll catch you up.”

Peleus takes them to Sisyphus’ Rest and they find a table tucked in one of the back corners of the inn. The atmosphere in the taproom is every bit the den of hushed whispers and suspicious glances that the rest of the Agora seems to be.

“I take it you didn’t read my last owl,” Peleus surmises.

His face has the look of someone who is trying to be stern but is really just amused and maybe—even a bit proud.

Patroclus cringes. They hadn’t exactly been the best about reading their mail the past few weeks. Achilles had responded to one or two of Peleus’ owls but Patroclus distinctly remembers Belius depositing a letter from Peleus yesterday but that had been right when Achilles had wanted to ride the bike down to the coffee shop for another icy caffeinated drink before they’d be saying goodbye to such things until next summer. The message had remained unopened on Patroclus’ desk.

“Sorry,” Achilles apologizes with a slight wince.

Peleus sighs and shakes his head but he is also smiling at them fondly. “Summer boys...”

“I had instructed you to wait at Patroclus’ for me to arrive and bring you both to the Agora and then see you two off.”

“Oops,” Achilles says.

Peleus cocks an eyebrow for emphasis.

“Everything is locked down right now and all children need to be escorted until they are aboard Circé’s Loom.”

“Why?”

There is a screech as Belius soars in through the patio. The great eagle owl doesn’t stop for scraps and attention like he usually does. He doesn’t so much as slow down. He drops the envelope in his talons like it is on fire and soars right back on out of the inn.

Peleus actually cringes, as his eyes lock onto the newly deposited envelope.

Achilles’ eyes go wide and as he too looks down at the letter on the table with the blood-red wax seal.

Patroclus stares in confusion between father and son.

“By the endless pit of Hades,” Peleus curses vehemently.
“Papa...” Achilles whispers, eyes still on the letter.

Patroclus had thought before that he did not know what fear would look like on Achilles’ face. This is something close to it. It is not something he ever wants to see again.

“What is it?” Patroclus asks.

“A headache,” Peleus grouses.

“A howler,” Achilles explains. “It’s...it’s...”

Before Achilles can finish, the envelope vibrates violently until it floats in front of Peleus.

“Open it, Papa,” Achilles says in quiet urgency. “You know what happened last time.”

Peleus lets out a defeated sigh and nods before reluctantly pointing his wand at the envelope.

There is a dry hiss as the paper opens and violently folds itself into something like a fanged beak.

That’s when it begins to screech at them in a tone that has Patroclus and Achilles both clamping their palms over their ears. It is a shrill and slivering sound, it is like the war cry of a thousand angry hawks. It is like nothing Patroclus has ever heard before but it is still somehow unmistakably Thetis.

“OF ALL THE RECKLESS—IRRESPONSIBLE—NEGLECTFUL—YOU LET HIM SNEAK OFF!? WITH EVERYTHING THAT IS GOING ON! DO YOU WANT OUR SON TO LOSE HIS MAGIC!? DO YOU WANT HIM TO END UP POWERLESS AND PATHETIC!? IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT!?”

Unbidden, the image of Thetis transforming before his eyes into something terrifying and raptorial last year in the Agora fills Patroclus’ mind as her voice roars and fills the inn.

Peleus’ eyes are closed and he looks both pained and exasperated.

“AND TO THE MUGGLE WORLD!? YOU KNEW WHERE HE WENT AND YOU JUST LET HIM STAY THERE!? WITH HIM!? I AUGHT TO DEMAND A TRIBUNAL AND REVOKE YOUR PARENTAL RIGHTS!”

Some people in the inn actually begin to get up and leave, casting terrified looks in their direction. Others, openly stare in rapt interest.

The paper beak swivels and faces Achilles next and the boy actually recoils a bit.

“And you, blossom of my womb, are never to do something that dangerous and distasteful ever again!”

Patroclus finds it a bit ridiculous that this is what Achilles is getting a message like this for. Hadn’t he fought a cyclops when he was eleven rather than calling for help? Hadn’t he sought out and explored an ancient ruin in a forbidden forest only to face a manticore? Compared to both those things a rebellious trip the muggle world seems downright mundane.

Achilles seems to relax an increment but the howler lunges forward and he arches back.

“FURTHERMORE, YOU ARE NEVER TO SEE THAT FILTHY LITTLE MUD-BLOOD AGAIN. I FORBID IT!”
That’s when Patroclus understands what this is really about.

Then, to Patroclus’ horror, the howler fixes upon him. And this time it does not screech. This time the tone is low and unmistakably threatening.

“AND YOU...YOU FOUL LITTLE INSECT...YOU KEEP AWAY FROM MY SON OR SO HELP ME...”

“ Enough,” Peleus snaps. His voice doesn’t boom but there is command and anger in it.

He flicks his wand and the parchment ignites and burns orange for a bit before turning a menacing green. It is paper but it somehow seems to resist the spell, writhing and twisting before it finally dissipates into ash and smoke.

Achilles glances over at his father, his eyes weary but his face relaxed in blatant relief.

“You know she can’t leave the ocean caves unless it is the utmost emergency.” Peleus answers the unspoken thing Achilles had not said aloud.

“She could send another.”

“She got her point across.”

Achilles turns and puts a hand on Patroclus’ shoulder. “She isn’t serious.”

Patroclus shakes his head in disbelief.

“She isn’t totally serious,” Achilles amends. “My dad’s right. She’s too busy to come here right now. She’s just angry. And besides, she can’t tell us what to do while we’re at Pelion. By Christmas, she’ll have cooled down and forgotten all of this ever happened.”

Patroclus looks at him and is astounded to see that Achilles seems to really believe this. Over Achilles’ shoulder, Peleus seems to be thinking much the same thing as Patroclus. The look he gives his son is sad.

“What did she mean about me losing my magic?” Achilles asks, turning to look at his father. “What’s going on?”

Peleus sighs looking tired. “We aren’t entirely sure,” he concedes. “All we know is that six different witches and wizards have lost their magic.”

“What!”” Achilles actually gasps.

“Is that possible?” Patroclus asks.

“No,” Peleus answers gravely. “Or at least it’s never happened before. It’s not supposed to be something that can happen.”

Achilles’ entire body is rigid and tight like a violin string stretched too far.

“All six victims claim that they were attacked by a hooded figure and that the magic was...” Peleus seems to be debating whether or not to tell them this part but eventually seems to settle on saying it. “They claim the magic was ‘sucked’ from them.”

“Like a vampire?” Patroclus asks, thinking back to not-so-mythical monsters he seen in his Defense Against the Dark Arts books.
“We don’t know,” Peleus answers. “What we do seem to know is that it’s not some kind of virus like people originally thought. The Apollo School of Healing seems very confident about that…but they also haven’t figured out how this could happen or if it can be reversed.”

Sickening horror creeps all through Patroclus. Someone or something that can steal your magic. Something that can leave you devoid of the precious gift of it. This thing could take it from Achilles—it could take it from Patroclus. It could leave him a muggle—it could force him out of the Wizarding World and back into the muggle world where he’d be behind his peers and left once more with his father. It could leave him without flying, Pelion, Briseis…it could leave him without Achilles.

To Patroclus, there is no crueler fate.

“I actually thought you’d be safer among muggles. All these attacks happened in towns and villages populated by witches and wizards. It seemed unlikely this thing would strike out in the normal world.”

“Papa,” Achilles says softly. “Is this...”

“No,” Peleus barks suddenly.

“But this—if this isn’t the greatest threat our world has ever known then what is?”

“That’s not what the prophecy says.”

“It doesn’t say I’m destined to save the Wizarding World from the greatest threat it has ever known?”

Peleus’ mouth remains shut and his lips clamped tightly together.

“What does the prophecy say?” Achilles demands.

“You’re not old enough,” Peleus says.

Patroclus can tell that this is an old argument. An old argument that has been given new life in the light of what is happening around them.

“Is that in the prophecy?” Achilles shoots, clearly irritated. “‘And the Boy That Was Promised may not learn what this prophecy decrees until the dawn of his sixteenth cycle around the sun.’?” His tone is high and mocking.

Peleus frowns, his dark brows dropping over his eyes.

“Or did you and mother just decide that yourselves?”

“Achilles,” Peleus warns.

“Or are you both just avoiding telling me altogether?”

“Achilles!” This time it is not a warning, and Peleus’ hand comes down on the table rattling the silverware and startling Patroclus.

Patroclus feels fidgety and like he shouldn’t be here for this—that he shouldn’t be witnessing this kind of family dispute. The other patrons of Sisyphus’ Rest don’t seem to have the same reservations many of whom have been blatantly watching and listening since the howler.
Peleus seems to notice this as well and leans in towards Achilles, the affable and almost jovial father that Patroclus is used to seeing nowhere to be seen. “This is a tragedy. There is something happening out there but the ministers will figure it out and deal with it. You will learn of your prophecy when the time is right. Not before.” He leans back and there is a finality that radiates from him.

Achilles is not cowed and for a tense moment, Patroclus is afraid that Achilles will continue to argue. But after a long, strained heartbeat Achilles turns from his father and says nothing more, the conversation dropped...for now.

After a very uncomfortable lunch, where there is very little conversation, Peleus takes them upstairs to their room.

“Sorry, boys, we’re going to have to share a room,” Peleus informs them as he opens the room and shows them into the suite with two large beds and a private washroom. “But given the circumstances, I think it’s best I keep an eye on you both and make sure you’re safe. You boys will have to bunk up together unless Achilles wants to share a bed with his old man.” The persona of the stern father is gone from the man and back again is the jesting and smiling that seems to be Peleus’ default.

Achilles is apparently not ready to go back to normal just yet because the look he shoots Peleus leaves no question about the state of the boy’s feelings toward his father and which sleeping option he will be choosing.

“Come on,” Peleus says into the still awkward silence. “Let’s go get your school supplies.”

The Agora is fuller when they go back downstairs and head to the House of Midas to get Patroclus’ funds for the year. Patroclus wonders if, in addition to limited means of transportation, the ministry is also limiting the times people are traveling out and around.

There is an air of unease among the throng, a perpetual whisper flutters around them. Everyone seems to be looking at everyone else in suspicion.

They run into Briseis at Papyrus while they are getting their books. Peleus appears to know her parents in that way that all adults seem to somehow know one another. She hurries up to them and she and Patroclus exchange a hug while she and Achilles only exchange polite nods.

“When did you get here?” She asks.

“Just before lunch,” Patroclus replies.

“Did the school send someone for you?”

Patroclus rubs at the back of his neck. “We flew, actually…”

“Flew? But my parents said—“

“We didn’t know.” Patroclus informs her.

She looks between them in confusion.

“I went to visit Patroclus for the summer.” Achilles informs her proudly and, honestly, a bit meanly.

Briseis gapes. “Your parents let you with this whole magic thief stuff going on?”
“He kinda...snuck over,” Patroclus supplies already hating where this conversation seems to be going.

Briseis looks shocked, angry, and annoyed all at once. “You just never stop, do you.” She accuses Achilles.

Patroclus cannot let this progress given Achilles’ current mood. It has the potential of being a disaster.

“His dad thought it might be safer in the muggle world for him,” Patroclus cuts in. “And he probably didn’t tell us because he was worried Achilles might go out looking for whatever’s doing this.”

Achilles scoffs and looks affronted.

Patroclus cocks his head towards him and lifts an eyebrow.

Achilles rocks his head side to side and shrugs in silent concession.

Briseis shakes her head. “Well, the grownups are all freaking out over this. My parents said they are actually in a hurry for me to get to Pelion. They think that it is the safest place to be right now.”

“Come on, Briseis,” the girl’s mother interjects, taking her daughter’s hand. “We best get home.”

Briseis makes a face that indicates that her mother is proving the point she had just made.

“I’ll see you on the ship,” Briseis calls as she is ushered out of the shop.

Shopping for supplies is different with Peleus around. Specifically, because he insists on buying Patroclus things.


“Yes, but this isn’t—“

Peleus waves him off. “None of that. You said it yourself that you’re interested in maybe becoming a healer. You had best begin sharpening those skills now.”

“But I can pay—“

“I want to, little faks. Don’t deny an old man his whims.”

So Patroclus leaves with two extra books that are all his own and dreams of someday having his own library. He also leaves with a newer, fancier potions set and a new helmet for quidditch since his head seems to have grown over the summer as well. Patroclus isn’t sure what to make of Peleus and his doting. Patroclus has never had a father who wanted to buy him things just because he cared or felt like it.

At first, he worries Achilles might grow jealous but Achilles is still in a sour mood from the howler and Peleus’ refusal to talk about the Prophecy. Achilles actually seems pleased his father has taken to Patroclus. It also doesn’t hurt that Achilles is also purchased several extra items that suit his interests: a polishing kit for his broom, a leg sheath for his wand, and a rich new cloak.
Achilles’ sour mood lasts all through dinner making for yet another uncomfortable meal and the three of them heading up to the room early for the night.

Once inside, Peleus immediately begins casting enchantments around the room. Patroclus thinks that it should be reassuring but it really only serves to speak to just how worried the adults are about this possible threat.

Just like every night the past few weeks, Achilles climbs into bed with Patroclus making no fuss about sharing. He does keep far more distance between them this time, however. It makes Patroclus wonder what all this bed-sharing has meant to the other boy. Is Achilles’ distance now because of his irritability? Or is it because he knows that what they’ve been doing the past few weeks is weird or inappropriate? A desperate part of Patroclus wants to think that it’s because Peleus is in the room with them. Because maybe if all this snuggling really is inappropriate… maybe it’s because it means something. Maybe it means Achilles feels something too.

Which, is oddly almost as terrifying as Achilles not feeling the same way.

Patroclus forcibly shoves the conflicting thoughts and emotions out of his mind. He cannot afford to even entertain the thought that Achilles feels the same things. It won’t lead to anything good. Heartbreak and pain are the only places that Patroclus can see those fantasies taking him.

So he lies on his back and stares up at the ceiling, arms locked at his side and legs pressed together, keeping himself on his own half of the bed. The lights go out and it isn’t long before the room is filled with the spluttering purr of Peleus’ snoring.

Patroclus’ heart skips a beat when Achilles pushes in close all at once, his back pressing into Patroclus’ side. Achilles humphs and bashes at his pillow a bit before flopping his head back down.

Patroclus feels frozen to the spot, unsure what to do, afraid to do anything. He has no idea what is going on with Achilles. He hasn’t seen him in such a mood since their first year.

Again, Achilles huffs, shimmying his body into Patroclus’ like he can somehow get closer.

Still, Patroclus does not move.

“Could you just—“ Achilles mutters, arm reaching back and grabbing Patroclus’. “Please…”

Achilles pulls Patroclus’ arm over and across his body. Patroclus follows, his front pressing into Achilles’ back to spoon him.

Achilles lets out a sigh and wiggles back against Patroclus one more time except this time it seems less frenetic and more settled.

“Thanks,” Achilles whispers, sounding relieved and winding their legs together under the sheets.

Patroclus only nods, his face pressed into Achilles’ shoulder. He has no idea what this is about but he likes it. He shouldn’t…but he does. He can’t help feeling snug, safe, and secure. He’s not sure he’ll ever be able to go back to sleeping alone.

Chapter End Notes
Up Next: The Peculiar Case of Cassandra K.

https://azuldemon.tumblr.com/post/189697215916/the-boy-that-was-promised-
chapter-18-azuldemon

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!